

**Parent-Child Socialization
in Diverse Cultures**

**ANNUAL ADVANCES IN APPLIED
DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
VOLUME 5**

VOLUME EDITORS:

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Educational Testing Service

1992



ABLEX PUBLISHING CORPORATION
NORWOOD, NEW JERSEY

A Comparison of the Parent-Child Relationship in Japan and the United States*

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Important developmental issues can be illuminated by comparing childrearing in Japan and the United States because the two nations have similar social structures but very different conventions for interaction. Socially, Japan and the United States are both economically developed and technologically sophisticated. The educational systems of both nations must cope with rapid social change by preparing children for an ever-expanding array of roles and responsibilities. However, norms of interpersonal communication and parent-child interaction differ greatly between Japan and the United States (Azuma, 1986; Hakuta, 1986).

To illuminate differences between parent-child relationships in Japan and the United States, our review considers the following factors: (a) childrearing beliefs in their historic context, (b) the home environment, (c) newborn behavior, (d) mother-infant interaction and maternal speech to infants, and (e) mother-preschooler interaction. While these factors are presented separately, we attempt to describe some of the complex interactions among them with the goal of illustrating development in its cultural contexts.

*This work was supported in part by a Fulbright Senior Research Fellowship to Alan Fogel, by the Department of Educational Psychology, Nagoya University, and by a research grant to Marguerite Stevenson from The Graduate School, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Special thanks to the Faculty of Human Science, Osaka University.

CHILDREARING BELIEFS

Beliefs about childrearing and education in Japan and the United States influence actual parent-child interaction. Many national beliefs about childrearing have their origins in the earlier social orders of Edo Japan and Colonial America. The review in Table 3.1 summarizes these historical beliefs with information from Krumboltz and Lazerson (1982), Hendry (1986), Kojima (1986), Pollack (1983), and Stevenson, Azuma, and Hakuta (1986).

Codes regulating interaction in Japan—including parent-child interaction—originated in ancient Chinese Confucianism. Confucian ethics emphasized the individual's connectedness with the natural world and with other people. In Confucianism personal fulfillment could only be attained by establishing harmonious relationships with the physical and social environment. The Japanese worldview—based on Confucianism—emphasizes interdependence.

By contrast, the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions that form a basis for ethics in the United States emphasized self-knowledge and personal responsibility. Personal fulfillment and self-reliance were seen as prerequisites for contributing to the common good. Based on these ideas, the United States worldview emphasizes the autonomous individual.

These different belief systems form the foundation for very different child-rearing practices and beliefs in Japan and the United States (Doi, 1973; Hara & Wagatsuma, 1974; Kojima, 1986; Lebra, 1976; White & Levine, 1986). Japanese parents view infants as initially unconnected to and unaware of their surrounding families. Japanese parents attempt to integrate them into mutually dependent social relationships (Yamada, 1987; Bornstein, 1989; Caudill, 1973). The Japanese mother devotes herself to satisfying the infant's basic needs in order to "convince" the infant to rely on her (Doi, 1973).

American families, on the other hand, see their infants as initially dependent and attempt to promote eventual self-sufficiency. The American mother sees her role as gradually weaning her infant away from initial dependency into autonomy and independence.

Japanese childrearing practices have historically allowed infants relatively free expression of their initial tendencies and desires. For example, Shinto beliefs in Japan suggest that children are from the gods, and that they should be treated with leniency lest they decide to return to the gods. Japanese parents are more accepting of their babies' dispositions and, for example, do not attempt to alter infant's individual predilections towards quietness, fussiness, or activity.

The Christian ascription of original sin to children historically legitimized the need for training and control. Parents in the United States are more likely to exert social controls to "optimize" infant performance (Brazelton, Koslowski, & Main, 1974). For example, concern is expressed if an American baby is too quiet or too active. Conformity to social expectations appears to have been the rule for American infants with the family as the primary socializer.

