

CHAPTER 7

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: PARENT AND CHILD



Intergenerational relationships refer to relationships between two or more generations of people. In this chapter, I will discuss relations between parents and children. In the next, I will focus on the elderly, specifically the relationships between adult children and their parents and between grandparents and grandchildren.

The manner in which parents socialize their children obviously varies enormously within and between cultures. The behavioral goals that parents seek and the strategies they utilize to reach those goals are frequently affected by, among other things, cultural values, such as individual or communal orientation, family size, socioeconomic class, the constraints of the immediate environment, and, for racial-ethnic minorities, the need to prepare their children to function in a society where they do not represent the norm. In practice, these factors intersect with one another so that it is difficult to disarticulate cause and effect, but I will attempt to address them separately.

Individual and Communal Orientations

One of the ways in which non-Western societies have been compared with Western (or European-derived) societies has been on their degree of communalism (or collectivism) as opposed to individualism. When applied to family relations, communalism is often referred to as familism. Essentially, what these concepts capture is the extent to which people place the needs of their group (their community, ethnic group, country, family) above their own individual needs. If viewed on a continuum, Americans, particularly White or native-born Americans lean toward individualism more than do Americans of color and/or the foreign-born.

Fulgini, Tseng, and Lam (1999) measured the attitudes of more than 800 American 10th and 12th graders from Asian, Hispanic, and White backgrounds. Specifically, they asked the students about their expectations for assisting family members in household chores, caring for siblings, spending time with family, respecting family members' advice, making sacrifices for the family, doing well for the sake of the family, and supporting family members in the future. The authors found dramatic racial-ethnic differences in attitudes, with Asian and Latino American youth having stronger familistic values than their European American counterparts.

More evidence of this difference in orientation is illustrated in the degree to which parents seek independent children. White Americans (and native-born parents generally) tend to value independence in their children more than do other racial-ethnic groups, particularly Asian, Hispanic, and Native

Americans (Bulcroft et al., 1996). Although the child's age is the most powerful predictor of independence; that is, older children tend to be given more independence, Griswold del Castillo (1984) found that Hispanic families extended dependency into adolescence, particularly for girls, more than did Black and White families.

Dependence of children on their parents and other siblings is reflected in the types of activities children and parents do jointly, from social activities to sleeping, and in the values and developmental skills parents encourage in their children. For instance, hiring babysitters so that parents can have a night out on the town is less common among racial-ethnic minorities in the United States than it is among White American families. This may be due to class differences as well as to, among certain groups, the more common use of extended family households, which have built-in babysitters. Immigrant parents, in particular, frequently invite grandparents to America to care for their grandchildren. Sometimes, young immigrant parents practice "transitional mothering," leaving their children with grandparents in the country of origin. Both practices allow the parents to devote themselves to work.

In many societies, infants and young children frequently sleep with the parents or with the mother, while the father sleeps separately (Werner, 1979). In part, this may be due to the family's economic status; they may have no choice but to share the same room. In her work among the Hmong in Wisconsin, Kolyk (1998) found that Hmong parents push their mattresses together so that the children and parents sleep in the same room. Kolyk said Hmong parents found it odd that most American parents put their children in separate rooms. American family sleeping arrangements prioritize the conjugal relationship. Middle-class American parents decorate a nursery for their new baby. Later, each child may have his or her own room, separate both from parents and from other siblings. When children sleep with their parents, American family experts express concerns about the potential negative effect on the marital relationship and the development of unhealthy attachments.

In other cultures, children's birthday parties are a mixture of adults and children. For instance, Perez-Firmat (1995) described Cuban *cumpleanos* (birthdays) as all-day communal feasts for the entire family. Guests congratulate the parents, not just the child. In contrast, in many middle-class White American homes, children's birthday parties likely consist of their peers with only a couple of adults present for supervision, signifying their independent social life.

Parental praise of offspring is another indication of valued individualism. American parents frequently praise their children for each accomplishment, attempting to build self-esteem, a sense of uniqueness, and agency in the

child. In more communal cultures, less praise is lavished upon the child or it is given for different behaviors, as the emphasis is not on how special the child is but on how much she or he is a part of the family (Gonzalez-Mena, 1993). Praise then is bestowed more when children share with or care for others, less when they do something to call attention to their own talents. Modesty and humility are highly prized in many cultures. In fact, drawing attention to one's self can be unnerving to some American Indians. Lee's 1950s study noted that teachers reported that Hopi students would be very uncomfortable, sometimes breaking into tears, if they were singled out for praise (Lee, 1959).

American parents also stress happiness and individual fulfillment to their children more than do other racial-ethnic groups. "Whatever makes you happy," "Be true to yourself," and "Say what you think" are common American phrases. Many Asian cultures, however, stress social harmony, the ability to get along with and respect others, even if it means suppressing one's emotions or refraining from speaking one's mind (Kagan, 1984). Hence, the Asian versions of the American expression "The squeaky wheel gets the grease" are "The crab who crawls out of the bucket gets pulled back in" or "The nail that sticks out gets pounded back in" (Thrupkaew, 2002). The family or community comes first, and the individual may need to subordinate her or his individual expression to the needs of the larger unit.

