

# Parents Reap What They Sow: Child-Centrism and Parental Well-Being

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## Abstract

A controversial feature of modern parenting is “child-centrism,” the tendency for parents to prioritize their children’s well-being above their own. It has been suggested that child-centric parenting in its various forms may undermine parental well-being. Contrary to popular belief, more child-centric parents reported deriving more happiness and meaning from parenthood (Study 1). Study 2 employed the day reconstruction method (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004) to capture parents’ actual experiences while taking care of their children. Consistent with Study 1, greater child-centrism was associated with the experience of greater positive affect, less negative affect, and greater meaning in life when engaged in child care activities. This link between child-centrism and well-being stands in contrast to recent arguments about the pitfalls of overinvestment in children, while dovetailing with a growing body of evidence that personal well-being is associated with investing in others rather than oneself.

## Keywords

child-centrism, well-being, parent satisfaction, positive affect, meaning, day reconstruction method (DRM)

A controversial approach to parenting is the placement of one’s children at the center of family life, where they receive the lion’s share of the family’s social, financial, and emotional resources. Several authors have argued that prioritizing the needs and wants of one’s children to the detriment of one’s own undermines parental well-being (Hodgkinson, 2009; Liedloff, 1975; Senior, 2010; Skenazy, 2009). Casting doubt on this perspective, a growing body of evidence suggests that when we invest in the well-being of others, we experience greater well-being ourselves. The goal of the present research is to examine the relationship between what we term *child-centric* parenting and the well-being (positive affect [PA] and negative affect [NA] and meaning) that parents derive from their children.

## Child-Centrism

The term *child-centrism* has been used in the popular media to describe a variety of different types of highly involved parents (from “helicopter parents” to “tiger moms”) with little conceptual specificity (e.g., Leslie, 2012; Roiphe, 2012; Singh, 2010). In the present research, we use the term *child-centrism* to capture the psychological mind-set in which parents are motivated to maximize their child’s well-being even at a cost to their own and are willing to prioritize the allocation of their emotional, temporal, financial, and attentional resources to their children rather than themselves. Child-centric parents place their children at the center of their lives, and demonstrate a high level of personal investment in their children, sacrificing

individual pleasures and pursuits for the benefit of their children. As such, child-centrism is distinct from other child-focused forms of parenting that are more specifically characterized by, for example, warmth and nurturance (i.e., responsive parenting; Landry, Smith, & Swank, 2006), protectiveness and overinvolvement in children’s academic affairs (i.e., “helicopter” parenting; Hunt, 2008), an emphasis on cultural enrichment (i.e., concerted cultivation; Lareau, 2003) or achievement (i.e., “Tiger Moms,” Chua, 2011). Importantly, “self-sacrificing” behaviors associated with some of these parenting styles may actually be self-enhancing (e.g., the tiger mom who spends hours overseeing her child’s piano practice may be driven by her *own* need for achievement); in contrast, our conceptualization of child-centrism emphasizes the psychological motive to place children’s needs before one’s own.

The consequences of child-focused forms of parenting for the well-being of parents have been a source of heated debate in the popular media, largely in the absence of empirical research (Acocella, 2008; Gibbs, 2009, but see Rizzo, Schiffrin, & Liss,

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**Table 1.** Participant Demographics Across Studies and Samples.

	Study 1: Total Sample	Study 2: Total Sample	Study 2: Public Places	Study 2: Online—Lab Website	Study 2: Online—MTurk
N	136	186	66	29	91
% Female	78.7	76.3	72.7	93.1	73.6
Median age	34	36	38	40	35
Median education	College/university degree	College/university degree	College/university degree	College/university degree	College/university degree
Median household income	\$50,000–\$60,000	\$70,000–\$80,000	\$80,000–\$90,000	\$100,000–\$110,000	\$50,000–\$60,000
Median (range) number of children living at home	2 (1–6 or more)	2 (1–6 or more)	2 (1–5)	1 (1–4)	2 (1–6 or more)
Median (range) age of the youngest child	5.5 (.02–18)	4 (.17–18)	3 (.17–10)	6 (1–14)	4 (.34–18)
Median (range) of oldest child living at home	10 (.67–36)	6 (.25–42)	6 (.25–27)	7 (1–25)	6 (1–42)
% married	84.6	86	84.8	89.7	85.7
% single (never married)	9.6	7.5	9.1	0	8.8
% divorced	5.1	6.5	6.1	10.3	5.5
% Caucasian	83.8	81.2	77.3	79.3	84.6

2012). In the present research, we developed a short, 7-item self-report measure of child-centrism, to empirically examine the relationship between child-centrism and the well-being that parents derive from taking care of their children.

