

child, which has been rigorously investigated in psychoanalytic circles for 100 years.

For example, Winnicott (1965a, 1965b) maintained that there is no such thing as a baby. His theories highlight the relating system (dynamic dyad) between parent and child. Winnicott argued this most clearly, but the idea can also be found in theories espoused by Klein, Erikson, Bowlby, and many other psychoanalytic writers (Corsini & Wedding, 1995). I suggest that further research into the socialization of emotion should explore the links between socioemotional competence of the child and dimensions of the dynamic dyad between parent and child, in addition to regulation and expression.

Summary

With the aim of generating further research and to establish legitimacy of the field, Eisenberg et al., although providing an adequate review of the empirical literature, do not provide a critical analysis of the underlying suppositions. Eisenberg et al. reduced parental socialization of emotion to parental ERSBs and child outcomes and consequently lost the context and the process of emotion socialization: the dynamic dyad between parent and child. The field of parental socialization of emotion is in its infancy, so there is still time to employ more appropriate qualitative methods of research and more complex meaningful paradigms before we end up throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Note

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Variations on a Theme: Culture and the Meaning of Socialization Practices and Child Competence

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It is a basic and long-held tenet of developmental psychology that parental socialization of emotion is a major influence in the development of children's psychological competence. Parents' perceptions of and responses to their children's emotions play a critical role in the evolution of a child's psychological well-being or difficulties. An understanding of how and why the socialization of emotion influences child competence

is important to our knowledge of basic development processes and to our understanding of the various points at which parental socialization leads to, prevents, or remediates child mental health problems.

In their target article, Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad remind us that developmental scientists still know little about the precise role of parental socialization of emotion in the development of children's com-

petence. Their article focuses on three parental behaviors that are hypothesized to make a prominent contribution to the development of social and emotional competence: parents' reactions to children's emotions, discussion about emotion, and parental expression of emotion. They hypothesize that these three components of child-parent interactions converge with other individual differences (e.g., child temperament) to make demonstrable contributions to the development of competence or maladjustment. They also make the important point that developmental science must advance beyond correlational data and concentrate on examination of the mechanisms and reasons for the relation between parental behavior and child competence.

In their thought-provoking review, Eisenberg et al. frequently refer to the importance of context in understanding and evaluating parental socialization of emotion and child social competence. Context includes parents' idiosyncratic values and goals for their children, the meaning embedded in dyadic transactions between child and caregiver, and cultural values for what constitutes effective childrearing and child outcome. Our own work has led us to believe that culture is particularly crucial to the understanding of the socialization of emotion and its role in the development of competence (Rubin, 1998; Saarni, 1998; Schneider, 1998). Without the study of cultural variations, we cannot understand the functional significance of children's emotional behaviors and parents' socialization practices (Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989). Moreover, the few studies that examine cultural variations clearly indicate that it is premature to conclude which socializing practices are good and which are bad. As Eisenberg et al. state, the research on socialization of emotion has focused on the values of middle- to upper class Americans of European descent. In rural areas, urban centers, and immigrant communities in the United States, and in communities throughout the world, there are many parents who appear not to share quite the same values as those represented in the child development literature (Harkness & Super, 1996).

Observational studies of East Asian and South Asian preschoolers and their parents, for example, reveal socialization practices that, according to the current child development literature, should create risk for child emotional insecurity and maladjustment. In a cross-sectional study of Tamang children in rural Nepal, we observed caregivers' initial reactions to children's anger and distress (Cole & Tamang, 1996). Prior to weaning (around 2–3 years of age), caregivers quickly attended to and cuddled infants who displayed negative emotion, caregiving behaviors that the literature describes as nurturant or supportive. Caregivers did not react so supportively to children older than 2 or 3; they either ignored or were critical of the child (e.g., mocked or scolded). Explanations, support, and direct efforts to

duce children's arousal were rarely seen. Therefore, from the perspective of the child development literature, the caregivers' immediate responses were minimizing or punishing. Few displays of negative emotions were observed among the school-age children.

Our research with this Nepali subculture was stimulated by the observation that Tamang people have been noted for their ability to maintain positive, compassionate, and egalitarian relationships (Fricke, 1986; Holmberg, 1989). This ability is a key element of the definition of social competence that Eisenberg and colleagues use to guide their thinking (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). The conclusion that parental minimization and punitiveness of children's negative emotions interfere with the development of competence would suggest that these Nepali children are at risk for emotional insecurity and behavior problems. However, the work of anthropologists, and our own experiences working in this community, suggest that the villagers' social competence is rather well developed and not impaired.