American adolescence is viewed as a time developing children push for independence, reducing time spent with their families and increasingly associating with their peers. The adolescent stage, however, is relatively absent for a number of cultures, particularly some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures (Basit, 1997). Obviously, children don't literally skip those years, but the American way of framing the teen years as an extended transition into an independent lifestyle is unrecognized. Children continue to remain submissive to parents even after marriage; youth defers to age (Sue, 1981). In addition, where early marriage is prized, youth take on responsibilities of family life during adolescence. So when people from such societies arrive in America, where their children will more likely postpone marriage, parents may be unaccustomed to, and lack role models for, rearing teenagers (McInnis, 1991).

Some traditions that appear to be driven by familism may be affected by other factors, such as large family size or low income, but the outcome of the practices nevertheless is longer dependency of the child on the parents. Table 7.1 illustrates that White Americans have the lowest fertility and smallest family and household size relative to other racial-ethnic groups. Families with more children and/or more caregivers can encourage more interdependence between adults and children and between siblings.

In extended or large families, children often have numerous caregivers. Passed from mother, to aunt, to grandmother, to older cousin, and so on, their

Table 7.1 Fertility Rates and Family Size by Race

	2002 Total Fertility Rate (per woman)	2000 Average Family Size (number of persons)	2000 Percentage of Households With 5 or More Persons
Non-Hispanic White	1.83	2.97	7.9
Hispanic	2.72	3.93	28.6
Black	2.05	3.33	13.8
Asian	1.82	3.60	18.1
Pacific Islander	— ^a	4.07	28.3
American Indian & Native Alaskan	1.74	3.50	18.0

SOURCES: Martin et al. (2003), Tables 4 and 9; U.S. Department of Commerce (2000d), Quick Table-P10, Matrices PCT8, PCT17, PCT18, PCT26, PCT27, and PCT28

a. For the 2002 Total Fertility Rate, Pacific Islanders are subsumed in the Asian category.

emotional attachments are distributed among many people (Gonzalez-Mena, 1993). In addition, access to numerous family members provides built-in playmates, so parents may be less likely to encourage their children to develop friendships beyond the family. White American families, on the other hand, encourage a singular attachment to mother and secondarily to father in the earliest stages of life. In recent years, nonfamily day care providers are frequently utilized, but parents usually try to limit the number.

Likewise, babies reared in large families, or in societies where housing is crowded or of lower quality, may be carried around a lot. In America, many families place their babies on their carpeted floor to explore and develop large motor skills. But for the former families, the floor is seen as dangerous, dirty, cold, or inappropriate for infants (Gonzalez-Mena, 1993).

Parents with several young children may toilet train the children earlier to avoid having too many tykes in diapers simultaneously. For instance, Boucke (2002) suggests a method whereby an at-home caretaker learns to read an infant's signals and dashes her or him off to the toilet. The stated goal may be a reduction in dirty diapers, but interdependence between parent and child is an outcome.

Larger families may delay teaching their children self-feeding in order to avoid the messes that children make feeding themselves. Some Hispanic families, for example, spoon-feed their children into the preschool years (Gonzalez-Mena, 1993). American child-rearing experts frequently advise parents to let children play with their food to develop motor skills, sensory

experience, and eventually self-feeding. But in many other societies, particularly where food is costly or scarce, playing with food would be viewed as wasteful and nearly sacrilegious.

Parents with numerous children often require older children to assume more responsibilities at earlier ages. Therefore, older siblings care for younger siblings or do more housework, such as cooking or laundry. Peterson (1993) reports that in Filipino families, when the older siblings marry and have children, they in turn receive help from their younger siblings in child care.

Ultimately, the specific behavioral goals that parents from both individualistic and familistic cultures seek may be the same. But the cultural context supplies different interpretations of the same behavior. Osterweil and Nagano's (1991) study comparing Japanese and Israeli mothers found that when their children brushed their teeth and clothed themselves, Japanese mothers defined those behaviors in familistic terms, as signs of obedience to their parents, whereas Israeli mothers defined them in individualistic terms, as signs of the child's autonomy.

Aside from family size, most research on child well-being, parenting styles, and child socialization has focused on the effects of socioeconomic class. It is there that I turn now.

Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Children's Well-Being

Clearly, socioeconomic class forms the foundation on which the general well-being of children rests, both by directly affecting their health and by influencing parenting strategies. I have already mentioned that racial-ethnic minorities have higher proportions of their populations in the working class and in poverty, making them more vulnerable to ill health. For instance, infant mortality is higher among a number of racial-ethnic groups. Figure 7.1 displays the 2000 infant mortality rates by race. Although these rates are improvements over past decades, the rate for every racial-ethnic group, with the exception of Asian Americans, is higher than for Whites. If the Asian rate was itemized by ethnic subgroups, we would find the rate for Pacific Islanders to be higher as well. Higher mortality rates are produced by a higher incidence of low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome (which is twice as high for infants of Black and American Indian mothers as it is for White mothers), and congenital malformations. Contributing maternal characteristics include young age, unmarried status, low education, smoking, and lack of prenatal care.

