

# **Parental Determinism and Child Well-Being**

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# Parental Determinism (Furedi, 2001)

'The interlocking myths of 'infant determinism' (the assumption that infant experience determines the course of future development) and 'parental determinism' (the notion that parental intervention determines the fate of the youngster) have come to have a major influence on the relations between children and their parents'.

'Parenting has been transformed into an all-purpose independent variable that seems to have the capacity to explain everything to do with an infant's development. Parenting has been used as a main variable to explain the following childhood problems: Eating disorders; The 'terrible twos'; Student anxiety; Failure in school; Depression; Low IQ; Violent behaviour; Psychological damage'.

'Inflating the public's perception of parental impact promises the potential of influence and power but inevitably delivers disappointing results. Unfortunately, when this happens we don't discard the doctrine of parental determinism, we insist instead that mothers and fathers adopt new parenting skills. Such pressures have led and continue to lead to a major redefinition of parenting'.

# The re-definition of parenting: the policy sphere this Century


- From family form and structure, to 'parenting competence'
- Linking measurable outcomes for children to parenting competencies
- Moral impetus is risk to child well-being / welfare, meaning parenting and child well-being become causally linked
- Policy focus on intervention / training / education in parent/child interaction expands
- 'Parental involvement' and 'Positive Parenting' as normative
- **Realm of state action becomes focussed on the affective (rather than the material) elevating management of emotion with the material as background / contributory factor**

# Sociological lens: Risk Consciousness, Therapeutic Culture

- The problem of uncertainty regarding the future has been recast throughout modern history as the problem of childhood and of the family
- Uncertainty has, more recently, found expression in risk management
- Increasingly strong emphasis on the risks of 'educational failure' and 'mental health' / twin foci of 'educational attainment' and 'psychological wellbeing' as routes to amelioration of risk
- Adult identity increasingly linked to goals of 'attainment' and 'mental health'
- Parent role organised around 'involvement' to these ends
- The reorganisation / destabilisation of previous boundaries of and meanings ascribed to public/private and adulthood/childhood are socially significant outcomes and this process of boundary dissolution is ongoing
- **Therapeutic management of individuals and of relations between individuals has become normative**




