

MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Introduction

Charting the Mediterranean Child (2004) presents an initial survey on Mediterranean children where the child is understood as corresponding to the 0- 18 age group. Depending on the general data gathered there are 233 million children in the Mediterranean in 0-20 age group. 65 % of these children live in the southern and the other 35 % in the northern area of the Mediterranean (including Turkey). The countries included in this study fall in the Mediterranean influence that includes the east of the Mediterranean basin as far as west coast of the Black Sea and countries of the Persian Gulf. The five geographical areas examined are the Arab Peninsula, North Africa, Southern Mediterranean, East Europe and South Europe, which are influenced by certain factors such as existing socio-economic development which is in transition in many respects. Turkey to be a member in the long-term prospect of the further expansion of EU, is one of those countries in the area of east Europe.

Turkey being part of the Ottoman Empire until 1923 imparts historical influence of centuries on the area of Balkans which display different indicators from those countries of East Europe. Israel can also be included in the Mediterranean area since displaying rates of development very similar to those of south Europe. Looking back at historical development, the Mediterranean has constituted not only the frontier but also has been an area of exchange between cultures, trade and tourism. According to the CENSIS the social dynamics of the “Mediterranean way of life” play an important role in the development of the Mediterranean children.

Primarily, the social status of women in the Mediterranean has its consequences on their children. The research findings indicate that the condition of women in general and particularly the mothers’ living conditions have an immediate effect on both physical, psychological and social development of children from the first years of life.

In the Arab Peninsula, type of education currently provided plays a significant part in the Arab thought. As “The Economist” comments early education provided in the area emphasizes tradition and respect for authority and the truth should be sought in the Koran and not in experience. As Syrian saying goes, “the role of thought is

to explain and transmit but not to search and question”. Such educational goals are known to discourage critical thought and innovation and taking initiatives (Lynkeus, 2004).

1. Review of research on mother - child interaction

Research in Turkey, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, Israel, Egypt presents a general picture of socio-psychological context in the Mediterranean region for the studies of mother and child interaction. Apart from high-lighting the differences between populations in the countries mentioned above, it is essential to emphasize the same factors, which are influential in various areas of development of children. These commonly shared cultural factors play a role on the course of child development, mothers aspirations for the child, parental beliefs and child rearing practices, short and long term goals of parents for their children which determine the nature of mother and child interaction.

Even though the countries in the Mediterranean basin are characterized by a great deal of ethnic, religious, cultural and historical diversity, some prevalent commonalities make up a homogeneous background which is projected unto the parental beliefs and child rearing practices. As Kağıtçıbaşı comments, gender roles, child socialization, close knit familial kinship and communal networks, social interaction patterns and solidarities are frequently encountered dispositions among people living in this area. These commonalities justify a comparative discussion of research on mother and child interaction across the above mentioned countries. When closely studied, these countries show common family structure and dynamics.

One observes a number of interesting similarities suggesting an existing “mediterranean way of life” as a different pattern from elsewhere in Europe. Since the 1960s during the “Second Demographic Transition” in Greece, Italy and Spain, family and institution of marriage have both undergone a process of profound changes where a number of different dimensions of the transformation of the socioeconomic and cultural values converge. This resulted in the reduction of fertility rate and an increase in divorce rate leading to women

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entering the labor force with varying intensity and timing. The changing role of women in these societies and their relation to formal work and family responsibilities seem to shape the parental behaviours observed during the last decades.

Until lately, social class, rural-urban, ethnic and gender differences have been thoroughly studied but studies investigating as to which aspects of the above variables predict the kind of behaviours and why they are instrumental in eliciting such behaviours have not been many. Studies that aim to identify the processes underlying the relation other than establishing a linkage between these variables and the elicited behaviour should be given a wider consideration.

In this respect, it may be of interest to find out which parental beliefs and goals may be the underlying push factors in certain parental styles. Therefore research on parental beliefs remains to be pragmatic in explaining certain set of behaviours with an emphasis on the potential psychological consequences for children (Sigel, et al, 1992).

In order to evaluate the research findings on mother and child interaction, the innate characteristics, basic needs and dispositions of children in the course of development are to be considered. Subsequently, socialization models and parental belief systems leading to cultural value of children need to be examined. Finally parental styles in child-rearing practices which affect the outcomes of mother-child interactions should be closely studied. Cultural values and attitudes regulate the child rearing values, developmental expectations and emotional orientations of the caretakers. Such differences and expectations mediate the daily experiences of children, their interactions with the persons, objects and symbols in their immediate environment (Rosenthal, 1999, 2000).

When studying mother child interactions we should consider the child development theories that are instrumental in child socialization. One theoretical perspective regarding mother-child relations in multicultural framework is Bowlby's attachment theory (1969). In the mother-infant attachment, the most important and crucial criterion is the way an infant has formed an attachment to his mother. In order to test a child's attachment a set of behaviour patterns are considered.

Biological theories emphasize the biological basis of child development. Brazelton focused on the interactive nature of mother-infant relation, especially emphasizing infant's contribution. The various individual differences exhibited at birth are being recognized to be sources of infant behaviour, which shape parental behaviour. Wolf

suggested that certain behavioural differences of different populations may arise from genetics rather than culture. Similarly Kagan, Konner and De Vore emphasize the biological aspects of human behaviour (Konner, 1977).

Social learning theories are concerned with how behaviour is modified through specific social experiences. Observational learning is fundamental in establishing a behaviour depending on a series of cognitive components such as attention, memory, imagery and motivation. Bandura (1965) proposes that individuals' beliefs about their ability to be effective in the environment constitute one of the key factors to understand human behaviour. This theory is particularly effective applied to understanding parental behaviour.

Ecological theories recognize the role of context in which children live and are brought up (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989). When parent-child relationships are in question the child's behaviour or characteristics are believed to influence both the parent and the contexts in which the interaction occurs. The child's experiences with the environment in turn influence the child's subsequent behaviour and characteristics. This theory is functional in explaining how a child's development takes place within a series of contextual levels.

Socialization Models of Child Development

Most of the studies regarding child socialization in multicultural research are derived from theories of development. LeVine's multicultural research on child development - socialization and mother-child relationship brings forth the importance of child-rearing practices to adaptation and to the survival of practices. Ainsworth also demonstrates how the multicultural approach is critical for comprehensive understanding of child-rearing and socialization processes.

Various studies indicate that child-rearing practices are shaped by cultural values that vary between human populations, which become effective in the personal preferences and inner regulations of individuals who seek to sustain them in the next generation. According to LeVine these cultural values are derived from not only situations that are specific to child care but also from broad orientations associated with the social system and its institutional goals, such as inter-personal relations, personal achievement and social solidarity. He suggests that culture, no less than biology, contributes to the ways in which parents perceive the task of rearing children; these ways are "rational" in that they contain information about environmental contingencies previously experienced by the population and assimilated into its cultural tradition; this information concerns aspects of the environment that are the most salient to the health

and welfare of the child, and appropriate responses to them; parents who conform to such customary prescriptions may be unaware of their past and present efficacy, but may view them as religiously or ethically ordained; this adaptive component concealed in child-rearing customs is important to understand the constraints within which other cultural values operate and to assess the prospects of change (LeVine, p. 17).

LeVine's model of parental strategies is based on the concept of parental investment strategies for allocating time, attention, and domestic resources to the raising of children during early and later years. Each major type of human socioeconomic adaptation (agrarian, urban-industrial) is assumed to have an optimal parental investment strategy that reflects its specific incentives and hazards affecting reproduction and also conditions the assumptions with which adults approach parenthood.

