

a high rate of infant mortality, parents will concentrate more on the goal of physical health and survival; the pursuit of learning to participate economically and learning cultural values will be postponed until a later age, when the child's survival is relatively certain.

How various cultures, or societies, prioritize these universal parenting goals may explain differences in maternal behavior toward infants (Richman, LeVine, New, & Howrigan, 1988). An example of a society that prioritizes the parenting goal of physical health and survival is the Gusii of Kenya. Gusii mothers interpret holding the child as a form of protection from physical hazards such as cooking fires and domestic animals, and have no alternatives like cradle boards, playpens, or infant seats. This close physical contact enables Gusii mothers to quickly soothe their infants by cuddling them when they cry.

In contrast, an example of a society that prioritizes the parenting goal of developing capacities for economic self-maintenance is the United States. American mothers verbalize with and gaze at their infants frequently. This reflects the belief that infants can communicate socially. By the time the American infant can walk, holding declines rapidly; infant seats, playpens, and high chairs are used to protect the locomotive infant from harm. This reduction in human physical contact reflects the value Americans put on separateness and independence.



DIVERSITY

How can you account for differences in parenting based on culture, ethnicity, or religion?

#### 4-4b Diversity in Parenting across Different Cultures, Ethnicities, and Religions

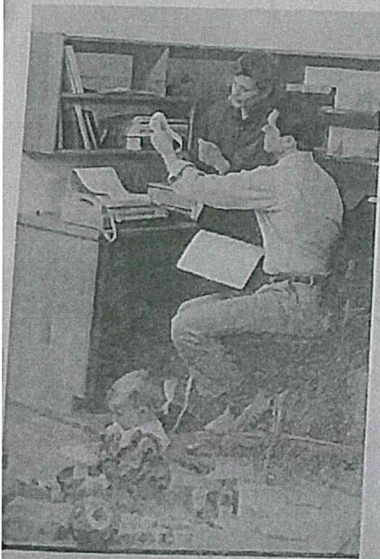
Cultural values, as discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, can be delineated on a continuum as being *collectivistic-oriented* or *individualistic-oriented*. To recap, *collectivistic* cultures emphasize interdependent relations, social responsibilities, and the well-being of the group; *individualistic* cultures emphasize individual fulfillment and choice.

*Collectivistic* and *individualistic* orientations are exhibited by how diverse families differ in parenting styles and child-rearing practices (see Table 4.1 for a summary). For example, children socialized in a *collectivist* context are amused by people—by being held, teased, or shown how to do something; children socialized in an *individualistic* context are amused by things—by being given space, given toys, or *told* how to do something (Trumbull et al., 2001). Exemplifying a *collectivistic* orientation, at our university department's fall welcome picnic for faculty and students, I observed an Israeli parent trying to keep her 2½-year-old child occupied and away from the cooking area by continually talking to him. He was quite verbally adept for his age, and the attentive conversation seemed to distract him from examining the barbeque. Exemplifying an *individualistic* orientation, the American preschool-age children at the picnic were given toys to play with while their parents talked and cooked.

Some generalizations follow regarding *collectivistic* and *individualistic* cultural/ethnic/religious orientations, as well as the specific family dynamics within them. These include differences in (1) authority roles, (2) communication, (3) display of emotion, (4) discipline/guidance of children, and (5) skills emphasized (Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Parke & Buriel, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Thiederman, 1991). Variations within the generalizations encompass the degree of adherence to traditional cultural/religious ways, the degree of assimilation into, and adoption of, mainstream ways, and the degree to which values are adopted from another ethnic group or religion (perhaps due to intermarriage).

#### Cooperative/Interdependent (Collective) Orientation

General principles affecting socialization in collectively oriented groups can be delineated as follows:



These parents are going over their finances while their baby amuses herself with the toys they gave her.

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### 1. Authority Role

- ◆ Social roles are ascribed based on hierarchy (age and status respected).
- ◆ Family structure is patriarchal, influenced by principles of order regarding roles and behavior.
- ◆ Particularism is valued (individuals treated differently according to rank, gender, and/or situation); authority figures have more rights and privileges, as well as having more obligations and responsibilities to protect and care for others; mothers, grandparents, teachers each do certain things.