### Prosocial Investment and Well-Being

Diverse strands of research across multiple domains provide evidence for what we term the *prosocial investment hypothesis*—that the more individuals invest in others, the greater their own well-being. For example, individuals who invest more personal resources in their relationships report greater relationship satisfaction (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998), and spending time volunteering or caring for others is linked to greater happiness (Borgonovi, 2008; Meier & Stutzer, 2008) and decreased mortality (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003). Using experimental methodology, Dunn, Aknin, and Norton (2008) showed that spending money on others produces greater well-being than spending money on oneself. Although the emotional benefits of such “prosocial spending” emerge even when people give to strangers (Aknin et al., 2013), recent research shows that these benefits are magnified when people give to close others (Aknin, Sandstrom, Dunn, & Norton, 2011). While this body of research has not specifically examined prosocial behavior toward one’s children, these findings suggest that the more care and attention people give to others, the more happiness and meaning they experience. From this perspective, the more invested parents are in their children’s well-being—that is, the more “child-centric” parents are—the more happiness and meaning they will derive from parenting.

### Overview

Two studies investigated the relationship between child-centrism and the well-being that parents derive from their

children. Study 1 aimed to provide validation for a newly developed child-centrism scale and to examine the relationship between child-centrism scores and the global happiness and sense of meaning in life that parents derive from parenthood. Study 2 employed the day reconstruction method (DRM; Kahneman et al., 2004) to investigate the relationship between child-centrism and parents’ episodic reports of the happiness and meaning that they experienced while taking care of their children.

### Study 1

Study 1 was conducted to examine the conceptual validity of the 7-item self-report measure of child-centrism that was developed for the present research. For this purpose, participants completed the child-centrism scale in addition to several measures of theoretically related indices of parental investment, parental sacrifice, and parental identity. In addition, we examined the relationship between our measure of child-centrism and characteristics of “over-involved” parenting styles as they have been described in the popular media (helicopter parenting, little emperor syndrome, and tiger mom parenting) and research articles (concerted cultivation; Lareau, 2003). Moreover, Study 1 measured parents’ global evaluations of the happiness and meaning that they derive from parenting.

### Method

#### Participants

One hundred thirty-six parents with at least one child 18 or younger living at home completed all items of our measure of child-centrism and were included in the study.<sup>1</sup> The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

## Procedure

Participants were recruited via Amazon's MTurk service for an online survey "about your experience as a parent." Participants first completed the child-centrism scale, followed by measures of parental investment, parental sacrifice, and parenting styles. Next, participants rated the happiness and sense of meaning they derived from parenting and completed a battery of demographic questions.

**Child-Centrism Scale.** The 7 items of the child-centrism scale (see Appendix A) reflect the core attitudes and behaviors characteristic of child-centric parents as conceptualized in the present research. By indicating the degree to which they agreed with each statement (e.g., *My children are the centre of my life* and *The happiness of my children is more important to me than my own happiness*) on a scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much*), parents rated the extent to which they are willing to invest their personal resources in their children rather than themselves. Child-centrism scores were derived by calculating the average of the seven child-centrism items ( $\alpha = .77$ ); higher scores indicate greater child-centrism.

**Behaviors Reflecting Investment and Sacrifice.** To validate our child-centrism scale, we evaluated the attentional, temporal, and emotional resources that parents dedicated to their children. Specifically, we measured the percentage of time parents spent together with their children, spent thinking about their children, and spent talking about their children relative to their friends, as well as how many hours they normally spent driving their children to activities per week. In the same vein, we asked parents to consider how they normally behave if their child is away for a week (e.g., for a school camp) and to report how often they want to contact their child, and actually contact their child, in such situations. To assess their financial commitment, we asked parents to report what percentage of their financial resources they devoted to their children. We also evaluated parents' willingness to sacrifice their own well-being for the well-being of the child. In particular, we asked parents to report the number of times they sacrificed their own desires to accommodate the desires of their children and the number of times they changed their leisure plans to accommodate their children over the previous 2 weeks.