Agrarian parental strategy is "quantitative"; it emphasizes high fertility being its primary goal. This reflects the high value of relatively unskilled child labor in domestic food and craft production, the high value of numerous progeny for long term social support during a parent's late years, the low cost of each child to parents in terms of domestic resources, and the high mortality rate of infants and children. The goal of agrarian mothers is to maximize the number of surviving children by spacing births to prolong the period exclusive to maternal attention, including breast-feeding and co sleeping.

Industrial parental strategy: In contrast to agrarian parents, urban-industrial parents use "qualitative" parental strategies. The main goal in this type of strategy is to make children acquire skills rather than have more and more children. Regarding these strategies in an urban-industrial setting children cost more and contribute less than in agrarian countries. These strategies lead to low infant and child mortality rates. The task of raising a child is redefined as a voluntary activity demanding much more parental time, energy, and attention over a longer period of time. In urban-industrial context, childcare is construed less as nurturance for child at risk than as mental and social stimulation for a child with a future. Maternal attention is devoted to talking and playing with the baby, creating extended "proto conversations" before the baby is capable of speech and responding to the baby's initiatives for social interaction. As the child gets older, takes more initiative, and communicates more comprehensively, the mother increases her attention in response to the child's expectation.

LeVine suggests that the distribution of maternal attention and effort across first years of child's life in urban-industrial societies be opposite of that found in agrarian societies. But he reminds that each culture,

drawing on its own symbolic tradition, supplies models for parental behaviour when implemented under local conditions, become culture-specific styles of parental commitment. Socio-economic and demographic conditions vary among agrarian societies and among urban-industrial societies and culture models for parental behaviour will reflect these variations.

Whiting's model of psychosocial learning suggests that learning environments of childhood would have to include physical and economic, cultural and interpersonal factors. There are differences between cultures in degree of initial indulgence or permissiveness, age of onset of socialization, severity of socialization and techniques of punishment used by parents. Different from attachment and learning theory the infant-stress theory emphasizes frequency and strength of rewards and punishments, the choice of discipline techniques, timing of various events such as weaning, toilet training vb. during the socialization process. In training for independence, the relative salience of the mother and father as socializing agents, the number of caretakers and the occurrences of specific stressful events in early infancy are taken to be crucial. Whiting believes that cultural variation in training for responsibility rises more directly from variation in mothers' workloads than from variation in capital accumulation. In cultures where women have a major responsibility for the primary subsistence activity, especially in agricultural societies where the women are the chief gardeners, the older children are held responsible not only for domestic chores in general, but for much of the infant care as well. Complex societies, especially those that have adopted Western schooling and have a social class structure with upward mobility related to achievement, are more likely to stress individual achievement.

Parents' Belief Systems and Cultural Value

Belief systems may be an adequate way to cluster maternal behaviours rather than the study of specific behaviours. The "meaning" of a maternal act may be quite different than how we (outsider to the culture) may interpret. To counteract this cultural bias, studies have to emphasize "the behaviour in context" "to be able to interpret the cultural aspect of a particular behaviour. Moreover, studying behaviour in its "situational-interactive context" informs us about the circumstances under which the particular behaviour occurs. Masten and Coastworth (1998) suggest that parents evaluate their children based on the knowledge about child development that are culturally transmitted from one generation to the next. Miller and Goodnow (1988) stated that parents' belief systems about child development are culturally constructed rather than individually. The parents assimilate the culturally valued perceptions of competence and use the kind of disciplinary techniques

and parenting that increase valued outcomes in children (Kagitcibasi, 1990).

Dinges and Duffy (1979) analyzed varying theories of competence and found fifteen dimensions of competence. Some of these are affect, autonomy, interactional competence, interpersonal competence, motivation, objective competence, subjective competence and self - symbol formation. Parental values and beliefs mediate between cultural values and parental behaviour and lead to competency outcomes. Addition to cultural factors, SES also influences parental beliefs and results in different parental behaviour.

Parenting Styles in Child-Rearing Practices

The most important and direct influence on children's development and well being is the parenting they receive. One of the parenting models was developed by Belsky (1984), who suggested that parenting is determined by three major influences. These are parental characteristics and resources; the social context in which the family lives, and the support available in this context; and characteristics of children (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001, p.48). She proposed that parental characteristics as well as the spousal relationships are the most potent source for competent parenting.

Another model of parenting involves combining dimensions of parenting to identify styles (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Baumrind, 1991). Early formulations of these parenting styles used two dimensions: *acceptance and support, and control and monitoring*.

Child rearing practices

Child rearing practices refers to the interactions involving parental practices and expression of attitudes, values and beliefs, between parents and their children (Sears, Maccoby and Levin, 1957; cited in Sever, 1985). There are important factors underlying a wide variety of parental behaviours. Sears, Maccoby and Levin suggested eight factors used by mothers: *permissiveness – restriction, family adjustment, warmth of mother – child relationship, responsible child training orientation, aggressiveness and punitiveness, perception of husband, orientation toward child's physical well being and pattern of control and discipline*. Crandall and Preston suggested four major dimensions of maternal behaviour: affection, protective, coercive control and coercive control. Although there is no general agreement on what the most important elements of child rearing practices are the results of various research findings indicate that the following are the significant variables: permissiveness – restriction, autocratic – democratic practices; punitive – non punitive discipline; warmth – coldness of parental attitudes and practices; causal – ignoring behaviour

toward the child, stress on promoting independence as opposed to encouraging dependence on the parents (McCandless, 1967, cited in Sever, 1985).

Baumrind (1967) suggests three types of mother – child interaction according to her use of disciplinary practices and attitudes: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Authoritarian mothers prefer to control their children through absolute set of rules rarely providing justifications to their children. However, authoritative mothers exercise firm control through directives resisting reactions from their children. They demand maturity by pressuring their children to perform according to their abilities and by encouraging independence and decision making. They would give reasons to justify their requests for compliance, solicit their children's opinions, exercise discipline in the context of a warm, emotionally supportive home environment. Whereas permissive mothers avoid exercising control, use little punishment, act in an accepting positive way toward their children's actions and generally let them regulate their own activities without interfering.

Mother-Child Interaction in Child Socialization

Mother-child interactions are attempted to be explained by various theories to varying degrees. These theories may seem to be competing yet complement each other or may coexist in conflict. Each theory focuses on different mother-child interactions highlighting different qualities of the parent-child dynamics. Each family exhibits series of relationships composed of set of interactions. Hinde (1976) comments about these relationships collected on multiple dimensions: the content (what do the people do together), the diversity (the range of things done), the quality (the participants responsiveness to each other), relative frequency and patterning of interaction, the reciprocal or complimentary nature (equality vs dominance, intimacy and commitment) (cited in Holden, 1997, p.23).

These dimensions of mother-child relationships uniquely occur within the context of the family. When family is taken into account the relationship among all members of the family must be recognized in order for the family structure and functioning to be understood. When we say that family is universal we should not conclude that it is uniform or even static. Childhood and family have been interpreted differently at various places at different times. Looking at the history of child in the family we get an overview of the transition of values, expectations, child rearing practices and consequently differing mother – child interactions. Since then, psychologists explored many functions and behaviours within families trying to tap the emotional relations between parents and children such as bonding, modeling etc. Childhood is continuously being redefined in the modern world in

respect to law and social order, which has a great impact on children's prospects and responsibilities.

