The Value of Social Interest

A Research Paper

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Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy

By

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Abstract

The Adlerian concept of social interest has roots in many cultures and religions around the world and has been shown to positively influence physical and mental health as well as life satisfaction and well-being. Overindulgence affects the development of social interest in young people and has consistently been linked to negative outcomes. Adler believed that lifestyle is formed by age five, therefore it is essential to create a family culture that is supportive of social interest and does not enable overindulgence during early childhood. First, this literature review will define the terms social interest and overindulgence. Second, social interest will be looked at as a universal concept. Third, the body of research surrounding social interest and overindulgence will be reviewed in order to understand the overall impact on an individual. Fourth, common processes of how young children develop social interest and overindulgent patterns will be examined. Lastly, the implications this research has on the community at large will be addressed.
The Value of Social Interest

Parents around the world share a common goal of teaching their children to live happy and healthy lives. The ways in which this lifestyle is created looks very different based on the values and cultural context of the family. Parenting behaviors impact a child’s development of social interest, which, according to Adlerian belief, is essential for well-being, happiness, and positive mental health. Overindulgence, both emotional and material, can work against this goal and hinder the development of social interest in young people. This project will be exploring parent-child interactions and their outcomes for Parent Child Home Program Staff to explore with their clients in order to build social interest and reduce overindulgent behaviors among the young children they serve.

Crandall (1980) writes that social interest includes, “… the human capacity to transcend the limits of the self and to identify with the needs and concerns of others” (p. 481). Social interest has incredible influence over several areas of life. Dixon, Willingham, Chandler, & McDougal (1986) explain, “Social interest is central to mental health and it is the degree of social interest that determines the possibility for happiness” (p. 421). Therefore, if social interest plays such a role in life, it should be of primary importance to parents, yet it is rarely discussed. Children are learning social behaviors prior to becoming one year old, and there are several parenting behaviors that can stimulate positive interactions and social interest, as well as build the child’s self-esteem and sense of contribution to the world around them (White, 1995).

This presentation will be multipurpose. It will provide information on social interest and ways of developing it from an early age, as well as the benefits of doing so. Secondly, the presentation will explore outcomes of parenting styles on the development of overindulgence. Third, cultural implications of this research will be discussed, as the Parent Child Home Program
works with a diverse population of families. The information will be relevant and applicable to a variety of cultures and communities as social interest is relevant for all people. Lastly, there will be a discussion of recent trends and statistics that explain why social interest is a key player in child development.

If social interest has as big of an impact on mental health and happiness as expressed above, then incorporating it into early childhood development would seem logical in the creation of socially healthy children. White (1995) found that “outstanding” six year olds (those who were well-behaved, kind, and pleasant to be around) exhibited many positive traits that were noticeable as early as age three, giving evidence to Adler’s belief that lifestyle begins forming at a very early age. White (1995) also argued that while the “terrible twos” can be a very real thing, it is not inevitable and can be avoided. This presentation could significantly influence the ways in which parents address social interest with their children and the how that impacts further development as the child grows older.

Often the term social interest is not used with children because of the childhood tendency to be egotistical and have difficulty viewing the world from another’s perspective based on developmental norms. Regardless, parents can instill qualities such as kindness and generosity in young children that will translate into the “adult” version of social interest over time. Once children become old enough to see the world through the eyes of another these qualities may contribute to being empathetic, giving of oneself to another and striving for the greater good rather than advancement of the self. This presentation will focus on social interest in this capacity and the ways in which it allows children to connect to others, contribute as human beings, and find a sense of significance and belonging in the world.
Two types of overindulgence will be acknowledged. The first type is material excess, or accumulation of physical items. This kind of overindulgence has typically been stereotyped as being a Western issue. The second type is emotional overindulgence, which as a young person can create unrealistic expectations for future human interactions. Emotionally overindulged children learn unreal expectations of others that can result in later disappointments and a misunderstanding of the world. In literature the term “overindulged” often is synonymous with “pampered” or “spoiled” as well. Both kinds of overindulgence can negatively impact social interest and relationships with others.