Table 3.1. Summary of Childbearing Beliefs in Edo Japan and Early America

Japan	
Infancy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are inherently good. They have innate tendencies that cannot and should not be reshaped by adult control. 2. Harmonious relations should prevail between parent and infant. Parents should not deny the infant's basic needs. 3. The parents should train the child only when ready. Premature training yields few positive results. 4. Mothers should be totally committed to their roles, even at the expense of other roles such as wife, friend, or employee.
Early Childhood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training in social and moral behavior should come only after a due period of infant development. 2. The responsibility for such training is shared by the community and society, not only the parents. 3. Training is based on following models, rather than analysis or questioning. 4. Adults rarely punish or praise, but rather allow child to self-regulate performance out of desire to conform.
United States	
Infancy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are seen as inherently primitive, needing to be socialized at an early age. 2. Children and parents should learn to obey expected norms of behavior regardless of the impact on the emotional ties between them. 3. Self-care and emotional independence should be accomplished as early as possible, even if the child protests. 4. Women are expected to balance motherhood against other roles, including those of wife, friend, employee.
Early Childhood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are clearly in need of continuing discipline and guidance. 2. Children can and should be trained to do a variety of useful tasks and chores, even at an early age. 3. Basic social and moral training is seen as a responsibility of the family (<i>parents patrie</i>). 4. Shaping the child's actions is accomplished through adult control largely in the form of reinforcement and punishment.

Methods of child discipline provide insight into childrearing. In the context of an accepting indulgence, Japanese toddlers are encouraged to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of others (Clancy, 1986) and to conform to social expectations. The Japanese mother tends to avoid confrontation and does not resort to her authority (Rohlen, 1989). The ideal is "that the child has internalized a desire to please the mother and this desire will result in compliance" (Conroy, Hess, Azuma, & Kashiwagi, 1980, p. 169). In extreme cases, however, Japanese children are disciplined with the threat of withdrawal of parental love. (Azuma,

these data, some trends appear clear. The American division of marital labor appears more equitable. In the United States, wives do more work out of the home and husbands do more work in the home. While Japanese mothers spend more time at home with their infants, they also have more extensive non-childcare work demands within the home. These work demands have the potential to impact on the time and energy the mother has available for care of her infant. Yet Japanese mothers place a higher value on their role as mothers than on other roles. Moreover, in comparison with the United States, Japanese generally live in homes with fewer and smaller rooms, thus keeping mother and baby in closer proximity. It may be that Japanese infant care is more integrated with other household tasks than in America.

These data suggest some of the differing environmental constraints on mother-infant interaction in Japan and the United States. We now turn to an examination of differences that infants themselves bring to the interaction.

NEWBORN BEHAVIOR

It has been hypothesized that differences in the behavior of Japanese and American children and differences in their interactions with their parents may derive from differences in the populations at birth. Cross-cultural studies in other societies have found differences between cultures on specific items of the Brazelton Neonatal Behavior Assessment Scale. For example, the Kipsigis in East Africa show lower scores on defensive reaction to a cloth placed over the face than infants from other ethnic groups living in the same region (deVries & Super, 1978), and Navajo infants have been found to be more excitable, to be quicker to self-calm, and to have lower motor tone than Caucasian infants.

However, there is considerable evidence that the behavioral differences are the result of differences in the physical and social context of pregnancy and childbirth, in the lability of newborn behavior, in the reliability drift of observers in the field, and in the social and physical conditions in which the test is administered (Chisholm, 1981; deVries & Super, 1978; Lester & Brazelton, 1982). For example, the weak defensive reaction of the Kipsigis infants seems to be due to the cultural practice of covering the newborn's face with a cloth during the day for privacy, quiet, and cleanliness. Even by the time of testing, these infants had habituated to a cloth on the face.

Bornstein (1989) recently reviewed the evidence about possible differences in the activity levels and motor maturity of infants in Japan and the United States. Of the 10 studies that he reviewed, five found more activity or more motor development in their American sample, and five found higher levels in their Japanese sample. Not only is this literature inconclusive about the existence of differences, it does not allow us to determine if possible differences are congenital or cultural. An attempt to determine the role of culture in early behavioral

differences compared fourth generation Japanese-American infants with Caucasian-American infants (Caudill & Frost, 1973). Infants who were genetically Japanese, but who were raised by thoroughly acculturated mothers did not differ from Caucasian-American infants. In summary, research does not point to consistent early differences in the Japanese and American infants, and where there are differences, they seem to be due to environmental rather than congenital factors.

MOTHER-INFANT INTERACTION

How do historically rooted beliefs about child care and the home environment affect actual mother-infant interaction? Child care beliefs are thought to provide ideals that motivate and guide actual interaction as well as to establish a "common sense" frame of reference of appropriate child care practices. More general environmental influences such as the predominant role of the Japanese mother in the home also shape national differences in the parent-child relationship. It should also be noted that the mother-infant interaction provides feedback to the mother that probably influences beliefs about child care.