Universal Dimensions of Maternal Behaviour

Mothers and caregivers are expected to have similar tasks in caring for socializing and transmitting culture to their children. When we look at these tasks from a closer view, five main types of behaviour are elicited (Whiting & Edwards, 1988, p.86)

- The caretaker must see to the physical well-being of her children by paying attention to their nutrition, health and by protecting them from physical discomfort and harm.
- The caretaker must relieve the child from anxiety and fear by offering emotional comfort, often in the form of physical contact.
- She must see that the child learns toilet training and proper hygiene.
- She must help the child to learn culturally appropriate ways of social behaviour.
- She must teach the child the skills acquired in early years.

These behaviours and skills being basic to survival are considered to be similar throughout cultures. Whiting & Whiting (1960) observed mothers interacting with their children in 4 different cultures and collected comparable data. They found striking similarity across samples of mothers. Twelve of the twenty three social behaviours observed and coded were then combined into four categories:

- Nurturance – routine care giving and the offering of help, attention, support
- Training – teaching appropriate skills, social behaviour, hygiene, restrain from dangerous and undesirable activities, assigning chores, childcare, teaching of etiquette.
- Control – correcting, threatening, punishing and seeking to dominate
- Sociability – interacting with children in a positive friendly way, exchange information, tease their children, talk and laugh with them, coming close and touching them.
- Responsiveness- responding positively when child seeks help, comfort, food, support or information. This category was created to assess the mothers' compliance to their children's taking initiative.

Mother-child relationship patterns including attitudes and beliefs are influenced by a number of factors. These factors can be studied at different level of analysis, which are grouped as influences within the family, influence of the environment through the family and influences of social change through the family. Factors such as age,

education and occupation of the mother, mother's concept of her role, the personality of the mother and child are accepted as influences within the family (Hurlock, 1974; Whiting and Child, 1966; McArthur, 1955; Aberle and Naegele, 1952). The factors including ecology, maintenance systems (Whiting and Child, 1966), political structure, technology and economic organizations (Alberle, 1961), rural – urban setting of the parents (Miller & Swanson, 1958) and SES of the family are some of the factors related to the influence of the environment. The third level of analysis including the influence of social change through the family draws attention to the “adjustable capacity” of human beings and the process of continuous interaction between man and his socio cultural environment (Sever, 1985).

2. Review of Research on Mother - Child Interaction in the Mediterranean

2.1. Research on Mother - Child Interaction in Turkey

Turkey being a developing country, undergoes a rapid social change as a result of urbanization and industrialization. This may produce changes in the cultural values of people from different levels of income, education and occupation, and rural urban areas. The general social context of the Turkish society may be described as one rapid social change from being a traditional, agricultural, rural and patriarchal society into an increasingly urbanized, industrial, modern, egalitarian society (Kagitcibasi, 1977). The Turkish family is generally characterized as one where there is a warm and loving parent – child relationship (Kagitcibasi, 1973).

Lecompte and Ozer (1978) investigated the dimensions of child – rearing attitudes among mothers of three different SES in Ankara – Turkey. The results revealed that the mothers from high SES tended to receive high scores on encouraging verbalization and equality, rejection of the housewife role and parental conflict. But the mothers of low SES supported the dimension of extreme mothering and protection; discipline and obedience. In a similar study Kagitcibasi (1973, 1975) researched the effects of socio-cultural variables on mother – child relationship in Izmir – Turkey. She reported that upper SES status, urban residence or upward social mobility from rural to urban were associated with affection orientation within mother – child relations, which was associated with modern attitudinal tendencies and values among youth. On the

contrary, lower SES, rural residence or lack of mobility were associated with a control (strict discipline) orientation within mother – child relations, which was associated with traditional tendencies among the youth.

An another study concerning families belonging to the middle and lower SES in Istanbul – Turkey found evidence of considerable inter generational continuity of socialization in the domestic – nurturant role of women (Kagitcibasi and Kansu, 1976, 1977). In the national study of Turkish Value of Children it was revealed that through social change and development there is a decrease in the economic value and an increase in the psychological value attached to the child. Psychological value is perceived primarily as providing companionship, love and joy and is highly valued in daughters especially by mothers. Also in the same study it was found that the child's dependence rather than independence was valued in the Turkish society which is explainable by the economic value of children in the context of underdevelopment (Kagitcibasi, 1980).

Traditional Turkish family is patriarchal, authoritarian, and hierarchical. Individuals are embedded in a network of close kinship ties and neighbours. Social relationships are based on mutual responsibilities among members of hierarchically ordered groups. In this hierarchy adults have authority over children and males have authority over females. Within this structure, traits such as obedience and respect for authorities are highly valued for both boys and girls, because family loyalties are more important than individualistic interests are. Where the nuclear family is unable to fulfil its tasks, the extended family provides support and security. The Turkish family is characterized by emotional closeness (Kagitcibasi and Sunar, 1992). The intra - family relationships are based on role differentiation. The roles of husband and wife are quite sharply distinct. Physical care of children is women's work. Fathers play the role of distant authority that establishes strict rules of conduct for children. There is greater intimacy between mother and child than between father and child. Husband is the ultimate authority and is entitled to make all decisions for the family. Woman's status is lower than man's. Her status starts to increase only after she gives birth to a boy, and reaches the peak of status when she becomes a mother-in-law (Kagitcibasi and Sunar, 1992).

In Turkey there is a strict sex role differentiation in child rearing practices of parents. Some independence and aggressiveness are permitted in boys, dependence and obedience are expected from girls. But parents don't prefer to encourage interdependence for both girls and boys. As girls become older restrictions of parents become stricter. Basaran (1988, cited in Kagitcibasi, 1990) stated that parents' view of competence changes

according to the child's age. In Turkey the word "uslu" (good mannered, obedient, quite, not boisterous) is highly valued characteristic of pre adolescent children, especially in girls, but "akilli uslu" (intelligent, reasonable, reliable in addition to being good mannered) is valued for adolescents, especially in boys.

Veziroglu (1998), investigated the characteristics of male and female adolescents in Turkey who were doing well from different socio - economic levels. In the study mothers mentioned conformity, family and work involvement, extra curricular interests more for adolescents, but personality characteristics more for pre adolescents. Also in the same study it was found that rural mothers perceived conformity and work involvement as more important. Urban mothers also reported family characteristics, self - sufficiency, social competence, extracurricular interest and health being more important. Similarly it was found that high SES mothers mentioned extracurricular interests more, educational involvement less. With increasing education mothers became more concerned with self - sufficiency, social competence, extracurricular interests, and health, but less with conformity and work involvement.

Kohn (1969, cited in Luster, Rhoades and Haas, 1989) found that different social standing makes a difference in parental values and parental behaviour, affecting child outcomes. According to Kohn the parent's having lower social position demand their children to conform to external authority including obedience and good manners, which are appropriate for lower class occupational demands. But the higher the parent's social position, the more likely he or she is to value self - direction, self - control, and responsibility.

Imamoglu (1986), in her study, compared middle and lower SES families' opinions on desirable characteristics of children in Turkey. She reported that for the children from middle and lower SES families, obedience and loyalty to parents were the most desirable characteristics but in the higher SES independence and self - reliance were more desirable.

According to Seligman (1991) parental criticism is one of the main sources for the construction of a person's explanatory style (cited in Akaygün, 2002). Also he emphasized that the mother's own explanatory style was the most important factor as a source for the construction of a person's explanatory style. In addition Fincham and Hokoda (1995) suggest that mothers are important figures as children tend to model their behaviours, and a mother's causal explanations have influential effects on a child's explanatory style. It is argued that children, unlike adults, do not use their current success or failure, but they hear and rely on their mothers' comment and evaluative sentences (Adler, Kaczala and Parsons, 1982). Akaygün (2002) questioned the relationship between

Turkish mother's and child's explanatory style by taking age, sex and socio-economic status factors into consideration. She found significant correlation between mother and child explanatory styles for the young children from high socio-economic status. Also she reported that sex was not discriminating factor in the relationship between the explanatory styles of mothers and children.

