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Development of Self and Competence in Cultural Context

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Abstract

Human development can be studied from various perspectives. Of particular significance in societies undergoing rapid socio-economic change, is the development of the self and of competence at both the individual and the societal level. Different social structural contexts provide individual persons with different socialisation processes and diverse experiential worlds leading to variations in social interactions, self-images and self-concepts, in short leading to different selves, which are manifested in variations in competence and patterns of adaptation to the environment.

I use the concept "self" here to refer to the person that emerges out of interactions with others and is thus socio-culturally constructed. Competence refers to behaviour that is adaptive to environmental demands and therefore implies flexibility and a basic capacity for change.

Current theorising in social and cross-cultural psychology examines the behavioural correlates or outcomes of different types of selves. For example, the difference between the emotions or social orientations of the separated and relational (independent and interdependent) selves have been studied (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This kind of analysis, however, stays mostly at the surface level and remains descriptive. To understand the dynamics of *why* and *how* differences in self develop, we need to go below the surface and utilise an approach that is both contextual and functional. Thus questions such as these become relevant: What kinds of family-interaction patterns and child rearing orientations lead to the development of the separated or relational selves? And what kinds of socio-economic-cultural contexts produce or even necessitate those particular family

patterns? And why do they do this? In dealing with such questions, the Family Change Model (Kağitçibaşi, 1996a) provides us with some conceptual tools that also have implications for applications regarding human development at a societal level.

As for the development of competence, it is important to recognise the changing demands of urban life styles, involving schooling and more specialised and differentiated tasks and roles. These changing life styles necessitate new conceptions of competence, involving shifts from purely social and practical intelligence toward school-like cognitive and language skills and technological literacy. Children, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, should be supported to develop competencies that can realise their full potential in challenging environments.

At the interface of the development of the self and of competence, the "autonomous-relational self" (Kağitçibaşi, 1996b) can be seen as a healthy synthesis. This type of self can function autonomously in the urban technological society while being able to sustain close human ties with significant others. Developmental scientists, applied researchers and policy makers can help promote such human well being through training, intervention and general social sensitisation.

Family and the development of the self

Human development occurs in context. Of paramount importance here is socialisation in the family. It reflects all aspects of the socio-cultural, historical, and economic aspects of the larger society. I will be dealing selectively with some aspects of the socialisation process to throw light on both cross-cultural diversity and cross-cultural unity.

To stress the diversity of the family contexts in which the self develops, I would like to start with some examples. The first example is from some parent education classes in the U.S. where young mothers are taught to "let go" of their toddlers. If mothers have to be taught this, it is obviously not a "natural" tendency, but needs to be cultivated to counteract mothers' tendencies to engulf or protect the child. "Letting go" is done to allow for the "individuation-separation" of the young child and for the development of autonomy. Both are considered necessary for healthy

personality development, otherwise, an unhealthy symbiotic relationship between the mother and the child may result. Clearly, this practice in parent education is based on psychological teaching, particularly "object relations" theory (e.g. Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975).

The other example is taken from descriptions of mother-child interaction in Japan by Hiroshi Azuma (1986). When a child is troublesome, the Japanese mother's typical message to her non-cooperative child is, "I am one with you; we can and will be of the same mind". But this is exactly the definition of a symbiotic relationship. Families containing such symbiotic relationships, overlapping selves without clear boundaries, are considered "enmeshed" and not healthy in Western psychology. I sometimes give my students a hypothetical example of a Turkish clinical psychologist, fresh out of his/her professional training in the United States, who goes to a Turkish village. Observing the human relationships there, he or she would declare the whole village to be enmeshed, with everybody connected to everybody else!

What do we do? Do we declare a whole village or a whole society pathological? Or do we declare the theory wrong? I would answer "No" to both of these questions. Neither is the society pathological, nor the theory wrong. What is wrong is the inappropriate application of the theory. What we see here is the cultural limitation of the theory. While it may be perfectly valid in some socio-cultural contexts, its universal validity is questionable.

Clearly, psychology, as it has been developed in the United States, considers the development of well-defined boundaries between oneself and others and thus individuation-separation to be a requisite for healthy personality and family relations. Thus it affirms one type of self – the separated self. Of course, cognitive processes of differentiation take place for everyone everywhere, since every person is aware of being a separate entity. However, "individuation-separation hypothesis" goes beyond that into the psychological construal of self-other relations, defining healthy and pathological functioning. There is an important lesson that psychology can learn from cross-cultural research, as seen from these examples. A theory that claims to be universally valid, which is the case with most psychological theories, may in fact be culture bound. The separated self may be a culturally bound phenomenon.

Together the examples from Japan and the United States reflect a basic dimension

of self-other relations. It has to do with human merging and separation; I call it the "psychology of relatedness". This is also a dimension extending from interdependence to independence. It can be studied as a characteristic of interpersonal relations, or as a characteristic of the self, contrasting well-defined boundaries with fluid boundaries around selves. It can be conceptualised at the individual, group or cultural levels. For example, we can talk about the culture of relatedness-culture of separateness (Kağitçibaşi, 1985), or we can talk about the independent self or the interdependent self (Kağitçibaşi, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and all the gradations in between these different levels of analysis.