This presentation will explore the ways in which parents can instill a positive sense of social interest in their young children while reducing negative effects of overindulgence and creating a healthy family culture. Culturally sensitive practices will be used to demonstrate how social interest is essential in childhood development and speaks to all backgrounds and communities.
Master’s Project Description

On Monday April 28, 2014 I will be presenting my Master’s Project to the Parent Child Home Program staff within the Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Minneapolis. The presentation will run from 11:00-12:00 and be presented with the assistance of a Prezi Presentation. Attendees will receive a note sheet that will coincide with the presentation for taking notes. The speaker will present from 11:00-11:55 leaving five minutes for questions at the end.

The presentation will mirror the organization of the literature review. First, I will explain how I decided on the topic of social interest and over indulgence. Next, I will define terms that are used in the presentation and give a background on Alfred Adler’s theories that relate to the present topic. After that, social interest will be explained as a universal concept and examples of social interest around the world will be given. Following that, the benefits of social interest and the consequences of overindulgence will be explained through current research study examples. Next, the way in which social interest and overindulgence develop in early childhood will be discussed and creative techniques for producing a positive family environment- high in social interest and low in overindulgence- will be explored.

Following the presentation evaluations will be given to the participants in order to get feedback for the follow-up portion of the Master’s Project. The evaluation will ask participates questions about their level of interest in the topic, whether or not the information was presented clearly, and whether or not they will use the information in the future.
Raising healthy and happy children could be the most rewarding yet challenging task a person faces in his/her lifetime. There are countless viewpoints, opinions, and perspectives on how to raise children that are believed to result in healthy or unhealthy outcomes. Among the various parenting practices in the world, the Adlerian concept of social interest remains a consistent theme throughout the literature and appears to be a building block of a healthy individual, family, and culture. In addition, overindulging or pampering a child is viewed as significantly hindering development and negatively impacting social interest. This literature review will focus on the research behind social interest and overindulgence and the impact each has on child development, family culture, health, and overall wellness.

**Defining Social Interest and Overindulgence**

Alfred Adler used the term “Gemeinschaftsgefühl”, which due to no direct translation has been loosely interpreted as meaning “social interest” or in some literature “community feeling”. Bickhard & Ford (1976) argued that “social interest” is not one concept but instead a collection of “complex concepts” and “theoretical propositions”. For the purpose of this paper, social interest will be defined as, “An interest in the interest of mankind” (Miranda & Goodman, 1996, p. 265). This definition, while open to its own interpretation, provides a framework for looking at social interest as encompassing several consistently recognized components of the term such as empathy towards others, contribution to the greater good, and an active interest in the betterment of the community.

Crandall (1980) describes individuals with social interest as placing value on things outside of themselves and having the ability to identify with the needs and concerns of others. Crandall also believes that being able to look beyond oneself is considered an essential
component of a healthy personality and found that lack of social interest can influence relationship problems, feelings of insecurity, and inferiority, which then increase experiences of alienation, competition with others, and the need to protect oneself emotionally and psychologically against outside threat. Social interest is a concept embedded implicitly into several parenting theories and practices, however if it is as important as the literature suggests then it should be more explicitly discussed in caregiver education as a primary and essential component of healthy child development.

Just as “social interest” can be complicated to define, “overindulgence” and “pampering” are also terms that can also be interpreted differently. Kaplan (1985) addresses Adler’s viewpoint that a pampered child is one who is deficient in social interest and gives four examples of what “pampering” parenting looks like: giving too much too often, doing something for the child that he/she could do themselves, over-supervising, and not having or enforcing structure, rules, or boundaries. Hughes (n.d.) identifies three types of overindulgence; all three of which parallel Adler’s descriptions (with over-supervising being eliminated). Therefore, for the purpose of this paper the terms “overindulgent” and “pampered” will be interchangeable. Unless otherwise noted, overindulgence will be assumed to be both giving too much emotionally to children as well as allowing material excess, as many researchers do not distinguish between the two in their findings.

Two fundamental Adlerian beliefs which are essential to understand before continuing on are 1) the relevance of relationships to mental health and 2) the concept and development of lifestyle. First, Adler believed that all human behavior and mental health should be viewed through the social context of the individual (Kopp, 2003). In other words, people are social beings and the relationships built between individuals are what drive all thoughts, feelings, and
behaviors in the world. Second, Adler believed that everyone develops an individual “lifestyle”, or view of the world, that has been fully created by age five. This lifestyle is based on early experiences and interactions with others, and serves the purpose of guiding one’s movements through life (Highland, Kern, & Curlette, 2010). Adults (typically parents) are the child’s first social relationships and therefore are instrumental in shaping children's beliefs about people, human interactions, and society at large through their own modeling, which has been shaped by their own personal lifestyle and early experiences.