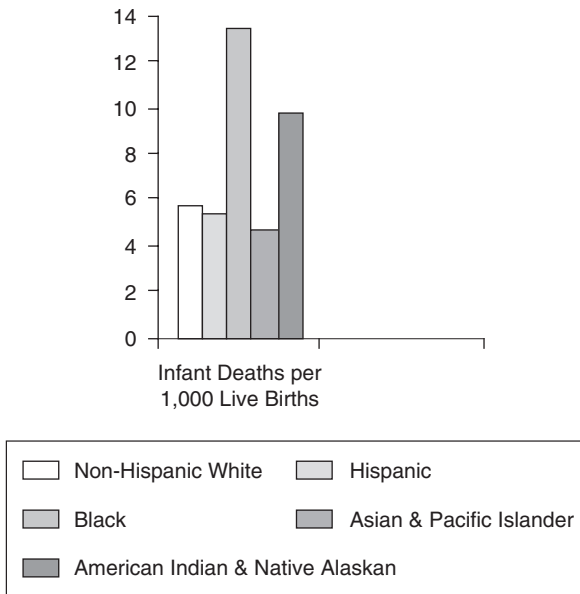


Figure 7.1 Infant Mortality Rates by Race, 2001

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001)

Even though more children of all races are surviving into their youth and adolescence than in the past, severe racial gaps linger in health care, which in turn affect adult mortality rates and life expectancy. Although insurance coverage of children has improved since 1997, in 2002, 20.2 percent of Hispanic children and 8.8 percent of Black children, compared to 6.6 percent of White children had no health coverage. The Hispanic rate is much higher because of the larger proportion of foreign-born in their population. Given the much higher rate of noninsurance among Hispanic Americans, one would expect that their infant mortality rate would be higher, but as mentioned earlier, immigrants tend to have better health and behave in ways that maintain their health. They have higher rates of two-parent families and are less likely to smoke, for instance.

Parenting Styles and Class

Many studies have concluded that socioeconomic class, more than culture, contributes to variation in parenting styles. Since most of the population

falls within the working and middle classes, I will focus on differences between working- and middle-class parents.

Most parents, no matter their class status, have similar long-term goals for their children. They want them to have health, security, and the capacity to lead a successful life (Hill, 1999). Research indicates a class difference, however, in which behaviors and values are viewed as necessary to achieve those goals. For instance, working-class parents (or parents who themselves were reared in working-class families) place more importance on obedience, conformity, good manners, and respect for authority. Middle-class parents, on the other hand, are more likely to instill initiative, creativity, curiosity, and independence in their children (Kohn, 1977).

Likewise, socioeconomic class influences the tactics and disciplinary methods parents adopt to elicit certain behaviors from their children. All parents use a combination of commands, requests, coaxing, and threatening to obtain the desired behaviors. Commands usually involve the use of direct, explicit language, whereas requests and coaxing pose questions or use indirect, implicit language. Threatening incorporates appeals to intrinsic or extrinsic sanctions.

Research on American parents suggests that working-class parents use more commands or explicit language, such as “Brush your teeth” and “Go to bed.” Middle-class parents more often use requests or indirect, implicit language, such as “Would you brush your teeth now?” or “It’s time for bed.” Moreover, middle-class parents use reason or give explanations for their commands and requests, whereas working-class parents frequently interpret this style as spoiling the child.

Most parents use threats of one sort or another to get children to control their behaviors. Working-class parents rely more on extrinsic appeals to reach their objectives. Extrinsic appeals refer to sources outside the person, such as authority figures or threats of punishment. Examples include “Wait ’til your dad gets home,” “If you do this, they will put you in jail,” or “If you do this one more time, I will spank you!” Lane Deer (Deer & Erdoes, 1993), a Lakota Sioux, reminisced about the external threats used by his grandmother to obtain his compliance.

When I didn’t want to go to sleep my grandma would try to scare me with the *ciciye*—a kind of bogeyman. “*Takoja, istima ye*—Go to sleep, sonny,” she would say, “or the *ciciye* will come after you.” Nobody knew what the *ciciye* was like, but he must have been something terrible. When the *ciciye* wouldn’t work anymore, I was threatened with the *siyoko*—another kind of monster. Nobody knew what the *siyoko* was like, either, but he was ten times more terrible than the *ciciye*. (p. 139)

Intrinsic appeals, used more by middle-class parents, reference emotions or resources within the person or the potential damage to an important relationship. These might include “You should feel guilty if you do that,” “Which choice do you think is the best one?” or “It disappoints me when you talk like that.” When parents use intrinsic appeals, they frequently appeal to a sense of guilt or shame. Studies indicate that Americans, particularly White Americans, reference guilt more, whereas minority groups, especially Asians, Middle Easterners, and Native Americans, rely more on shame to achieve compliance. Shame includes a public element, emphasizing that others will become aware of the wrongdoing. The use of shame works best in communal cultures, where the individual’s responsibility to the family unit is valued, and the individual’s behavior has repercussions for the whole family’s reputation within the community (Ng, 1998; M. G. Wong, 1998). Therefore, concerns with “losing face” or “dishonoring the family” accompany discipline that is shame-based (Agbayani-Siewart, 1994; Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 2002).

Parenting Styles and Environment

Some family scholars (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983) have classified these various strategies into four parenting styles—authoritative, permissive, uninvolved, and authoritarian. Authoritative parents set limits and expectations, but are also nurturing. They use reason and are responsive to their children’s needs. Permissive parents are more responsive than demanding, frequently allowing the child considerable self-regulation. Uninvolved parents are neither responsive nor demanding. In extreme cases, they are neglectful. Authoritarian parents demand obedience, set many rules, and use coercion more than reason or love withdrawal (separation or time-outs).

Using this classification, some research has found that White parents fall more into the authoritative category, whereas parents of color disproportionately fall into the authoritarian mode. African American parenting style, in particular, has been described as leaning toward authoritarian (Hale-Benson, 1986). Similarly, a study of 1,200 Black, White, and Latino fathers (Toth & Xu, 2002) found that Black and Latino fathers were more likely than White fathers to monitor and supervise their children’s activities, parenting strategies that would place them in the authoritarian category. Black fathers, however, were similar to White fathers in their degree of interaction and expression of affection, whereas Latino dads were higher than either Blacks or Whites on interaction. Few studies exist on Asian fathers, but those

few indicate that Asian fathers maintain more authority and are more emotionally distant from their children (Ho, 1986; M. G. Wong, 1998). Some studies of Chinese parents, in particular, indicate that discipline is stricter than in the White community (Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Petersen, 1978).

