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## Helicopter Parenting and Young Adult Well-Being: Differences by Immigration Status, Gender, and Race

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Helicopter Parenting and Young Adult Well-Being:  
Differences by Immigration Status, Gender, and Race

A Thesis in Sociology

by

Miriam Marcus

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in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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## ABSTRACT

Helicopter parenting is a relatively new phenomenon that involves parental overinvolvement in their kids' lives. It can manifest in the form of overcontrol of their kids' decisions, for example, so helicopter parents may contact their children's professors about changing their grades, or they may control who their children spend time with. Research has shown that helicopter parenting has overall negative effects on young adults, especially regarding their well-being and autonomy. The effects of helicopter parenting on people who come from varying backgrounds can differ, though, and this is something that should be studied. This study was completed through the administration of a survey, and the survey found that helicopter parenting does have differences in the way it affects young adults of different identities, with some of the most prominent findings being that children of immigrants are less negatively affected by helicopter parenting than children of American-born parents, and the use of helicopter parenting affects the autonomy of men worse than women. These results show that it is important to always consider differences in respondents' identities in any study. If this is not done, the study should not be considered complete. The background of different respondents can yield different results in many cases, and that should encourage people to look at the overall society we live in. The goal of this study was not only to examine the effects of helicopter parenting, but to examine how factors that aren't typically considered can also affect young adults raised by helicopter parenting.

## INTRODUCTION

The parenting style used to raise children has a significant effect on their well-being. This has been proven through numerous studies. There can be negative and positive outcomes on adolescents simply based on the parenting style used to raise them (McDermott Panetta et al. 2014). In childhood especially, children are highly impressionable and the way their parents raise them during childhood has significant effects on them later in life (Maccoby 1992). In fact, parents are considered the major influencers on the well-being of their children, including on their levels of socialization-gaining social skills, personality attributes, and values (Maccoby 1992).

Many different parenting styles have been identified and studied, but one that is a relatively new phenomenon is helicopter parenting. Helicopter parenting is when parents are unnecessarily overinvolved in their children's lives. This can include solving problems for them, speaking to their teachers/professors for them about raising their grades, controlling their relationships, and trying to know more about the details of their child's life than necessary (Rote et al. 2020). This parenting style can be especially harmful once children reach adolescence and need to learn how to be independent. The use of helicopter parenting limits a young adult's autonomy, can lead to feelings of decreased self-worth and self-efficacy, and can lead to greater risk for developing depression and anxiety (Rote et al. 2020).

### *The Importance of this Study*

Because helicopter parenting can have such negative effects on young adults, it's important to study it. However, many studies have only looked at one demographic-children of white, American-born, and typically wealthy, parents. The differences in the effects helicopter

parenting can have based on one's identity has not been meaningfully studied. Societal, cultural, and sociological factors can heavily impact the effects of helicopter parenting on young adults. Particularly, the use of helicopter parenting on children of immigrants may be significant, but the effects of it may be different because helicopter parenting may be ingrained in some cultures. Helicopter parenting may also be used more on one gender than others-possibly also because of societal factors, and helicopter parenting may affect people of different genders differently, but this is not something that has been studied at length before. It is also possible that helicopter parenting affects people of different races differently, and this is useful to study as well. Additionally, it is important to consider the intersections of socioeconomic status and race, gender, and immigration status. There are systemic reasons for why people of some identities may be more likely to come from a lower-income background than others, and even though helicopter parenting is thought to be used by wealthy parents, considering that it may also be used by parents of different identities who may be more likely to be low-income because of systemic purposes can yield significant results. Studying these things can lead to explanations for why helicopter parenting has different effects depending on one's identity. In turn, this can help explain different aspects of our society (like inequality) and lead to changes in society as well.

Even though helicopter parenting is typically thought to be used by white, American-born, wealthy parents, and most studies have shown that it has negative effects on the children of these parents, it is important to look at people of all identities if research is to be complete. Therefore, it is important to answer the following question: *How does helicopter parenting affect young adults, and does it affect people of varying identities in different ways?*

## BACKGROUND

## *Types of Parenting Styles*

*Diane Baumrind's Parenting Styles.* Diane Baumrind is a prominent psychologist who developed four different parenting styles based on behaviors of control and warmth. Control refers to the level at which parents oversee their children's behavior, and warmth refers to the level at which parents are responsive and accepting of their children's behavior (Kopko 2007).

The first parenting style Baumrind defines is authoritative parenting, and she considers this the ideal parenting style. Parents who implement the authoritative parenting style give their children independence but still apply limits to that independence. Authoritative parents are warm yet firm with their children. They listen to and genuinely consider the viewpoints of their child, but final decisions are still up to the parents. Studies have found that children of authoritative parents are more likely to be autonomous, responsible, socially competent, engage in negotiations and discussions, and to understand that their opinions hold value (Kopko 2007).

The second parenting style identified by Baumrind is the authoritarian parenting style. Parents who use this style provide little warmth toward their children and display a high level of control toward them. They are highly disciplinary and restrictive of their children and make sure their children strictly follow their rules. The viewpoints of their children are not taken into consideration and rules implemented by the parents are not debated (Kopko 2007). Research on this parenting style has found that children raised by authoritarian parents believe that abiding by standards is more important than developing independence. This can result in behaviors of deviance and/or high levels of dependency (Kopko 2007).