Early lifestyle development has been widely accepted and supported. Kopp (2003) believes that the first three years of life are responsible for shaping an individual’s behavior as an adult. White (1995) distinguished characteristics that comprise an “outstanding six year old” and found that many of those same qualities were found in the children as early as three years old. Hongbing, Sekine, Chen, Yamagami, and Kagamimori (2008) found that lifestyle factors identified in early childhood significantly affected quality of life for students entering junior high school and that lifestyles were believed to be primarily modeled by main caregivers. Therefore, the parent-child interactions that occur as early as infancy need to be conscious and purposeful.

Social Interest as a Universal Perspective

Universally, social interest, while it may vary by language or subtle meaning, plays a role in healthy development across cultures, religions, and ethnicities. As a result social interest can be viewed as a global concept and ultimate goal of child rearing around the world. Buddhism views everything as being a part of a “Whole”, emphasizing the connectedness of the universe and all of its parts (Leak, Gardner, & Pounds, 1992). In Islam, people are taught that they are never alone, that God is in their heart, and that the best way to maintain a healthy heart is to live among people who have “equal regard for them” (Alizadeh, 2012). Leak, Gardner, & Pounds
(1992) write, “…there are striking and overwhelming similarities between social interest in its multitude of facets and the philosophy and precepts of today’s major religions” (p. 54).

Therefore, social interest is a concept that transcends borders and can speak to parents and families of all backgrounds.

For collective thinking societies, social interest may feel natural and play a significant role in everyday life, while individualistic societies may have a deficient “community feeling” and focus attention primarily on individual needs rather than the needs of the community. Yeh, Inman, Kim, and Okubo (2006) describe collectivist cultures as placing emphasis on the connectedness of human beings, while individualistic cultures “…highlight one’s separateness or independence from others” (p.136). Renzaho, Green, Mellor, and Swinburn (2011) studied parenting in a new culture by researching African migrants in Melbourne and found that the parents described the Australian individualistic way of thinking and emphasis on self-fulfillment and independence, as conflicting with their more collective approach which they described as creating tension. Due to cultural differences in the perceived importance and practices of social interest, research findings will be essential in explaining its necessity to communities that currently do not place high value in it or recognize it as valuable for healthy child development.

While being a member of a primarily collective or an individualistic culture may influence a family to possess a certain level of initial social interest, it is ultimately the primary caregivers who create the family culture and model social interactions in the home. Cauce (2008) writes, “Children do not enter the world with any specific sense of culture, they become members of a culture through interactions with their parents and other significant others in their environment” (p. 227). Therefore, it is within the parents’ power to create a culture of social
interest and understanding its many benefits for children can help parents of all backgrounds as they explore their own parenting practices.

Culture may also influence the amount of social interest an individual displays based on their sex. Johnson, Smith, & Nelson (2003) explain Adler’s belief that social interest is innate, yet relies on parental guidance for its development. However, sex differences in social interest measures, with women scoring significantly higher than men, were found by Kaplan (1991) to be indicative that social interest is not innate but rather learned. Johnson, Smith, & Nelson (2003) found similar findings and believe that broader culture may play a role, as women in Western society are typically socialized to be caregivers, a role that demonstrates several characteristics congruent with social interest, while independence and self-reliance is culturally more encouraged of men and indicative of lower social interest. Therefore, while social interest is a universal concept, guidelines and expectations of a culture may affect and limit the benefits it produces for all members of the community.

The Research Behind Social Interest

Displaying a high level of social interest has been shown to benefit humans physically and mentally in a variety of ways. The following findings were discovered using self-report inventories established specifically to measure social interest. The inventories may have slight variations based on researcher’s understanding of social interest and the specific criteria used to measure it. Most studies used inventories based on the Adlerian description of social interest. Nonetheless the findings overwhelmingly indicate the wide variety of benefits to scoring high on measures of social interest.

