

Is consistency in young children's sleep arrangements related to their level of independence?

Proposal

This project looks at associations between consistency in sleep arrangement during infancy and the development of a child's independence. We hypothesize that those children who maintained their initial sleep method, whether it was co-sleeping or solitary sleeping, have developed a higher sense of independence. Past research in this field has often focused on which type of sleep arrangement (solitary or co-sleeping) would be better at fostering independence (Ferber, 1985; Keller & Goldberg, in press; Brazelton, 1992). We are proposing that both sleep arrangements are valid as long as they are consistently enforced, based on the notion that young children benefit from stability in their daily routine. Consistent co-sleepers and consistent solitary sleepers would be more independent than children who experienced changes in their sleep arrangement during their first three years. This would enable the child to feel self-confident and assured in the future decisions he or she faces, thus, decreasing any confusion that may lead to unhealthy dependent behavior. According to attachment theory, increased security early on fosters independence as the child becomes older (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Sroufe, Fox & Pancake, 1983).

At this point we have completed the data collection. Participants were a convenience sample of over 100 mothers of pre-school age children in the Orange and Los Angeles counties. The sample was nearly half European American, about 21% Asian/ Asian-American, and the rest distributed among European, Latino, Middle Eastern and other. The mothers ranged in age from 22 to 49 years old, and their children (46.8% male, 53.2% female) ranged in age from 36 to 76 months. Data were obtained through questionnaires that were distributed and collected at the preschools. After the undergraduate and graduate research teams completed the coding, the data were entered, cleaned, and screened for miscodes and outliers. We then began scale development and data analysis. It should be noted that the results will not be generalizable to all young children due to the sample limitations such as lack of a random sample and the low response rate, which may have been altered by the data collection being occurring near the end of the school year. Also, information was collected retrospectively and based on maternal reports. Despite these limitations, we feel our sample was strong in that we had diversity in aspects such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and family structure.

Consistency in sleep arrangement may be one aspect in the broad spectrum of child rearing patterns that can foster security inside the home, which in turn would support independent behavior outside of the home, (i.e. high levels of self care and peer relations). This study is expected to stimulate further research on consistency in the home as it relates to feelings of security in the child, which then encourages independence in other aspects of the child's life.

Student Responsibilities

Researcher #1: As part of Professor Goldberg's undergraduate team I shared responsibility for: survey distribution and collection, coding surveys, and data entry. Data analysis and making the poster are responsibilities I will accomplish before the symposium.

Researcher #2: As part of Professor Goldberg's undergraduate team I shared responsibility for: survey distribution and collection, coding surveys, and data entry. Data analysis and making the poster are responsibilities I will accomplish before the symposium.

Our faculty mentor is on sabbatical during fall quarter; however we will maintain contact with her via e-mail and occasional meetings. We also have weekly meetings with the graduate student team to

discuss our progress and to get any assistance we may need. During the winter and spring she will return to conduct the weekly research meetings.

References

Ainsworth M., Blehar M., Waters E., Wall, S. 1978. *Patterns of Attachment*. Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ.

Bowlby J. 1969. *Attachment*, Volume 1 of *Attachment and Loss*. Hogarth Press. London

Brazelton T. 1992. *Toughpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. Reading, MA.

Ferber R. 1985. *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*. Simon and Schuster. New York

Keller M. & Goldberg W. in press. Co-Sleeping: Help or Hindrance for Young Children's Independence?

Sroufe L., Fox N., Pancake V. 1983. Attachment and Dependency in Developmental Perspective. *Child Development* 54: 1615-1627.

Timeline

November, 2003	Complete scale development; start data analysis
January, 2003	Write the abstract, introduction and methods Complete data analysis
March, 2003	Organize data and results Make poster
April, 2004	Present data at regional conference, if accepted WPA Conference Phoenix, AZ
May, 2004	UROP Symposium, UCI

Itemized Budget

Total request: \$1515.00

White and colored paper for handouts	\$20 (2 @ \$10/ream)
Transparencies for presentation	\$30 (100pk)
Printer Ink Cartridge (black and color)	\$70 (\$35 each)
Copy Services for handouts, transparency, and poster	\$150
Floppy Disks for transportation of files and data	\$5 (10pk)
SPSS Computer Program	\$100

As undergraduates we have to depend on the graduate students for access to the research office and are limited to the building's operating hours. With the program we could run analyses from home and on our own schedule.

WPA Student Membership Fees	\$70 (2 x \$35)
Phoenix, AZ, 2004 WPA Conference presentation fee	\$70 (2 x \$35)
Hotel accommodations (shared room)	\$500 (3 nights + tax)

Airfare	\$300
Miscellaneous conference expenses (food, transportation)	\$200