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Overindulgence, Personality, Family Interaction and Parental Locus of Control

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Link to Conference Theme: "Harmonizing Work Family and All that Jazz"

Balancing work and family is a challenge and some parents cope by overindulging their children.

Taggart Ross Johnson, age 11 Five Hawks Elementary School, Jordan

"Freedom can be a source of trouble. Kids today often wander anywhere and do almost anything they want to. They often don't talk to their parents very much and instead decide on their own what to do, and then do it. The less the parents are home, the sloppier children become at their chores or homework."

Hwjchim Vang, age 17 Como Park High School, St. Paul

"I look at my childhood and compare it to my dad's; my dad had it harder than me. Since we are a Hmong family, my dad had to go to war when he was only 12."

Jessica Sharratt, age 17 Minnetonka High School, Minnetonka

"Think about it. If a child never had to work to obtain anything, they would have no reason to be responsible."

Lorentz Aberg, age 10 Orono Intermediate School, Long Lake

"A spoiled kid needs his or her parents to help the spoiling process... I think that the kids are more spoiled, but the parents are less responsible."

Goals

- 1. What overindulgence is.
- Too much of anything that interferes with learning developmental tasks.
- 2. Three ways of overindulging.
- Too much
- Over-nurture
- Soft structure
- 3. Long-term effects.
- Psychic pain
- Missing skills

Overindulgence Studies

- Study I 1996-97: Perceptions Attributed by Adults to Parental Overindulgence During Childhood (N=730 Total Adults/124 Overindulged)
- Study II 2001: The Relationship Between Childhood Overindulgence and Young Adulthood Personality Characteristics (N=74 College Students)
- Study III 2001: The Relationship Between Childhood Overindulgence and Adult Parenting Beliefs and Practices (N=348)

Study I: Top Ten Areas of Overindulgence (N=124)

- 53% Having things done for you; No consistent chores expected
- 41% Clothes
- 36% Privileges
- 35% Toys
- 32% Freedom; Allowed to take lead or dominate family; Not having to learn skills that were expected of other children
- 23% Love;not having to follow rules
- 22% Lessons
- 18% Entertainment
- 17% Holidays

NOTE: does not add up to 100% because subjects could select more than one choice

Indicators of Overindulgence

Study II: College Students (N=74)

- When I was growing up, I was allowed to have any clothes I wanted. (.261*)
- When I was growing up, my parents gave me lots of toys. (.325**)
- When growing up, my parents expected me to do chores. (.403***)(R)
- When I was growing up, my parents gave me too much freedom. (.325**)
- When I was growing up, my parents were over-loving and gave me too much attention. (.467***)
- When I was growing up, my parents had rules that I was expected to follow. (. 334**)(R)
- When I was growing up, my parents enforced their rules. (.417***)(R)
- When I was growing up, my parents made sure I was entertained. (.274*)
 Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; never or almost never = 1; seldom = 2; sometimes, sometimes not = 3; frequently = 4; always or almost always = 5; ;(R)=reverse scored)</p>

Study III: Parents (N=348)

- When I was growing up, I was allowed to have any clothes I wanted. (.443***)
- When I was growing up, my parents gave me lots of toys. (.544***)
- When growing up, my parents expected me to do chores. (.322***)(R)
- When I was growing up, my parents gave me too much freedom. (.370***)
- When I was growing up, my parents were overloving and gave me too much attention. (.488***)
- When I was growing up, my parents had rules that I was expected to follow. (.254***)(R)
- When I was growing up, my parents enforced their rules. (.259***)(R)
- When I was growing up, my parents made sure I was entertained. (.469***)
- When growing up, my parents did things for me that I could or should do for myself. (.430***)
- When I was growing up, I was allowed lots of privileges. (.443***)
 - When I was growing up, my parents allowed me to take the lead or dominate the family. (.469***)
 - When I was growing up, I was expected to learn the same skills that other children learned. (. 151**)(R)
 - When I was growing up, my parents scheduled me for activities, lessons, sports, camps. (. 273***)

Relationship Between Childhood Overindulgence and Dysfunctional Attitudes College Students (N=74)

- If someone disagrees with me, it probably indicates that he does not like me. (-.316**)
- It is best to give up on your own interests in order to please other people. (-.305**)
- If a person asks for help, it is a sign of weakness. (-.266*)
- People should have a chance to succeed before doing anything. (-.267*)(R)
- People who have good ideas are better than those who do not.
 (-.247*)
- If others dislike you, you cannot be happy. (-.247*) I cannot be happy unless most people I know admire me. (-.234*)

Note: DAS scores: 1= totally agree (low score) to 7= totally disagree (high score). R=reversed scored. The more overindulged as child the more dysfunctional attitudes held. Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Relationship Between Childhood Overindulgence and Dysfunctional Attitudes (Parents N=348)

- It is difficult to be happy unless one is looking good, intelligent, rich, and creative. (-.267***)
- Happiness is more a matter of my attitude towards myself than the way other people feel about me. (-.163**) (R)
- It is possible to gain another person's respect without being especially talented at anything. (-.124*)(R)
- I cannot be happy unless most people I know admire me.
- **(-.231***)**
- If I do not do as well as other people, it means I am a weak person. (-.120*)

Note: DAS scores: 1= totally agree (low score) to 7= totally disagree (high score). R=reverse scored. The more overindulged as child the more dysfunctional attitudes held. Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Relationship Between Childhood Overindulgence and Dysfunctional Attitudes (Parents N=348)