Native American parents are the exception to this generalization. Traditionally, Native Americans were described as indulgent, relying more on persuasion, ridicule, shaming, and facial expression, or simply ignoring bad behavior rather than either yelling or corporal punishment (Ryan, 1981). In recent years, however, punitive methods are more evident among Native Americans.

Some have suggested that this parenting style classification privileges the White middle class (Hamner & Turner, 1990), and therefore should not be upheld as ideal. Research shows, however, that middle-class racial-ethnic minorities parent very similarly to middle-class White parents. Lareau (2002) compared Black and White middle-class parents and found that they were equally likely to enroll their children in organized activities that they believe transmit life skills and to rely on talking as the preferred mode of discipline. Likewise, Amato and Fowler (2002) compared interviews of African Americans, Hispanic, and White parents and found examples of authoritative parenting among all groups. Parental warmth and support, spending generous amounts of time with children, monitoring behavior, expecting children to follow rules, encouraging open communication, and reacting to misbehavior with discussion rather than harsh punishment, led to positive outcomes (i.e., higher grades, fewer behavioral problems, less substance abuse, better mental health, greater social competence, and more positive self-concept) among children of all races.

Reliance on authoritarian styles is frequently attributed to the harsher environment in which working-class and lower-income families (and hence many racial-ethnic minorities) find themselves. More rules, and strict enforcement of them, are perceived as necessary in harsh surroundings. Parental practices that appear overly restrictive in a middle-class environment may provide optimum supervision and support in a dangerous or impoverished neighborhood (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Cole, 1990). Others (Bell-Scott & McKenry, 1986; Comer & Poussaint, 1992) have argued that Black parents historically stressed obedience so their children did not violate any racial rules and, in so doing, bring difficulties to themselves or their families. Therefore, African American parents were more likely to use a language of control; that is, explicit commands such as "Get over here" or "Shut up." Even among more "permissive" Native Americans tribes, for instance, infants were strapped in cradleboards to make them easier to transport and to teach them restraint. If the infants cried, family members scraped a brushy

stick across the baby's face or lips or pinched the child to teach it not to cry. Such tactics were necessary for safety in traveling through dangerous territory (Broker, 1993).

Similarly, families residing in lower-income neighborhoods may sense the need to teach their children the capacity to defend themselves. For instance, in *Life on the Color Line*, mixed-race author Greg Williams (1990) recounts his childhood in an African American Indiana neighborhood, where he and his brother were informally adopted and reared by an unrelated Black woman after his parents essentially abandoned them. One of his first encounters in the new neighborhood was getting beaten up by a neighborhood boy. Williams, about 10 at the time, ran home to get a knife. His "mother" said,

You do hafta go back. If you don't, them boys is gonna think they can run over you whenever they want. But you can't take a knife. You liable to get kilt. . . . You got to go back up there with nothing but your own will. If he starts a fight, just do the best you can. (p. 133)

Likewise, some have suggested that the Cuban *choteo* humor and the African American game "playing the dozens," both of which involve teasing or insulting someone's family members or making light of a serious issue, are strategies to teach children coping or defense mechanisms. Psychologists Comer and Poussaint (1992), however, warn parents that although they might feel they should train their children to be more aggressive to deal with racism or with dangerous neighborhood streets, the victims of such aggression will likely be family and friends.

The environment has had contradictory effects for immigrants. Most native-born American parents, particularly White parents, feel they can rely on institutions, such as school, church, the workplace, and laws, to support their parenting and control children. Although some native-born American parents complain that schools teach material contrary to their values or that the media work against their family values, this is truer still for immigrant parents. For instance, in their interviews of Jordanian immigrant mothers, Hattar-Pollara and Meleis (2002) quote one mother:

Life here is difficult; everything in this new environment works against us. Back home, life, in and outside the home, is the same. What we teach at home is reinforced by the society, but here we have too much responsibility to keep the family together. . . . So it [rests] upon me to raise children according to our customs. (p. 167)

Consequently, immigrant parents, who are unfamiliar with American ways and hold images of the high American crime rate in their minds, may hesitate to allow their children to participate in field trips or after-school

activities, go to classmates' homes for group homework assignments, or attend social gatherings. People in many cultures have never heard of the American practice of sleepovers. For instance, Timm's (1992) study of Hmong children, found that parents refused to allow their children to visit non-Hmong homes after school for fear that their children would do something Americans would not understand and might be mistreated. They allowed after-school jobs, but thought athletics and other after-school activities were a waste of time. Groups of teens "chilling" in shopping malls or fast food restaurants were akin to gangs in their perceptions. As a counter-strategy, some immigrant families, Asian families in particular, form their own day care centers or after-school programs where they can teach their children their native languages and traditions. At older ages, they provide college-prep classes, called "cram schools" (Min, 1998).

On the other hand, immigrants from societies where collective socialization of children is a predominant style sometimes give children a lot of freedom; they assume other adults will step in to protect their children in the absence of the parents. According to Holtzman's (2000) ethnography of Sudanese immigrants in Minnesota, parents frequently let their children go outside without much supervision as they were accustomed to doing in their villages where everyone is a potential parent. Such a strategy can pose problems in American society, where this might appear as parental neglect.