The next parenting style identified by Baumrind is the permissive parenting style. Permissive parents provide warmth to their children but are not demanding. These parents

believe that giving their children whatever they would like and following their wishes is the best way to show them love. They believe their children should make their own decisions, including significant ones, without parental input. They do not believe they should be active participants in their children's lives unless the children ask for their input. Therefore, they believe their children should see them as a resource (Kopko 2007). Children of permissive parents typically believe that there are no consequences in life and that there are no boundaries in life. This can result in high levels of egocentric tendencies and low levels of self-control. This can also make it hard for them to develop positive peer relationships (Kopko 2007).

The last parenting style Baumrind developed is the uninvolved style. Parents who are uninvolved do not provide warmth to their children and do not place any demands on them (Kopko 2007). Uninvolved parents rarely interact with their children and can be neglectful toward them, in some cases. These parents do not consider the needs of their child and may find it a burden when their children need something from them. These parents also do not consider their child's input when it comes to making decisions. Studies have found that children of uninvolved parents behave in similar ways to children of permissive parents, but they also may struggle with making impulsive decisions, since they never learned the skill of self-regulation (Kopko 2007). When thinking about parenting styles, Diane Baumrind's are typically the ones that are referred to, but there are other parenting styles that Baumrind did not define, such as helicopter parenting.

*Helicopter Parenting.* Helicopter parenting is a parenting style that does not necessarily fit into any of the four parenting styles coined by Diane Baumrind. Helicopter parenting is when a parent is *too* involved in their child's life, oftentimes making decisions for them and communicating with people their children should be communicating with instead of them, such

as professors. The term “helicopter parenting” was coined in 1990 by child development researchers Foster Cline and Jim Fay (Lythcott-Haims 2015:4). These researchers noticed the emergence of this type of parenting about one decade earlier, meaning that those who were raised by helicopter parents would be considered the older generation of millennials today (Lythcott-Haims 2015:4). Therefore, helicopter parenting is a relatively new phenomenon.

Overall, research has found that the use of the helicopter parenting style leads to lower levels of self-efficacy, communication, and trust in children once they reach college. The use of the helicopter parenting style also leads to higher levels of depression and higher levels of peer alienation (Casillas et. al. 2020). Parents who use the helicopter parenting style generally use it out of concern for their child and typically have good intentions, but this is generally not the effect it has. Children raised by helicopter parents struggle with transitioning to adulthood, which is why this parenting style is particularly damaging toward college students (Kouros et. al. 2016).

### *The Harms of Helicopter Parenting*

The use of the helicopter parenting style can have a plethora of negative effects on children, especially once they reach college. According to a study by sociologists Terri LeMoyne and Tom Buchanan, the use of helicopter parenting results in decreased levels of overall well-being in college students (LeMoyne and Buchanan 2011). College students who were raised by helicopter parents were also more likely to be on medication for depression or anxiety, and out of all participants in the study, females were more likely to be on medication, and African Americans were less likely to be on medication. It was also found that those raised by helicopter parents were more likely to have taken pain pills for reasons other than treating pain (LeMoyne and Buchanan 2011).



Another study found that the use of helicopter parenting resulted in lower levels of life satisfaction in young adults (Schiffirin et. al. 2013). This study focused on the needs outlined in self-determination theory, which are the basic need for autonomy, the basic need for competence, and feeling like one is involved in caring relationships (Schiffirin et. al, 2013). It found that high levels of depression among those who were raised by helicopter parents was an indirect effect of the levels of autonomy and competence participants reported (Schiffirin et. al, 2013). Other studies have found that children who are raised by parents who used the helicopter parenting style have higher rates of narcissism later in life (Winner and Nicholson 2018).

One study found that rates of sleep disturbance are higher in young adults who were raised by helicopter parents (Shibata et. al. 2016), and there have also been studies that have found that excessive consumption of alcohol is higher among those raised by helicopter parents, and females generally tend to be more affected by helicopter parenting in this manner than males (Cui et. al. 2018).

Researchers have also found that some helicopter parenting tactics, particularly those that can be excessively manipulative with a goal of coercing children into thinking the way their parents do and mirroring their actions, (typically referred to as psychological control rather than behavioral control), can lead to very high rates of depression and anxiety among adolescents (Rogers et. al. 2019). Some of these psychological control tactics include inducing guilt in their children, withdrawing love and affection, and dismissiveness. The goal of this is typically to stimulate feelings of dependency toward their parents on young adults. This can be done through means of encouraging them to manipulate, coerce, or control themselves as well, and this becomes excessively harmful in adolescence because it hinders autonomy development (Rogers et. al. 2019).

### *How Does Parenting Change Based on One's Identity?*

Some studies have focused on certain ethnic groups and how helicopter parenting affects them differently because of culture. Many studies have been done on the effects of this parenting style on the Asian-American community in particular. A study involving Korean-American college students found that Korean-American parents are more likely to use the helicopter parenting style because of cultural reasons, and the study found that the use of the helicopter parenting style among Korean-Americans leads to higher levels of academic achievement, whereas the opposite is true for white Americans (Kwon et. al. 2017).