#### Examples:

- **MARY**, a *Catholic American*, was socialized to believe in a hierarchical order of status and social roles (age and gender). This ensures people will maintain their appropriate behavior, as well as follow certain orderly principles (such as God's will regarding childbearing). She has also been socialized to respect, obey, and fear her parents and other authority figures.
- **HABIB**, a *Muslim American* who practices *Islam*, was socialized to believe that one's relationship to God is that all things belong to Him and that wealth held by individuals is held in trust. He also believes that a portion of one's accumulated wealth is required to be given to those in need.

### 2. Relationships

- ◆ Harmony is valued.
- ◆ Family members place family needs above individual needs.
- ◆ Children show obedience and loyalty to parents and are expected to care for elderly parents.
- ◆ People believe that a cooperative social network extends from the mother and father union to the extended family of relatives and ultimately to the community; children are socialized by the extended, as well as the nuclear, family; old people traditionally pass on the cultural heritage to the younger ones; children are taught to respect elders (age is a "badge of honor"—if you have grown old, you have done the right things).

#### Examples:

- **ANGELO**, a *Latino American*, was socialized to prioritize family needs and responsibilities. When his grandmother became ill, and his mother had to take her to the doctor, he had to stay home from school to care for his younger siblings.
- **WINONA**, a *Native American*, has been taught that children are not permitted to communicate their opinions to older people. She also has been taught not to boast or cause another embarrassment. Children in her tribal group are socialized by all members of the community.

### 3. Communication

- ◆ Communication tends to be more indirect than direct—conversations might include inquiries about family members, health, or other matters seemingly unrelated to the purpose of the communication (such inquiries are necessary for assessing choice of language to be used and degree of familiarity with which certain topics can be discussed) (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).
- ◆ Nonverbal, more than verbal, communication (body language, gestures, touch, facial expression, eye contact) is used.

These children are engaged in a collective

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### Examples:

- LEE, an *Asian American*, and DAKOTA, a *Native American*, were both socialized to rely on context (including nonverbal behavior and relational cues) in order to be able to completely understand what is being communicated in a conversation. They also learned to use silence and pauses in conversations to contemplate what was said and to think about how to respond.
- AKILAH, a *Middle-Eastern American*, JOE, an *Italian American*, and KANOA, a *Hawaiian*, have learned to use interruption as a means of getting involved in a conversation (Thiederman, 1991).
- KAREEM, a *low-income African American*, was encouraged to learn by adults who would ask "real" questions (those to which a child would not know the answer), such as "What's in that box?" (Heath, 1989). He experienced the acting out of conversations with body language and/or the use of a lot of teasing. Also, words sometimes were coined to enhance and further communication ("It's not what is said, but how it is said that is important") (Hale, 1994).

## 4. Displays of Emotion

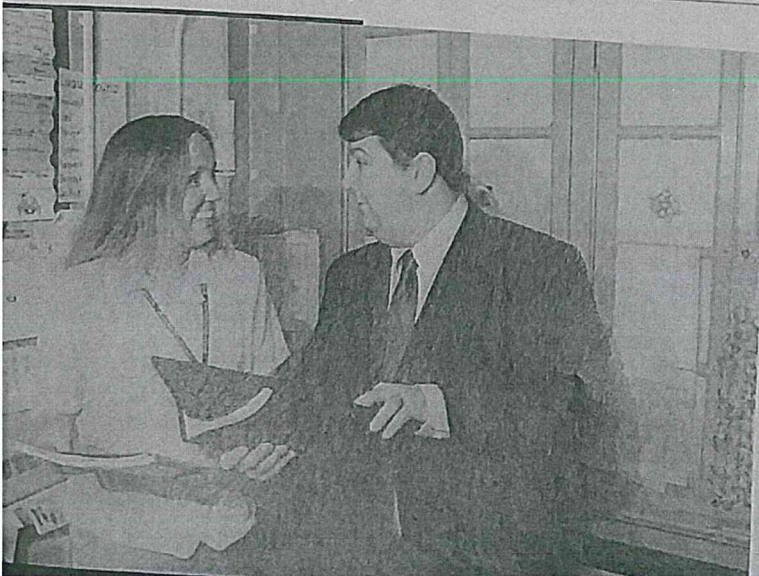
- ◆ Some groups display emotions inwardly and others display them outwardly.
- ◆ Inward emotions are feelings rarely shown publicly; they can be expressed through a change in personal distance (stepping backward while engaged in a loud conversation), shunning (ignoring and avoiding a friend for boasting), or deviations in performing routines (knowing your wife is angry because she filled your teacup only halfway with lukewarm tea).
- ◆ Outward emotions are expressed through facial expressions, sound, body movement (however, facial expressions don't always reveal inner emotions).