Corporal Punishment and Child Abuse

Given the preceding discussion, it is not surprising that most research indicates that racial-ethnic minorities use corporal punishment at a higher rate than White Americans. Heffer and Kelley (1987) found that two thirds of both middle-class and lower-class African American mothers accepted spanking as a discipline technique, compared to one fourth of White women. In that study, lower-income African Americans rated the time-out option very low. White middle-class parents relied more on time-outs or attention withdrawal, essentially ignoring bad behavior. Similarly, McDade (1995) interviewed households in the State of Washington and found that 50 percent of the Black parents thought spanking was acceptable, compared with 10 percent of White parents. But only 7 percent of Asian parents and no Hispanic or Native American parents thought spanking was acceptable. Most surveys show, however, that the majority of American parents, regardless of race, use spanking at one time or another, even if the parents don't believe in corporal punishment (Day, Peterson, & McCracken, 1998).

In recent years, debates about the effectiveness of spanking have proliferated. But an overall review of the research indicates that spanking has no long-term negative consequences when (1) the purpose is to correct the child (rather than to vent the parent's anger), (2) accompanied by high levels of warmth and parental involvement, (3) part of consistent disciplinary warnings, and (4) absent verbal abuse or ridicule (Larzelere, 1996). Likewise, McLoyd and Smith (2002)—using data collected over 6 years on a sample of more than 1,000 White children, 550 African American children, and 400 Hispanic children from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth—concluded that for all three groups spanking was associated with problem behavior in a context of low emotional support, but not in a context of high emotional support. Baumrind (1996) has suggested that socialization practices that are normative for a culture are generally well-accepted by children. Therefore, moderate corporal punishment may be less problematic among African Americans because it is more normative in the Black community (Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997).

Corporal punishment, spanking, is not equivalent to abuse. Physical child abuse appears to be correlated with low income and poverty (sexual abuse, which accounts for about 10 percent of child abuse incidents, is higher for middle-class families [Finkelhor, 1984]). Neglect, which accounts for about 60 percent of child abuse incidents, is highly associated with poverty (Giovannoni & Billingsley, 1970), and the most severe injuries occur in extreme poverty. Economic stress leads to depression and demoralization, which in turn lead to harsh, inconsistent, noninvolved parenting (Baumrind, 1994).

As you can see in Table 7.2, the rates of child abuse in 2002 are highest for Native Americans and African Americans, but some studies comparing Blacks and Whites find that when socioeconomic status is controlled, the rates appear the same or lower than Whites (Cazenave & Straus, 1979). In addition to poverty, the higher likelihood of young unmarried motherhood makes Native and African American children more susceptible to abuse. Across racial groups, children under 3 have the highest rates of abuse, and mothers are twice as likely as fathers to be perpetrators.

As with spousal abuse, however, report rate or perception differences may account for some of the racial gap. Although Asians and Pacific Islanders and American Indian and Native Alaskans represent lower percentages of abuse victims, they are 20 percent more likely than the other racial groups to be deemed victims when initial reports are investigated for substantiation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

With the rates of abuse higher among Black and American Indian children, their representation in the foster care system is also disproportionate.

Table 7.2 Child Maltreatment Rates by Race, 2002

	<i>Victimization Rate per 1,000 Population 17 and Under</i>	<i>Percentage of Victim Population</i>
Non-Hispanic White	10.7	54.2
Hispanic	9.5	11.0
Black	20.2	26.1
Asian & Pacific Islander	3.7	1.8
American Indian & Native Alaskan	21.7	0.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2004)

Table 7.3 illustrates that Whites and Asians are the only racial-ethnic groups underrepresented in the foster care population. Unfortunately, a Wisconsin study (Courtney & Park, 1996) found that of all races African American children are the most likely (38 percent) to remain in foster care for 3 years or longer, followed by Hispanics (17 percent), Asians (10 percent), Whites (9 percent), and Native Americans (8 percent). As with the maltreatment figures, a few scholars have argued that their overrepresentation is due not only to a higher abuse incidence, but to the social service system's propensity to institutionalize children of color rather than work with the family or find another family member to care for them (Roberts, 2001).

Parenting Styles and the School System

Differences in parenting styles may explain perceived behavioral problems in other contexts, such as school. Children accustomed to stricter discipline and more authoritarian styles may not respond seriously to more permissive styles. Hale-Benson (1986) cautioned White teachers that Black children whose parents are more firm and physical in their discipline will "run all over" teachers who are practicing the techniques learned in college, and in turn those children will be labeled discipline problems.

Students reared with direct, explicit language might respond to indirect language literally. They may think that the request "Would you get in line now?" is a question to which "No" is an acceptable response. Writing in his 1995 autobiography, Gustavo Perez-Firmat, a Cuban American, recalled an elementary school experience. Every Monday morning, his teacher summarized the sermon she had heard the previous day in church.

Table 7.3 Foster Care Population by Race, 2000

	<i>Percentage of Foster Care Population</i>	<i>Percentage of U.S. Population Under 18^a</i>
Non-Hispanic White	40.9	61.1
Hispanic	17.2	17.0
Black	35.3	14.8
Asian	1.1	3.4
Pacific Islander	0.3	0.2
American Indian & Native Alaskan	3.1	1.1

SOURCE: Lugaila & Overturf (2004)

- a. These figures do not add up to 100 percent because they do not include those who identified themselves as "Some other race" or "Two or more races."

