Cultural Heterogeneity: Parental Values and Beliefs in Children’s Activities in the United States, South Korea, and Estonia

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In this chapter we report on an ongoing program of research that has been underway since 1989. The aim of the research is to try to understand ways in which children become competent members of the cultural group into which they are born. Our assumption is that what counts as “competence” is culturally relative and can be understood only in terms of the prevailing values and practices of the members of any cultural group. Becoming competent is the result of ongoing interpretations, actions, and interaction in which children (and others) engage with social partners. We have therefore observed everyday activities of young children and their partners in these activities and gathered data from their parents about their values and beliefs relating to bringing up children. Although the project has since broadened in scope, our initial focus was on industrialized societies from the northern hemisphere. In a series of interconnected studies, data were collected in cities of equivalent size and cultural amenities in societies that differed, at least until recently, in ideology (capitalist

or socialist) and in values about social organization (relatively individualistic or collectivist).

Much cross-cultural research has been conducted with cultural groups that are as different as possible from each other. As Bornstein, Tal, and Tamis-LeMonda (1991) pointed out:

Cross-cultural research is often geared to evaluate the distinctiveness of some phenomenon in a setting that is exotic or unique; frequently, it is undertaken to compare samples from contrastive settings in order to maximize the potential of uncovering differences. However, such a strategy potentially confounds childrearing aspects of culture with other factors. (p. 72)

For example, cross-cultural psychologists interested in issues of children’s development have compared child rearing in an industrialized society (typically the United States) with equivalent practices in societies in which the parents have had little or no schooling (as in many parts of rural Africa or South America). It is clear as a result that behaviors, beliefs, practices, and so on that are considered competent in one cultural group are not seen as competent in another. Cultural differences occur widely in terms of such things as the appropriate age to wean the child from the breast, the age at which children should not be sleeping with parents, when it is worth trying to communicate with babies, and so on (Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, & Goldsmith, 1992; New & Richman, 1996; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Valsiner, 1989; Wolf, Lozoff, Latz, & Paholec, 1996).

Although this work has been useful in alerting psychologists to the range of values, beliefs, and practices that are viewed as appropriate and competent, there has been a problem with this focus on cultural groups that are maximally different from each other. The problem is that within-society cultural differences have largely been ignored, and one group of families, most commonly white, middle-class, and from the United States, is typically compared with rural, minimally schooled, families in one or more nonindustrialized societies. For example, middle-class families in Boston have been compared with Kikuyu families in Kenya and Efe hunter-gatherers in Zaire, middle-class families in Salt Lake City with rural Mayan families in Guatemala, and middle-class families in Wisconsin compared with rural families in Senegal (Bloch, 1989; Dixon, LeVine, Richman, & Brazelet, 1984; Morelli, Rogoff, & Angellito, 1992; Morelli et al., 1992; Rogoff, Mistry, Gönçü, & Mosier, 1991; Super & Harkness, 1982).
We do not wish to imply that the scholars engaging in this research believe that their findings can be generalized beyond the particular group being studied or that there is an assumption of within-society homogeneity. In fact, the richly contextualized descriptions of daily lives in these groups are meant to indicate their specific ecocultural niche. In this sense, their work is a conceptual world away from traditional research in developmental psychology as practiced in North America, where generalizability is the explicit goal and thus the impact of context is, supposedly, reduced to a minimum. Nonetheless, without any explicit discussion of within-society heterogeneity, problems in interpretation may occur. For example, by virtue of the fact that the families of “Orchard Town” were the only ones drawn from the industrialized world in the Six Cultures Study (Whiting & Whiting, 1975), they have come to serve as representative of families far beyond the confines of the small New England village where the data were collected. This is partly because we have an extremely limited amount of high-quality observational data of everyday lives in such families, unlike the comparative wealth of such data gained from the participants in more “traditional” anthropological studies, conducted in predominantly rural and non-urban semi-industrialized societies (Bloch, 1989; Richards, 1977). But it is also the result of the lack of any explicit attention to the heterogeneous nature of industrialized societies or to the changes in social relationships over historical time. Readers of reports of the Six Cultures Study may thus be left with the understanding that, compared to mothers in Kenya, India, the Philippines, Mexico, and so on, mothers in the United States are more likely to be the social partners of their children. And even in the most recent report (Whiting & Edwards, 1988), no mention is made of possible variations across historical time (the 1950s, when the data were gathered, and the 1980s), across social class (all the families were of middle class or self-employed working class), across race (all the families were white), or across area (all the families lived in a small New England village).

