Spoiled Rotten — A Timeless Complaint (commentary)
Spoiled Rotten – A Timeless Complaint

By Alfie Kohn

This is an expanded version of the published article, which appeared in the Post's Sunday "Outlook" section.

WASHINGTON POST
July 18, 2010

For years, reporters, cultural critics, parent educators, and popular writers have been predicting the arrival of a pampered generation. Some claim it's the result of overparenting, says Keene State College psychologist Neil Montgomery, using the colloquial term for overinvolvement in one's children's lives.

Many researchers have noted what psychologists call "helicopter parenting," the practice of hovering too closely or tolerating too much. But for parents who have ever said "no" to their children, the belief that American parents today are pampered is hard to reconcile.

Ron Edmonds, a professor of developmental psychology at the University of Illinois, points out that Americans have never been more attentive to what their kids are doing than they are today. "We're better acquainted with exactly what's going on in the lives of our children," he says. "People are more aware of habits that were thought to be natural in previous generations, such as smoking and drinking age."

But many people believe that the pampered generation is a new phenomenon. "It's like we're seeing a whole new breed," says psychologist Robin Edmonds, a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois.

But the reality is that no generation of parents has been more pampered or indulgent than any other. "The pampered generation is an unpronounced generation," says psychologist Michael McPherson, a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois.

But what about the pampered generation's children? Do they deserve to be called pampered? Or are they simply products of their environment?

The answer is neither. The pampered generation's children are simply products of their environment. They are not necessarily pampered or indulgent. But they are certainly a generation that has been pampered and indulgent.

The problem is not that the pampered generation's children are pampered or indulgent. The problem is that they are pampered and indulgent. They are not pampered or indulgent. But they are pampered and indulgent.

The pampered generation's children are not necessarily pampered or indulgent. But they are a generation that has been pampered and indulgent. They are not pampered or indulgent. But they are pampered and indulgent.

The pampered generation's children are not necessarily pampered or indulgent. But they are a generation that has been pampered and indulgent. They are not pampered or indulgent. But they are pampered and indulgent.

The pampered generation's children are not necessarily pampered or indulgent. But they are a generation that has been pampered and indulgent. They are not pampered or indulgent. But they are pampered and indulgent.

The pampered generation's children are not necessarily pampered or indulgent. But they are a generation that has been pampered and indulgent. They are not pampered or indulgent. But they are pampered and indulgent.

The pampered generation's children are not necessarily pampered or indulgent. But they are a generation that has been pampered and indulgent. They are not pampered or indulgent. But they are pampered and indulgent.