**Highly Involved Parenting Styles.** In order to evaluate the association between the concept of child-centrism measured by our scale (described above) and highly involved parenting styles as they are described in the popular media, we asked participants to use 9-point scales (1 = *never or definitely not*, 9 = *always or definitely*) to indicate the frequency with which they identified with attitudes and behaviors characteristic of "helicopter" parents (who try to resolve their child's problems and try to stop them coming to harm by keeping them out of dangerous situations; Nelson, 2010), "little emperor" parents (who give their children all the material goods they desire, so that they want for nothing; Cutler, 1988), "tiger moms" or tiger

parents (who expect exceptional achievement from their children and will not accept anything less; Chua, 2011), and parents who engage in "concerted cultivation" (scheduling extracurricular schooling, tutoring, and coaching during children's leisure time to give them a competitive edge over other children; Lareau, 2003). Each set of items (Appendix B) showed moderate reliability (mean  $\alpha = .68$ ), so items were averaged to reflect composite scores for each parenting style.

**Parental Well-Being.** We examined parents' global evaluations of the happiness and meaning (or sense of purpose) in life that they derive from their children by adapting items from the Subjective Happiness scale (e.g., "In general, when I am spending time with my children I am: 1 = *not at all happy*, 7 = *extremely happy*"; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and the "presence" subscale of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; e.g., "My children make my life meaningful": 1 = *not at all true*, 7 = *absolutely true*; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). Both adapted scales had good inter-item reliability ( $\alpha = .80$  and  $.79$ , respectively).

## Results and Discussion

### Child-Centrism Validation

First, we examined the relation between child-centrism scores and a range of behaviors reflecting parental investment and sacrifice. As presented in Table 2, participants' scores on the child-centrism scale were positively related to the time they spent with their children, the time they spent thinking about their children, the time they spent talking about their children relative to their friends, and the financial resources parents reported dedicating to their children. In addition, when asked to imagine their child being away for a week, more child-centric parents reported a marginal desire to contact their children more often, and reported being significantly more likely to actually do so. In addition, more child-centric parents reported sacrificing their own desires to accommodate the desires of their children more often in the past 2 weeks, and were marginally more likely to change their leisure time plans to accommodate their children. Child-centrism scores did not predict the amount of time parents spent driving their children to activities.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, these results strongly suggest that our measure of child-centrism is associated with actual parental behavior, thus confirming our conceptualization of child-centrism as a tendency to dedicate more time, effort, and resources to one's children.

Next, we examined the relationship between child-centrism and a number of over-involved parenting styles, including helicopter parenting, little emperor parenting, tiger mom parenting, and concerted cultivation. As shown in Table 2, we found that child-centrism was positively correlated with helicopter parenting and little emperor parenting. Child-centrism was inversely—but only marginally—related to "tiger mom" parenting, and was not associated with concerted cultivation, although it is possible that stronger associations would emerge

**Table 2.** Child-Centrism Scale Correlations With Parenting Behaviors and Parenting Styles and Parental Well-Being.

	Child-Centrism
Parent behavior	
What percentage of your time do you spend with your children?	.41***
What percentage of your time do you spend thinking about your children?	.55***
How much do you talk about your children relative to your friends?	.38***
What percentage of your financial resources are devoted to your children?	.25**
If your child is away for a week (for a school camp or holiday), how often do you call or make contact with your child?	.34***
If your child is away for a week (for a school camp or holiday), how often do you want to make contact with your child?	.25
How often in the past two weeks have you sacrificed your own desires to accommodate the desires of your children?	.18*
How often in the past two weeks have you changed your leisure plans to accommodate your children?	.16
How much time (hours) do you spend driving your kids to activities per week?	-.06
Parenting styles	
“Helicopter” parenting	.41***
“Little emperor” parenting	.44***
“Tiger mom” parenting	-.16
Concerted cultivation	-.06
Parental well-being	
Subjective well-being derived from children	.27*
Meaning in life derived from children	.50***

Note. Due to missing data and excluded outliers, number of respondents varies between 127 and 136.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

with longer, more reliable measures of these parenting styles. These results support our theorizing that although child-centrism may be related to some frequently discussed over-involved parenting styles, child-centrism is a distinct construct from any of those parenting styles.

### Child-Centrism and Well-Being Derived From Parenthood

As an initial test of the hypothesis that child-centrism would be related to parental well-being, we also examined the relationship between child-centrism and self-reported subjective happiness and meaning derived from parenthood. We found a significant positive relationship between child-centrism and the subjective happiness and sense of meaning in life that participants reported deriving from parenting (Table 2).