Another example of racial differences that could lead to differences in effects of helicopter parenting is that African American families have been found to focus on the parent-child relationship more than white families (Clark et al. 2014). African American adolescents are more parent-oriented, whereas Caucasian adolescents are more peer-oriented (Clark et al, 2014). African American adolescents also perceive a higher level of parental control and family attachment (Clark et al, 2014). This is just one example of a difference in the culture of certain races that can affect what parenting style is used and the effects that parenting style will have on a young adult.

The struggles that people of differing identities face can be one reason why parents of different identities decide to use the helicopter parenting style. For example, the struggles immigrants face could be one reason why they decide to hover over their children. Being overprotective and overly controlling can be a method of shielding their children from the struggles they faced. Helicopter parents try to involve their children in as much as they can to set their children up for success, but for immigrant parents, this may not be the case because they may be weary of a culture other than their own, yet they still may show tendencies of helicopter parenting

in other ways. In fact, factors like culture are so significant when it comes to parenting that it is considered to impact children before they are even born (Bornstein 2012). Children of immigrants may be differently impacted by helicopter parenting because of this. They may be kept sheltered or socially isolated because of this. It has even been found that foreign-born mothers show less emotional and cognitive supportiveness for their children, and immigrant parents overall portray higher levels of control, lower levels of responsiveness, and lower levels of emotional support (Gelatt et al. 2015.)

Something else to consider is that most children who are raised using the helicopter parenting style are found to be from high-income families, but this may not be the case for people like immigrants who may still have parents who use this parenting style for cultural reasons but are low-income, and this can affect people of different backgrounds in ways that are different than others. One researcher, Arlie Hochschild, found that people from different social classes manage emotional labor differently. For example, people from the middle class tend to interact with people more, and typically on a more personal level, because of the jobs they tend to have. This leads to them knowing more about emotions and teaching their children about emotions more than upper-class parents (Camilo 2021). Contrastingly, parents who are working class are more likely to hold jobs where they do not interact with people and that can lead them to perform less emotional labor and can lead to a lack of talking to their children about the importance of emotions. This can also lead to more of a “because I told you so” attitude toward parenting, or as Diane Baumrind would call it, authoritarian parenting style (Camilo 2021).

Regarding gender, the use of helicopter parenting on girls may be more significant because of the overprotectiveness that parents sometimes feel they need to show toward their daughters. The effects this can have on the well-being of young women compared to young men is very

important to consider. It has been found that authoritarian parenting is more likely to be used on boys than on girls (McKee et al. 2007), and girls are more likely to be taught the expressive role. This includes being more sensitive and affectionate (Williams et al. 1992).

The differences in the effects of helicopter parenting based on the different identities both parents and their children hold is something that has not been heavily researched. Looking at how the helicopter parenting style affects people of different identities is essential to understanding it, and this parenting style must be looked at from different perspectives, and especially from a sociological perspective, to understand the full effects of it.

### *The Current Study*

Although there has been some research conducted on the way the helicopter parenting style affects college students of different identities, not enough has been conducted. Typically, Asian Americans are the ethnic group that are focused on when looking at how this parenting style affects different groups of people, but other ethnic groups can be affected by helicopter parenting in different ways as well. Culture greatly affects how different people are raised, and particularly, children of immigrant parents may be affected by the helicopter parenting style in ways that are different than children of native-born Americans. The current study will address how the effects of helicopter parenting differ depending on one's identity-particularly looking at immigration status, gender, and race.

The differences in how helicopter parenting affects people of different backgrounds has not been examined enough, and this study will examine this further. There are many identities that have not been considered when trying to answer how helicopter parenting affects young adults. If the harms of helicopter parenting can be detrimental toward young adults, then this is

something that needs to be addressed. Studying how helicopter parenting affects people can help both current and future parents understand not only helicopter parenting, but also how best to raise their children. In turn, this can yield positive results for the lives of future generations and society in general.

## METHOD

College students of many different identities were included in this study. The survey I created was sent out to Sociology majors and minors at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, people in different organizations I am involved in at UNO, and to friends of mine. I posted it on my social media accounts, and I have friends on social media who are of very diverse backgrounds and from different parts of the country, so that added diversity to my sample. My survey garnered 178 responses overall, but different questions yielded different numbers of responses, since some people did not answer all questions in the survey. My subjects were of many different backgrounds. They were from different races, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexualities, and respondents were children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, and children of native-born Americans. There is not a large amount of existing secondary data that looks at what I specifically looked at-referring to how helicopter parenting affects people of different identities. I did find some sources that addressed this, but they were not specific enough and I found that these sources were lacking in providing data about multiple different identities. This data is superior to other sources of data for my study because it was collected from people who I know are college students and was collected from a diverse group of college students.

### *Measures*

My independent variables are the different identities I looked at. These included socioeconomic status growing up, and this was measured by asking how often a respondent's family had enough money to make ends meet growing up, immigrant or non-immigrant status/children of immigrants or of native-born Americans, and this was measured by asking if respondents had at least one parent born in the US, race/ethnicity (categories included Black/African American, white/Caucasian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Hispanic/Latino/a, and other). The Native American/Alaska Native category only garnered one respondent, so it was not used for final data collection. Gender was also looked at (categories included male, female, non-binary, prefer to self-identify, and prefer not to say). The survey also asked respondents to rate their parents' use of different traits of helicopter parenting, both in childhood and adulthood. These questions asked respondents if their parents kept them socially isolated, tried to solve problems for them, over-involved the respondent in activities growing up, allowed them to be independent, have interfered in their lives at times when the respondent wished they hadn't, controlled their relationships, and controlled where they went. The effects of helicopter parenting are the dependent variables I looked at. These effects included the state of one's mental health (particularly looking at depression and anxiety), sleep patterns, level of independence, and level of cautiousness. I looked at how these dependent variables changed when looking at people of different identities. I also asked respondents to rate their alcohol usage, but this did not yield any significant results, so it was thrown out.