Cross-national research conducted by Lois, Wladis, Hoffman (1975) and Hoffman, (1980) in nine countries (US, Turkey, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Germany) has supported various satisfactions of parenthood that children satisfy depending on how intensely each need is felt. Children are seen as a plausible source of satisfying those needs. The nature of interaction of mother and child depends on what the mothers want for their children and what they want from their children, which may culturally be diverse depending on many social and economic factors.

Hoffman (1984, 1986) concludes that parents rear their children so that to encourage the development of qualities and attitudes needed for their expected roles which may differ from culture to culture. The needs of parents that children seem to satisfy are: economic – utility, primary ties and affection, stimulation and fun, expansion of self, adult status and social identity, achievement and creativity, morality and power. In this study of the Value of Children three of these needs (economic-utility, primary ties and affection, achievement and creativity) are examined within the relationship between these needs and child-rearing goals of parents.

Cross-National Value of Children Study

This research project was conducted in 1975 including nine countries. In each country between 1,000 and 3,000 married women under forty and at least one quarter of their husbands were interviewed. The study was concerned primarily with the perceived psychological satisfactions that children provide for their parents and the relationship between these and fertility attitudes and behaviour. When the needs that children satisfy for parents are examined 54 percent of the Turkish mothers indicated that children satisfied an economic utility need while 46 percent did not include this in their answer. This shows that the most common value of children is economic-utility while primary ties, love and response is most common for U.S. mothers.

Kağıtcıbaşı (1982a) defines the role of the child in a traditional Turkish family on two main dimensions: a) child's place in the independent family structure and b) the child's sex-role identity as a son or daughter. Children's economic value to the family includes both

material contributions while they are young and the old-age security they provide to their parents when they grow up. The interdependence built into the family cycle develops from first the child being dependent on the parents, later the elder parents becoming dependent on their children. This interdependence is seen in social values and in the aspirations of the parents for their children. Among the desired qualities listed, obedience was (60 %) valued whereas independence and self-reliance was valued as (18%).

In another study with lower class Turkish preschool children and their mothers, obedience was most frequently mentioned as positive quality, autonomy and similar concepts were regarded as negative qualities (Kağıtcıbaşı, Sunar & Bekman, 1988).

The preference for child's sexual identity among 54% of respondents was to have a son while only 16% stated a preference for a daughter. This pattern was even more exaggerated among fathers who prefer to have a son by 92% , the mothers preference for a son being by %75 (Kagıtcıbaşı & Sunar, 1992).

Parental Goals

The Cross-National Value of Children Study included two measures of parental goals:

- What qualities parents wanted in their children at school age (given a list of five choices)
- What qualities parents wanted in their children (sons specified) when they grow up (open-ended)

The relationship between the need children satisfy for parents and the parental goals for children was examined separately for three different groups: elementary school educated, high school educated, college educated. Only five countries were selected for this study, Turkey being among them. The results show the following findings on three dimensions:

a) Economic-utilitarian

Parents who wanted economic and utilitarian goals for their sons would be more likely to expect obedience from them to increase the probability that the children will help their parent both as children and as adults. These relationships were statistically significant in Turkish sample as well as Korean and Taiwanese. The utilitarian value of children is more prevalent in countries with mainly rural economics.

When the needed help is best provided by a particular sex, usually the male, there is a preference for that sex. In this study, the answers supported this trend, particularly in Turkey, Korea and Taiwan. Respondents specifically indicated that the reason for preferring sons was their greater potential in economic affairs.

b) Primary ties and Affection

The components of this category of parental needs were that children bring love and provide companionship and strengthen marriage ties. Personal qualities such as outgoing, warm, loving, good-natured, cheerful, not boring, good sense of humor, straightforward was associated with this need.

The results show that the Turkish parents emphasize "being close and loyal" and "being faithful to the parents" as desirable qualities of adult children (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1990, p.81).

c) Achievement, Competence and Creativity

An association between achievement and choosing adult goals for sons and daughters were defined by qualities called "virtue" among which are to be a good person, an honest person, god-fearing man, one who respects others. Parents in the Turkish sample were among those who frequently mentioned such virtues for both sons and daughters, seeking achievement satisfaction with a set of moral qualities as their goal for their children when they grow up. Even though the economic value of the child may lose importance with economic development, the child's psychological value may not change, may even increase, as was found in Turkey in the same study.

To improve the mother and child interaction, parental education programs may well serve to inform the mothers through group encounters where child rearing practices are discussed and problems that arise from the interaction are reviewed under the guidance of a pedagogue, teachers and a child psychologist.

The findings of an eight-week mother support program carried out by Sevinç and Evirgen in an industrial area of Istanbul, Küçükçekmece, with the mothers of pre-school children in a school environment showed positive effects on mothers' beliefs and child-rearing practices. 40 mothers of lower SES who volunteered participated in the study comprising of ten mothers in four groups. The mothers attended the program which consisted of eight workshops on child development and education. They were asked to complete mother-child activity home-works each week and also participated in classes with their children. At the end of the program the mothers reported to be more self-assured, knowing how to react to their children's demands, enjoying sharing time with their children. When the mothers were asked to evaluate the program, their feedback on the whole was as such: "I came to understand why my child behaves the way he does", "I learned that feeding the children and dressing them is not every thing there is to it to be a mother", "we played together with toys and were both happy", "I realized I have to contribute more to my child" (Sevinç & Evirgen, 2003).

Temel ve Ömeroğlu (1993) in their study have developed a parental education program visiting the home

environments of children from low SES. In this study 92 infants and their mothers from shantytown in Ankara took part in the training program. The results indicated positive effects of the program on mother-child interaction and infants' cognitive development.

2.2. Research on Mother- Child Interaction in ISRAEL

Greenbaum and Landua (1977) conducted a study to determine the components of vocal behaviour of infants that are subject to environmental influence, and those that represent developmental stage of mastery by the child, relatively independent of environmental influences. They examined vocal behaviour of infants at various ages in the first year of life and its relation to selected aspects of adult speech by comparing a number of child-rearing environments.

This study was developmental (ages of 2, 4, 7 and 11 months of age) and cross-cultural in design (sampling in five environments: middle class, lower class, institution, kibbutz, and Bedouin Arab). According to results obtained, there is a striking decrease with age in the amount of exposure to sentences spoken by mother in all environments. Also the differences among environments is significant, due largely to the low stimulation received by the institutionalized infants. In the same study it was reported that middle and lower class are higher than the others in the amount of mother's asking of questions. The analyses regarding vocalization of infants revealed that children in the two urban home environments express more vowels than children in the other environments in the three upper age level.