- If you cannot do something well, there is little point in doing it at all. (-.167**)
- Making mistakes is fine because I can learn from them. (.151**)
- If someone disagrees with me, it probably indicates that he does not like me. (-.225***)
- If I fail partly, it is as bad as being a complete failure. (-.211***)
- If other people know what you are really like, they will think less of you. (.151**)
- People should have a chance to succeed before doing anything.
 (.142**)
- My value as a person depends greatly on what others think of me. (-157**)
- If I am to be a worthwhile person, I must be the best in at least one way. (-.165**)

Relationship Between Childhood Overindulgence and Dysfunctional Attitudes (Parents N=348)

- I should be upset if I make a mistake. (-.134*)
- If I ask a question, it makes me look stupid. (-.144**)
- If you don't have other people to lean on, you are going to be sad. (-.152**)
- It is possible for a person to be scolded and not get upset. (-.151**)
- My happiness depends more on other people than it does on me. (-.153**)
- If a person avoids problems, the problems tend to go away.
 (-.160**)
- I can be happy even if I miss out on many of the good things in life. (-.249***)(R)
- Being alone leads to unhappiness. (-.148**)

- My child usually gets his/her own way, so why try. (.255***)
- When my child gets angry I can usually deal with him/her if I stay calm. (-.159**)
- When something goes wrong between me and my child, there is little I can do to correct it. (.217***)
- When I set expectations for my child, I am almost certain that I can help him/her meet them. (.107*)(R)

Note: PLOC scores: 1= strongly disagree (low score) to 5 = strongly agree (high score). R=reverse scored. The more overindulged as child the more external locus of control parental beliefs held. Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

- Parents should address problems with their children because ignoring them won't make them go away. (.138*)
- If your child throws tantrums no matter what you try, you might as well give up. (.136*)
- I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by my child. (. 263***)
- My child does not control my life. (.222***)(R)
- Even if your child frequently has tantrums, a parent should not give up. (.155**)(R)
- My child influences the number of friends I have. (.134*)
- When I make a mistake with my child I am usually able to correct it. (.107*)(R)
- It is easy for me to avoid and function independently of my child's attempts to have control over me. (.119*)(R)

- My life is chiefly controlled by my child. (.262***)
- Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective parent. (.144**)
- Heredity plays the major role in determining a child's personality. (.129*)
- Neither my child nor myself is responsible for his/her behavior. (.193***)
- Success in dealing with children seems to be more a matter of the child's moods and feelings at the time than rather than one's own actions. (.123*)

- In order to have my plans work, I make sure they fit in with the desires of my child. (.225***)
- I have often found that when it comes to my child, what is going to happen will happen. (.204***)
- It is often easier to let my child have his/her own way than to put up with the tantrum. (.138*)
- I allow my child to get away with things. (.169**)
- Sometimes when I'm tired I let my children do things I normally wouldn't. (.141**)

Results of Overindulging

- 1. Too Much
- Enough
- Disrespect of others
- Center of the universe
- 2. Over-nurturing
- Enough
- Trained helplessness
- Needs and wants confusion
- Center of the Universe

Results of Overindulgence

- 3. Soft-Structure
- Enough
- Lax boundaries
- Trained irresponsibility
- False empowerment
- Center of the universe

Results:

False sense of self

Overindulgence of Children

Overindulgence is giving children so much of anything that it keeps them from learning their developmental tasks and it has a negative effect on their adult lives.

Description of Overindulgence

Overindulging children is giving them too much of anything that looks good but that hinders them from growing up strong and from learning necessary life lessons.

This includes:

- too much care and attention (over-nurture)
- too much freedom and license (soft structure), and
- too many things that cost money (too much) or that give a disproportionate amount of family resources to one or more children.

Description of Overindulgence Cont' d

It is giving too soon or too long in a way that appears to be meeting the children's needs but does not, so children experience scarcity in the midst of plenty. Overindulgence is providing so much of something that it does active harm or at least stagnates a child and keeps that child from achieving his or her full potential.

Description of Overindulgence Cont' d

It is giving them things or experiences that are not appropriate for their age or their interests and talents and not insisting that they learn important life skills. It is the process of giving things to children to meet the adult's needs, not the child's needs.

Overindulgence is a form of child neglect because it hinders children from doing their developmental tasks.

Cassandra Johnson, age 16 Becker High School, Becker, Minn.

"Getting everything you want must be tough. But if I could have it, I would take it for granted also."

Handouts on Overindulgence (Study 1, 2 & 3)

You can find our articles published at educarer.com. Point your web browser there and find them or click on the following links below.

- 1. Grasping a Slippery Concept: OVERINDULGENCE Series Introduction http://www.educarer.com/oi-intro.htm
- 2. OVERINDULGENCE: When Receiving H U R T S Instead of Helps http://www.educarer.com/overindulgence.htm
- 3. What's in the Closet? (Counting May Not Help) http://www.educarer.com/oi-clothing.htm
- 4. OVER-NURTURING:Too Much of a Good Thing? (When Helping STOPS Being Helpful?) http://www.educarer.com/oi-nurturing.htm
- 5. No Rules, Not Enforcing the Rules, No Chores + Lots of Freedom = Overindulgence Too http://www.educarer.com/oi-structure.htm

To Read More About Study 1

- Bredehoft, D. J., Mennicke, S. A., Potter, A. M., and Clarke, J. I. (1998). Perceptions attributed by adults to parental overindulgence during childhood. <u>Journal of Marriage and Family Consumer Sciences</u> <u>Education</u> 16: 3-17.
- Clarke, J. I., and Dawson, C. (1998). <u>Growing Up Again: Parenting Ourselves, Parenting Our Children</u> (2nd ed.). Hazelden, Central City, Minnesota.(pp. 123-145).

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