Indeed, we find that many conceptualisations that are similar to this dimension of independence-interdependence have been proposed. For example, we find it in the conflict theories of personality as "union-fusion-dependency versus separation-individualisation" (Rank, 1945) or "surrender vs. autonomy" (Angyal, 1951) or "communion vs. agency" (Bakan, 1966), and in general in the recent theorising along individualism-collectivism distinction in cross-cultural psychology. They refer to two basic but seemingly conflicting human needs for autonomy and interpersonal closeness (Kağitçibaşi, 1996b).

The autonomous-relational self: a new synthesis

Autonomy is often construed as separateness from others and is seen to result from a separation-individuation process. Yet, it is neither logically nor psychologically necessary for autonomy to imply separateness if the existence of two different dimensions of agency and interpersonal distance are recognised. The two poles of the agency dimension are autonomy and heteronomy; those of the interpersonal distance dimension are separateness and relatedness (Figure 1). The two dimensions are confounded when autonomy is pitted against relatedness.

Figure 1. Two dimensions

1. Interpersonal Distance
   Separateness – Connectedness

2. Agency
   Autonomy – Heteronomy

Relatedness and autonomy

In considering the two dimensions of interpersonal distance and agency, whether seen as independent of each other or not, we can ask a number of questions. These questions have both theoretical and empirical significance. One has to do with the different types of selves (separated-relational, autonomous-heteronomous) and how they differ from one another in terms of several psychological processes, ranging from self-perceptions to emotions. A second question inquires into the different kinds of socialisation processes that engender these different selves. A third question asks why a certain kind of socialisation occurs in a particular socio-cultural context and when a change in this process of self-development may be expected.

Most current theorising of the self deals with the first question, mainly in terms of the correlates of the independent and the interdependent selves. Often taxonomies in terms of individualism-collectivism are used, and the consequences or behavioural correlates of the different types of selves are examined along several psychological processes (e.g. Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The causes or antecedents of the separated-relational and autonomous-heteronomous (agentic-dependent) selves (the second and the third questions above) have not been adequately examined.

Such analysis requires an examination of the functional underpinnings of the society-family-socialisation interfaces, not commonly ventured by psychologists. For example, there is a need to understand how socialisation values and family interaction patterns are influenced by the socio-economic-cultural context and how these patterns, in turn, affect childrearing. Any changes in the socio-cultural context would have implications for changes in the chain of relationships. This kind of a conceptualisation cannot remain only at the psychological level of analysis but has to situate self within family and culture. The family plays a key mediating role in the causal relationships between the self and the society.

Family as a developmental context

I have proposed (Kağitçibaşi, 1990, 1996a) a model of family change that analyses the development of three different types of self within three different family interaction patterns. The model aims to discover the societal and familial antecedents of the separated and the relational selves. It also examines the implications of family change through socio-economic development, for the emergence of a self that integrates both autonomy and relatedness.

Three family interaction patterns are distinguished: (i) the traditional family characterised by overall (material and emotional) interdependence between generations, (ii) the individualistic model based on independence, and (iii) a dialectical synthesis of the two, involving material independence but emotional interdependence. These interaction patterns are studied mainly at the intergenerational level.

The pattern of interdependence is prevalent in traditional rural agrarian society (though not limited to it) where intergenerational interdependence between generations is a requisite for family livelihood. The child contributes to the family well being both while young and later on in providing old age security to his/her parents. Thus, in such contexts the child's economic/utilitarian value has salience for parents, and high fertility is implicated, as the economic value of the child (VOC) is cumulative with child numbers (Kağitçibaşi, 1982, 1990). In the family model of interdependence, the independence of the child is not functional and may even be seen as a threat to the family livelihood because independent offspring may look after his/her own interests rather than that of the family. Thus an obedience orientation is seen in childrearing that leaves little room for autonomy.

A contrasting pattern is seen in the family model of independence, characteristic of the Western middle-class nuclear family, at least in professed ideals. Here intergenerational independence is valued, and childrearing is oriented toward engendering self-reliance and autonomy in the child. Individuation-separation is considered a requisite for healthy human development in such a context where objective conditions of social welfare and affluence render family interdependence unnecessary, if not dysfunctional.

There is a general modernisation assumption that suggests that socio-economic development has brought about a shift from the former model of family interdependence to the latter model of family independence. However, recent evidence is questioning this assumption in showing continuities in closely-knit interaction patterns despite increased urbanisation and industrialisation in cultures of relatedness with closely knit human relations (see Kağitçibaşi, 1990, 1996a for reviews). What appears to happen is that *material* interdependencies weaken with increased affluence and urban life styles, but *emotional* interdependencies continue. The implications of these changes are significant for childrearing. When material interdependencies decrease, there is room for

autonomy in childrearing. This is because the child's autonomy is not seen as a threat once his/her material contribution is no longer required for family livelihood. Nevertheless, since emotional interdependencies continue to be valued, the *closeness*, or connectedness, of the growing child is still desired. Thus, though autonomy is valued and complete obedience and loyalty of the child is no longer needed, there is still firm control (not permissive childrearing) because separation is not the goal.