[The teacher] once stopped in the middle of one of her warmed-over sermons to ask if anyone in the class would prefer not to listen to it. Understanding her question as an honest inquiry rather than a veiled threat, I was the only kid to raise his hand, and as a result spent the rest of the morning in the cafeteria. (p.)

Similarly, loud or disruptive behavior in school may mimic behavior necessary at home to garner attention from stressed parents in a setting where more family members and noise prevail. Racial-ethnic groups such as the Hmong and African Americans are known for high rates of television viewing (Ford, McDonald, Owens, & Robinson, 2002; Koltyk, 1998), suggesting that children of these racial-ethnic groups might require more stimulation in the academic setting. On the other hand, children taught to respect (or fear) authority and be quiet among adults ("Children should be seen and not heard," my working-class mother used to say) may have trouble participating in free-flowing classroom discussions. Similarly, American Indian children frequently are socialized to learn through observation with little verbal instruction, with the outcome that as adults they sense and anticipate what other family members expect (Miller & Moore, 1979; Swisher, 1991). Speaking from her or his own experience, Cheshire (2001) recalls that "Growing up, I was taught to listen and watch but not ask questions, because I would learn without having to ask questions, and what I would learn would have a deeper meaning to me" (p. 1533). In American classrooms, an inability or unwillingness to participate verbally may be viewed as diminished intelligence.

In Asian cultures, looking directly into the eyes of adults is a sign of disrespect. You can see how this might cause a problem in America, where adults often chastise young people to “Look at me when I speak to you.” Whereas most societies consider prolonged staring to be rude, some cultures consider it downright dangerous. You may have heard of the “evil eye.” In a number of societies, it is believed that someone can harm you by transmitting evil spirits, even unintentionally, through staring. (By the way, the traditional American bridal veil was originally designed to keep away evil spirits that might accompany all the staring the bride receives. The noise-making and car decorating were also meant to scare away the evil spirits [Ingoldsby, 1995c]). I will return to the evil eye later in this chapter.

Perceptions of public displays of affection vary by culture as well. Public affection appears to be highest among Hispanic American families and lowest among Asian American families (M. G. Wong, 1998). In Asian cultures, hugging and touching may even be considered dangerous. For instance, in America patting children on the head, or even giving “nuggies,” is a sign of affection, whereas in Vietnamese culture touching people on the head is thought to rob them of their spirit (Binh, 1975). Asian children may withdraw, therefore, from shows of affection from teachers or other adults.

The Asian and Native American focus on relational harmony may be reflected in smiling or agreeing at times that would seem odd to most native-born Americans. In her handbook for teachers, Binh (1975) related a teacher’s complaint that her Vietnamese students smiled when being reprimanded. The teacher thought they were being insolent or stupid, but Binh explained that the students were indicating their acceptance of the reprimand. Similarly, Native Americans frequently choose to avoid confrontation to maintain harmony within themselves; but in a school setting parents who prefer to ignore a problem to maintain inner harmony might be seen by the staff as uninterested.

Racial Socialization

Racial-ethnic minorities must deal with what White Americans can generally avoid: teaching their children how to adapt to living in a culture where they are the numerical and cultural minority. As mentioned earlier, parents of color need to instill competencies to navigate within a sometimes hostile environment (Miller, 1999). Racial socialization involves the same tasks other parents must accomplish, plus the responsibility of raising healthy children within a society in which being of color has negative connotations. Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, and Allen (1990) point out that racial socialization

aims to build personal and group identity, teach children how to cope with intergroup relations, and conveys messages about the individual's position in the social hierarchy. The critical message of such socialization is that race affects one's identity and what options and life chances are available to him or her.

Several studies indicate that most, but not all, minority parents engage in racial socialization (Bowman & Howard, 1985). In a study of African American adolescents, Sanders-Thompson (1994) found that nearly 80 percent of the respondents recalled having had race-related discussions with their parents, especially about racial barriers. Biafora et al. (1993) similarly found 73 percent of their sample of Black teens reported family discussions regarding race and prejudice.

The actual amount of racial socialization may to some degree be a matter of perception. The reports vary by whether the researcher interviewed the parents or the children. In Nagata and Cheng's (2003) study, parental reports indicated that 65 percent had discussed racial experiences with their children, but the children reported an absence of such communication. Similarly, Marshall (1995) noted in a study of racial socialization among African Americans that twice as many Black children as their parents said their parents had been silent on race. These findings only confirm that intergenerational communication gaps exist among all racial groups!

The few studies that have compared racial socialization across racial groups have concluded that the amount of racial socialization varies by race and by the type of socialization. Phinney and Chavira (1995) sampled Mexican American, African American, and Japanese American parents. They found that 94 percent of African American parents reported discussing racial bias and discrimination with their teens, whereas only 44.5 percent of Japanese American parents did so. The majority of each group, however, described efforts to instill cultural pride. Nagata and Cheng (2003) also found Japanese parents less inclined to engage in cultural socialization and preparation for bias communication.

Some have attributed the Japanese reticence to discuss race issues to the Asian values of self-restraint and relational harmony, but others have attributed it to their experience in World War II relocation camps. Specifically, Nagata and Cheng (2003; also Carr, 1993; Nagata, Trierweiler, & Talbort, 1999) looked at the experience of second-generation Japanese American parents and their third-generation children. They found that the parents consciously chose to socialize their children to blend into the dominant society, refrained from actively passing on language and culture, and preferred to avoid discussing their experiences in World War II relocation camps. The authors suggested that this strategy of avoiding racial issues might spare

children from being hypersensitive to racial encounters and from being burdened by their parents' experiences.