Nadine Burke Harris



Suzanne Zeedyk




David Cameron




John Carnochan



Mary Glasgow



Pauline Scott



Gary Robinson



James Docherty



Nicky Murray

# Making SCOTLAND the World's First ACE-Aware Nation

26 September 2018  
GLASGOW

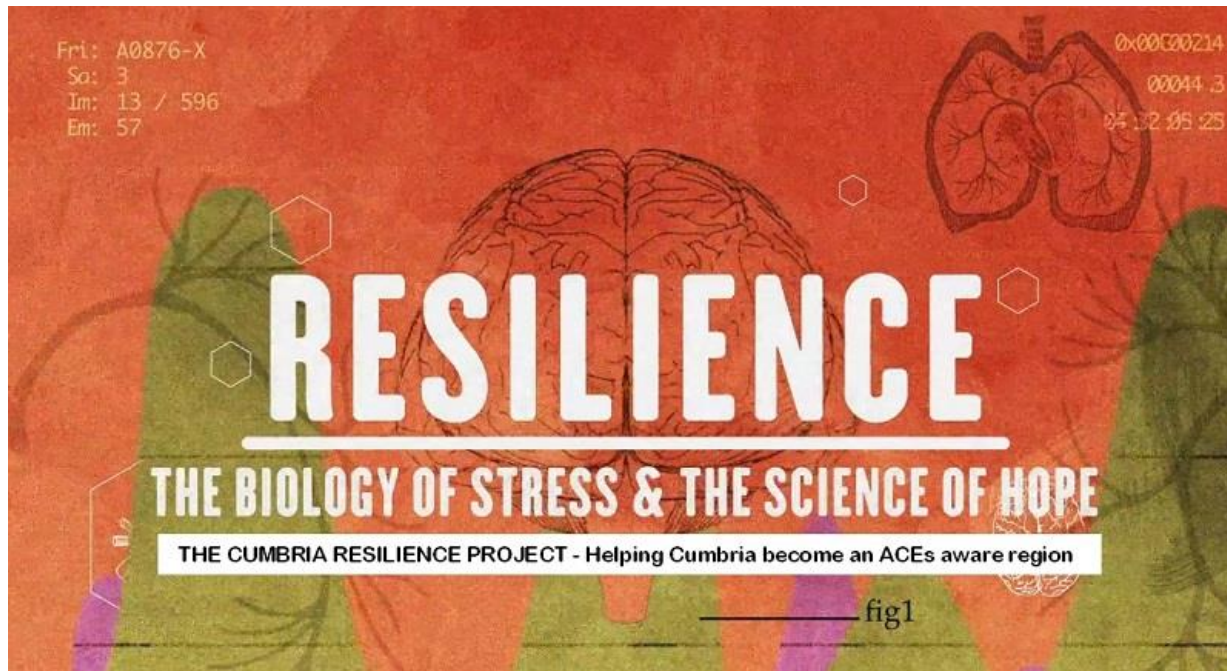


Latest iteration of the ‘first three years movement’ (Thornton 2011)

*“an alliance of child welfare advocates and politicians’ which proposes that social problems such as ‘inequality, poverty, educational underachievement, violence and mental illness are best addressed through ‘early intervention’ programmes” (Macvarish et al, 2015)*



# Evangelical certainty - 'new magic bullet'



Together, we can break the cycle of ACEs.  
Everyone in Wales has a part to play.  
Join the movement!

#ACEsCymru

## How many adults reported each ACE in 2017?

### Child maltreatment



Verbal abuse  
**20%**



Physical abuse  
**16%**



Sexual abuse  
**7%**

### Household ACEs



Parental separation  
**25%**



Mental illness  
**18%**



Domestic violence  
**17%**

Neglect was measured for the first time in 2017. Most people who reported neglect had multiple ACEs.



Emotional neglect  
**7%**



Physical neglect  
**4%**



Alcohol abuse  
**13%**



Drug abuse  
**6%**



Incarceration  
**4%**

**For every 100 adults in Wales,  
50 had at least one ACE and 14 had four or more**





# Traumatised brains

70/30 CAMPAIGN: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN

## Childhood Trauma

An event that a child finds overwhelmingly distressing or emotionally painful, often resulting in lasting mental and physical effects.

2x

more likely to develop  
**DEPRESSION**

3x

more likely to develop  
**ANXIETY DISORDERS**

### Common causes:

 Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)

Grief



 Witness/victim of violence

 War/Terrorism

 Neglect

 Medical trauma

 Substance misuse

 Mental illness

 Bullying in school

 Separation from loved ones

## LONG-TERM IMPACTS:

Affects perception of reality



Takes away sense of safety



Wires brain to expect danger

Increases stress hormones flowing through the body



Triggers fight, fright or freeze response



Creates a sense of helplessness



Creates relationship problems



Results in serious behaviour problems



“The initial trauma of a young child may go underground but it will return to haunt us”  
James Garbarino

**PREFRONTAL CORTEX (PFC)**

"Thinking Centre"

**Underactivated**

Difficulties concentrating & learning.

A traumatised brain is

"*bottom heavy*"

**ANTERIOR CINGULATE CORTEX (ACC)**

"Emotion Regulation Centre"

**Underactivated**

Difficulties with managing emotions.

**AMYGDALA**

"Fear Centre"

**Overactivated**

Difficulty feeling safe, calming down, sleeping

**Complex Trauma:** a result of repetitive, prolonged trauma



www.70-30.org.uk  
@7030Campaign

# Health, education, police: aspiring to an 'ACE-free' world



**Our research shows taking a public health approach to policing & criminal justice = less people in prison, less violence & less drug use.**

**We all need to be ACE & Trauma informed and support vulnerable people, families & communities so future generations can be ACE free**

Mark Bellis, Director of Policy, Health and International Development



**GIG**  
CYMRU  
**NHS**  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

*'your body remembers what the mind forgets'*

**ACEs:**

- **Retrospectively** identified in adults, correlated with health problems (mental and physical).
- **Prospectively** identified in children.
- Traditional fears of disorderly social underclass reinterpreted in therapeutic terms.