At a biological level, having a sense of social interest and belonging to a group can assist in keeping individuals physically healthier, as shown by physiological studies conducted to
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gather evidence about human interactions. Possessing social interest has consistently been shown to increase survival for human beings, historically protecting against danger and increasing chances of surviving the wild, and more recently by strengthening personal health factors and lowering mortality rates (Nikelly, 2005). For example, after purposely exposing participants to a cold virus, Cohen, Doyle, Turner, Alper, and Skoner (2003) found more social individuals were able to build a greater resistance to developing the cold, therefore being social played a role in maintaining health despite adversity.

Volunteering and supporting others, acts both high in social interest, have been widely cited for benefiting the “helper” significantly (Poulin, 2013). However, individual differences may play more of a role than initially thought. Poulin (2013) found that the health benefits of volunteering were in fact dependent upon the individual having positive views of others. Therefore, in order to reap the benefits allegedly linked to volunteering, it is likely that an individual would need to already encompass a sense of social interest. In addition, Karcher & Lindwall (2003) found that youth mentors who reported greater social interest were more likely to seek out and continue involvement in altruistic activities and overall were more likely to choose to work with academically and socially at-risk youth. Karcher and Lindwall also found that youth who reported higher social interest tended to be caring, concerned, and had a desire to positively impact and change the world, while those scoring low in social interest were more likely to terminate their involvement in the mentorship program. Therefore the volunteers who are likely to stick around longer and benefit more from their work with others are those who exhibit strong social interest.

Social interest can also influence an individual’s worldview and how one makes moral judgments about one’s own actions as well as the actions of others. Rim (1983) found that those
who scored high on social interest scales were more likely to have an absolutist ethical ideology in which they use universal moral codes to make moral judgments. Those scoring low in social interest were found to be subjectivists, indicating moral judgments should be made primarily based on personal perception and one’s own values. Rim also found that people scoring high in social interest ranked items showing a concern for others (helpful, loving, and peace) as being more important to them while people scoring low in social interest ranked items indicating self-centeredness (wisdom, accomplishment, and comfortable life) as being more important items. Therefore, those low in social interest are likely to not take into account the perceptions of others and act in accordance to what they feel is situationally best for them, not the broader community.

There have also been links between social interest and a child’s perceived coping skills. Edwards, Gfroerer, Flowers, and Whitaker (2004) found a relationship between social interest and a child’s perceived coping resources. In the study, a child’s perception of his/her own ability to cope was a stronger predictor of overall stress than the specific stressful event. Stressful events cannot be predicted, but with a conscious effort social interest can be enhanced by targeted programing and support from parents in order to encourage children to be resilient (Edwards, Gfroerer, Flowers, & Whitaker, 2004).

As seen through the body of research, possessing social interest can affect many areas of life, but more importantly is the effect it has on happiness. Adler (1927) writes, “…personal and common happiness are dependent on the interest of each in the other” (p.122). Human interest in other people creates happiness within an individual and also brings happiness to others. Ostrovsky, Parr, and Gradel (1992) found in a highly democratic classroom, social interest grew naturally because conflict was approached with “a spirit of community and cooperation” (p.221).
A household in which the members of the family care for one another and approach conflict constructively will be a place where significance, security, and belonging are felt by all.

**The Research Behind Overindulgence**

The theory that children develop a fully formed lifestyle before age five can be beneficial as well as damaging depending on the circumstances of the childhood. As shown through the influence of social interest, young children have potential to grow up into healthy members of society that value others and the world, but negative behaviors and messages delivered at a young age can lower social interest and create lifestyle patterns that become increasingly more concrete and difficult to change as the child grows into adulthood.

Overindulgence can develop into a chronic pattern of thinking and behaving that has been shown to have roots in early childhood and is recognized as a contributor to undesirable qualities well into adulthood. Capron (2004) states, “…children who have been overindulged are not happy children. They are, in fact, likely to be chronically dissatisfied” (p. 208). Chronically dissatisfied individuals may experience a host of psychical and mental health issues and Rissanen et al. (2013) found that those individuals were also more likely to live alone, have poor social support, poor sleep, and were more often smokers. While parents want to give their child “the best”, research shows that giving too much and going beyond moderation may negatively affect a child’s view of the world and the manner in which he/she functions in it.