Most research on racial socialization, however, has been conducted on Black families. Most studies conclude that African American parents validate ethnic identity and negate dominant cultural messages that might undermine their children's self-esteem and efficacy. Thornton et al. (1990), however, found that mothers, older people, married Black parents, and those who reside in the Northeast were more likely to report proactive racial socialization. (Nagata [1993] also found that Japanese mothers were more likely than fathers to engage in racial socialization.)

Jake Lamar's autobiography *Bourgeois Blues* (1991) illustrates the gender difference. Lamar's mom explained the civil rights movement, taught him about Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, and purchased African art for the house. His dad, on the other hand, "was indifferent to such gestures. Dad simply told me that if I worked hard and excelled in school, no one would care about my race" (p. 46).

Hughes and Johnson (2001) examined racial socialization processes among 94 African American parents of third, fourth, and fifth graders. They concluded that parents were more likely to discuss cultural socialization and pluralism (messages about ethnic history and cultural practices) but less likely to address the possibility of discrimination. Phinney and Chavira (1995) and Hughes and Chen (1997) found a similar pattern. Specifically, both studies found that cautions or warnings about interactions with other racial groups, particularly Whites, were reported by a minority (about 20 percent) of parents. The authors speculated that discussions about discrimination were more discomforting than discussions instilling ethnic pride, so parents refrained from initiating such discussions unless precipitated by a specific discriminatory incident. Thornton et al. (1990) found only 3 percent of their parent respondents instructed children to maintain social distance from Whites. When they did, it was usually precipitated by a child's report of unfair treatment by a peer.

Parents' communications to children are important determinants of children's race-related attitudes and their sense of efficacy in negotiating racial barriers and experiences (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Spencer, 1983). Those communications can prepare children to fail or succeed in mainstream endeavors (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Johnson, 2001). Most research indicates that racial socialization engenders a positive racial identity, facilitates the development of competence and academic achievement, and helps minorities handle stress and overcome negative stereotypes (McCreary, Slavin, & Berry, 1996; Oyserman, Kimmelmeier, Fryberg, Brosh, & Hart-Johnson, 2003; Peters, 1985; Stevenson, 1994).

Cultural Rituals That Contribute to Racial Socialization

Not all racial socialization occurs through direct conversation about racial issues and identity. Much of it occurs through observation, listening, and experience. The maintenance of cultural rituals helps develop positive racial identities and social competencies as well.

Socializing rituals can start immediately from birth. For instance, infant-naming ceremonies or birth celebrations are common among a number of racial-ethnic groups. Such traditions are most common when ancestor recognition is an important part of the culture or when higher infant mortality is prevalent (Ng, 1998).

Many Native American nations hold such ceremonies. The Hopi hold an infant-naming ceremony in which the paternal aunts name the child. The Ojibway celebrate a naming feast and ceremony 3 weeks after birth. A wise person is chosen from among tribal members to choose a name, as every person's spirit needs a name, a song, and an animal. The namer visits the child and then meditates on what the appropriate name should be. Ignatia Broker (1993, p. 89) said her grandmother was named Ni-Bo-Wi-Se-Gwe, which meant Night Flying Woman, because she had been born in the night.

Some Asian groups have similar traditions. Hmong infants are usually named and inducted into the world on the 3rd day of life. In Hindi tradition, a baby-naming ceremony occurs 10 days after birth. Chinese Americans traditionally celebrate a one-month birthday, originally only for boys, especially the first son, but recently celebrations are held for daughters too (Ng, 1998). In the traditional ceremony, performed before the family altar or at the temple, the grandmother shaves the infant's hair and eyebrows.

In many infant ceremonies, the navel cord plays a pivotal role, as it symbolizes the tie between mother and child. Some African tribes bury the cord by the house entrance to ensure that the child will always return home. In Vietnam, the cord is saved in a box to sustain the connection between child and mother, even when the two are far apart (Hayslip, 1989). The Sioux make two turtle or lizard amulets upon the birth of a child. The navel cord is placed inside one amulet, which is then hidden in the baby's cradleboard. The other amulet is displayed to deflect the evil spirits (Crow Dog, 1990). Because most births in America occur in hospital settings, it is more difficult for parents to access the navel cord, although more hospitals now ask parents if they want the cord.

Similarly, a number of Latino cultures purchase coral and onyx beads or *azabaches*, amulets made of black coral and blessed by a folk healer or priest, to keep away the *mal de ojo* (evil eye). In Turkey, parents pin gems or amulets on their babies to keep away the effects of the evil eye. In India,

some families smudge black kohl under babies' eyes to ward off the evil spirits (Bumiller, 1990).

As the child enters puberty and adolescence, many cultures honor the ensuing bodily and developmental changes, recognizing them as transitions to adult responsibilities. Several Native American groups have ceremonies to mark puberty. The Ojibway hold an ear-piercing ceremony and feast for young girls. The Navajo celebrate the *kinaalda*, a 4-day initiation, and the Apache have a sunrise ceremony, both of which occur shortly after girls begin menstruating (Pleck, 2000). According to Crow Dog (1990), the Sioux used to announce the onset of a girl's menstruation to the whole village. Her family would hold a feast in honor of the event and give gifts to celebrate.

