

Kids of Helicopter Parents Are Sputtering Out

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Slate:

Academically overbearing parents are doing great harm. So says Bill Deresiewicz in his groundbreaking 2014 manifesto *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*. “[For students] haunted their whole lives by a fear of failure—often, in the first instance, by their parents’ fear of failure,” writes Deresiewicz, “the cost of falling short, even temporarily, becomes not merely practical, but existential.”

Those whom Deresiewicz calls “excellent sheep” I call the “existentially impotent.” From 2006 to 2008, I served on Stanford University’s mental health task force, which examined the problem of student depression and proposed ways to teach faculty, staff, and students to better understand, notice, and respond to mental health issues. As dean, I saw a lack of intellectual and emotional freedom—this existential impotence—behind closed doors. The “excellent sheep” were in my office. Often brilliant, always accomplished, these students would sit on my couch holding their fragile, brittle parts together, resigned to the fact that these outwardly successful situations were their miserable lives.

Read the whole story: [Slate](#)