It is important to note that in the family model of emotional interdependence, autonomy *can* enter childrearing orientations because of decreasing material interdependencies. Why it *should* enter, however, has to do with its adaptiveness in urban living conditions. With changing life styles, autonomous, agentic orientations become more functional in coping with more specialised tasks requiring individual responsibility rather than following age-old traditions. Obedience does not go very far in ensuring success at school or in a job that involves more than manual labour in non-agricultural contexts (Kohn, 1969; Nunes, 1993; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). In the family model of interdependence, childrearing is oriented toward obedience, since an obedient child is more likely to grow up to be a loyal family member. In the family model of independence, autonomy and separateness of the growing child are encouraged, since these characteristics contribute to greater self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In the family model of emotional interdependence, a dialectic synthesis of the other two models is seen in a childrearing orientation that integrates autonomy with relatedness. The self that develops in the family model of interdependence is the relational self; it is characterised by relatedness and heteronomy, considering the two dimensions discussed above. The self emerging in the family model of independence is the separated self; it involves autonomy and separateness. The self developing in the family model of emotional interdependence is the autonomous-relational self, manifesting both autonomy and relatedness.

In the family model of interdependence, authority and obedience oriented parenting contributes to the development of the relational self. In the family model of independence relatively permissive and self-reliance oriented parenting engenders the separated self. In the family model of emotional interdependence there is a combination of autonomy and control orientation in parenting, which may be akin to "authoritative parenting" (Baumrind, 1980), that leads to the development of the autonomous-relational self (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Agency, interpersonal distance and the types of selves in context

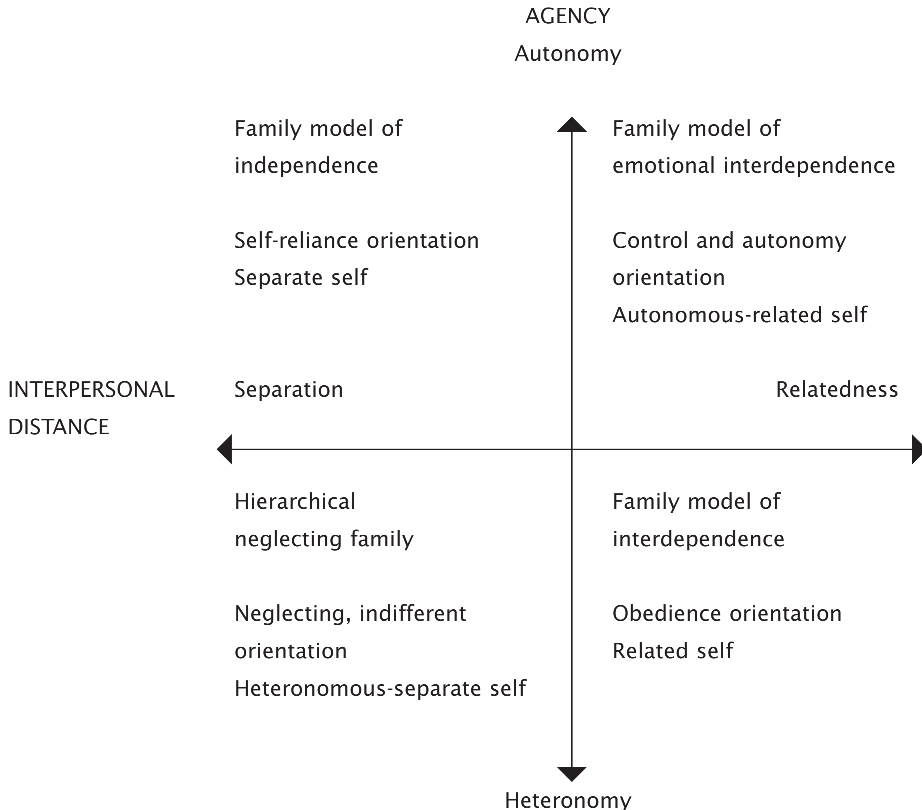

Figure 2 provides a summary presentation of the interpersonal distance and agency dimensions in terms of the type of self, family and parenting they implicate. The three quadrants of relatedness-autonomy, relatedness-heteronomy, and separation-autonomy have been described as autonomous-relational self (emotional interdependence), relational self (interdependence) and separated self (independence), respectively. The fourth quadrant points to a situation of parental neglect where the self lacks both autonomy and closeness to others. This may be the case where the individual is pushed into a subordinate and separate position. An example might be the hierarchical family involving autocratic power differentials between generations (and genders) that interfere with intimacy and relatedness (Fisek, 1991). A somewhat similar conceptualisation is found in Baumrind's (1980) "indifferent parenting". This last type needs more empirical

validation. It may characterise abusive family relations depriving the person of both autonomy and relatedness.