# The evidence is uncertain: 'the argument' precedes it

'Little robust research' to 'claim there is a sufficient evidence-base for specific Interventions'. (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health)

'The ACE score approach is highly limited in being able to inform interventions as it's unclear which adversities produce the most negative impacts upon health and how this occurs. The limitations of the ACE score approach are becoming more widely acknowledged in this field of research...' (International Centre for Lifecourse studies)

‘Other potential gaps in the evidence also include research establishing causality; it is important to distinguish association from cause and effect.’ (Association of Directors of Public Health)

‘The Academy of Medical Sciences similarly noted that “it is not always clear where the line is drawn between normative stress experiences and ACEs”’

# Tension between activating parental agency, determinism and fatalism

“There is an ignorance among people in general about the importance of what they do for children’s lives. **Children’s everyday experiences shape their lives, yet among many people there is a kind of fatalism.** They think, “The child will be what it is going to be like anyway. It does not really matter what I do.” When you have that kind of attitude, **you do not try to help your child.** To overcome that kind of philosophy, **we need to change our culture with regard to how we view parenting.**”  
(Professor Edward Melhuish, oral evidence)



# Psychological/therapeutic fatalism?

- Little faith in any maternal ‘instinct’ or spontaneous feelings of love.
- Motherhood is portrayed as more likely to inspire depression, or re-trigger past traumas.
- A mirror image of historic idealisations of naturalised motherhood?



# ACEs: What happens to the parent?

- The parent appears to be centrally important: because they are determinate of the child/future adult.
  - But they are a risk factor.
  - Unconsciously determinate: a 'toxic' vector of harm.
- But, the parent also disappears relative to others:
  - Professionals are given para-parental status - the child needs 'stable, caring adults', 'caregivers', the professional knows the child better than the parent.
- Simultaneously the problem and the solution.
  - Lack of faith and authority, but the focus of intense therapeutic scrutiny and intervention.

# The problem of the 'Helicopter Parent'

- Extensive, highly visible discussion in the US (where term originates)
- Increasingly prevalent in Britain this Century e.g. media reporting (about both young adults and toddlers)

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a Guardian article. The article is titled "Don't make their GP appointments, don't manage their money - universities' advice to helicopter parents" and is categorized under "Higher education". The author is Anna Fazackerley, and the article was published on Tuesday, 20 November 2018 at 07:14 GMT. The article features a photograph of Steve West, vice-chancellor of the University of West of England, and a yellow Eurostar advertisement for Amsterdam. The text of the article discusses parental anxiety and the challenges of university life for students of helicopter parents.

**Higher education**

## Don't make their GP appointments, don't manage their money - universities' advice to helicopter parents

Parents are finding it harder to let go, and universities are responding by making them 'part of the team'

**Anna Fazackerley**  
Tue 20 Nov 2018 07:14 GMT

54 268

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Steve West of the University of the West of England. 'If they are taking drugs or drinking, get them to talk to you, but don't be judgmental.' Photograph: Adrian Sheratt/Guardian

**A**s a father of five, Steve West, vice-chancellor of the University of West of England, knows all about parental anxiety. Yet he says parents whose offspring have started university must learn to listen from afar without judging - even if those young adults are experimenting with drugs or drinking heavily.

University may be a door to adulthood, but the parents of today's students have wedged their feet firmly inside. With parents keen to know that the £9,250-a-year tuition fees are being spent wisely, there is now an established culture of them attending open days. And new research shows that perfectionist parents, who have grown used to managing everything at

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a Guardian article. The article is titled "Leave those kids alone: 'helicopter parenting' linked to behavioural problems" and is categorized under "Psychology". The author is Nicola Davis, and the article was published on Monday, 18 June 2018 at 14:00 BST. The article features a photograph of a woman holding a baby in a stroller. The text of the article discusses the link between helicopter parenting and behavioral problems in children.

those kids alone: 'helicopter'

**Psychology**

## Leave those kids alone: 'helicopter parenting' linked to behavioural problems

Children with over-controlling parents aged two struggled to manage their emotions later in life, study finds

**Nicola Davis**  
@NicolaSDavis  
Mon 18 Jun 2018 14:00 BST

9,983

This article is over 4 months old

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At some point you have to let your children go. Photograph: Tim Clayton/Corbis via Getty Images

Children whose parents are over-controlling "helicopter parents" when they are toddlers, are less able to control their emotions and impulses as they get older apparently leading to more problems with school, new research suggests.