It is possible, however, that participants higher in child-centrism inflated their reports of the well-being they derived from parenting, perhaps to reduce any cognitive dissonance stemming from heavily investing in their children (Eibach & Mock, 2011). It is also possible that more child-centric parents are particularly prone to socially desirable responding in relation to the parenting role. In Study 2, therefore, we employed a novel method of measuring well-being—the DRM (Kahneman et al., 2004)—to mitigate the biases associated with global self-reports of well-being. The DRM requires participants to reconstruct the previous day, from morning to night, and to report what they were doing and how they were feeling during each part of the day. By focusing participants’ attention on specific episodes of their day (e.g., driving kids to soccer practice), this method has been shown to circumvent many of the self-report biases associated with more global reports of well-being (Kahneman et al., 2004). The DRM also allowed us to investigate the association between child-centrism and the

well-being that parents derive from child care activities specifically, controlling for the well-being that parents experience in all of their other daily activities. Classic research shows that higher correspondence between attitudes and behavior is associated with a stronger relationship between the attitude and the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Davidson & Jaccard, 1979); thus, we expected that our measure of child-centrism would be specifically related to parents’ experiences during the behavior of child care, but not to their experiences during other activities (e.g., housework).

## Study 2 Method

### Participants

As part of a larger study, 186 parents, with at least one child 18 years old or younger living at home, completed our survey items, including reporting at least one child care episode and one non-child care episode (for other findings from this larger study, see Kushlev, Dunn, & Ashton-James, 2012; Nelson, Kushlev, English, Dunn, & Lyubomirsky, 2013). As described in Table 1, we recruited 66 participants in person at public places in British Columbia, Canada, and 120 participants online (91 through Amazon’s recruitment service Mturk and 29 through local schools and our lab website).<sup>3</sup> Online participants were recruited for a study on “parenting and happiness.” In-person participants were recruited for a study on their “daily experiences” with no mention of either parenting or happiness.

### Materials and Procedure

A modified version of the DRM was used to capture parents’ subjective experiences of happiness (PA and NA) and meaning

**Table 3.** Intercorrelations Among Child-Centrism Scores and Episodic Measures of Positive Affect (PA), Negative Affect (NA), and Meaning.

Measure	Child-Centrism	Positive Affect Experienced During Child Care Episodes	Negative Affect Experienced During Child Care Episodes	Meaning Experienced During Child Care Episodes
Child-centrism ( $\alpha = .78$ )	1.0			
Positive affect experienced during child care episodes ( $\alpha = .90$ )	.17*	1.0		
Negative affect experienced during child care episodes ( $\alpha = .81$ )	-.21**	-.46***	1.0	
Meaning experienced during child care episodes	.22**	.55***	-.27***	1.0
Positive affect experienced during child-free episodes ( $\alpha = .89$ )	.10	.33***	-.05	.07
Negative affect experienced during child care episodes ( $\alpha = .87$ )	-.15	-.07	.49***	-.03
Meaning experienced during child-free episodes	.11	.21**	-.04	.41***

Note. Due to missing data, number of respondents varies between 167 and 185.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

in life (Baumeister, 1991) while taking care of their children. By asking participants to reconstruct their previous day episode-by-episode, “as a continuous series of scenes or ‘episodes’ in a film” participants are prompted to relive their actual rather than imagined experiences, while engaged with a variety of activities (e.g., taking care of children, housework, or commuting). Next, participants indicated the type of activity in which they were engaged (e.g., eating, working, or child care), and importantly, their affective state and the meaning in life that they experienced during each episode.<sup>4</sup> Consistent with Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, and Stone’s (2004) method, we measured PA by asking participants to rate the extent to which they felt happy and warm or friendly during the episode, as well as how much they enjoyed themselves; we measured NA as the average of the following items: frustrated or annoyed, depressed or blue, hassled or pushed around, angry or hostile, worried or anxious, and criticized or put down. To measure meaning, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they felt a sense of purpose and meaning in life during the activity.<sup>5</sup> For all items, participants rated their feelings on 7-point scales (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *very much*). After completing all episodic ratings, participants completed our 7-item measure of child-centrism ( $\alpha = .78$ ). Participants then answered demographic questions (e.g., age of children, number of children living at home, age, gender, income, education, and marital status) drawn from Kahneman et al.