Research support for the autonomous-relational self

The autonomous-relational self may be seen as a contradiction in terms if the two underlying dimensions discussed before, interpersonal distance and agency (Figure l), are confounded. However, the logical and psychological distinctness of these two separate dimensions (separateness-relatedness and autonomy-heteronomy) indeed allows for this possible combination.

A combined autonomy and control orientation in childrearing has been found, for example, among Chinese parents (Lin & Fu, 1990) who are high on both control in childrearing and encouragement of independence. Similarly, Korean parents (Cha, 1994) grant autonomy to their children while accepting in-group obligations. Thus it can be seen that apparently conflicting tendencies are found to coexist in child rearing, providing further support to the independence of interpersonal distance and agency dimensions.

Similarly, research in Turkey points to parental values combining autonomy and relatedness. While low SES Turkish parents (in the family model of interdependence) expect their children to be grateful to them (insuring loyalty), high SES parents (in the family model of emotional interdependence) do not expect gratitude and value autonomy, but nevertheless want their children to remain close (Imamoglu, 1987). Furthermore, low SES parents can be supported and induced (through an intervention programme) to value autonomy while continuing to maintain a closeness to their children (Kağitçibaşi, Sunar & Bekman, 2001; Kağitçibaşi, 1996a).

The development of the autonomous-relational self is best understood from a contextual/functional perspective. This type of an integrative synthesis emerges in the family context of emotional interdependence, rather than in either a context of total interdependence or independence. This is because with emotional interdependence both autonomy and closely-knit connectedness are functional. This would be more typical in the developed (urban, educated) sectors of the societies with cultures of relatedness, rather than in traditional rural society. Urban lifestyles render autonomy, rather than heteronomy, functional, as discussed before. However, culture lag may slow down the process of change, and obedience-oriented childrearing may persist even though it is no longer needed or

functional. Such a maladaptive situation can come about in the context of social change and may call for intervention (Kağitçibaşi, 1996a).

There may be shifts from a model of independence to a model of emotional interdependence, also, as the latter model better satisfies the two basic human needs for autonomy and for relatedness. Indeed, recent evidence points to such reaffirmation of relatedness values in post-technological postmodern society. For example, Inglehart (1991) and Young (1992) find an increasing importance of human relational values in several technological societies, and Saal (1987), Jansen (1987), and Weil (1987) point to new living arrangements that are recreating community in the Netherlands and in Israel.

A great deal of recent social criticism has been directed at the unbridled individualism in the Western, especially American, context calling for relatedness rather than separateness. From a different perspective, feminist theory and family psychology research also propose more recognition and appreciation of relatedness *together with* autonomy (see Kağitçibaşi, 1996b for a review of these different critical positions).

These amount to a call to correct of the overemphasis in psychology on individual autonomy and the neglect of human relatedness (Guisinger & Blatt, 1994). The recognition of this imbalance is facilitated by an understanding of the two independent dimensions of interpersonal distance (separateness-relatedness) and agency (autonomy-heteronomy). I propose that autonomy should be recognised for what it is, as agency, not as separateness. The agency dimension should not be confused with interpersonal distance dimension. The recognition of the possible coexistence of relatedness with autonomy would provide the needed corrective. Such a corrective promises to promote a more balanced human development. Although the autonomous-relational self may be an ideal, it is in fact within reach and not merely utopic. Psychology can have a role in making this ideal a reality.

Development of competence

It may be informative to review some instances of socialisation for competence outside of Western middle-class family or school contexts, drawn from observations and research reports. They should provide us with some clues about

the diverse processes involved in and the meanings attached to socialisation for competence in different socio-cultural and economic contexts.

A pioneering early anthropological study in a Turkish village (Helling, 1966) noted the prevalence of a parental teaching style based on demonstration, imitation, and motor learning rather than verbal explanation and reasoning. As a husband-wife team Hellings observed informal teaching-learning activities and reported, for example, the case of a father “teaching” his son how to cut wood by just doing it, himself, to be imitated, with no explanation. They went back to the same village twenty years later and did not observe any appreciable change in this non-verbal orientation to “teaching by doing” (Helling, 1986, personal communication).

Similar descriptions of “teaching and learning” abound in anthropological reports from many cultures, especially among rural populations. For example, other early work points to similar patterns in Africa (Gay & Cole, 1967; LeVine & LeVine, 1966), and more recently it has been noted among the Australian aborigines (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992). These patterns are clearly widespread, and they work. With time children learn to cut wood or develop manual skills to produce exquisite handicrafts, mainly through imitation and commonly without verbal instruction or positive reinforcement (LeVine, 1989). In Western urban contexts, similar non-verbal and less praising parental teaching styles are also noted in research among, for example, Hispanic minorities in the U.S. (Laosa, 1980) and Turkish minorities in the Netherlands (Leseman, 1993).