The study looked at to what degree mothers of toddlers dominated playtime and showed their child what to do, and then studied how their children behaved over the following eight years, revealing that controlling parenting is linked to a number of problems as a child grows up.

"Parents who are over-controlling are most often very well-intentioned and are trying to support and be there for their children," said Dr Nicole Perry of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, who co-authored the research.

# Headlines (UK Nationals)

## 2018

'**Don't** make their GP appointments, don't manage their money - universities' advice to helicopter parents' (*The Guardian*, November)

'Helicopter parenting is **bad for children**' (*The Times*); 'Leave those kids alone: 'helicopter parenting' **linked to behavioural problems**' (*The Guardian*); 'Helicopter' parents cause their children to **struggle at school, become badly behaved and 'defiant'**, study finds (*The Mail*) (all June)

## 2017

'Helicopter parents who praise their children too easily are blamed for them **still living at home aged 25**' (*The Mail*); 'Middle-class parents damaging their children by not being able to say 'no'; 'Mollycoddling' and 'helicopter' parenting leaving primary school children **poorly behaved and ill-prepared for real life**, expert warns' (*The Independent*); 'Warning to helicopter parents: **Ignoring your child** may actually be the best thing for them' (*The Mail*); 'Helicopter and lawnmower parents beware: Experts say the key to raising kids is to **be 'just good enough'**' (*The Mail*)

## 2016

'Pushy parents should **'butt out'** of their children's university open days, admissions head demands' (*The Mail*); 'Oxford University **separates 'helicopter' parents from children** at open days-' (*The Telegraph*)

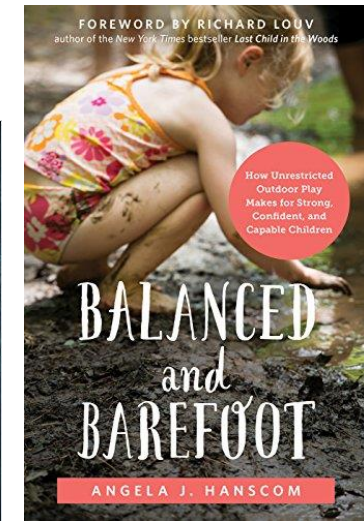
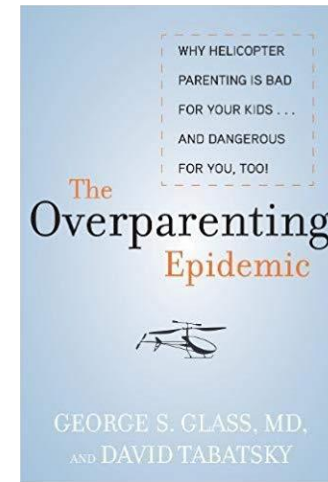
# Helicopter Parenting and Parental Determinism

'A common target of child-rearing manuals before the Second World War was the over-protective parent, and guilt-ridden parents worried that they might be 'smothering' their children. But how many times do we hear parents criticized for being over-protective today? Indeed, many of the traits associated with the classic over-protective father or mother are likely to be praised by today's child experts as responsible parenting'. (Furedi, 2001)

Is this problem a departure from, or development of, parental determinism?

- Claimsmakers and fields of discussion: who owns the term and how is the problem defined?
- 'Helicopter Parenting' as a problematic 'parenting style'
- Outcomes: the expansion of therapeutic management of parent and child