## RESULTS

### *Demographic Characteristics*

Of respondents who gave valid responses that could contribute to the data, 101 were women and 26 were men. 55 were children of immigrants and 88 were children of American-born parents. Of respondents who gave valid responses, 12 identified as Black/African American, 86 identified as white, 13 identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 19 identified as Middle Eastern/North African, and 29 identified as Hispanic/Latino/a. Within these categories, women made up 7 of those who identified as Black/African American, 53 who identified as white/Caucasian, 8 who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 16 who identified as Middle Eastern/North African, and 22 who identified as Hispanic/Latino/a. Men made up 2 of those who identified as Black/African American, 18 of those who identified as white/Caucasian, 4 of those who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 3 of those who identified as Middle Eastern/North African, and 5 of those who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander.

[See Tables 1, 2, & 3]

#### *Overall Use of and Effects of Helicopter Parenting on All Respondents*

The mean for all respondents for use of helicopter parenting during childhood was 2.95 with a standard deviation of 1.02, whereas the mean for all respondents for use of helicopter parenting during adulthood was 3.60 with a standard deviation of 1.05. The mean for the effect of helicopter parenting on autonomy for all respondents was 1.87 with a standard deviation of 0.64, and the effect of helicopter parenting on well-being for all respondents was 2.09 with standard deviation of 0.60. Table 1 portrays these statistics in more detail.

[See Table 4]

#### *Gender Differences for Use of Helicopter Parenting*

Regarding gender differences, survey results showed that helicopter parenting is used more on girls during childhood and more on men in adulthood. The mean for use of helicopter parenting on girls during childhood was 2.98 with a standard deviation of 1.02, whereas the mean for the use of helicopter parenting on boys during childhood was 2.78 with a standard deviation of 1.14. The mean for use of helicopter parenting on women in adulthood was 3.57 with a standard deviation of 1.09, and the mean for use of helicopter parenting on men in adulthood was 3.66 with a standard deviation of 1.03.

[See Table 5]

#### *Immigration-Status Differences for Use of Helicopter Parenting*

Based on survey results, the mean of the use of helicopter parenting on children of immigrants during childhood was 3.39 with a standard deviation of 0.92, and the mean of the use of helicopter parenting on children of immigrants in adulthood was 3.14 with a standard deviation of 0.99. The mean of the use of helicopter parenting on children of American-born parents during childhood was 2.67 with a standard deviation of 0.99, and during adulthood, the mean was 3.89 with a standard deviation of 0.98.

[See Table 6]

#### *Race Differences for Use of Helicopter Parenting (Not Shown in Tables)*

The mean for the use of helicopter parenting on Black individuals in childhood was 2.77, and in adulthood, it was 3.73. For white individuals, the mean for the use of helicopter parenting in childhood was 2.69, and in adulthood, the mean was 3.73. For Asian individuals, the use of helicopter parenting during childhood was 3.02, and in adulthood, the mean was 3.31. The use of helicopter parenting during childhood for Middle Eastern/North African individuals was 3.75,



and in adulthood, the mean was 2.58. For Hispanic/Latino/a individuals, the mean for the use of helicopter parenting in childhood was 2.97, and the mean for the use of helicopter parenting in adulthood was 3.74.

#### *Correlations for All Respondents*

For all respondents, use of helicopter parenting in childhood had a correlation with autonomy of 0.193 and a correlation with well-being of 0.309\*\* (\*\* $p < 0.01$ ). For all respondents, helicopter parenting in adulthood had a correlation with autonomy of -0.249\* (\* $p < 0.05$ .) and a correlation with well-being of -0.336\*\* (\*\* $p < 0.01$ ).

[See Table 7]

#### *Correlations for Effects of Helicopter Parenting on Women Versus Men*

For women, use of helicopter parenting in childhood had a correlation with autonomy of 0.149 and a correlation with well-being of 0.342\*\* (\*\* $p < 0.01$ ). Use of helicopter parenting in adulthood for women had a correlation with autonomy of -0.206 and a correlation with well-being of -0.353\*\* (\*\* $p < 0.01$ ). For men, use of helicopter parenting in childhood had a correlation with autonomy of 0.320 and a correlation with well-being of 0.254. Use of helicopter parenting in adulthood for men had a correlation with autonomy of -0.418 and a correlation with well-being of -0.330.

[See Table 8]

#### *Correlations for Effects of Helicopter Parenting on Children of Immigrants versus Children of American-Born Parents*

Use of helicopter parenting in childhood for children of immigrants had a correlation with autonomy of 0.027 and a correlation with well-being of 0.156. Use of helicopter parenting

in adulthood for children of immigrants had a correlation with autonomy of -0.112 and a correlation with well-being of -0.200. Use of helicopter parenting in childhood for children of American-born parents had a correlation with autonomy of 0.275\* (\*p<0.05.) and a correlation with well-being of 0.357\*\* (\*\*p<0.01.). Use of helicopter parenting in adulthood for children of American-born parents had a correlation with autonomy of -0.323\* (\*p<0.05.) and a correlation with well-being of -0.379\*\* (\*\*p<0.01.)