Whether there is extensive verbalisation with the child may also have something to do with cultural conceptions of childhood. Specifically, it appears to be important whether caregivers see themselves in a consciously goal-directed, child-development-oriented, “child-rearing” role and whether childhood is considered special or not. This type of self-role definition is common among educated middle-class (especially Western and particularly American) parents (Goodnow, 1988; Laosa, 1980; Coll, 1990). In contrast, Kakar (1978) for example, notes that Indian caregivers emphasise pleasure between adult and child and experience little pressure to steer the child in a given direction. In traditional Indian society, children are expected to learn adult roles and behaviours mainly through observation and imitation.

Learning by observation and imitation obviously occurs in all contexts and throughout life. However, there are limitations to observational learning. For

example, it is found to be not effectual in the transfer of new tasks (Greenfield & Lave, 1982; Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1993; Segall et al., 1990). Also observational learning is commonly only one type of many types of learning, and at least some of these others involve verbal reasoning. If verbalisation with the child, especially verbal communication involving adult reasoning and decontextualised language, is lacking or infrequent there may be serious developmental implications.

Another commonly observed characteristic of traditional childrearing is obedience-orientation. This is indeed a key characteristic of child socialisation in the family model of interdependence. Obedience expectations from children show systematic cross-cultural variation. In more traditional family contexts, especially in rural agrarian and low socio-economic conditions, a high value is put on obedience in child rearing. This value is reflected in a cultural conceptualisation of cognitive competence, which includes social components, social responsibility and social sensitivity in particular. Research has pointed to the functional or adaptive value of conformity orientations inculcated in children for survival (LeVine, 1974, 1988) or for occupational requirements (Kohn, 1969).

So-called “social” definitions of intelligence abound in research from Africa (as reviewed by Berry, 1984). Mundy-Castle (1974) even spoke about “African social intelligence”. However, this phenomenon is not unique to Africa but is commonly seen in “traditional” societies, where “socio-affective” aspects of cognitive competence are stressed. For example, Berry and Bennett (1992) note that among the Cree of northern Canada the cognitive and social/moral aspects of competence are not differentiated. This is in contrast to the more cognitive conceptualisation of intelligence seen in Western technological societies. Obviously, as intelligence tests are products of Western technological society, they will reflect the latter notions of intelligence.

A classic study by Serpell (1977), of a Zambian village, demonstrates the contrast between the “folk” conceptions of intelligence and what is measured by intelligence tests. He asked five adults to rate the village children of about 10 years of age in terms of who they would choose to carry out an important task. He also asked them to rank the children in terms of intelligence, using the local term for it. The children thus rated were given a number of intelligence tests to perform, including three developed for use with non-schooled children in Zambia. The scores from the intelligence tests did not correlate with how the adults rated

the children. This is because, even though probably free of specific school bias, the tests measured cognitive skills and not the social skills and social responsibility that the adults used as criteria for intelligence.

In short, socialisation and child rearing is aimed to develop valued characteristics in children. In Africa this includes social skills and social responsibility, rather than, for example, abstract reasoning, which is associated with intelligence by Western psychologists. Clearly, children's cognitive competence gets promoted in those domains that are in culturally valued, whereas development in other domains lags behind. Thus, learning is functional, it is adaptive to environmental demands.

Social change and the resulting mismatch

A problem emerges, however, when stable functional relations or adaptive mechanisms are challenged by modifications in life styles that accompany social structural and economic changes. Perhaps the most pertinent examples are found in studies looking into ethnic and social-class differences in Western urban contexts. Most ethnic minorities in the industrialised countries of Europe, North America and Australia include immigrants from less developed majority world countries and especially from their rural areas (Blacks in the U.S. and native peoples being the main exception). The child rearing patterns of these ethnic minority populations reflect the kinds of parental conceptions of cognitive competence that I have been discussing here. Specifically, a socially-rather than a cognitively-oriented conception of competence is valued, stressing conformity-obedience goals, and early learning in the family is based mainly on observation and imitation.

Indeed research on ethnic minority families points to this type of parental conception and finds a mismatch between this cultural conception of competence and that of the school culture in the host society. For example, Nunes (1993) notes that immigrant Mexican parents in the U.S. believe, erroneously, that if their children are quiet and obedient and listen to the teacher, they will succeed in school. Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) similarly find that for immigrant parents from Cambodia, Mexico, the Philippines and Vietnam, motivation, social skills, and practical school skills were at least as important as cognitive characteristics to their conceptions of an "intelligent first-grade child". This was not true for Anglo-

American parents who valued cognitive characteristics like problem-solving skills, verbal ability, and creative ability. Furthermore, parents' beliefs about the importance of conformity correlated negatively with children's school performance, and American-born parents favoured developing autonomy over conformity.

In Europe, research abounds that points to problems in the social integration of ethnic minorities. The lack of success among immigrant children from the very start of their school careers has been widely documented in the Netherlands (see for example Eldering & Leseman, 1999; van Tuijl, Leseman & Rispens, 2001). Early school failure has adverse consequences in later life such as early school dropout, lower income, higher unemployment and more marginalisation. Beyond the economic and social factors, which contribute to this disadvantageous situation, childrearing attitudes and behaviour patterns of the parents come to the fore. In particular, low levels of stimulation and cognitive complexity in verbal interaction with young children and emphasis on obedience are found to be common contributing factors (e.g. Leseman & de Jong, 1998).