# Parenting advice

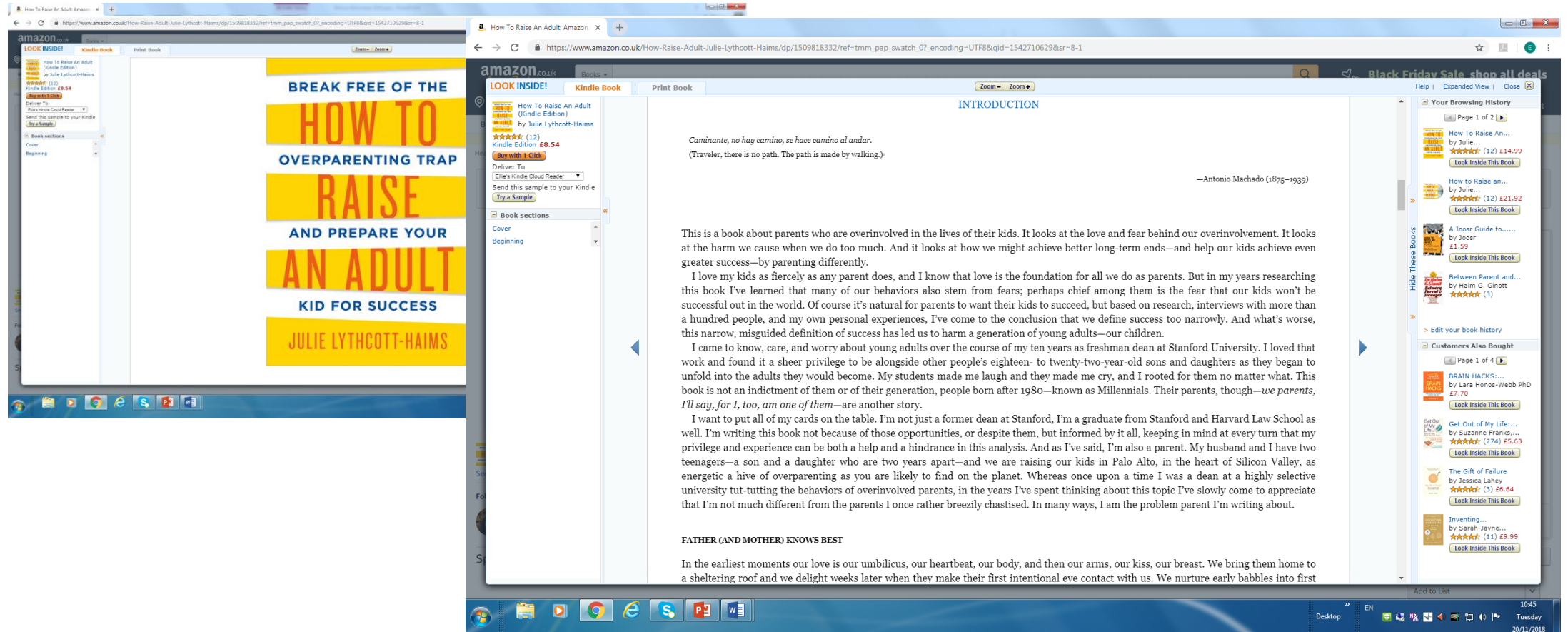


- ‘Mother hovers over me like a helicopter’ (*Between Parent and Teenager*, Haim Ginott, 1969)
- *Creative Child and Adult Quarterly* advises parents to ‘not hover like a helicopter’ over a child practising the violin (1987)
- Multiple references to the term as it originating with US parenting advice book *Parenting With Love and Logic* (Cline and Fay, 1990). Drawing on biblical references, merging with psychological theorizing, categorises Helicopter Parenting as ineffective, contrasting it with Consultant Parenting (as effective).

‘They say “some parents think that *love* means rotating their lives around their children. They are helicopter parents...While today these “loving” parents may feel they are easing their children’s path into adulthood, tomorrow the same children will be leaving home and wasting the first eighteen months of their adult life flunking our out of college or meandering about ‘getting their heads together’. Such children are unequipped for the challenges of life. Their significant learning opportunities were stolen from them in the name of love’ (p23)



# Higher Education Officials (major focus in US, imported to UK)



# ‘Lay’ commentators and campaigners (‘The Backlash’)

‘The insanity crept up on us slowly; we just wanted what was best for our kids. We bought macrobiotic cupcakes and hypoallergenic socks, hired tutors to correct a 5-year-old's "pencil-holding deficiency," hooked up broadband connections in the treehouse but took down the swing set after the second skinned knee. We hovered over every school, playground and practice field — "helicopter parents," teachers christened us, a phenomenon that spread to parents of all ages, races and regions...

