

Stop pushing, let children grow up slowly

What does it mean to be spoiled in the 1990s? Sure, the United States has its ample dose of brats still around, but would you characterize them as "spoiled?"

It seems I rarely see what not so long ago was a staple in America — spoiled children. Many prominent child professionals have noted lately what they perceive to be a startling societal trend toward rushing our youth to grow up. In the words of David Elkind: today's children are the "hurried children."

To some this prospect seems rather innocuous. Others only faintly sense a cause for alarm, for what is lost but a few aimless years of play? I think, however, we should be acutely disturbed by this condition and the spectral implications it has for our society.

The last few generations of Americans had been brought up in a society that fostered "self-expression" through allowing children to indulge in their impulses without much discipline. But today's society pressures its youth to achieve, succeed and please.

It is not the lack of pressure of earlier generations, but a new pressure to hurry and grow up.

Stress has been defined as an intense life event or "chronic environmental situation that causes disequilibrium." Of course, we all know a certain degree

Andy Yung
Columnist

of normal stress is healthy.

Today, however, children are exposed everyday to confusing family structures, television violence and gratuitous sex, deaths of relatives and close friends, geographical relocations, drugs and more. Therefore, I do not believe we ought to stress our children any more than necessary.

Today's child has become the unwilling, unintended victim of overwhelming stress — stress arising from rapid, bewildering social change and constantly rising expectations.

Case in point, people's reaction to stiffening global competition by pressuring our young: "How are we to compete with the Japanese if our children do not attend school 250 days a year or learn to read by five?" But while we expect ever more, the children are doing all they can just to cope and survive, never fully adapting.

Today the family whose mother and father both work — presuming it's not a single-parent household — serves as quite the exception. Children often are whisked off to the daycare center in the morning, attend school and come home to exhausted parents. This is very understandable considering economic realities, but there are characteristics of today's family that are

less excusable.

Today's parents are subject to extreme competition, demands, role changes and personal and professional uncertainties over which they exert no control. Parents want to seek release from stress whenever they can, and usually the one place they are sure to be in control is their home.

If child rearing means more work and stress, then by hurrying children to grow up — or better yet, treating them as adults — parents hope to remove a portion of their burden of worry and anxiety. They reason, "If the kids can cook part of dinner, how about letting them cook the whole thing" or "If they can clean their room, how about tidying up the whole house?"

But beyond manual labor, by treating children like adults, parents can convince themselves that the children are independent and less needing of attention.

Furthermore, after Sputnik's launch and the Civil Rights movement's unveiling of poor performance of our disadvantaged youth, early academic achievement became paramount to this nation. Hence, incredible contemporary pressures still exist on children who do not intellectually or otherwise achieve fast enough or high enough.

The signs of precociousness are everywhere. Look to their dress. Our mothers probably were not allowed to wear sheer stockings or makeup until their teens. Our fathers, too, had

certain clothing rites of passage. Clothing sets children apart from adults in both sexes.

Today, though, there is an array of adult "costumes" along with a wide choice of accompanying postures (modeled by commercials) available to children... Christian Dior this or Guess that and tight jeans, Nikes and leather mini-skirts to boot.

Studies convincingly show that when children dress like adults they are more likely to act as adults do.

The media, too, including music,

"Today, however, children are exposed everyday to confusing family structures, television violence and gratuitous sex, deaths of relatives and close friends, geographical relocations, drugs and more."

books, film and television, more and more portray youths as precocious. They increasingly have presented children in explicit sexual or manipulative situations. The movie "Little Darlings" comes to mind. In this film, teenage girls at summer camp are in competition to see who will "lose their virginity" first.

Television and movies promote not only casual teenage sex but also adult language and relationships and the wearing of adult clothes. To my mind, all the consequences of our

institutional (schools, media, family, societal mores) hurrying of children are negative.

Children who are told to act like adults feel betrayed by society when they find that driving, smoking and drinking are denied them until a certain age. More than 50 percent of teenage girls have premarital sex. This is an upward trend. Some 10 percent of all teenage girls (13 to 19 years old) get pregnant each year, and the sharpest increase is in the girls younger-than-category!

Our children cannot cope with such stresses, and so they seek to escape their reality through cults, suicide, drugs, crime, violence, sex... the statistics speak for themselves.

Many of us soon will be parents, if we are not already. We must be willing to be the architects of a different social structure. Would it be so bad to postpone those grown-up-type clothes and makeup for a few years more?

You can regulate the movies and TV shows your younger children view. And all of us can discuss the day's events lovingly with our children after we come home from work, without asking, "What did you accomplish?"

Be a good role model and do not worry so much about early achievement. A child is to be looked upon as a gift, not a bother. Expect the life you live now to later reflect on your child's.

Andy Yung is a junior political science major.