This section reports on the few well-controlled cross-cultural comparisons of the early mother-infant interaction between Japan and the United States. In a research project done between 1961 and 1964, Caudill and his colleagues (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969) made naturalistic observations of 30 4-month-old infants and mothers in their homes. The amount of face-to-face play was recorded in relation to the time spent in sleeping, eating, and caregiving activities, but the details of the face-to-face interaction were not noted. American infants were found to engage in greater amounts of gross body activity, play with objects, and happy vocalizations. In comparison, the Japanese infants were more passive and cried more. American mothers did more looking at, repositioning, and talking to their infants while the Japanese mothers rocked, carried, lulled, and slept with their infants more.

Subsequent investigators have suggested that Caudill and Weinstein's findings may be explained by the differences in size and layout of the home in Japan vs. the United States, rather than on the basis of differences in childrearing beliefs and practices (Chen & Miyake, 1986). Thus there may be more need to calm the baby in the more confined environment of the Japanese household.

However, when Otaki and colleagues (Otaki, Durrett, Richards, Nyquist, & Pennebaker, 1986) attempted to replicate Caudill and Weinstein's 1969 study, their results were different. They found no difference in the frequency of lulling or holding or rocking of infants in the two cultures. The authors suggest that the two cultures may have converged over time, partly due to the exposure of Japanese mothers to American childrearing ideas.

In another replication of Caudill and Weinstein, Shand and Kosawa (1985b)

municative style found by Clancy (1986). Communication among Japanese adults relies more on nonverbal cues and indirect verbal messages than communication among American adults. Japanese spoken language follows strict rules that designate interpersonal status differences. Verbs appear at the end of a sentence and can be changed in tense, level of formality, or between negation and affirmation, depending upon the speakers' evaluation of the listeners' response. Thus, *Japanese pay closer attention to nonverbal signals, and often express important affective and interpersonal messages indirectly*. U.S. speakers, on the other, value direct expression of feelings and precision in conveying meaning.

Because the "topic" of communication during the face-to-face period is the mutual exchange of affective feelings (Stern, 1974), one would expect mothers to use culturally appropriate means of expressing affect: through nonverbal displays and indirect statements for the Japanese mothers and through direct verbal statements for the U.S. mothers. In our sample, Japanese mothers contingently and co-occurently used a greater variety of nonverbal visual stimulation (hand gesticulation, facial expression, and looming), and more often used touching than U.S. mothers. In addition, Japanese mothers did not contingently respond to infant vocalizations nor did they use their own vocalizations as contingent responses, while American mothers did.

In a separate analysis of the mother's vocalizations in the data described above (Toda, Fogel, & Kawai, 1990) we found that Japanese mothers used more indirect, verbal means to communicate interpersonal meaning than American mothers. In general the speech of the U.S. mothers focused on the communication of information (directing, interpreting, reporting, and answering), while the speech of Japanese mothers was affect-salient (encouraging or discouraging,

Table 3.3. Summary of Findings from Microanalytic Study of Mother-Infant Play

U.S. mothers. When the baby looked, smiled, or vocalized the U.S. mothers reduced their own expressiveness and vocalizing. If the baby continued to look at mother, she resumed with a series of facial expressions and vocalizations. These actions served also as the primary response mode to the infant's smiling and vocalizing. U.S. mothers spent about two-thirds of their time holding their face relatively close to the infants', using the intimacy of proximity to engage in an interaction dominated by shifts of facial expression and vocalizations.

Japanese mothers. When the baby looked, smiled, or vocalized the Japanese mothers reduced their own expressiveness and vocalizing, while they leaned close and touched their babies. If the baby continued to look at the mother, she resumed with a series of looming leaning movements accompanied by touching. When the baby smiled she returned the infant's smile with a smile or laugh, and relied less on touching and looming. Japanese mothers used a variety of auditory and visual displays with their hands—gesticulating and clapping—but this behavior did not seem to have a simultaneous or contingent relationship to any of the infant behaviors that we coded.

greeting, calling by name, singing songs, and using onomatopoeics). Mothers from the United States were also more likely to use grammatically correct utterances, to talk about their infants' actions, and to ask direct (yes/no or wh-) questions.

Perhaps the most interesting cultural differences between the speech to infants was that Japanese mothers used a great deal more baby talk than the U.S. mothers. Baby talk (BT) is a specific register of language felt to be appropriate with children, and it contrasts with adult usages. For example, in the United States, BT for "stomach" is "tummy;" in Japan the adult word for stomach, "onaka," is rendered in BT as "ponpo." In our 2-minute interactions, United States mothers used BT an average of one time, usually either "mama" or "tummy." In contrast, the Japanese mothers used BT an average of six times in 2 minutes. Table 3.4 gives some examples of BT used by Japanese mothers. In the United States, mothers appear to use BT to get the infant's attention. In Japan, BT, with its formal if playful demarcation of child and adult status, may be a conventional way to express affection for the infant.