## Results

**Child-Centrism and Positive Affect.** Correlational analyses, presented in Table 3, confirmed our hypothesis that more child-centric parents reported higher levels of PA when taking care of their children. In contrast, more child-centric parents did not report significantly more PA throughout the rest of their day. Next, we entered child-centrism into a regression predicting PA when taking care of children, while controlling for people’s general tendency to experience PA in daily life as

measured by the average level of PA that they reported in relation to non child care daily activities (e.g., commuting, working, or shopping). This analysis showed that controlling for the PA that they experienced during other daily activities, child-centrism positively predicted the PA that parents experienced when taking care of their children,  $\beta = .15$ ,  $t(167) = 1.99$ ,  $p = .049$ . This relationship remained substantively unchanged when we controlled for gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, and age of the youngest child ( $\beta$ s  $> .14$  and  $ps < .061$ ).

**Child-Centrism and Negative Affect.** The relationship between child-centrism and NA was also consistent with our theorizing. As shown in Table 3, we found that more child-centric parents reported lower levels of NA when taking care of their children; child-centrism was also marginally related in the same direction to the average level of NA parents experienced throughout the rest of their day. As with PA, we then entered child-centrism into a regression predicting parents’ NA when taking care of their children, while controlling for the NA that individuals experienced during non-child care activities. Child-centrism was negatively related to the NA parents experienced when taking care of children controlling for the NA they experienced during non-child care activities,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t(164) = -1.99$ ,  $p = .048$ . This relationship remained substantively unchanged ( $\beta$ s  $< -.13$ ,  $ps < .069$ ) when controlling for gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, and age of the youngest child.

**Child-Centrism and Meaning.** Next, we found confirmation that more child-centric parents also reported higher levels of meaning when taking care of their children, whereas child-centrism was not significantly related to the average level of meaning parents experienced throughout the rest of their day (see Table 3). As above, we then entered child-centrism into a regression predicting parents’ sense of meaning when taking care of children, while controlling for the degree of meaning

that individuals experienced while doing all activities other than taking care of their children. Child-centrism positively predicted the level of meaning that parents experienced specifically when taking care of children, controlling for the meaning they experienced when not taking care of their children,  $\beta = .17$ ,  $t(174) = 2.48$ ,  $p = .014$ . This relationship remained substantively unchanged when we controlled for gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, and age of the youngest child,  $\beta_s > .15$ ,  $ps < .03$ .<sup>6</sup>

## General Discussion

Consistent with the prosocial investment hypothesis, we found a positive association between parents' child-centrism and their experience of meaning and PA when taking care of their children. By using the DRM and by asking parents to respond to our child-centrism questionnaire *after* our happiness questions, we were able to show that putting one's children at the center of one's life (thus presumably incurring more costs overtime) does not just enhance parents' theories about how much enjoyment they derive from their children, but is associated with the actual enjoyment and meaning that parents derive from their children (cf., Eibach & Mock, 2011). These findings stand in contrast to claims in the popular media that prioritizing children's well-being undermines parents' well-being: In our samples, while child-centrism was not strongly associated with differences in the well-being that parents experienced during non-parenting activities, it was associated with the well-being that parents experienced when taking care of their children, suggesting that child-centrism may be associated with benefits rather than costs for parents' well-being.

That said, some forms of highly involved parenting may still be associated with negative outcomes for parents. While parents who scored higher on our "helicopter" or "little emperor" parenting scales also reported greater child-centrism in Study 1, we would only expect these highly involved parents to experience happiness and meaning when taking care of their children to the extent that their parenting practices are driven by child-centric (self-sacrificing) motives. It is also possible that the relationship between child-centrism and parental well-being is limited to cultures in which it is expected that children's moment-to-moment happiness is prioritized above the needs and desires of parents. In general, the well-being that people derive from their daily activities is associated with their perceived fulfillment of cultural expectations and their behavioral consistency with prevailing social norms (Oishi & Sullivan, 2005). The samples employed in the present research do not provide enough cultural diversity to explore the possibility that the well-being benefits associated with child-centrism may be culture-specific. Hence, it would be useful to examine the interaction between child-centrism and culture in future research.

The relationship between child-centrism and parental well-being may also vary with family structure (e.g., age of children and number of children living at home). For instance, Rizzo, Schiffrin, and Liss (2012) studied the parenting experiences

of mothers with children 5 years old or younger, and found that while more child-centered parents reported more fulfillment (e.g., "Being a parent brings a person the greatest joy they can possibly experience") they also reported less life satisfaction. Rizzo and colleagues' measure of child-centeredness (a subscale of the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire; Liss, Schiffrin, MacKintosh, Miles-McLean & Erchull, 2012) was comparable to the child-centrism scale used in the present study (an example item is "Children's needs should come before their parents"). While our samples were not powered to test the interactive effects of child-centrism and child age on the well-being that parents experience when taking care of their children, the results of Rizzo and colleagues suggest that this possibility be taken into consideration in the development and analysis of future research on child-centrism.