All great rebellions are born of private acts of civil disobedience that inspire rebel bands to plot together. And so there is now a new revolution under way, one aimed at rolling back the almost comical overprotectiveness and overinvestment of moms and dads.

The insurgency goes by many names — slow parenting, simplicity parenting, free-range parenting — but the message is the same: Less is more’ (‘The Growing Backlash Against Overparenting’.  
Nancy Gibbs, *Time Magazine* Nov 20, 2009)

# Academic Experts: Parenting Styles

‘The parenting style literature is probably the most important incubator of the concept of parenting. Such factors as parents’ orientation to their children, their style of discipline and manner of communicating with children are the focus of enquiry here. These are considered interesting mainly for their role in the transmission of patterns of adjustment or dysfunction in the individual child. This literature is permeated by the belief that parents’ modes of relating to their children can be conceptualised as ‘styles’ and that such ‘styles’ have profound effects on children’ (Daly, in Betz, Honig, Ostner, 2017, p43)

# Helicopter Parenting as a 'parenting style' (following Baumrind)

'We are not proposing that helicopter parenting is an entirely new *dimension* of parenting.... Instead it represents a unique pattern of the basic dimensions of parenting...

...helicopter parenting does not appear to be a clear form of psychological control as it does not appear to target the emotional or psychological autonomy of the child. It certainly appears to reflect some aspects of behavioural control, but with high levels of warmth and support as well as excessive limiting of autonomy that is not at all consistent with the age of the child.

...In these respects, helicopter parenting is reminiscent of similar constructs that have been identified in parenting of children at various ages....More similarity exists between helicopter parenting in emerging adulthood and an approach to parenting of younger children known as overprotective, or oversolicitous parenting....

Given that involvement, protection, affection etc tend to be aspects of 'good' parenting, it leads to the question of when and **whether a parent can give too much of a good thing**.....

(Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 'Black hawk down?: Establishing helicopter parenting as a distinct construct from other forms of parental control during adulthood'. **2012**, *Journal of Adolescence* 1177-1190)

# Involvement of the ‘wrong sort’

‘Although parental involvement has generally been found to be associated with positive cognitive and psychosocial child outcomes (Day and Padilla-Walker [2009](#); Fingerman et al. [2012](#); Wilder [2014](#)), there is mounting evidence that **developmentally inappropriate levels of involvement associated with helicopter parenting is associated with decreased well-being** (LeMoyne and Buchanan [2011](#); Schiffrin et al. [2014](#); Segrin et al. [2013](#)) **and academic achievement** (Nelson et al. [2015](#); Padilla-Walker and Nelson [2012](#); Shoup et al. [2009](#)) among adolescents and young adults’. (Schiffrin and Liss 2017, ‘The Effects of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Motivation’ *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 26: 1472-1480)

# Expanding the field of study

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying an article on Psychology Today. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201802/the-3-different-kinds-helicopter-parents>. The Psychology Today logo is in the top left, with navigation links for 'Find Counselling', 'Get Help', 'Magazine', and 'Today'. A search bar is located below the navigation. The article title is 'The 3 Different Kinds of Helicopter Parents' by Amy Morin, dated Feb 27, 2018. The article text discusses how helicopter parenting has become more prevalent in modern workplaces. A social sharing bar includes buttons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, and a 'More' option. An advertisement on the right features a woman and the text: 'I tell everyone looking for a counsellor to check it out!'. Below the main article, there is a 'Most Popular in UK' section with a link to '3 Reasons the "Little Brain" Might Become the Next Big'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date as Sunday, 11/11/2018, and the time as 15:26.

The 3 Different Kinds of Helicopter Parents

New research reveals distinctly different types of helicopter parents.

Posted Feb 27, 2018

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I bet no one told your grandparents not to attend your parents' job interviews when they were 25. Hovering in the workplace wasn't a "thing" in past generations. But, in today's world, helicopter parents don't think twice about meddling with their college graduate's career.

In fact, a survey conducted by Michigan State University found that 32 percent of large companies have heard from their employees' parents at one point or another. Whether it's a mother trying to convince a hiring manager that her son is a "real self-starter" or it's a father inquiring about health insurance benefits, helicopter parents leap at the opportunity to get involved.