There is ample evidence that maternal speech to preverbal infants serves different functions in Japan and the United States. Japanese mothers' speech acts to infants appear to be direct emotional interventions while American mothers appear to more often use speech to comment on and to their infants. Caudill and Weinstein (1969) and Shand and Kosawa (1985a) reported that American mothers chatted more to their infants who engaged in more noncrying vocalizations than did Japanese infants. American mothers, who value verbal directness, may be encouraging verbal proficiency. Japanese mothers tended to chat to their infants when the infants were upset, perhaps to soothe them. Chew (1969; cited in Ferguson, 1977) found more instances of baby talk, shorter utterances, and more contentless utterances in Japanese compared to Western mothers' speech to preverbal infants. U.S. mothers' speech to 3-month-olds has been found to contain a large percentage of references to the infants' state and expression

Table 3.4. Examples of Baby Talk Used by Japanese Mothers

English Equivalent	Adult Speech	Baby Talk	Explanation
Are you hungry?	Onaka suita?	Onaka shuita	Phonological change
Let's play	Asobimashoo	Achobimachoo	Phonological change
Please	Doozo	Doojo	Phonological change
Eye	Me	Meme	Duplication
It hurts	Itai	Itai-itai	Duplication
Get up	Okiru	Okii	Shortening
Hiccup	Shakkuri	Hikku hikku	Mimic sound of action
Lamp	Denki	Denki-san	Use of honorific
Dirty	Katanai	Batchii	Entirely new word

Source: Toda, Fogel, & Kawai (1990).

But the most striking example of the interpersonal autonomy of the American toddlers was that they left the task for longer than did the Japanese toddlers. Only three Japanese toddlers left the task while all but three of the American toddlers did so.

In general, Japanese mothers seemed eager to help their children complete the task as many times as possible. They seemed to slip easily into an intensive helping role that continues, albeit in a more academic form, throughout childhood. Close physical interaction seemed the norm as mothers sought to facilitate their toddler's performance by handing over blocks and pointing out where they might go. Japanese toddlers seemed to have internalized a desire to do the task in the way that the mother considered appropriate. One Japanese mother interested her daughter in the task by suggesting incorrect blocks to her daughter. Her daughter, who had appeared apathetic until that time, responded with vigorous task completion. But frustrated or not, Japanese toddlers stayed at the task.

American mothers seemed most interested in toddlers demonstrating their ability to do the task by themselves. American toddlers probably had more experiences of doing the task on their own and of attempting to do so than Japanese toddlers. American toddlers also seemed to have internalized a sense of their autonomy. Some made the task easier for themselves by dumping out the turtle puzzle before all the blocks were fit. Others, frustrated or simply more interested in doing something else, left the task for 10 times as long as did Japanese children. Mothers either let their children wander off or engaged in verbal negotiating and physical struggle to get their toddlers to return.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has reviewed differences in the parent-child relationship in Japan and the United States, focusing on parent beliefs, the home environment, and parent-infant and parent-child relationships. In both nations, beliefs about what children are like and what is best for them are reflected in interactional styles with children. But beliefs and interactional styles are very different in Japan and the United States.

On both a cultural level and in the structure of home life, the Japanese mother's relationship with the infant is especially primary. The ideal is for the mother to create a relationship in which the infant is naturally drawn into considerate, interdependent, competent interactions with others. The first step is to satisfy the infant's desires for proximity, to accept and respond directly to the infant's proclivities and affective needs. Within this context, mothers focus the infant's attention on reciprocal interpersonal processes. Children are to behave, for example, lest they hurt someone else's feelings or lest they themselves become ostracized. After infancy, competence in various areas is encouraged by

showing children how things are done and actively working with them on tasks. The degree of interdependence fostered between parent and child in Japan cannot be underestimated.

In the United States, eventual self-reliance and self-assertion are valued. Infants are provided with toys and encouraged to do tasks on their own. Infants are spoken to in a relatively adult way and verbal proficiency is encouraged throughout childhood. Infants are oriented towards areas in which they can practice and develop autonomy. Children are also encouraged to stick up for themselves and say what they want. However, parents attempt to control their children's self-assertion by appealing to their own authority. In this respect, American ideals of childrearing and actual practice are often inconsistent, such that ideals of autonomy may contribute to parent-child conflict.

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