We believe that a broader cultural framework must be understood to know why minimization and punitiveness in one community may have different consequences than similar behaviors in a different cultural context. We are presently conducting more research in an effort to understand how these Tamang caregivers relate to their children's emotions over time. We expect that these observations will describe the culturally specific ways in which Tamang caregivers discourage the experience and expression of negative emotion but at the same time promote children's sense of being nurtured and supported. Their caregiving responses to children's negative emotion have to be understood in terms of Tamang cultural values and goals. For example, Tamang value the maintenance of relationships more than the assertion and satisfaction of individual needs. Also, Tamang adults have known the hardships of a subsistence farming life (e.g., periods of insufficient food supply) and so they prepare their children to endure such conditions. Additionally, they are Tibetan Buddhists who share the philosophical goal of keeping one's *sem* (heart-mind) clear of emotion. In fact, first-graders from this village believe that they should feel *tiken*; that is, calm and without emotion (Cole & Tamang, 1998).

Understanding the cultural context of caregivers' reactions to children's negative emotion is crucial to understanding why parents do what they do and in relating parents' behavior to children's competence. Rubin et al. (1998) emphasized that social competence cannot be evaluated in the absence of appreciating individuals' beliefs about the goals of social interaction and the meaning of a positive relationship between self and other. Cultures vary in the meanings they give to the notions of self and other and to the goals of social interaction (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore,

judgments about whether a child is socially competent must be informed by an understanding of the cultural differences in the meaning of a child's behavior and the goals of socialization (Harkness & Super, 1996; Ogbu, 1981; Saarni, 1998).

Cross-cultural examinations of children's socioemotional functioning clearly indicate that behavior that causes concern to European-American, middle-class parents and to developmental researchers may not be concerning in other cultural contexts (Rubin, 1998). In a study of Japanese and U.S. preschool-age children's reunions with their mothers after a natural separation, we found that some preschoolers greeted their mothers by eagerly showing what they had done during their mothers' absence. Other preschoolers quickly left those activities and sought proximity to their mothers, expressing distress, clambering on their mothers' laps. The latter reunion behavior, which was characteristic of Japanese preschoolers, has been described as characteristic of insecure attachment, a risk factor for child competence (Mizuta, Zahn-Waxler, Cole, & Hiruma, 1996).

Did Japanese preschoolers' reunions reflect "attachment insecurity," and were these children therefore at risk? U.S. mothers whose preschoolers behaved in the manner just described expressed more concern about their children than did Japanese mothers. They described such preschoolers as having internalizing symptoms (e.g., immature, dependent). Japanese mothers, however, did not seem concerned. We interpreted this cultural difference as reflecting *amae*, a Japanese value that places interpersonal closeness as the greater goal in relation to achievement of independence. In other words, what is perceived as endangering competence in one cultural framework may be seen as epitomizing successful socialization in another.

Perceptions of child competence or risk are value judgments that carry emotional significance. When we first observed videotapes of prototypical Japanese preschooler-mother dyads during reunion, the U.S. researchers immediately felt deep concern about the "immaturity" of those preschoolers. As we turned to our Japanese colleagues to express this concern, we were met with their glowing pride that they had captured an essential and wonderful aspect of Japanese culture on videotape! Eisenberg et al.'s emphasis on parental beliefs can be coupled with an emphasis on parents' emotional reactions to child behavior (Dix, 1991). Those emotions are embedded in meaning attributed to child behavior. That meaning, more than the actual behavior itself, may be most influential in the development of child adjustment or maladjustment. A parent who attributes a toddler's angry resistance to developing problems with authority will have a different reaction than a parent who believes that the toddler is just a baby and cannot act differently. It is an empirical question whether the accepting parent

and the concerned parent have different reactions that then lead to different child outcomes.

In sum, Eisenberg and colleagues provide us with a thought-provoking framework for conceptualizing parental socialization. Their framework should stimulate much-needed research on how and why parental socialization of child emotion deters or promotes the development of social competence. We would amplify the point that context, including cultural meanings, must be incorporated into such research. Judgments about what constitutes optimal or effective socialization practices, and judgments about what constitutes social competence, are entirely culture bound.

Note

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