These studies show that cultural conceptions of cognitive competence held by caretakers and their corresponding behaviours can conflict with mainstream (school) conceptions. If school performance is used as a developmental outcome variable, such home orientations may be considered a "disadvantage". A simple anecdotal example may provide an illustration.

Recently at a major European airport, while waiting for luggage, I noticed a young Turkish family, father, mother and two little boys. They were obviously living in Western Europe as an ethnic minority family of lower socio-economic status. The luggage did not get processed for a long while, and I had a chance to do some naturalistic observation. The bigger boy was about four to four and a half years of age, and the smaller one was about three. The bigger boy was trying hard to catch his father's attention and to engage him in a conversation, as he was repeatedly telling the father some things and asking eagerly, "Isn't it so, daddy?" The father was not responding, not even looking at the child. The mother did not intervene or respond in any way either. She, like her husband, was looking aimlessly into space, as if the children were not there. The smaller boy, in turn, was actively searching for the attention of his older brother. After insistent repetitions, the bigger boy gave up on catching the father's attention and turned to his younger brother, and the two of them carried on from there.

This is a simple glimpse of behaviour, but it is telling in its contrast to common Western (especially American) middle-class parental behaviour. The greater verbal responsiveness of U.S. middle-class parents compared with working-class parents is documented in research (Sameroff & Fiese, 1992; McLoyd, 1990; Laosa, 1980). Again, I have personally experienced it on several occasions throughout the years. Many times I have felt surprised and even frustrated at not being able to carry on an uninterrupted conversation with an American colleague or friend, if his or her child was around. In the middle of a serious conversation, even while the other person is talking, if the child says something, the parent typically turns to the child and attends to him, cutting the other person out.

These two vignettes of parental behaviour which I have described can both be considered selective. However, in a recent nation-wide study in Turkey where interviews were conducted with more than 6000 mothers (Macro, 1993) “the child interrupting adult conversation” was reported by 73% of the mothers as “not tolerated”. Since a nationally representative sample was used, this finding reflects fairly common cultural values. In cultural contexts, where childhood is not considered as special, verbal responsiveness to children is likely to be less. The fact that the traditional motto “children are to be seen and not heard” was widespread in the West, too, until rather recently, and is still present among lower SES groups, shows that changes occur over time as well as across cultures.

In an extensive project with mothers and young children, the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (Kağitçibaşi, Sunar & Bekman, 2001; Kağitçibaşi, 1991, 1996a), we interviewed mothers living in low income areas of Istanbul. To find out the degree of their involvement and interaction with their three to five-year-old children, we asked them how often they gave their full attention to the child outside of meal times. Those who said, “never” or “almost never” reached 22%. Together with those who said, “seldom”, low involvement was found among more than 40% of the mothers. In terms of what they commonly do when they are with their children at home, 90% of the mothers stated that they do household chores (and a small proportion hand work such as knitting, embroidering), with little direct interaction with their children.

When does lack of responsiveness, especially in terms of verbal interaction, become a disadvantage for the child? Again research provides us with some answers. There is often a mismatch between school expectations and child rearing goals among marginal groups, as I mentioned before. A background of

observational learning without verbal reasoning can be a disadvantage in school (Nunes, 1993). Indeed early verbal interaction with adults appears to be a crucial antecedent of early language development. Language skills are, in turn, indicative of better school performance.

Similarly, work on the development of oral language skills and literacy also points to the importance of extensive adult-child verbal interactions, involving reasoning, asking and answering questions, story-telling, book-reading and discussions of ongoing events (Snow 1991, 1993). A growing body of research in the area of literacy shows that early home experience with oral language skills and a “culture of literacy” (involving familiarity with printed media, world knowledge, vocabulary, etc.) predict advanced literacy achievement. Children who lack such experience would be disadvantaged in school and as adults in literate society.

One early study in Istanbul found large differences in vocabulary of middle and working-class children in the fifth grade of primary school (Semin, 1975). Yet, vocabulary is found to be the best single predictor of reading success (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). This finding from research conducted in the U.S. may well have cross-cultural validity. Similarly, Ataman and Epir (1972), in a study in Ankara, Turkey, found that children from low-income families formed concepts of lower level of complexity, compared with middle-class children. In later work, Savasir and Sahin (1988) and Savasir, Sezgin and Erol (1992) found persistent social-class differences in vocabulary and verbal competence in Turkey. In a study of children of Turkish migrant workers in the Netherlands, Leseman (1993) found that lower SES Turkish children between three and three and a halfyears of age had lower levels of vocabulary and concept formation skills (in Turkish) than Dutch middle and working-class children (in Dutch). Studies comparing Dutch children with other groups of immigrant children in the three to six age range, showed similar results (see Leseman, 1993; Van Tuijl, Leseman & Rispens, 2001).