Overindulgence has repeatedly been linked to narcissistic personality traits; possibly one of the personality profiles least associated with social interest. Capron (2004) found that overindulgence was highly correlated with the variables of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and addressed Adler’s theory that adult psychopathology was in general the result of excessive pampering as a child. The article suggests that this is perhaps due to “a consistent
message of entitlement to the child…” (Capron, 2004, p. 90). Highland, Kern, and Curlette (2010) also found links between overindulgence and narcissism through entitlement, arrogance, and lack of empathy for others (lack of social interest). The narcissist is only capable of one-way love and is unable to make significant attachments to another (Schneider, Kern, & Curlette, 2007). An overindulged child may show narcissistic tendencies by having grandiose ideas about what he/she deserves from others and not giving anything back.

Highland, Kern, and Curlette (2010) address Adler’s belief that emotional overindulgence, along with low social interest and high activity, play a key role in the development of criminal behavior. Highland, Kern, & Curlette’s article also shares Adler’s suggestion that criminal activity is caused by inferior feelings which stimulate a person to strive for superiority through criminal acts. While few attempts have been made to research Adler’s crime theory, several studies researching lifestyle have found similar profiles among sex offenders, drug dealers, aggressive adolescents, and other criminals (Highland, Kern, & Curlette, 2010). While Highland, Kern, and Curlette’s conclusions about pampering were inconclusive, low levels of social interest were measured among the inmates they used as participants for their study. Therefore, lack of social interest may lead to inferiority as mentioned earlier through the work of Crandall (1980), and inferiority, among other factors, may manifest into criminal behavior as Adler had proposed.

**Building Social Interest and Reducing Overindulgence**

Knowing the negative effects overindulgence can have on well-being and that it becomes a lifestyle that grows roots in childhood, it is important to recognize the process by which overindulgence begins to affect an individual and how to prevent it in young children. In addition, knowing how to encourage a spirit of social interest at home can help teach children
early on in life to care about those around them and contribute to the community they live in (even if that just means their immediate family members to begin with). Often one will find that the parenting techniques aimed at promoting social interest will naturally reduce overindulgence and that the techniques aimed at reducing overindulgence will consequently build social interest.

Around seven and a half months babies begin to learn how to use socialization to their advantage and by two years old a child can be considered “socially old” (White, 1995). At this age material excess is not the primary concern, but emotional pampering is often significantly present in the home. Often times parents are unaware of what their baby is capable of achieving at an age as young as one. It is often assumed that two year old children are naturally difficult human beings, but White (1995) argues that does not have to be the case and instead believes children can be quite pleasant if parents employ a “loving but firm” stance immediately after a baby begins to exhibit socialization skills. Often unknowingly parents demonstrate a “loving and overindulgent” style of parenting because they are enamored by their child. White believes by two years of age children have an incredible ability to manipulate situations in their favor, but that parents who are attuned to this can prevent their child from becoming emotionally overindulgent and maintain realistic expectations of the parent child relationship. If the child becomes accustomed to having the parents attention at any moment, that will be his/her expectation going forward.

Often parents are attune to their child’s cries and want to improve the situation in order to stop what the parent is perceiving as the child’s unhappiness. However, after approximately seven months of age, babies of attentive caregivers will begin to understand that crying achieves getting attention from an adult and will begin to use that behavior as a way to manipulate a situation; a highly effective social tool. White (1995) believes that the “attention crying” initially
begins when the baby becomes frustrated or bored with his/her environment and cannot single
handedly remedy the situation and therefore cries for a caregiver to help. To prevent this White
(1995) proposes creating an environment in which the baby has access to interesting objects, can
explore, and as a result will not learn to cry as a manipulation but will reserve crying for times
when he/she truly has a need such as hunger or discomfort. Without opportunity to explore a
baby will focus on his/her evolving interest in people which typically means requiring more
attention from parents.

White (1995) also addresses the fact that most bad behaviors tend to get attention from
parents and because babies cannot distinguish good versus bad attention the behavior will likely
continue if addressed by a parent because the baby only understands he/she has complete
attention. At such an early age, positive behaviors should be encouraged through rewarding the
baby with attention while negative behavior should primarily be ignored (or addressed in a brief
and quick manner if the behavior is destructive or dangerous) and the baby will typically move
on to something new.