[See Table 9]

*Correlations for Effects of Helicopter Parenting on People of Different Races (Not shown in Tables)*

*\*\*.* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*\*.* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For Black individuals, use of helicopter parenting in childhood has a correlation with autonomy of 0.277 and a correlation with well-being of 0.480, and in adulthood it has a correlation with autonomy of 0.087 and a correlation with well-being of -0.801\*\*. For white individuals, use of helicopter parenting in childhood has a correlation with autonomy of 0.212 and a correlation with well-being of 0.316\*\*, and in adulthood, it has a correlation with autonomy of -0.292\* and a correlation with well-being of -0.355\*\*. For Asian individuals, use of helicopter parenting in childhood has a correlation with autonomy of 0.277 and a correlation with well-being of -0.304, and in adulthood, it has a correlation with autonomy of -0.508 and a correlation with well-being of -0.162. For Middle Eastern/North African individuals, use of helicopter parenting in childhood has a correlation with autonomy of 0.462 and a correlation with well-being of -0.204, and for adulthood, it has a correlation with autonomy of -0.168 and a correlation with well-being of -0.245. For Hispanic/Latino/a individuals, use of helicopter

parenting in childhood has a correlation with autonomy of 0.154 and a correlation with well-being of 0.230, and in adulthood, it has a correlation with autonomy of -0.117 and a correlation with well-being of -0.038.

## DISCUSSION

Helicopter Parenting has detrimental effects on the well-being of young adults, and the results of this project prove that. The results of this project match the results of multiple previous studies that have also found that the use of helicopter parenting has overwhelmingly negative effects on young adults. Previous studies have found that use of helicopter parenting in childhood, and especially in young adulthood when people should begin to learn how to be independent, results in lower levels of life satisfaction (Schiffirin et. al. 2013), trouble sleeping, an increased risk of eating disorders, mood disorders, and even higher risk of suicide attempts or dying by suicide (Shibata et. al. 2016). The research I conducted agreed with these findings. Use of helicopter parenting in adulthood especially led to decreased levels of overall well-being, especially considering mental health. Feelings of depression and anxiety were significant among respondents who stated that their parents used helicopter parenting behaviors. On top of this, decreased levels of autonomy was also a significant finding of this study. Additionally, decreases in self-perceived levels of autonomy may contribute to feelings of depression and anxiety. The administered survey also asked about trouble sleeping as a result of feeling depressed or anxious, and this yielded a significant finding as well, as many respondents whose parents used helicopter parenting behaviors did state that they had trouble sleeping.

The results of this study also show that use of helicopter parenting in both childhood and adulthood affects people of various identities in different ways, something that has not been addressed in many previous studies. Use of helicopter parenting has more detrimental effects on

the autonomy of men, and more detrimental effects on the well-being of women (although the difference in effects on well-being based on gender is small). There may be many sociological reasons for this. One possibility is that society encourages men to be more autonomous than women, so men's self-perceived levels of autonomy may be lower than women because of this.

This study also found that helicopter parenting is used more on children of immigrants in childhood and more on children of American-born parents in adulthood. One sociological explanation for this could be that immigrant parents might worry about their children more when they are younger because they may be weary of allowing their children to have high levels of independence in a country that is different than the one they are from, and it is likely that their children were younger when they immigrated to a new country. It is possible that once their children reach adulthood, immigrant parents begin to use helicopter parenting strategies less because they may begin to adhere to or assimilate to the culture of the country they have immigrated to. This may lead to less worry about their children, and therefore, less use of helicopter parenting on them. Another possibility is that their children, once they reach young adulthood, may begin to advocate for themselves and use the experiences of other young adults around them (who may be children of American-born parents), as examples to encourage their parents to give them more autonomy. Also, due to cultural reasons, immigrant parents may be less worried about their children once they reach young adulthood because they believe that the culture they raised them within is binding enough that they won't try to drift from it.

On the other hand, higher rates of use of helicopter parenting behaviors on children of American-born parents in adulthood may be due to the background of these parents. Due to systemic reasons and the immigration system in the United States, it is likely that American-born parents may be wealthier than immigrant parents. This implies that they may have the ability to

engage their children in activities that may cost significant amounts of money, typically as a means of attempting to set them up for success in life, and once their children reach young adulthood, this behavior may continue by their parents. It may begin to manifest in manners such as encouraging their children to participate in Greek life or other paid activities and organizations that can lead to more opportunities and even success in life.

Another interesting finding regarding helicopter parenting and immigration status is that use of helicopter parenting in both childhood and adulthood has fewer negative effects on children of immigrant parents than on children of American-born parents. This is regarding both levels of autonomy and well-being. One possible reason for this could be that because the use of helicopter parenting may be ingrained in certain cultures, it is more normalized in immigrant communities and may not be seen as something negative, even by the children in those communities who helicopter parenting is being used on. If there is a large immigrant population present where a young adult who helicopter parenting was used on lives, then they would likely also have a community where many people were raised similarly, and this may mitigate some of the negative effects of helicopter parenting.