The same study showed that Kibbutz children, who experienced the sharpest drop-off in the amount of speech to which they were exposed, spoke more words per time unit than any other group. Institutionalized children spoke no words at all. The researchers reported that very little direct imitation of vocal behaviour of adults by infants was observed; the amount of vocal behaviour occurring without imitation was greater by many times than that occurred in the context of imitation. Osterweil and Nagano (1991) in their study compared Japanese and Israeli mothers' views on their preschool children's autonomy. Both societies retain common elements of family cohesiveness, emphasis on education, and collectivism. But in Israeli society, there is a Western emphasis on individualism, as well. Different from Japanese mothers Israeli mothers described instrumental independence as taking care of children, and performing tasks. Korat and Levin (2000) investigated the social cultural context in spelling development at the entry level to school. Two different SES groups were examined

regarding (a) the role of spelling in mother-child writing interaction, (b) maternal beliefs concerning the importance of spelling in early years, (c) the spelling level of the child's solo text and (d) the relationships between all these aspects. 40 2nd graders and their mothers -half from high and half from low SES participated in the study. In the first stage the children were asked to write two texts unassisted. In the second stage, the children wrote the same text with their mothers assisting. Interaction in the spelling issues were examined. In the third stage, mothers were interviewed while watching the videotapes of their interaction. The results showed that spelling level of solo texts of children from low SES was lower than that from high SES; but no difference was found in spelling levels of texts written during the interaction stage.

2.3. Research on Mother - Child Interaction in YUGOSLAVIA

Lewis and Ban (1997) have studied mother-child interaction in the region of Croatia, within the Yugoslavian national borders then, after the collapse of Hapsburg Empire. Two samples of socio-cultural life styles were compared to examine the ways mothers interact with their infants. The urban sample was drawn from the capital, Zagreb, and the rural sample from two villages 10 miles to the north of the city. The urban sample were the children of university educated professionals. All of them living in small apartments near the center, often with either the grandmother or the grandfather sharing. Generally 4 adults and a baby sharing a 3 to 4 room apartment which makes it overcrowded by Western standards. Since most mothers have to work to keep up with the living standards, there is a regular need for childcare around the house which is provided by the grandparents. Usually the baby sleeps in the parent's bedroom.

Contemporary Family in Yugoslavia

Maintenance of kinship ties has played a vital role in the modernization of Yugoslav family life both in rural and urban variants. A spirit of mutual help and collectivity remains even though the land is divided. As Buric (1976) states money loaned without interest still prevails. Material help given by urban families to their peasant relatives are returned by substantial contributions of crops and fruit grown in the villages. In the city, apartments are always open to peasant relatives who require medical treatment, who come for legal business, for their children's education or to seek employment. Overall, relatives are willing to contribute in all respects and to intervene in times of need. Children are always under the protection of a web of kinship ties. Weddings and rites of passage such as communion, circumcision

are important events where relatives get together no matter what to rejoice the situation. Collectivism and common interests and solidarity among kins are supported by a system of values. Regardless of educational level or social mobility one attains these values as predominant in their lives. To help a relative in need is considered a moral imperative one cannot ignore. Those who have been helped by kins will always stay thankful to those family members throughout their lives. These interactions are regarded as part of the "natural order" which people go along without questioning. Parents make the best of what they can to provide their children with education. Children in return are expected to help and show respect and attention to their parents in their adulthood (cited in Lewis and Ban, 1977).

Cultural background

The rural sample, undergoing extensive sociological change, has an effect on the work force. Until lately the young men depending on the agricultural subsistence prefer to seek labor in recently developing industry in Zagreb. Even though housing conditions have improved, the social density is quite high, as many as six to eight adults living under the same roof, all belonging to the family. Children are subject to high interaction with other adults. Women, other than taking care of the infants, they get to work in the fields, attend the farm animals and do the household chores.

Overall, the predominant life style depends on the demands of the agriculture. The family structure is quite important for the childrearing practices. The overcrowded households seem to surpass the working class of the Western communities in respect to adult-child ratio. An infant is subject to the attention of many adults of different ages, and relations. Physical space is not differentiated by function as in middle-class homes. A large space is commonly utilized as kitchen for eating and bedrooms in the evenings. There is no privacy defined by having own space and affairs in those quarters.

Play: Rural children have no access to toys and play materials. The Yugoslav culture does not emphasize this sort of stimulation to enlighten the child. Children create their own play things in the fields using natural materials such as leaves, earth, water, stones, bones etc.

Belief Systems: When belief systems are taken into consideration vis a vis the child rearing consequences and child development, one may conclude certain outcomes depending on the cultural meaning we attach to it. As Lewis & Ban point out, "...it is possible that mothers, regardless of their cultural backgrounds or social class, behave in similar ways and that infants also share similarities in behaviour " when compared with

mothers and children in other cultures. “ The important fact is that social class and cultural differences as they apply to child care are related to general belief systems defined by the culture, rooted in both cognitive and the affective systems.” To give an example, in Turkish culture especially the fathers are expected to show affection to their children only when they are asleep. The rationale for this code of behaviour, is that the cultural belief system does not allow the authority of the father to be undermined by spoiling the child with affection. These belief systems (rather than specific behaviours) and their consequences may be more relevant to child development outcomes than we realize. Lewis & Ban have undertaken a study in Yugoslavia and looked at the following issues comparing urban and rural samples and further comparing the overall findings cross-culturally with results of the American sample. The objectives of the study were: (a) what care-giving functions this culture demonstrates, (b) how they might be similar to the American culture.

The research looked at the variance and invariance within samples in the mother and infant interaction and its relationship to belief systems held in that culture. To execute the research a dynamic picture of the infant - caretaker relationship was considered important rather than solely a frequency count of behaviour.

18 Yugoslavian subjects participated in the research. All subjects were 12-week-old infants. 9 of the subjects were from the city and 9 were from the villages. Data was later compared with a longitudinal American data collected for mother-infant interaction. Dynamic set of measures that explored not only the frequency of occurrence of behaviour but also “ who does what, to whom and when “approach and evaluation was used to interpret the data within its situational-interactive context.

The data showed that the mothers behave in the same way (touch, hold, vocalize, look, smile, play, rock, read) in terms of frequency both in the city and the village. However some differences between American and Yugoslavian mothers’ behaviours were reported. American mothers tend to hold their infants more than Yugoslavian mothers do, especially for male infants, but Yugoslavian mothers rock their infants more than American mothers. Also Yugoslavian mothers look and smile at their infants more than American mothers. Although these differences may reflect some underlying processes both groups of mothers behave in much the same manner. For both groups the three most frequent behaviours were hold, vocalize and look. In terms of infant behaviours (vocalize, movement, fret-cry, play and smile) the researchers found out that there is a high consistency across groups. Infants, regardless of background, show the most frequent behaviours to be

vocalization and quiet play while the least are smiling and fret-cry. In the same study some differences between American and Yugoslavian’ infant behaviours were reported. Yugoslavian male infants show more movement than American group. Similarly the infants from Yugoslavia show much more quiet play than the American children.

2.4. Research on Mother- Child Interaction in ITALY

News conducted a study in central Italy in 1981 focusing on the impact of a rapidly changing environment on infant care practices. The study suggests that strategies of infant care may reflect all three of the concerns itemized in LeVine’s (1974) hierarchy and the fact that it is particularly true in societies undergoing major transitions.

The study was carried out in the region of Latium, one hour north of Rome bordered by a fertile agricultural zone with fields of tobacco and wheat as well as with vineyards and olive groves. The town is isolated from the surrounding countryside geographically and socially with a population of fifteen thousand at the time. Health care is available through the local hospital and community pediatric clinic, as well as through private practices and a neonatal intensive care unit located 25 kilometers away.

Research procedures included two one hour naturalistic home observations of all infant behaviour and interactions with the infants, parental attitude interviews regarding short and long term care taking goals, daily routine interviews where mothers were asked to recount the previous 24 hour period. All information was sampled at several different age points. Italian sample consisted of 20 infants and their families recruited through local birth records as well as the pediatric clinic. The average age of mothers was 28.1, the average age of fathers was 30.9. Mothers had an average of 7.3 years of education, fathers had an average age of 8.8 years of education. The average family size of the sample was 2.2 children.