In a series of studies with Mexican-American mothers and their children Laosa (1980, 1982, 1984) pointed to the importance of low maternal education, low social-class standing and minority language status as determinants of children’s poor cognitive performance. Mothers’ teaching strategies and verbal communication with the child were mediating factors. Specifically, less educated Hispanic mothers typically used less verbal interaction with their young children, they also used less praise and less inquiring but more modeling, directives and negative physical control than Anglo-mothers. Laosa (1984) found differences

between Hispanic and Anglo children's performance (on the McCarthy scales of children's abilities) as early as two and a half years of age, showing the importance of early language development. Similarly, Slaughter (1988) noted the lack of decontextualised communication and play with young children in Black families in the U.S. She pointed to this as a factor explaining why black infants who surpass white infants in early sensory-motor intelligence fall behind in later language-based cognitive performance.

Wachs and Gruen (1982) also pointed out that verbal stimulation becomes important after the first year, and that the amount of parent-child interaction after 24 months of age makes an impact on developmental outcomes. The second year appears critical for early syntactic and semantic development, and starting from age two, amount and complexity of parental verbal communication with the child is consequential for the child's cognitive development. Goodnow (1988) points to "parental modernity" as a possible important moderator variable. This is an outlook involving "stimulating academic behaviour", "stimulating language", and "encouraging social maturity". Parents with such an outlook provide a supportive environment for their young children and actively prepare them for school.

Applegate, et al. (1992), propose a model of communication development focusing on the complexity dimension. It purports that the complexity of parental social cognition leads to the complexity of parental communication, which in turn leads to the complexity of the child's social cognition and finally to the complexity of the child's communication. The key in this process model is what they call "reflection-enhancing parenting", found to relate positively to mother's social-class and social-cognitive development.

Implications of research

Though I have dealt with two different spheres of human development and socialisation, namely the development of the self and of competence, several common points of mutual influence have emerged. A contextual and functional analysis provides us with insights for understanding why and how certain patterns of childrearing lead to the development of certain patterns of self and competence. Such an approach also points to when a change in these patterns is needed and how it can be achieved.

When contexts change, such as happens in rural-to-urban or international migration, new environmental demands emerge. In particular, urban life styles, involving public schooling, more specialised tasks and jobs require different outlooks affecting both the self and competence. Clearly, change is called for. However, what kind of change is optimal is an empirical question that requires functional analysis. Such functional analysis claims that those individual traits and interpersonal orientations that are incompatible with emerging environmental demands will disappear. Others that are not incompatible with new life styles but are adaptive to them will continue.

This is indeed the theoretical basis of the predicted shift toward the family model of emotional interdependence engendering the autonomous-relational self (Kağitçibaşi, 1996a) that I described before. Though the evidence for this synthetic model of human/family relations emerges mainly from research conducted in societies undergoing urbanisation and economic development, it may be a universal trend, as already noted. This is because such a synthesis does more justice to the two basic human needs for autonomy and relatedness.

Regarding the development of competence, again a universally valid cognitive competence model is implicated. Global patterns of urbanisation, industrialisation, and technological development require a high degree of education and specialisation everywhere. And all societies need to socialise their children to be competent in changing life styles. This does not mean, however, that the so-called “social intelligence” of the traditional society, involving social sensitivity and responsibility would be superfluous. What seems to be needed is the *addition* of cognitive competence to social competence.

Intervention

Though the above functional analysis is useful in understanding what kind of change is needed, there is no guarantee that such change will in fact take place. Culture is often resistant to change, and “cultural lag” may get in the way of progress. Also, cultural diffusion from the West, especially from the U.S. through the media can bolster the Western model of human/family relations even though the independence pattern may not be the most functional one for adapting to human and societal needs. Thus, what is called for is intervention that is informed by scientifically sound and socially responsible research.

With regard to the issues I have discussed here, intervention needs to address two spheres of child socialisation. The first one should be designed to increase such parental orientations as increased responsiveness to the child, extensive verbal communication with the child, use of reasoning in child discipline, and valuing cognitive skills and education. The second one should promote autonomy while at the same time nurturing close relations, thus targeting the autonomous-relational self as a childrearing goal.

These intervention goals are summarised in Figure 3. The figure also shows the main shifts in contexts and their concomitant functional correlates in human traits and behaviours.

Figure 3. Contextual change and its outcomes

Context	Rural/traditional Less specialised tasks Low levels of schooling	ˋ	Urban More specialised tasks Increasing schooling
Family	Family model of total interdependence Old-age security VOC important Material interdependence	ˋ	Family model of emotional interdependence Material interdependence decreasing
Childrearing and the self	Obedience-orientation functional The related self	ˋ	Autonomy becomes functional The autonomous-related self
Teaching and Learning	Teaching through demonstration and modeling Apprenticeship in everyday life	ˋ	School-like learning, cognitive language skills become functional

In the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP), mentioned before, (Kağitçibaşi, 1991, 1996a; Kağitçibaşi, Sunar & Bekman, 2001) mothers were encouraged to develop a positive self-concept, feelings of competence, and efficacy as well as specific cognitive skills and positive orientations to provide their children with more cognitive stimulation and enrichment at home. This was done, by reinforcing the existing close mother-child relationship on the one hand, and by

capitalising on the existing communal support systems, on the other. The latter were utilised in group meetings of mothers in the community and para-professional home instruction. The impact of intervention on both the mothers and the children was found to be impressive in the fourth year of the study (Kağitçibaşi, 1991, 1996a).