Regarding the use of helicopter parenting on people of different racial backgrounds, survey results found that the use of helicopter parenting is most prevalent in childhood for Middle Eastern/North African individuals, and in adulthood, the use of helicopter parenting is most prevalent for white individuals. The reason for these results may be similar to the reason for the results found for differences in effects of helicopter parenting on children of immigrant parents versus children of American-born parents. It is possible that parents of Middle Eastern/North African individuals are worried about their children when they first immigrate to a new country, but that worry may dwindle down when their children become young adults

because they realize their children have been raised in a certain culture and will adhere to it. It is also possible that immigrant parents, because many of them may have given up successful careers in their home countries for the sake of their kids, may realize the importance of letting their children become independent and autonomous as they become young adults, because this will positively impact their careers as well. On the other hand, parents of white children may become more controlling of them in adulthood because they realize that this is the time their kids will finally begin to focus on their futures without their parents, and if these children were not already raised in a culture that is more strict, and oftentimes cultures of immigrants--and especially Middle Eastern/North African cultures--are more strict, their parents may begin to worry about them and their futures intensely once they reach adulthood.

Furthermore, it is also important to look at the effects use of helicopter parenting has on people of different racial backgrounds. Use of helicopter parenting in childhood has the worst effects on well-being for Asian/Pacific Islander individuals and the worst effects on autonomy for Hispanic/Latino/a individuals. In adulthood, use of helicopter parenting has the worst effects on the well-being of Black individuals, and the worst effects on the autonomy of Asian/Pacific Islander individuals. This result may prove the need for further research on Asian/Pacific Islander cultures and the use and effects of helicopter parenting on people within these cultures.

All these findings show the need for further research on the effects of parenting styles on people of many different backgrounds, and this research should include more than just the effects of helicopter parenting. Additionally, the use of helicopter parenting may also be coupled with other parenting styles, and considering the nature of helicopter parenting, some of these parenting styles may have negative effects as well. It is useful to investigate the intersections of helicopter parenting with other parenting styles and whether that makes a difference on young

adults or not. Current research that primarily focuses on the use of and effects of helicopter parenting on children of American-born, white (and most of the time, wealthy) parents is not complete research. Research that addresses the backgrounds of multiple different people of varying identities is what is complete research. There are systemic reasons as to why some people may be affected differently by helicopter parenting, and on top of this, reasons like cultural backgrounds and societal standards and expectations for certain demographics can also lead to differing levels of usage of helicopter parenting behaviors and different effects on young adults who were raised by helicopter parents.

### *Limitations*

Future research should look at not only the way helicopter parenting can be used confluent with other parenting styles and the effects this would have on young adults, but also the possible reasons why some parents might be more likely to use the helicopter parenting style than others. This would be particularly interesting when looking at one specific demographic and comparing parents who use helicopter parenting on their children versus those who do not. The study conducted for this project was intended to include Native Americans as well, but only one respondent was Native American, so the results were not expansive enough. Future research should be expanded so that a larger respondent pool is pulled from, and this might best be completed if respondents are acquired from all over the United States, rather than mainly one state. It would also have been interesting to study if helicopter parenting has worse effects on people of certain backgrounds based on their location and the demographics of that location. For example, it is possible that helicopter parenting could affect someone who is of an underrepresented group in a certain state more negatively than if they were in another state where that group is more well-represented. Having a population of people who are of the same

culture and/or background as you could likely mitigate the effects of helicopter parenting, especially if one observes that others around them are being raised in the same manner. For example, a Middle Easterner from a state like Nebraska, where the Middle Eastern population is small, may be more negatively affected by helicopter parenting than a Middle Easterner from a state like New York, where the Middle Eastern population is large.

This study also could have been improved by looking more at socioeconomic status, especially because helicopter parenting is typically thought to be used by wealthy parents. Looking at the use of helicopter parenting by low-income parents, and also considering the systemic reasons why people of marginalized backgrounds may be more likely to fit into a low-income background, could yield some fascinating results.

## CONCLUSION

This project has found that helicopter parenting has overall negative effects on people of all backgrounds, but that one's identity does matter when looking at these effects. This proves that different factors must be taken into consideration for any study, and people of different identities need to be included in studies. It is important to think about societal and systemic reasons as to why there may be different results for people of different backgrounds, but that is not something that is taken into account in many studies. There are groups who are more negatively affected by helicopter parenting than others and thinking about why is an important way to address how to decrease the use of helicopter parenting. Autonomy and well-being are both very important parts of the development of young adults, but the use of helicopter parenting hinders development in these areas and possibly in others as well that this study did not specifically look at. Therefore, educating both current and prospective parents about the harms of helicopter parenting is essential to the development of young adults who will shape the future of society. Lastly, looking



at the effects of helicopter parenting on people of differing identities can lead to further discussion on how marginalization can affect certain populations in many different aspects and how important it is to always consider intersectionality. This why studying helicopter parenting, and continuing this research, is essential.

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Ethics and Safety/Copy of Electronic Consent Form

## **The Effects of Parenting Styles**

You are invited to take part in this survey. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you have any questions, please ask.