Community Norms of Social Interaction

The community life in this town showed a high level of activity, family having primacy and strictly conforming to traditional sex roles among adult men and women. Females were assigned to the domestic life and males assumed the role of wage earners, frequenting the town center and the local liquor bars (New & Benigni, 1987). Children were considered as ties between husbands and wives who were allowed no special activities, such as play. During outdoor excursions toddlers were greeted, admired and encouraged to display how to say goodbye and how to give a kiss etc.

The Infant Care Environment

Infant care environments consisted of a variety of individuals other than mother and infant. Infants almost spent no time alone and besides the mother others were always present. In spite of the predominantly nuclear-family households, grandparents, extended family members, friends and neighbours were also common to the infant care scene, showing the public quality typical of community social norms. Adults and children engaged infants in games of peek-a-boo and patti cake and were observed teaching infants four months old to open and close the fist in the traditional gesture of greeting, ciao. Interaction with infants also included vigorous handling and teasing in various ways to engage his attention and interest.

As a result of these interactions sample infants seemed to develop a remarkable tolerance for high levels of stimulation. At night infants generally slept in the same room with their parents regardless of the availability of separate rooms.

Play: Play sessions as defined in United States studies were not frequent, sustained only 4 minutes per hour of observation. Play was initiated and terminated by adults' volition. Even though toys were available, they were used as distractions during child care rather than play materials. Infant locomotor activity was restricted to one fourth of the total observation period because they were in someone's lap or in high chair etc. Independent exploration of the environment or manipulation of objects was rarely encouraged and frequently inhibited.

Patterns of Mother - Infant Interaction

Mother – infant interactions were typically centered on one of three tasks: Feeding, grooming, or dressing the infant. The least likely of all interaction behaviours was to initiate play with objects. The most frequently observed maternal behaviour other than visual monitoring of her infant was talking, occurring 39 percent of her infant interactions. They were quick to acknowledge infant signals, responding by looks, talking, and holding.

In spite of encouragement of the infant as a member of the family social order the infant's increasing capacities for autonomous behaviour was not allowed. The infant was expected to be dependent and controlled by the mother. These patterns of infant care are not without emphasis on other culturally beliefs and values associated with child's social and emotional relationships within the family including the extended family. In spite of the fluctuating socio economic conditions throughout Italy, the development and maintenance of the individual's ties with kin outside the nuclear family continue to be a major feature of the family life throughout much of Italy. (Pavi, 1982, Saracera, 1981,

Siebert, 1984). The child care practices of Italians encouraging reliance of child welfare on other family members and discouraging autonomous behaviour or independent daily routines on the part of the child may be seen as appropriate enculturation in a society that has relied on the strength of the family.

Child rearing practices (sleeping arrangements)

Sleep practices are part of child-rearing behaviours that reflect values about what it means to be a "good" parent and how parents go about it to prepare their children for entry into family and community life. Sleeping arrangements of children during infancy and toddler years showing different cultural and ethnic characteristics depending on various factors such as infant survival, climate, house size and room availability, family size, presence of father, privacy, dependence and independence have been cited as influencing the closeness of child and parents during the night.

Sleep practices may vary from allowing children to sleep in close proximity to parents during the night to placing them in separate rooms and expecting them to sleep without parent intervention through the night (Wolf et al cited in Harkness & Super, 1996). Studies of Italian child-rearing practices by Goddini & Goddini (1970) compared Italian rural and urban children with Anglo-Saxon middle class children living in Rome. They reported that Italian children were more frequently breastfed for a longer period of time and frequently slept in the same bedroom with their parents.

A study was undertaken by Wolf et al, (1996) to examine parental beliefs and child-rearing practices among five different cultural samples. A sample of Italian children was compared with US and Japanese children between 6 to 48 months of age in respect to sleep arrangements. Data were collected by means of a structured interview for all samples asking information on sleep patterns and practices, the child's behaviour and development and family structure lasting 30 to 90 minutes. The objective of the study was to investigate co-sleeping habits, that is if parents and children sleeping in body contact with each other.

The researchers observed that in contrast to US white and breast feeding sample, the Japanese, Italian and African - American samples more frequently co slept on a regular basis and also the fact that grandparents were more frequently present in the household. Italian case shows an emphasis on "the family including the extended family members". The findings suggest that these cultures may be characterized as emphasizing an interpersonal relatedness with regular co- sleeping practices. The results also indicate that Western cultures (U.S.) give greater importance to self-development than to

interpersonal relatedness, stressing the development of autonomy, independence and identity as desirable factors in a mature personality. Close proximity of mother child interaction and instigating a sense of interdependency in the early years later transferred into adult life is more characteristic of Italian and Japanese culture.

New (1988) observed that care taking styles and infant care environment gave way to a wide range of social interactions due to the proximity of social contact. Infants typically slept in the arms of the caretaker and were open to immediate interactions of surrounding people. As New reports, "it was considered unkind to put an infant to sleep alone in a room". New has also commented on the power of family solidarity by stating that in spite of the "acknowledgement of the infant as a member of the family social order, there is little recognition of the infant's increasing capabilities for autonomous behaviour". Actual infant needs were often disregarded in favour of family routines. In the study, the Italian mothers "saw bedtime struggles as a need of the child to be with the mother, a need that should be gratified." The researchers report that one mother directly commented on the cultural aspects of co-sleeping as, "Italian people love to sleep together always" (cited in Wolf et al, 1996, pp.378-9).

The earlier studies of parental child-rearing styles were studied within different social class environments to observe how they influence the cognitions and behaviours resulting in parental roles. Lately infant caregiving styles and practices are studied as transitional relationships between socio-cultural context, adult ideologies and strategies used to fulfil them. The previous studies focused on the relationship between observable child-rearing patterns and resulting child behaviour personality characteristics in diverse cultural settings (Whiting & Whiting, (1963, 1975), cited in New, 1988). Whereas cultural imperatives of parenting play a major part in determining both a mother's beliefs regarding her childrearing responsibilities and also developing strategies and abilities to handle them. (Minturn & Lambert, 1964).

LeVine's (1974) review of four decades of anthropological research made it possible to examine the influence of cultural variables on parental beliefs and practices. These practices in turn play a role in shaping the environments of infancy and early childhood, thus determining the kind of interaction in child rearing practices.

LeVine's theory emphasizes parental goals which views child care strategies responsive not only to the biological aspects of development but also to culturally transmitted "ways to go about" for infant care based on

environmental pressures and cultural values. Brenfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model of development served as a timely framework to go beyond the study of observable behaviour to consider behaviour in context in adult behaviour and how it affects child development.

The comparative study reported by New & Richman (1996) is based on the framework LeVine's parental goals theory (LeVine, 1974, 1988). This comparative study of maternal beliefs and infant care was carried out in central Italy and a suburb of New England in U.S. The primary objective in this study was to investigate the influence of cultural values in the determination on maternal goals, beliefs and strategies of infant care. A secondary objective was to consider socio-cultural context in supporting and maintaining the specific maternal roles.

The study investigated the following dimensions of mothers' goals for their children:

- the long term goals that mothers expressed for their infants
- their beliefs about the maternal role and typical infant development
- the manner in which key childrearing practices reflect these beliefs and goals.