Awkward relationship

U.S. media make Saudis wary

As I always have, I spent this past Christmas break in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

My family has lived there since 1973, and I consider Dhahran home. This time, however, Dhahran was not the same quiet oil town — it was the center of a war zone.

Every highway was packed with military convoys delivering another piece of the allied war machine.

Even the beach where I used to scuba dive was now a training ground for Navy rescue teams.

Along with the world's military forces came another intruder into the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia — the American mass media.

The Saudis rarely allowed foreign media into the kingdom, but America's demand for coverage could not be denied.

All three major networks, CNN and the Associated Press established temporary bureaus in a Dhahran hotel.

Toward the end of December, I was hired by NBC and witnessed first hand the developing relationship between the media and Saudi Arabia.

America's hyperactive media and the conservative kingdom were complete strangers before Saddam Hussein arranged their marriage.

Saudi Arabia's own daily newspapers and nightly news are not examples of a free press. Though not officially censored, they tiptoe around sensitive issues and usually praise the government.

Before the gulf crisis erupted in August, a Saudi television newscast included video clips of King Fahd greeting visitors at an airport or dedicating a new hospital named in his honor.

Suddenly, everything from Bedouin goat herders to my old elementary school gym teacher was exposed to the whole world.

For the average citizen, this journalistic invasion was going too far. They even let Geraldo into the country. The Saudi government began to place

Matthew Goff
Reader's Opinion

restrictions on the press.

They created the Joint Information Bureau (JIB) and placed it under allied military control. Currently, all military information passes through the JIB and reporters must have permission to cover local interests such as goat herders.

The censorship does not exist because the Saudis are trying to hide something, but because they have a duty to two interests.

The first is the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia is the custodian of Islam's

"Along with the world's military forces came another intruder into the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia — the American mass media. The Saudis rarely allowed foreign media into the kingdom, but America's demand for coverage could not be denied. At times, the reporters grew restless because the stories concerning the military were being spoon fed to them and shared by every news outlet."

holiest shrines and must keep them sacred. The filming of a mosque is almost always forbidden.

Second, they attempt to shelter the armed forces. The JIB makes it very clear what they do not want the enemy to hear on the nightly news coverage. They fear that some journalists may report information that is potentially dangerous to allied troops.

Such restrictions are alien to the American press covering the war. Often, the crew I worked with expressed the frustrations of being closely monitored.

At times, the reporters grew restless because the stories concerning the military were being spoon fed to them and shared by every news outlet. Hungry for stories they could call their own, many reporters lurked in places like grocery stores, softball fields and

the airport.

From August until Jan. 15, every aspect of life in Dhahran was a potential story. Now that the war has started, the boredom has turned to exhilaration as some reporters prepare to cover the front lines while others remain in Dhahran dodging Scud missiles.

The possibility of war was the element that magnetically drew American media to this current hot spot — not goat herders, grocery stores or overweight elementary gym teachers.

After five months of preparation, some reporters may have been relieved to hear the first sounds of war.

The people of Dhahran will be relieved when the war ends and a trip

to town no longer requires chemical warfare protection. They also will be glad to see the media abandon the once private and often ignored kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

My parents and the rest of Dhahran rely on nervous American reporters standing on the roof of a familiar hotel to narrate the story of the Scud and the Patriot.

Without correspondents like CNN's Charles Jaco, the frightening blasts that rattle the homes of Dhahran could only leave the residents guessing about what was happening in their own city.

The relationship between America's media and Saudi Arabia is awkward, yet the demand for its success is too great for it to fail.

Matthew Goff is a junior journalism major.

MAIL CALL

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes all letters to the editor. Please include name, classification, address and phone number on all letters. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Because of limited space, shorter letters have a better chance of appearing. There is, however, no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Keep an open mind

EDITOR:

Since the Middle East conflict has escalated to war, there have been many discussions between pro- and anti-war advocates. Considering the magnitude of the issue, it is understood that passions are deep on both sides. However, insulting one's argumentative opponent is uncalled for.

Today, I was told I was "naive and irrational" for my opinions concerning the gulf war. Normally, I would not be insulted at being called naive, but since the beginning of the conflict I have spent much time reading information and propaganda for both sides of the issue. I also have engaged in intelligent discussions with members of the opposing view. I have found these discussions helpful in gaining information and understanding opposing ideas.

The person with whom I attempted to discuss this with continued to call my ideas naive, irrational and shallow. Had he offered me the depth of his convictions and listened to mine, we both would have emerged that much richer. Americans still here must make a concerted effort not to begin a war among ourselves. Protests are needed to make others aware of the anti-war philosophy among serving other purposes, and pro-war rallies are an important factor for other reasons. But it is important that each side listen fairly to the opposition without insults or violence. I am sorry my fellow student was unable to open himself to ideas conflicting with his own. I was not asking him to agree with me — just to listen.