The Japanese celebrate 12th-year birthdays, whereas the Chinese mark 10th and 15th birthdays. Jews hold a bar mitzvah for 13-year-old boys and in recent years a bas mitzvah for girls. For Latinas, the *quinceanera*, a party celebrated near a girl's 15th birthday, is similar in purpose to a "sweet sixteen" party, a debutante ball, or cotillion. Sometimes accompanied by a Catholic mass, these parties can be quite lavish. Fifteen couples may perform a choreographed dance, and families might enlist the help of godparents to pay the costs of the gown, tiara, food, and religious medallions. The girl often dresses in white, to signify purity, as the celebration traditionally announced the girl's availability for courtship.

Holidays also serve as vehicles for cultural socialization. Because African Americans have been in America many generations and are largely Christian, they celebrate most of the same holidays and traditions as European Americans. The majority of Black families celebrate Christmas, but with the rise in "ethnic" toys, African American children's literature, Black-oriented greeting cards, Black Santa and nativity decorations (Jones, 1993), African Americans can now "tweak" Christmas celebrations to reflect Black culture.

A small segment of Black Americans have begun to celebrate Kwanzaa, a holiday created in the 1960s as a means for Blacks to forge an identity acknowledging their African roots (Pleck, 2000). The word Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili language and means "firsts," such as the first harvests of the year. Originally, Kwanzaa was intended to be a simple celebration, lighting a candle each of the 7 nights from December 26 through January 1. Families might gather for a southern-style dinner including mustard greens, corn bread, and black-eyed peas. Like other American holidays, over time Kwanzaa has become more commercialized with Kwanzaa cards and wrapping paper.

Hispanic Americans celebrate mostly Catholic holidays, such as saints' days (which originally substituted for children's birthday parties). In Mexico, a widely celebrated holiday is Day of the Dead (*El Día de los Muertos*), which originated in 9th century Europe and is celebrated from October 31 to

November 2. It is believed that ancestors' souls return home for a joyful reunion during these days (Silva, 1995). Similar to Halloween, the streets are decorated with paper skeletons, coffins, death masks, and skulls. Sweets are made in these same shapes. In Guanajuato, Mexico, dead bodies are on public view. Music and dancing, as well as the maintenance of family gravesites, are part of this celebration.

The large number of Asian groups prevents me from describing holidays for each subgroup, but the main holiday for Chinese Americans, the largest Asian group in America, is the Chinese New Year, which is one of the world's oldest holidays and is celebrated for 2 weeks. As with most holidays, food plays a major role in the celebration. Chinese tea and pastries are abundant. Various foods carry symbolic meanings: candied melon (health), sugared coconut strips (togetherness), kumquat (prosperity), litchi nuts (strong family ties), red melon seeds (happiness), lotus seeds (many children), and lettuce (longevity). In China, red symbolizes happiness and luck, so adults give children red envelopes containing money for the New Year and on other occasions, including funerals (Fong-Torres, 1995). Parades with dragons and lions to ward off evil are common as well at the New Year's celebration.

Two of the most celebrated Muslim holidays are the Eid al Fitr and the Eid al Adha. The former celebrates the end of the month-long fast called Ramadan, and the latter commemorates Abraham's sacrifice of his son. Because Muslims reside in numerous countries, the style of celebration varies, but in most countries the celebration centers on food and families. Gifts are given to children, and elaborate henna tattoos decorate women's hands and feet. New clothes are purchased for the occasion, and some houses hang decorative lights. The dates of Muslim holidays change yearly because they follow the lunar calendar.

These traditions and rituals socialize children, bring extended families together, and bridge the generations. I turn now to the older generation.

Resources

Books and Articles

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1993). *Multicultural issues in child care*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

This short book provides examples of cross-cultural differences in child-rearing strategies among parents of preschoolers.

Gudykunst, W. B. (2004). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

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This work provides an overview of cultural differences in interpersonal interaction and suggestions for avoiding misunderstandings.

LeVine, R. A. (2003). *Childhood socialization: Comparative studies of parenting, learning, and educational change*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Comparative Education Research Centre.

Here you will find articles on parenting practices in Africa, Japan, and Mexico.

Malley-Morrison, K., & Hines, D. (2004). *Family violence in a cultural perspective: Defining, understanding and combating abuse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

This book focuses on family violence among Native, African, Latino, and Asian Americans.

Pleck, E. H. (2000). *Celebrating the family: Ethnicity, consumer culture, and family rituals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This work contains a historical account of various holidays and traditions among different racial groups in America.

Wright, M. A. (2000). *I'm chocolate, you're vanilla: Raising healthy Black and biracial children in a race-conscious world*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This readable book helps parents understand their children's racial identity development.

Videos

Carr, L. (Producer/Director). (2000). *Kinaalda: A Navajo rite of passage*. (Available from Women Making Movies, 462 Broadway, Suite 500, New York, NY 10013, or at <http://www.wmm.com>)

This one-hour documentary takes viewers inside a coming-of-age ceremony for young Navajo women.

Hammond, R. J. (Producer/Director). (1996). *Overcoming prejudice*. United States: Multimedia Creations Studio of Utah Valley State College. (Available from Insight Media Inc., 2162 Broadway, New York, NY 10024-0621, or at <http://www.insight-media.com>)

In this one-hour video, participants share stories illustrating important principles about overcoming prejudice. It includes a section on parenting issues.

Websites

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/hstein/parentin.htm>

The website from the Alfred Adler Institutes gives a broad but brief overview of various parenting styles and their effects on children.

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

The Children's Defense Fund site has data, publications, and links to information about the state of America's children.