40 children 4 to 10 months of age infants and their families participated in the study: 20 from a small town north of Rome and 20 from a suburb in Boston, U.S. Data were collected by naturalistic home observations focused on all interactions that involved the infant, report of family life, infant care and parental attitudes, interviews regarding mother's conceptions of norms of child development, maternal role, goals and priorities of infant care.

The U.S infants were found to spend much of their time in either intense interactions or isolation. One third of the time they were observed alone with their mothers in a baby-proofed environment with many objects but few people. Infants had their own rooms, where their toys and other personal belongings were kept. The belief that infant care was primarily mother's responsibility was acknowledged by all sample mothers. Other than mothers, care was provided by babysitters or grandmothers. Siblings only took part in object play or social stimulation, but not in child-care.

In the Italian sample all infants shared a bedroom with the parent during the first year. The infants had no time alone or space to themselves and rarely were alone with their mother. They were more likely to be in groups of people observing and interacting with many people. Most mothers reported daily visits to the extended family

members. High level of social activity dominated their lives with very little solitary activity.

Parental values, beliefs and goals

Mothers were asked open-ended questions about their short and long term goals for their infants. They were also asked about how they would attain these goals. Short term goals were expressed in terms of their priorities and strategies related to three common parenting concerns where clear cultural differences were reported.

U.S mothers expressed three short term goals which were:

- child's cognitive and emotional development
- mother's role in providing a language rich environment
- opportunities for exploration and play

Italian mothers' short term goals were related to:

- protecting the child from the elements
- assuring a healthy and adequate diet
- keeping the child clean and well-groomed

Long term goals of U.S mothers' were :

- economic and emotional independence the child- to be able to make own decisions and establish separate lives
- attainment of a sense of well-being in their children – to be happy
- to have honest, respectful relationships with others.

Long term goals for Italian mothers were:

- establishing social relations
- physical, economic well being

To summarize, the answers to the questions "how do the infant care strategies relate to long term goals of sample mothers' fall within three categories: family, financial security and good health. Financial security in the form of "a good job" mentioned by 15 out of 20 families, "a good education" mentioned by 14 out of 20 families, "good health" by all families. Additionally mothers and fathers stated other factors as goals perceived for their children.

Child care and Practices

Previous studies show that the environmental characteristics and beliefs of mothers play a role in their infant care practices. Three aspects of infant care as have been identified from these studies were the following:

- avoidance of hazards
- sleep arrangements

- eating habits (LeVine, 1974; Candill & Plath, 1966)

In New's study these aspects of child care were also observed and the interactions analysed. The interrelationships among parenting beliefs and practices within these three domains constitute the role of cultural values in how infant care is structured and the mother's conception of child development.

a) Motor activity and avoidance of hazards

In the Italian sample infants were confined to a sort of container (walker, stroller, high chair, play pen) or held by someone to restrict their movement around the house. Time on the floor, for a 10 month old infant represented 26 % of the total time observed. The reason given was so that the infant wouldn't "get into everything". The child thus is not allowed freely to explore the physical environment. The U.S infants were restricted access only to certain hazardous areas of the house and were explained where and with what it is safe to play, otherwise were left free to get around. The child is expected to be responsible for his own safety from the beginning. Infants were confined to "containers" only when the mother needed to be alone or with others. Mothers encouraged the infants for their development of independence and security when unattended and approved of increased motor activities and curiosity to explore the environment. These infants spent more than half of observation time 52% on the floor.

b) Sleeping arrangements

In the U.S sample most infants slept in their rooms or shared with other siblings. Bedtime rituals between mothers and infants were well established by 6 months of age. At certain hours infants were removed from the social environment and put to bed .Italian sample infants' sleep habits did not follow any clear schedule. The infants often fell asleep before being put to bed which means that they are normally part of adult social life. They usually share their parents' bedroom until the second birthday. Mothers did not take special care about infants sleep times as they simply say "he sleeps when he gets tired".

c) Eating habits

The results indicate cultural differences in the goals and strategies in establishing eating habits. U.S mothers believe that infants can and should regulate their own eating habits. The infants get fed on demand and know when their hungry. During feeding times mother and child interaction takes place as a time to teach and talk together. Infants are fed in their high chairs which facilitates self feeding. They are encouraged to eat with their hands and use special cups to drink.

The Italian sample infants are required to be present at all family meals. The infants go along with adult eating procedures. They have no choice as when to eat and what and how to eat. Infants resisting to eat are gently forced with a variety of techniques including the alternation of the spoon and the pacifier. Mothers express that the child doesn't know when he is hungry. Only mother knows. "If he does not like the meal, he will get used to it".

The findings in all three aspects of care practices support LeVine's conceptualization of the relationship between sample mother's goal, (their moral direction), their belief (the pragmatic design), and their practices (conventional script actions) (LeVine, et.al, 1994).

2.5. Research on Mother-Child Interaction in Spain and France

The research carried out in Spain compared the parental beliefs among traditional, modern and paradoxical parents. 70 parents and children 21-24 months of age were observed for parent-child interactions centred on different situations (constructing a pyramid, reading a story, playing with everyday household materials) and stimulation in the home (Palacios, Gonzales, & Moreno, 1990). HOME scale (Caldwell and Bradley, 1984) was used to evaluate these data.

In this study Sigel's measure of distinction between different types of distancing was used in "reading a story" practices. (a) *Low level distancing: affirmative (telling)* where the child is informed. (b) *High level distancing: the interrogative form (asking)* where the child has to go through an active mental process to construct the information. According to the results of the analyses of interactions in story reading situations a low level of distancing (telling) was found to be predominant in all parents which is expected given the age of children.

It was found that the frequency of asking increases from traditional to paradoxical parents and from these to modern parents. Further analyses showed that modern parents asked their children more questions and maintained this conduct more consistently throughout the interactions. This research emphasizes the different educational levels related to parental ideas on the development and upbringing of the children and how these ideas are closely related to the way in which parents stimulate their children at an early age (Palacios, 1992).

To explore the cultural differences in mother and infant relationships samples from U.S, France and Japan were compared in respect to mothers' responsiveness to their infants. These interactions were videotaped for forty five minutes. Findings indicated very few differences " in

such care-giving practices as encouragement to explore or nurturance in response to distress." One cultural difference identified was maternal responses to their infant's looking. Japanese mothers were found to be more responsive when their infants were looking at other people compared to the other two samples. (Bornstein et al., 1991). This may be due to interdependence of social practices favoured by the Japanese culture. Such practices encourage constant and close physical relations including co-sleeping and co-bathing, and punishment based on separation (Weisz, Rothbaum & Blackurn, 1984 cited in Holden, 1997, p.54).

2.6. Childhood in the Muslim Middle East

The cultural ideal of the child in the Middle East is seen as the crucial link in the family between generations and the key to its continuation that ties the present to the past, at the same time to the future. In the predominant agrarian societies in the Middle East the primary social unit is the extended family. Within this kin group, each child receives identity, affection, discipline, role models, and economic and social support from birth to death.

The family in return requires conformity and loyalty from all members beginning from early childhood. Various studies carried out by researches in Palestinian village, in several Lebanese towns, in upper Egyptian village and in Lebanese Mountain community and in Yemen elicit some general patterns of socialization of children conforming Fernea's observations in Iraq (1965), Egypt (1977) and Morocco (1981). The findings indicate early indulgence of babies and demand breastfeeding, widely shared throughout the region with a great deal of affectionate behaviour toward the baby primarily from the mother, also from the father, older siblings and other relatives. Weaning breast leads the socialization process into specific gender roles, acquiring cultural values, and division of child labour according to sex and age. The further socialization of societal norms of behaviours begins almost as soon as a child has consciousness of others.

