

Cross-Cultural Differences in Development

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Development Overview

- **Human Development:** Changes in physical, psychological, and social behavior and thought across the lifetime
 - **Enculturation:** Process of learning about one's culture, typically without direct teaching
 - **Socialization:** Deliberate teaching of a culture
- A child's development and enculturation depends on:
 - With whom the child interacts
 - Where they interact with others
 - Roles children play
 - Parents' beliefs of appropriate parenting practices

Developmental Niche

- **Developmental Niche:** World in which the child learns the values and norms important to the culture
- Three components of the developmental niche:
 - Physical and social setting
 - Customs of child care (cultural norms and institutions)
 - Psychology of the caregivers (beliefs and values)
- The developmental niche promotes, nurtures, and constrains development
- Before examining the cultural influences on development, a key first question to ask is:
 - What is good development within the culture?

Infant Development

- **African Infant Precocity:** African babies develop psychomotor skills before Euro-American babies (Gerber & Dean, 1957)
 - For example, African babies sit up and walk about 1 month before Euro-American babies
- Cultural factors that may influence faster psychomotor infant development in African babies:
 - Less anesthesia during birth
 - Massaging babies
 - Deliberate teaching and practice of motor skills
 - Vertical position of baby while mother works

Similarities and Differences in Parenting of Infants

- **Intuitive parenting practices:** Cross-cultural similarity in parenting of infants
 - Attempt to capture and maintain the infant's attention
 - Exaggerating facial expression
 - **Motherese:** Higher pitch and larger variations in pitch when speaking to infants
- Differences in infant parenting practices
 - Speech to children
 - **Affect-salient speech:** Songs, nonsense expressions, and incomplete statements
 - Empathize with needs of infants
 - **Information-Salient speech:** Provide information about the environment with a child
 - Encourages individual expression

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Similarities and Differences in Play

- Children playing is culturally universal
 - Functions of play:
 - Promote cognitive development (Symbolism, Language use, Problem Solving, Creativity)
 - Promote social development (Friendship, Social competence, Emotional maturity)
- Cultural differences in play
 - Amount of time children spent playing
 - Age at children stop playing
 - Sibling involvement in play
 - Adulthood involvement in play
- Children in complex cultures play more and play with more complexity

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Cultural Differences in Play

- Chinese children spent more time playing with other children whereas American children spent more time playing individually (Haight, Wang, Fung, Williams, & Mintz, 1999)
- When playing with toddlers, Japanese mothers focus more on social interactions while American mothers use play to teach knowledge of the world.

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Influence of Childcare Customs on Development

- Frequency of mothers in western Kenya holding their infants had positive correlation with the child's affective disposition at 12 years (Keller & Eckensberger, 1998)
- Frequency of mother-holding did not influence cognitive performance
- Children's early experiences lead to **Domain-specific** consequences
- **Conclusion:** Different parenting practices do not have general development consequences, but the outcomes are specifically related to the parenting practices

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Parents' Goals

- Parenting goals of rural Gusii mothers (Kenya) and urban American mothers (LeVine, Levine, Dixon, Richman, Leiderman, & Keefer, 1996)
 - American mothers' goal is to actively engage and socially interact with their children
 - Mothers respond to 20% of baby's vocalizations
 - Gusii mothers only respond to 5% of vocalizations
 - Gusii mothers believe that stimulation leads to self-centered adult
- Goals and beliefs of parents are rooted in what is appropriate for the culture.

Dimensions of Child Rearing

(Barry, Bacon & Child, 1957)

- **Obedience Training:** Degree to which children are trained to obey adults
- **Responsibility Training:** Degree which children are trained take responsibility for tasks
- **Nurturance Training:** Degree to which children are trained to care for the younger siblings and others
- **Achievement Training:** Degree to which children are trained to strive for standards of excellence in performance
- **Self-Reliance:** Degree to which children are trained to be independent of the assistance from others for supplying their own needs and wants

Parenting Ethnotheories

- **Parenting Ethnotheories:** Knowledge and beliefs about the domain of parenting
 - Beliefs, values, and practices of parent about the proper way to raise a child
 - For example:
 - Affection and warmth between parents and children
 - Amount of time breastfeeding
 - Development: When a child walks, talks, chooses friends
 - Why children misbehave and how to discipline
 - Amount of talk to children
 - Sleeping patterns

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Parenting Ethnotheories

- Videotapes of children in preschool in Japan and USA were shown to teachers (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989)
 - Perspectives on class size:
 - **US:** Disapproved of the large responsibility on teachers by having a large number (30) of children in Japanese classrooms
 - **Japanese:** Disapproved of the small class size in the US because children would be unable to learn from others
 - Perspective on misbehavior:
 - **Japanese:** Children did not develop a healthy dependency on their mother.
 - **US:** Children had inherent problems

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Parenting Ehtnotheories

- Conclusions
 - Parents and other caretakers influence their child's development through socialization practices based on their cultural beliefs
 - Parents reflect the standard and expectations of their cultural environment in:
 1. How they treat their children
 2. How they perceive social situations
 - Parents do not tend to realize the extent to which they direct their children into cultural practices

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Child Rearing Conclusion

- Some child-rearing practices are similar across all cultures
- Child-rearing also differs from one society to the other
- **Universalist Perspective**

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Conclusion

- A particular institution or practice cannot be removed from one culture and inserted into another and expect the same developmental outcomes
- Understanding healthy development and taking action to promote healthy development requires thinking about the elements of a child's developmental niche and how they interact

Revision

- Explain the six dimensions of child rearing.
- Explain the concept of parental ethnotheories and how they can influence development.
- What are some common and different parenting practices across cultures?