This survey is part of the course requirement for my Senior Thesis course, taken by all UNO Sociology majors. I am collecting original data because I would like to know more about the effects of parenting styles on young adults. You will be asked to answer 11 short, multiple-choice questions. This survey will take about 5 minutes to complete. You must be between the ages of 19 and 25 to participate.

Because this study asks you to consider personal topics, there may be a slight risk that emotions relating to your family experience will arise. Participating in this study can benefit you by allowing you to have an increased awareness of parenting styles and to consider the effects the parenting style your parents used had on you. Participating in this study will help to gather research about the possible advantages and disadvantages of certain parenting styles, which can be helpful to current and future parents.

Instead of being in this research study, you can choose not to participate. Additionally, you can withdraw from this research survey at any time before, during, or after the research begins. Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The only persons who will have access to your research records are me and my instructor. The information from this study may be published in a research paper for course credit, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

### **Documentation of informed consent**

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Clicking “yes” below means that you have read and understood this consent form, and you have decided to be in the research study. If you have any questions during the study, you should talk to one of the investigators listed below.

### **Contact information**

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## Appendix B: Survey Details and Questions

- What is your age?  
19-25

- What is your race/ethnicity (select all that apply)?
  - Black/African American
  - White/Caucasian (not Hispanic/Latino)
  - Asian/Pacific Islander
  - Native American/Alaska Native
  - Middle Eastern/North African
  - Hispanic/Latino/a
  - Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_
  
- What gender do you identify with?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Non-binary
  - Prefer to self-identify\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to say
  
- What is your highest level of education?
  - Less than high school
  - High school degree
  - Some college
  - Associate's Degree
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Graduate Degree
  
- Were both of your parents born in the US?
  - Yes
  - No
  
- Were you born in the US?
  - Yes
  - No
  
- How often did your family have enough money to make ends meet growing up?
  - Always
  - Usually
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
  
- Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about your childhood.  
(Response categories for all are strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree)
  - My parents kept me socially isolated growing up.

- My parents allowed me to solve problems on my own without becoming too involved.
  - My parents tried to over-involve me in activities growing up.
  - My parents controlled the relationships I had growing up.
  - My parents controlled where I went growing up.
- Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about your relationship with your parents now. (Response categories for all are strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree)
    - My parents have allowed me to be independent since I became an adult.
    - My parents allow me to solve problems on my own without becoming too involved.
    - My parents have interfered in my life at times when I wish they hadn't.
    - My parents try to control the relationships I have now.
    - My parents try to control where I go now.
- Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about you. (Response categories for all are strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree)
    - I am overly cautious.
    - I struggle when it comes to being independent.
    - I am anxious in social situations.
- Please answer the following questions about the state of your well-being. (Response categories for all are not at all, several days, more than half the days, nearly every day)
    - How often have you had little interest or pleasure in doing things over the past two weeks?
    - How often have you had trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much over the past two weeks?
    - How often have you felt down, depressed, hopeless, nervous, anxious, or on edge over the past two weeks?
- How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?
    - Monthly
    - 2 to 4 times/month
    - 2 to 3 times/week
    - 4 or more times/week
- How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?
    - Never
    - Less than monthly
    - Monthly
    - Weekly
    - Daily or almost daily



TABLES

**Table 1**

Overall Frequencies for Race

**Table 2**

Overall Frequencies for Gender

Race	Number of Sample, Percent of Sample
Black/African American	14, 7.9%
White/Caucasian	95, 53.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	14, 7.9%
Native American/Alaska Native	1, 0.6%
Middle Eastern/North African	24, 13.5%
Hispanic/Latino/a	32, 18%

N Total=178

Gender	Number of Sample, Percent of Sample
Male	28, 17.3%
Female	118, 72.8%
Non-binary	12, 7.4%
Prefer to self-identify	4, 2.5%

**Table 3**

Overall Frequencies for Immigration Status

Immigration Status	Number of Sample, Percent of Sample
Respondents with American-Born Parents	97, 59.9%
Respondents with Immigrant Parents	65, 40.1%

N Total=178

**Table 4**

**Descriptive Statistics for All Variables**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>N</i>
Use of helicopter parenting on all respondents during childhood	2.95	1.02	1 – 5	143
<b>Use of helicopter parenting on all respondents during adulthood</b>	3.60	1.05	1 – 5	142
Effects of helicopter parenting on autonomy-all respondents	1.87	0.64	1 – 5	94
<b>Effects of helicopter parenting on well-being-all respondents</b>	2.09	0.60	1 – 5	135

**N=143**

**Table 5**

**Descriptive Statistics for Variables (Gender)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>N</i>
Use of helicopter parenting on girls during childhood	2.98	1.02	1 – 5	101
<b>Use of helicopter parenting on women during adulthood</b>	3.57	1.09	1 – 5	100
Use of helicopter parenting on boys during childhood	2.78	1.14	1 – 5	26
<b>Use of helicopter parenting on men in adulthood</b>	3.66	1.03	1 – 5	26
<b>N for women=101</b>				
<b>N for men=26</b>				

**Table 6**

**Descriptive Statistics for Variables (Immigration Status)**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>N</i>
Use of helicopter parenting on children of immigrants during childhood	3.39	0.92	1 – 5	101
<b>Use of helicopter parenting on children of immigrants during adulthood</b>	3.14	0.99	1 – 5	100
Use of helicopter parenting on children of American-born parents during childhood	2.67	0.99	1 – 5	26
<b>Use of helicopter parenting on children of American-born parents during adulthood</b>	3.89	0.98	1 – 5	26