Parents in Western cultures often feel pressure to put their child’s needs before their own,
however this too can lead to overindulgence. Gross-Loh’s (2013) book on parenting practices
from around the world describes the intense expectations felt by American parents to respond
quickly to their children and give them the “best” when often that is more than they need.
Parents should employ a “healthy selfishness” and ask themselves is what they are doing more
pressing than what their baby wants to show them? (White, 1995). By assessing the situation
first when a child is simply wanting attention, the parent is sending the message that the baby’s
non-immediate needs are not significantly more important than the parent’s task and increases
the baby’s awareness of other people while instilling the message that while the baby is
important, he/she is no more important than anyone else. Not reacting immediately is an important step in teaching a child that his/her non-immediate needs are equal to those of others; a lesson that will become more valuable to the child’s relationships as they grow older.

Once a child reaches an age in which he/she can be contributing to the home, parents should capitalize on the opportunity to teach their child the value of being a helping member of a community. Parents who do not encourage a spirit of cooperation in their home will find that their child will expect his/her needs to be met and create a mistaken belief that people are used for personal pleasure and things should come easily (Highland, Kern, & Curlette, 2010). In addition, Adler and Fleisher (1988) believe that if a mother does everything for the child there is nothing left for him/herself to do and that the child will stop thinking for themselves and simply take suggestions from the mother. Furthermore, Ansbacher (1992) writes, “Pampered children expect that their wishes be treated as laws and to receive without giving. Through the sub service of others they have not learned that they can do things for themselves and have not become independent…” (p. 14). If the expectation of contribution is taught early in life it becomes a part of the family culture and will most likely be continued naturally as the child grows up without much effort on the part of the parents. A child contributing to the home could mean that they participate in clearing the dinner table, cleaning up their own messes, or at a very young engage in pretend play in which the child believes they are “helping” a parent do household work.

As a child begins interacting with peers outside of the home, material overindulgence may become prevalent. This could occur because the child is exposed to a higher volume of advertising messages through mass media, or during playdates the child may begin to compare what others have in their homes to the child’s own belongings. When it comes to toys, Gross-Loh (2013) believes that scarcity promotes creativity and that when children have less material
objects they will make more of it imaginatively. Gross-Loh also writes that research indicates simpler, open-ended “play things” such as wooden blocks or a simple doll are better in developing a child’s creative side in comparison to more complex and/or electronic toys.

In the same chapter Gross-Loh (2013) addresses consumerism and explains findings that nations which value equality and harmony provide better lives for their children than nations that emphasize money, power, and achievement (values often associated with free-market economies like the United States), and therefore there is a constant tug-of-war between satisfying children’s needs and company growth, “…given that these two aims are often at odds,” (p.54). Gross-Loh’s recommendation is to recognize and trust that providing less for children is actually how parents provide more-creativity, resourcefulness, moderation, self-restraint, and self-satisfaction. These are qualities that children will keep with them forever.

Conclusions and Future Implications of the Research

Possessing a higher degree of social interest provides numerous physical and emotional health benefits for individuals from early childhood well into adulthood. Subsets of social interest such as a feeling of belonging, empathy for fellow human beings, and having an active interest in making one’s community better have been shown to transcend cultural borders and impact all people in profound and positive ways. Overindulgent thinking patterns and behaviors restrict social interest in an individual and create conflict with others as well as impact overall life satisfaction. As shown through research overindulgence may contribute to significant disruptions in mental health and well-being such as the development of narcissistic personality traits, chronic dissatisfaction, and poor health.

Research suggests that children are learning how to function in the world and interact with others from as early as seven months old. This data demonstrates the need for early
education and intervention for caregivers to learn how to model behaviors that encourage social interest in the home and build a child’s sense of significance and belonging in the world during the first years of life. By creating a family culture that values social interest, it will become a part of the individual’s life experience and upon starting their own families individuals will incorporate a higher sense of natural social interest in the home they create for their own children. Once social interest has become a family value it will transcend generations and will be more easily maintained as it will have become the expectation.