Hyper-parenting can be a nightmare for human resource departments. And

Most Popular in UK

3 Reasons the "Little Brain" Might Become the Next Big



# Discovering the pathological effects of helicopter parenting 2010+

- **Depressive symptoms / use of prescription medication** (LeMoyne and Buchanan, 2011; Garner 2017; Reilly and Semkowska 2018)
- **Anxiety and social connectedness** (Ulutas and Aksoy 2014;
- **Well-Being / Psychological Well-being / Psychological adjustment** (LeMoyne and Buchanan, 2011; Schriffin, Liss et al, 2014; Woo, Hur and Ahn 2017; Cui, Janhonen-Abruquah et al 2018; Lee and Kang 2018)
- **Anorexia and eating disorders, body image** (Levy and Crow 2017; Ciccia and Darlin 2017; Perez, Cui et al 2018;
- **Alcohol use in females** (Cui, Allen et al 2018)
- **Academic motivation / academic achievement and functioning/procrastination** (Hong, Hwang et al 2015; Schriffin, Liss 2017; Goh 2017;Lubbe, Mancini et al 2018)
- **Adjustment to college** (Darlow, Norvilitis, Schuetze 2017)
- **Self-efficacy** (Reed, Duncan et al 2016)
- **Rapport with instructors** (Van Ingan, Freiheit et al 2015; Frey and Tatum 2016)
- **Lack of empathy** (McGinley 2018)
- **Narcissism** (Winner and Nicholson 2018)
- **Retreat from marriage** (Willoughby, Hearsh, Padilla-Walker, Nelson 2015)
- **Perceived impaired ability to relate well to children** (Scharf and Rousseau 2017)

# Outcomes

‘The main outcome of this process is not a balanced understanding of the problems of ‘hyper-parenting’, but a further development in the ‘normalisation of parent-bashing’. Parents are castigated for their failure to anticipate and manage a bewildering range of risks to their child, and simultaneously criticized for the failure to ‘let go’” (Bristow, in Lee et al, 2014, p214)

- A response to parental determinism that re-articulates its premises in a new way
- Maintains starting point for ‘the problem’ in the child’s emotions and links directly to ‘parenting style’
- Introduces new layer of mixed messages regarding ‘involvement’
- Avoids the problem of adult responsibility in general


# 'Parenting' comes full circle: the roots of the pathology in the early years

Leave those kids alone: 'helicopter parenting' linked to behavioural problems

Children with over-controlling parents aged two struggled to manage their emotions later in life, study finds

**Psychology**

**Nicola Davis**  
@NicolaKSDavis  
Mon 18 Jun 2018 14:00 BST  
9,983  
This article is over 4 months old



▲ At some point you have to let your children go. Photograph: Tim Clayton/Corbis via Getty Images

Children whose parents are over-controlling "helicopter parents" when they are toddlers, are less able to control their emotions and impulses as they get older apparently leading to more problems with school, new research suggests.