### Examples:

- AMI, a *Japanese American*, grew up learning that a smile can disguise embarrassment, mask bereavement, or conceal rage, whereas a straight face can hide happiness (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). Yet, up until she was about 5 years old, she, like other Japanese children, was expected to emote outwardly by whining and clambering on her mother after a separation, because this represents *amae*, the child's enduring emotional dependence on the mother (Cole & Tan, 2007).
- JOHN, a *middle-class European American*, was socialized not to whine and to exhibit self-control by modeling the ways in which adults show emotion (Cole & Tan, 2007).

The communication between these adults exemplifies a direct style. It also exemplifies an outward display of emotion in that the man is looking at and leaning his body toward the woman while he explains something; by the smile on her face, the woman is showing she understands and is pleased.

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## 5. Discipline/Guidance

- ◆ Age is equated with knowledge—children are not asked their desires, nor are they expected to communicate their opinions to older people; they are expected to be guided by adult wisdom.
- ◆ Children obey and imitate; they learn by doing—even when children play, an adult or older sibling is nearby to guide them as needed (Rogoff, 2003).
- ◆ A sense of obligation to parents is fostered by dependency and physical

closeness between parents and child, which is continually reinforced as children grow older.

- ◆ The use of shame and guilt is enabled by the child's dependency on the mother; she controls the child's behavior by appealing to the child's sense of duty when the child deviates from her expectations.
- ◆ The child also learns related socialized behaviors to avoid shame and save face—reluctance to admit lack of understanding, hesitation to ask questions, take initiative, or do something a new way, and avoidance of confrontation or disagreement (a Japanese proverb says: "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down").

#### Examples:

- **DAN**, an *Asian American*, experienced discipline/guidance through nurturance (responsive maternal care given to infants). In China, as well as in other Asian countries, infants seldom are allowed to cry for prolonged periods before they are picked up; they are fed on demand and weaned at a relatively late age; the young child is allowed to sleep with parents; and toilet training is gradual. Children so raised become dependent on their mothers to satisfy their needs.
- **DALIA**, a *Middle-Eastern American*, experienced doting, indulgent care as a young child. This is common in Middle-Eastern cultures as a way of establishing strong emotional ties from children to their parents and families. Young children are not expected to follow rules, and misbehavior is tolerated. However, between age 5 and 7, parents gradually demand more discipline, and children are also expected to help younger siblings and elders (Kagibasi, 1996).
- **KAYA**, a *Native American*, experienced discipline/guidance that was subtly implemented as she grew up. Approval was indicated through a smile, a pleasant tone of voice, or a friendly pat. Children in her tribal group typically were corrected by adults lowering their voices. Neither physical punishment nor verbal praise were used; instead, frowning, ignoring, withdrawal of affection, shaming, and group pressure were the forms of social control used. Criticism of another is communicated indirectly through another family member, rather than directly.

## 6. Skills Emphasis

- ◆ Skills believed important for children to learn to get along in the group, as well as to become contributing adults, are brotherhood, sharing, spirituality, and personal integrity.
- ◆ Modesty and moderation are stressed (one doesn't talk for the sake of talking; one doesn't boast when one achieves; and one doesn't show emotions).
- ◆ Children are expected to do what they are capable of doing for their age, not to be perfect—the goal is to improve on past performance (failure is not a concept).

#### Examples:

- **HONAN**, a *Native American*, grew up learning spirituality through rites and rituals. He was socialized to value cooperation highly and was discouraged from competing within the group (such as for attention). He learned that consensus on decisions facing the group is sought via discussions, rather than by voting and majority rule—the needs of the group supersede the needs of the individual. In his tribal group, personal items are readily shared because boundaries of property ownership are believed to be permeable.
- **LUPITA**, a *Latina American*, grew up in a family that emphasized cooperation and helpfulness. Hispanic children are generally taught to be sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. Also, there usually is more emphasis on interaction with people than with things.