Follow link to view Prezi Presentation that accompanied speaker:

http://prezi.com/c_f_nbbdbnfc/social-interest/
Note Sheet Given to Participants

The Value of Social Interest

Presented by: Brittany Beck

Resources

Online Presentation-  http://prezi.com/c_f_nbbdnfc/social-interest/

Raising a Happy Unspoiled Child- Burton White

Parenting Without Borders: Surprising Lessons Parents Around the World Can Teach Us-

Christine Gross-Loh

UNICEF Brochure on Child Well-being:


Video by Roger Ballou - http://vimeo.com/67760886

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Summary

The presentation received favorable reviews from the participants and sparked several questions, examples, and further opportunities to present the information. The presentation ran forty-five minutes long on video, however participants approached the speaker afterwards to engage in more conversation. Several participants requested more information and that the presentation be done in other venues. The presenter was asked to return in the Fall when the Parent Child Home Program Staff return to work with families.

Fifteen participants filled out evaluations following the presentation and overall the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. When asked how interesting the topic was to the participant 80% reported a four, meaning extremely interested, while 20% reported a three. When asked how clear was the information presented 87% reported fours, meaning extremely clear, while the remaining percent reported a three. Lastly, the presenter wanted to know how likely the participants were to consider social interest when working with families in the future. 73% of participants reported fours, meaning they are extremely likely to consider social interest in the future while 20% reported threes, and one participant indicated a three and a half mark on their evaluation. Comments and written feedback given by participants can be found on the following page verbatim from the evaluation handouts.

In future presentations addressing additional techniques for teaching social interest may improve the quality of the presentation and allow it to be more readily accessible to those who are new to the concept. In addition, future presentations could be developed to address social interest based on age specifically, as there was an abundance of information that could have been covered but was restricted due to time. Future presentations on developing social interest could
be broken down by ages zero-two, two-four, elementary school age, middle school age, high school age, and even college aged young adults.

Future presentations should also include further clarification on certain aspects of the ideas presented. It should be made clear that overindulged children are not the only children to have low social interest and that other factors can produce a similar outcome. In addition, it should be addressed in the presentation that a world in which everyone has social interest is ideal but highly unlikely. Acknowledging this in the presentation will show realistic expectations and not an idealized version of what the world should look like.

Further research could build upon this presentation and create a series of classes for early childhood education centers. As discussed in the presentation, children are learning social interest at a very young age, therefore this presentation would be best suited for parents-to-be or new parents who can follow along with the classes as their child grows. This presentation would be less effective for parents whose children have already developed low social interest and a presentation geared towards intervention may be effective. In addition, teenagers may benefit from programming in schools or day treatment centers, in which social interest is not directly addressed but its themes are embedded into social activities, community involvement, and programs geared towards working with others.

This presentation has the ability to open many doors to conversations about social interest, parenting, and child development. The information is versatile and can be adapted to fit the needs of many groups of people. The core of the presentation that should remain the same is the emphasis placed on the importance of social interest and why it is a key ingredient in raising happy, healthy, and satisfied children.
Master’s Project Presentation Evaluation

Presentation title: The Value of Social Interest

Presenter: Brittany Beck

How interesting was this topic to you?

1 2 3 4
Not at all Extremely

How clearly was the information presented?

1 2 3 4
Not at all Extremely

How likely are you to consider social interest when working with families in the future?

1 2 3 4
Not at all Extremely

Do you have any comments or questions for the presenter?

Thank you for your attention and participation!
Participant Feedback

“Brittany was a really effective speaker. She was interesting and gave great information on social interest”

“Great presentation! Interesting and well said!”

“Very good job- slides were interesting. Concerned about social interest and a feeling of it being similar to communism, not that it is in any way, but a feeling of the ‘greater good’.”

“Really interesting- I liked the multicultural examples”

“If you can, try to slow down your speaking. Good content tying it all together. At first I wasn’t clear on how overindulgent children tied in, but totally got it as time went on!”

“Maybe something pointing out that having social interest does not necessarily mean you must be an extrovert (talking on the train for ex.)”

“Great presentation- we WILL revisit in our staff meetings! Thanks”


“She should host parenting classes too”

“Very well organized presenter. Great, Brittany was a great presenter. Clear. Good communication”

“Great presentation! Very interesting!”

“Thank you. Are you coming back next year?”

“How can we get the online video?”

“Brittany did a wonderful job clearly presenting the information in a passionate way, as well as giving practical application for my life as a parent and home visitor.”
References


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