In this study, mothers and their preschool-aged children in low-income areas of Istanbul were studied first for base line performance. Afterwards, in the second and the third year of the study, a randomly selected sample of the mothers were given a mother-child training programme. The focus was on both the cognitive development of children, adapted from a programme developed in Israel (Lombard, 1981) and also on supporting mothers in their child rearing roles and empowering them in general. Positive results were found in the final year of the study. In a follow-up study seven years later the gains from the intervention were found to be sustained. Both following the intervention and seven years later, the children whose mothers participated in the mother-training programme surpassed the control group in cognitive performance and school achievement. They also showed greater autonomy, a more positive self concept and better family and social adjustment. Trained mothers were found to interact more positively with their children, were pleased with them, and had higher educational aspirations for them. These mothers also had higher intra-family status and reported better and closer family relations in general compared with the control group (Kağitçibaşi, 1991, 1996a; Kağitçibaşi, Sunar & Bekman, 2001).

Some links can be formed between this intervention and the model of family change and the self I described before. TEEP is an example of a model of intervention that worked because it was built upon existing human relational patterns and the family culture, rather than ignoring them. As the focus was shifted here from the individual (child) as target of intervention to interactions between the individual and his/her environment in a holistic context, multiple and expanding benefits accrued. This is a model of great potential for use in intervention/ development programmes because it works through and builds upon the existing strengths in the family and promotes them further for overall individual-family-community development.

A main aspect of the TEEP had to do with modifying child-rearing orientations. Specifically, an attempt was made to introduce “autonomy” in child-rearing while reinforcing “closely knit human and family ties”. Both the fourth-year and the

follow-up results showed that more of the trained mothers came to appreciate their children's autonomy while remaining as close to them as the control group of mothers. This is in line with the model of emotional interdependence.

A second way in which a modification in child-rearing orientations was accomplished in TEEP was to encourage mothers to be more responsive to their children and to help support their children's cognitive development in preparation for school. First-year baseline assessments pointed to generally low levels of responsiveness to children among the mothers, as mentioned before, and low levels of environmental stimulation at home (Kağitçibaşi, 1991). This is in line with much research conducted in socio-economically disadvantaged homes in the United States and other Western societies as well (see Kağitçibaşi, 1996a for a review). The project intervention aimed at improving the situation by sensitising the mothers to the importance of early learning environments and by getting them involved directly in the early education of their children.

The results showed increased levels of mother-child interaction as well as more supportive mother teaching styles, more verbalisation, and more responsiveness in general among the trained mothers compared with the control group. These positive orientations were sustained over time and were also shared by the fathers, as evidenced by the follow-up results. Such parenting had doubtless much to do with the satisfactory overall development and achievement of the children.

Conclusion

There is a great deal of accumulated knowledge in developmental psychology regarding indicators of school readiness. Much research has informed us about the development of language, problem solving, and other cognitive skills; social competence; emotional development; self-help skills; and other factors in early childhood. However, all this knowledge should be put to more effective use in wide-scale intervention work in different socio-cultural contexts, especially in the *Majority World* and in contexts of migration. To ascertain arrested human development and to promote optimal development, culturally valid measures are needed that would build upon both cross-cultural research in the field and also within each socio-cultural context. Both commonalities and differences would need to be taken into consideration, integrating comparative standards and culture-sensitive conceptualisation.

It is with these considerations that we undertook the Turkish Early Enrichment Project. Supporting the mothers to support their children's overall development and school readiness entailed using comparative school-related cognitive standards, but this was done within a culturally relevant contextual approach. Our research experience and the applications emerging from our project have reinforced my belief in the feasibility of such an integrative approach, combining comparative standards of human development with culturally sensitive endogenous conceptualisations of well-being.

The current applications of TEEP are extensive in Turkey. A mother-child education programme has developed out of it that is operative in sixty provinces in the country and which has reached more than hundred thousand mothers and children. Current evaluations (Bekman, 1998) point to important gains even with such a large-scale application. These gains are seen in both children's school preparation and school performance, as well as in the mothers' childrearing orientations and self-concepts.

A culture-sensitive approach is a valuable guide to assist in understanding the development of self and competence, as well as in undertaking intervention work to help promote optimal development. However, it is also important to reveal the basic processes underlying adaptive development, in particular to recognise when changes in life styles call for changes in beliefs and behaviours.

The role of psychology, education, and social science researchers and practitioners come to the fore here. This role can be summarised in terms of sensitising and training people, forming public opinion, and informing social policies to help bring about changes that promote human well-being. Social policies should be much more informed than they are now by research in human development and human sciences in general. Particularly when such research is culturally sensitive and cognizant of social change, it would help make social policies more valid and more supportive of human adjustment to socio-cultural change.

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