Kristin J. Frederiksen '92

Get more organized!

EDITOR:

Last night I had a disappointing experience. I planned to watch the free movie "L.A. Story" at Rudder after reading a posted sign at the ticket office. The sign claimed there were 400 tickets left to be passed out at 7 p.m. Arriving at 6:30 p.m., I was behind approximately 100 people. By 7 o'clock, that number had more than tripled. Then a guy comes out at 7:20 p.m. to tell everyone there was a misprint on the posted sign and only 32 to 40 tickets remained. Almost a whole hour wasted.

Let's get a little more organized, folks. Get the facts straight. There's a big difference between 40 and 400. And how about roping off the line at 6 p.m.? This would be a big help in keeping the line somewhat organized and would deter many from skipping in line. Let's face it; we aren't all boy scouts — trustworthiness and honesty are dying traditions at A&M.

Terry Carol '92

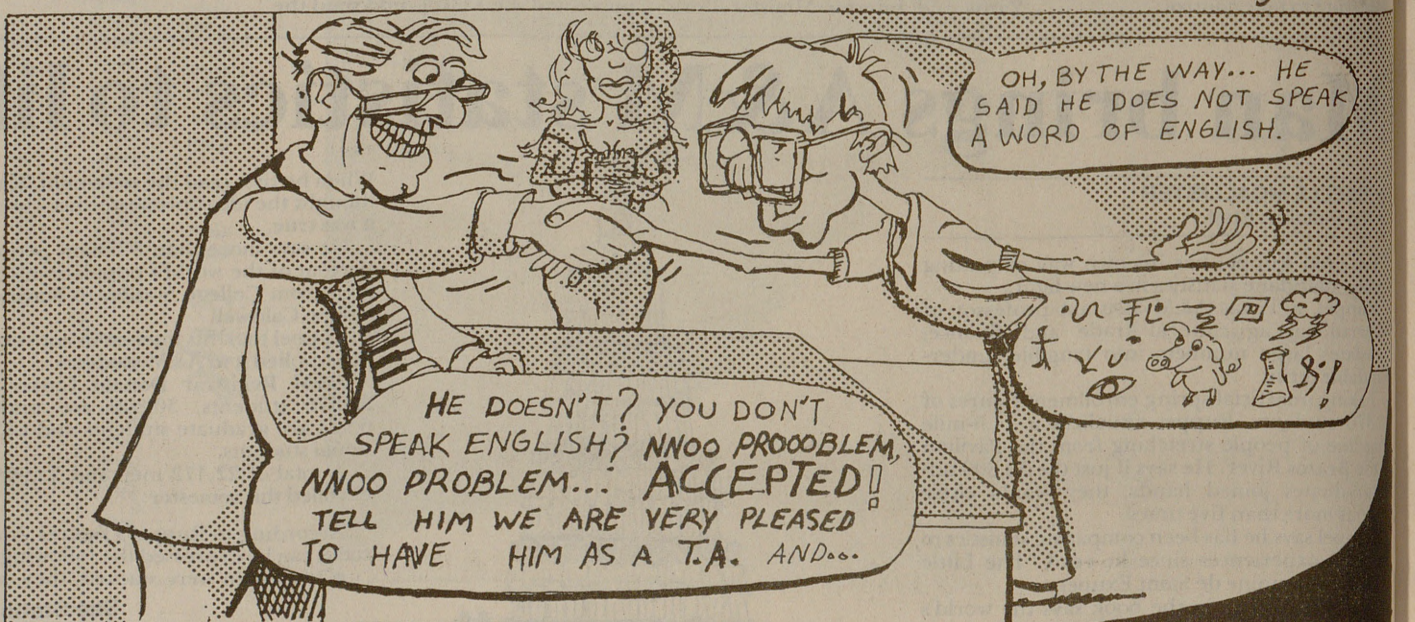
Correction

A letter to the editor in the Jan. 30 edition of The Battalion was typed into the computer system incorrectly.

The letter, titled "Find a peaceful solution," should have read: "It should be clear to the open mind that one must not support Bush's foreign policy in order to fully support the Americans that must execute the policy. The Battalion regrets the error."

the itch

by Nito



The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Lisa Ann Robertson,
Editor

Kathy Cox, Managing Editor

Jennifer Jeffus,
Opinion Page Editor

Chris Vaughn, City Editor

Keith Sartin,
Richard Tijerina,
News Editors

Alan Lehmann, Sports Editor

Fredrick D. Joe, Art Director

Kristin North,
Life Style Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion is published daily, except Saturday, Sunday, holidays, exam periods, and when school is not in session during fall and spring semesters; publication is Tuesday through Friday during the summer session. Newsroom: 845-3313.

Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year: 845-2611. Advertising rates furnished on request: 845-2696.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.