These norms include respect for food, for religion and for the kin group and hospitality to guests, respect for obedience for the authority of the father. Punishment includes spanking or beating, as well as teasing and shaming before peers and other members of the family. Socialization of the child takes place primarily in home, father and mother being responsible as well as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins participate in a child's rearing. In urban and rural areas neighbours also are involved in child's socialization as well as the schoolteachers in Coranic schools. All in all many adults

of all standing participate in the discipline and development of the child providing alternative role models and sources of supports in their growing process. According to Ammar adults view the period of childhood as a nuisance and childhood activities, especially play as a waste of time. The adults' role is to prepare children for their roles in the world of adulthood. They do not specifically interact with children as perceived in the western world (Fernea, 1985).

Ash Shareef has studied texts from a repertoire of Bani Alfa, an African Arab ethnic group who live in Southern Sudan. These groups have a nomadic sector and sedentary one. The Bani Alfa Muslims belongs to a culture of a nomadic Muslim Arab community. Kinship is an important social institution and their group consciousness and sense of solidarity is very strong. Courage, hospitality, respect for neighbours and the like are highly regarded moral values (Fernea, 1985).

2.7. Research on mother-child interaction in Egypt

Brink (1990) has observed child-rearing styles in a village in Giza that is an hour's drive from Cairo. The child-rearing practices of educated and uneducated mothers were compared. In general most women live in extended families and expect to maintain intimate ties with their children even after when they are adults. They expect their sons will continue to live with them after they are married. They are concerned that the children show loyalty to the family, success in school is not important whereas well-paid job near the village is sought after. For the daughters a good marriage at an early age is desirable, education being unnecessary. The mothers train their daughters teaching them household skills and ensuring they have virtuous reputation.

In the study, the educated women who lived in the village were not typical village women. All of them had high school or college education and most were born in urban areas and had moved to these villages by marriage or by official appointment. They were employed as primary school teachers or secretaries in the nearby factories. These mothers wanted their children to excel in school. They were ambitious for both their sons and daughters and wanted their children to go to college. They trained their children to be more independent at an early age rather than being family oriented.

Mothers with no formal education employed indulgent kind of infant rearing techniques defined by LeVine, 1977 which is carrying the child, attending to crying immediately, nursing on demand. LeVine suggest that the indulgent treatment of infant is adaptive and restricting the infant from a dangerous environment. The

children are surrounded by extended family members who constantly show love and protection. These infants do not have toys to play they engage mostly with people of all ages. As soon as they learn to walk they join groups of children in the street and no longer seek the mothers' presence. The mothers respond to child's demand for comfort, care and attention often only after delays and persistent cries of infants.

This indulgent type of behaviour "encourages an active insistence almost aggressive style of dependency" (Whiting & Edwards, 1948, p. 142, cited in Brink, 1985). This type of child rearing is a short-term disciplinary style in which the mothers use power to gain compliance, which promotes dependence of children and produces negative verbal reactions such as whining, crying or tantrums. Because the child does not internalize norms and simply is forced to obey, this behaviour repeats itself. The role of father in the village families is as disciplinarian where threat is sufficient to insure good behaviour. While fathers are loving and affectionate with infants they assume stricter and authoritarian attitudes with older children.

McClelland (1946) has found that with less authoritarian fathers children have greater ability to achieve where disciplinary practices are shared between mothers and fathers. The educated mothers in the village have a child-rearing style that is highly verbal using positive reinforcement to gain children's compliance. This type of disciplinary behaviour encourages children to internalize norms and values that promote independence (Kuzynski, 1984). This research has shown that verbal style of child rearing is associated with cognitive development of children showing higher scores on the Bayley Mental Scale (Sigmam, et al., 1988, cited in Brink, 1985, p.89). The findings of Brink's research in Egypt show that the educated mothers expect their children regardless of sex to be professionals with high levels of education. Child rearing traits of these educated women are: weaning children early, sleeping in a separate bed, holding infants less, encouraging children to play with manipulative toys, using verbal discipline to internalize norms encouraging children to be ego oriented. The uneducated women raise their children to be dependent on the mother and protective and nurturing toward younger siblings, with primary goals being loyal to their family whereas the educated women train their children to be self-motivated achievers. Brinks reports that these types of behaviours are seen in several other developing countries as stated by Werner (1979, Clignet, 1967, LLoyd, 1973). The researcher comments that these different child-rearing styles were to some extent a conscious effort on the parts of the mothers to fulfil their goals for their children

3. Summary

Characteristics shown by these research studies are typical of the Mediterranean culture. Traditional family structure such as obedience, dependence, loyalty and empathy to others are important factors that promote interdependency among family members. Material interdependence is also reflected in social values and in the aspirations of the parents for their children. Authority structure demanding traits such as respect and care for elders, compliance, cooperation and group integration rather than competition are highly valued for both girls and boys as children and as adults.

In contrast to many Western societies which reflect underlying “individualist” value related to acquisition of individual competence and independence giving way to competition, the Mediterranean countries with traditional cultural groups exhibit more “collectivist” and “interdependent” cultural values (Rosenthal, 2000). In these societies collective goals such as learning to live in harmony with one another, participation in social events, obedience to authority and cooperative orientation are more highly valued.

Children being in close contact with the adults, mainly women, learn parental roles from an early age on through observation, direct imitation and later by role playing in imaginative play (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1992, p85). The father represents the ultimate authority in exercising disciplinary practices. Mothers are expected to be kind and indulgent whereas the fathers should appear distant and strict.

When childrearing practices are reviewed we conclude two different perspectives: child’s developmental perspective which refers to promote positive child development, and the parental perspective which refers to the need for child care that support parents’ beliefs and aspirations. Attitudes toward child care vary according to parents’ beliefs about who should be responsible raising young children, attitudes toward work and family roles. For example some parents with children under the age of three would prefer to look after their children themselves. Again parents with traditional views concerning maternal employment who perceive this to be an economic necessity may choose home based arrangements with extended family members in preference to sending their children to centres (Rosenthal, 2000). These cultural values and expectations of parents are in marked contrast with those values of Western culture (Kagan, 1984, Spence, 1985 cited in Kağıtçıbaşı, 1992). As Ogbu (1981) points out the latest theoretical formulations suggest that the cultures themselves provide the clues in understanding socialization practices. Within this framework an understanding of specific parental beliefs,

perceptions of children and roles attributed to them, folk beliefs and practices, religious practices, parental strategies, fertility rates and a set of sociodemographic factors serve as a guideline to study the context of child development and mother and child interaction.

The cultural processes employed in achieving certain desired outcomes as reflected in the parental beliefs and goals give way to socialization patterns which are complex and convey different meaning and value from culture to culture (Roopnarine & Carter, 1992, p. 274). Once we observe how these processes of parental beliefs are exercised, parental education in order to modify those beliefs which have developmental outcomes on the children may be possible (Clarke & Stewart (1992) cited in New & Richman, 1996).

Culture plays predominant role in the structuring and interpretation of parental roles and specific strategies and patterns of child care which reflect and are in turn influenced by cultural values. Parental discipline styles such as use of reasoning, showing disapproval, redirecting behaviours using time out or physical punishment may vary according to whether or not a culture believes external controls lead to self-discipline. There is also great deal of variations in basic care giving practices across cultures, including ways of eating habits, sleeping patterns and toilet training. When designing parental programs to modify parental beliefs and practices these cultural values should be taken into consideration in order to gain insight in observed behaviours.

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