## Coda

By identifying a core psychological construct—child-centrism—that predicts the well-being that parents' derive from parental activities, the present research stands to bring specificity and theoretical rigor to the ever-evolving monikers used to describe modern parenting and bring clarity to the conditions under which parenthood undermines well-being. Our findings also contribute to the emergence of research supporting the prosocial investment hypothesis, that investing financial and emotional resources in others is associated with greater happiness than investing in oneself (i.e., Brown et al., 2003; Dunn et al., 2008). In short, when it comes to parental well-being, you reap what you sow.

## Appendix A

### Child-Centrism Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

(0 = *very strong disagreement*; 6 = *very strong agreement*)

1. My children are the centre of my life.
2. The happiness of my children is more important to me than my own happiness.
3. My children are the most frequent topic of my discussions.
4. I do not mind leaving my children to spend time with my friends (reversed item).
5. I would be willing to make almost any sacrifice for my children.
6. My schedule revolves around my children.
7. The needs of my children come before my own.

## Appendix B

### Over-Involved Parenting Styles

Instructions: Please indicate how much each statement is true of you using the 9-point scale below. Please note that for convenience we use "children" to refer both to a

single child and multiple children, whatever the case might be.

Helicopter parenting items ( $\alpha = .73$ ):

1. If my children have a problem, I will come to the rescue to solve it for them.
2. I keep tabs on my children's activities.
3. I expect to be involved in my children's decisions about how to spend their time or money.
4. If my children cannot solve a problem on their own, my children can expect me to solve it for them.
5. I feel responsible for my children's safety, even when they are not under my direct care.

Little Emperor parenting items ( $\alpha = .72$ ):

1. My household structures itself around the desires of the children.
2. My children command the sole attention of their parents and grandparents.
3. My children receive the material goods that they desire.
4. It is not uncommon for my children to be better dressed than me.
5. I would not be surprised to hear that people think my children are spoiled brats.

Tiger Mom parenting items ( $\alpha = .59$ ):

1. I expect the best from my children and don't settle for anything less.
2. I don't believe in making exceptions or excuses for my children's failures.
3. Each child is special in their own way (reversed item).
4. My children see me as a merciless task master.
5. I have extremely high expectations of my children.

Concerted cultivation items ( $\alpha = .50$ ):

1. My children participate in more extracurricular activities than other children.
2. My children have little free time to play with friends.
3. I believe that my children should "work hard, play later."
4. I encourage my children to question the reasoning behind my decisions.
5. I encourage my children to make their aspirations known.

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### Notes

1. Forty-one additional participants who completed the survey were excluded for failing the Instructional Manipulation Check, a validated tool for eliminating participants based on their failure to follow counterintuitive instructions that are embedded within a paragraph of text (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). This drop-out rate is consistent with previous research using Mturk (Downs, Holbrook, Sheng, & Cranor, 2010).
2. Since the answers to the four frequency questions and the question about number of driving hours were open-ended, we conducted each analysis excluding people whose answer to each question was 2.5 *SD* above the mean of the sample.
3. Fifty-three additional MTurk participants were excluded for failing the Instructional Manipulation Check (Oppenheimer et al., 2009).
4. Parents reported an average of 3.24 episodes ( $SD = 1.89$ ; range: 1–7) when they were taking care of their children and 4.15 episodes ( $SD = 1.98$ ; range: 1–7) when they were not taking care of their children.
5. To validate this measure of meaning, we asked participants at the end of Study 1 to think of a specific child care episode and to complete this single-item measure of meaning, as well as a 4-item version of the MLQ adapted to measure meaning during a specific episode (e.g., "During the episode, my personal existence was very purposeful and meaningful"). We found that our single-item measure was strongly correlated with this MLQ subscale,  $r(133) = .83, p < .001$ .
6. Three separate regression analyses were ran with the centered score on the child-centrism scale, the method of recruitment (*online* = 1 vs. *in-person* = 0), and the interaction term between these two variables entered as predictors. These analyses revealed that the method of recruitment (*online* vs. *in-person*) did not moderate the relationship between child-centrism and PA ( $p = .352$ ), NA ( $p = .449$ ), or meaning ( $p = .838$ ) during child care episodes.

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