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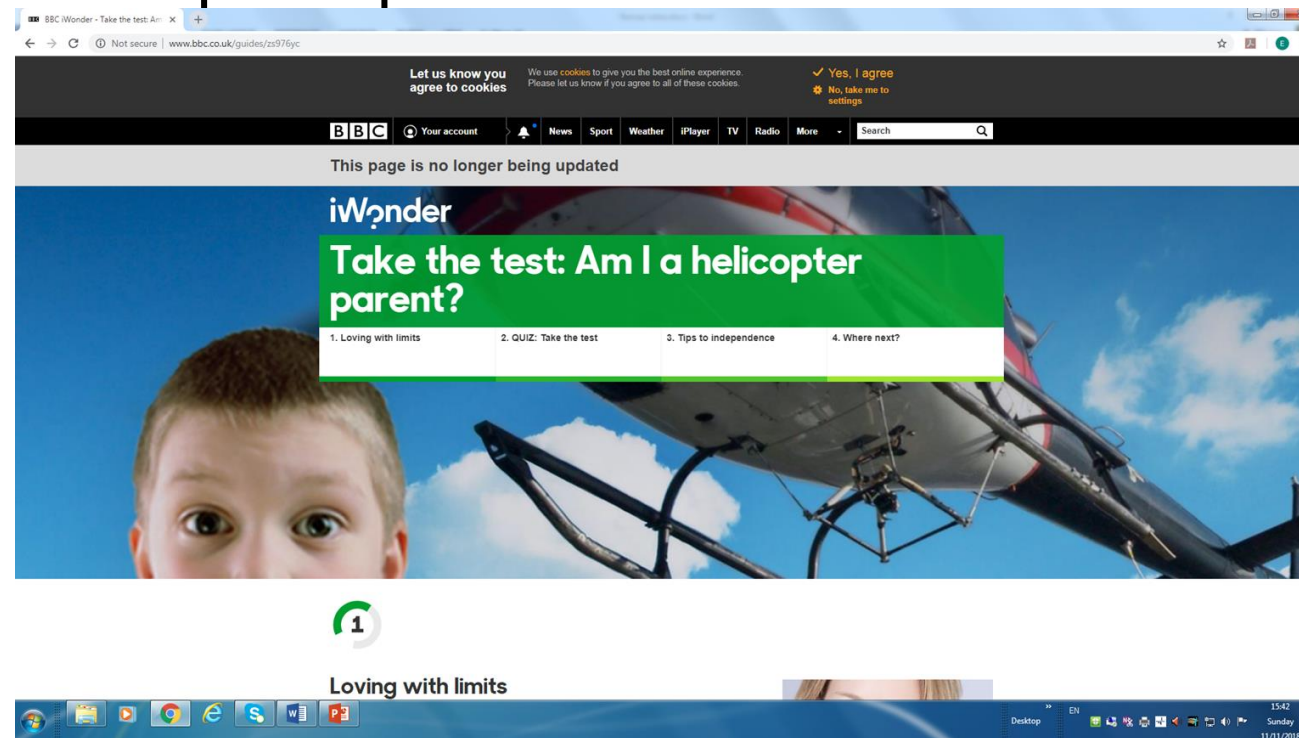
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https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/jun/18/over-controlled-toddlers-grow-up-unable-to-cope#img-1

15:24 Sunday 11/11/2018

# Outcomes: therapeutic management

- ‘Resilience training’ for the young as counter to parenting (at least in part)
- New forms of ‘self help’ for parents who want to do better: ‘Loving with limits’



# 'Parents as part of the team': involvement in HE (not just school)

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Guardian news article. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/oct/09/student-mental-health-minister-force-universities-involve-parents>. The page features a dark blue header with the Guardian logo and navigation links for 'News', 'Opinion', 'Sport', 'Culture', 'Lifestyle', and 'More'. Below the header, the article is categorized under 'Education' and 'Higher education'. The main headline reads 'Student mental health: universities could be forced to involve parents'. The sub-headline states 'Minister says institutions still not doing enough to help vulnerable young people'. The author is identified as 'Anna Fazackerley' with a publication date of 'Tue 9 Oct 2018 07:00 BST'. A photograph of a young woman, Meg Zeenat Warmithi, is shown. The article text below the photo reads: '▲ Meg Zeenat Warmithi says her university had excellent academic support but she didn't know who to turn to when she felt stressed and depressed. Photograph: Martin Godwin for the Guardian'. To the right of the article is an advertisement for 'Warmott Rewards' and 'spg' (Spa & Wellness) offering 'Enjoy up to 25% off your stay in Warsaw.' The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 11:14 on Tuesday, 20/11/2018.

# Concluding points

Contrasts between the ACEs parent and the helicopter parent:

- Both are usually mothers
- Both rely on parental determinism as precept
- **ACEs mother** = lower class, takes too little parental responsibility, too little love and security, may be actively abusive or neglectful (drink, drugs, violence). Physically or emotionally absent. BUT, may also be the product of their own childhood ACEs: not ignorant or feckless but traumatised. Naturally toxic.
  - ACE Awareness proposed as a social movement to fix the problem of the vulnerable child within the adult.
- **Helicopter mother** = middle class, takes too much responsibility, too much love and security, too present. Unwittingly toxic: love too much, maternal anxiety. OR culpably toxic: narcissistic, status-driven, instrumental, forging their own identity through their children.
  - Self-awareness alongside continued involvement (of the right sort)