**N for children of immigrant parents=55**  
**N for children of American-born parents=88**

**Table 7**

**Correlations for All Respondents**

	<b>Helicopter Parenting in Childhood</b>	<b>Helicopter Parenting in Adulthood</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Well- being</b>
<b>Helicopter Parenting in Childhood</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-0.700**</b>	<b>0.193</b>	<b>0.309**</b>
<b>Helicopter Parenting in Adulthood</b>		<b>1.00</b>	<b>-0.249*</b>	<b>-0.336**</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>			<b>1.00</b>	<b>-0.034</b>
<b>Well-being</b>				<b>1.00</b>

N=143

\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

**Table 8**

**Correlations for Effects of Helicopter Parenting on Women versus Men**

	<b>Helicopter Parenting in Childhood</b>	<b>Helicopter Parenting in Adulthood</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Well-being</b>
<b>Helicopter Parenting in Childhood</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-0.696**</b>	<b>0.149</b>	<b>0.342**</b>
<b>Helicopter Parenting in Adulthood</b>	<b>-0.702**</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-0.206</b>	<b>-0.353**</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>0.320</b>	<b>-0.418</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-0.110</b>
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>0.254</b>	<b>-0.330</b>	<b>0.276</b>	<b>1.00</b>

N for women=101, N for men=26

\*\* p < .01.

**Red=Correlations for women**

**Blue=Correlations for men**

Table 9

**Correlations for Effects of Helicopter Parenting on Children of Immigrants versus Children of American Born Parents**

	<b>Helicopter Parenting in Childhood</b>	<b>Helicopter Parenting in Adulthood</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Well-being</b>
<b>Helicopter Parenting in Childhood</b>	1.00	<b>-0.604**</b>	<b>0.027</b>	<b>0.156</b>
<b>Helicopter Parenting in Adulthood</b>	<b>-0.691**</b>	1.00	<b>-0.112</b>	<b>-0.200</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>0.275*</b>	<b>-0.323*</b>	1.00	<b>-0.152</b>
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>0.357**</b>	<b>-0.379**</b>	<b>0.038</b>	1.00

N for Children of Immigrants=55  
 N for Children of American-Born Parents=88  
 \* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

**Red=Correlations for children of immigrants**  
**Blue=Correlations for children of American-born parents**

FIGURES

**Figure 1**



# Relation of Immigration Status to Helicopter Parenting

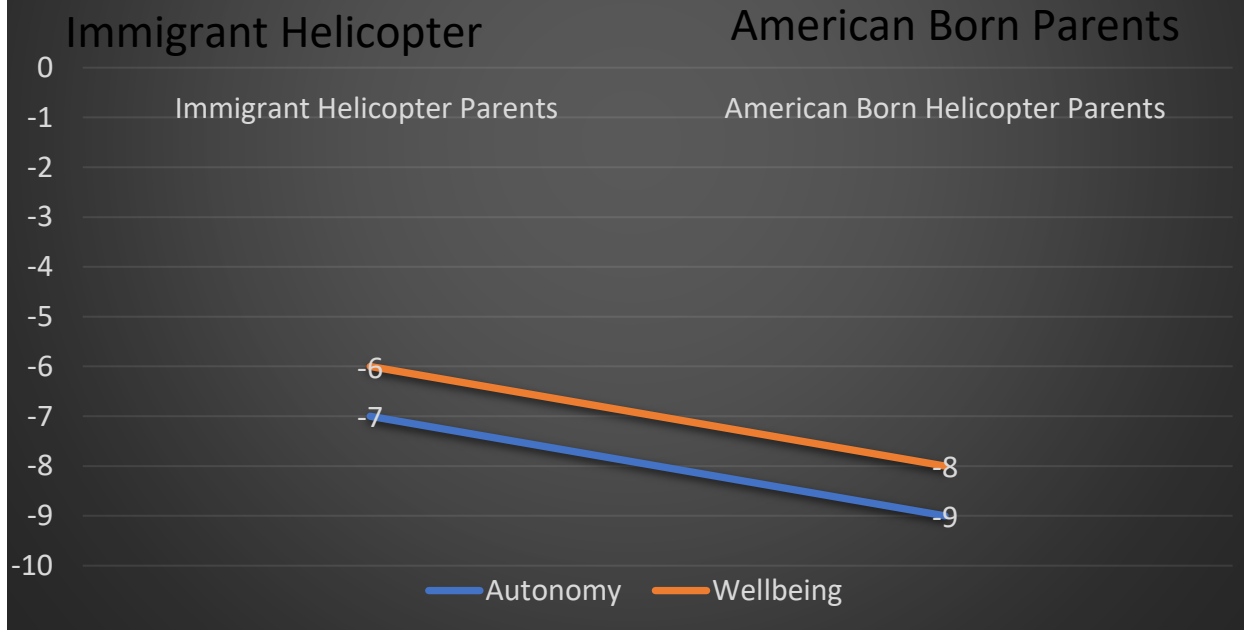


Figure 2

### Relation of Gender to Effects of Helicopter Parenting