The issue of heterogeneity has long been recognized, of course, but principally by those with a sociological background who explore racial, ethnic, or social class variability within societies or by psychologists who include these terms as independent variables of interest, but who go little beyond using what Bronfenbrenner and Caster (1983) have termed “social address” models. In our view, it is important to go beyond such models and analytic strategies to explore the ways in which cultural groups who live at different social addresses engage in their everyday activities, the meanings that these activities have for them, and their consequences.

One of the approaches taken to heterogeneity has been to focus on immigrants, who have brought the values, beliefs, and practices of their original society (or rather, of their cultural group within that society) to their new society (Field & Widmayer, 1981; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Ninio, 1979, 1988; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993; Pomerleau, Malcuit, & Sabatier, 1991). Comparisons of immigrants and nonimmigrants (or different groups of immigrants to the same area, or even the relative length of time immigrants have been in a place) are relatively easily accomplished. There is a price to be paid, of course, because it is not possible to understand any differences between those who chose to remain and those who chose to come to a new society (chosen, perhaps, because of preexisting views of the nature of that society, including such things as the perceived goodness of fit or opportunities for success).

A second approach to heterogeneity has been to explore the impact of differential extent of engagement in schooling. This research has been conducted for the most part in societies that are currently industrializing and making it more possible, and desirable, for children to attend school. In the research of LeVine, Miller, Richman, and LeVine (1996), for example, it is clear that the longer time mothers spent in school the more likely they were to believe that their children could be communicative partners and the more likely they were to respond contingently to their children. This relationship held true even when other important factors, such as access to resources, neighborhood, and husband’s education were taken into account. Moreover, when the children were selected when they were almost 3 years old, those whose mothers had behaved more contingently scored higher on tests related to subsequent school performance. Amount of schooling has other benefits, of course, including both more general and school-specific cognitive competence, likely to help schooled children get better jobs and pass on the benefits to their children in turn (Rogoff, 1981; Stevenson, 1982). The way in which schooled members of a culture engage with children also is different from those without schooling (Wertsch, Minick, & Arns, 1984).

In industrialized societies, also, level of education has been found to play a role in beliefs and practices, although it is difficult to disentangle the confounding factors of education and socioeconomic status, given that level of education is often a determining factor in the type of occupations that are attainable (see, for example, Hoff-Ginsburg & Tardif, 1995).
However, a number of studies have focused specifically on education, indicating that parents have differing ideas about development and engage in different practices, as a function of level of education. For example, Palacios and Moreno (1996) studied ethnically homogeneous Spanish parents and adolescents, varying in terms of education and urbanicity, and found quite different “cultural models” of parenting coexisting within the same society. Other studies have examined changes in maternal beliefs about child rearing as a function of parent education programs (Hochan, 1995).

A third approach to heterogeneity has been to examine, explicitly, two or more groups from within the same society, whether differentiated by race, ethnicity, or social class in the United States (for example, Wolf et al., 1996), or implicitly, by choosing for comparative purposes matched groups from two or more societies. As McGillivray-DeLisi and Subramanian (1996) pointed out with regard to their study of the beliefs of Tanzanian and U.S. mothers, matching groups on such characteristics as parental education, degree of affluence, occupation, and so on does not mean that the two groups have been equated. However, a matching strategy does acknowledge the heterogeneity that exists in both societies. Bornstein et al. (1991) were more explicit about the issue of heterogeneity in their study of parenting in the United States, Japan, and France, choosing equivalent-sized cities and mothers and babies that were carefully balanced on a whole range of characteristics, including demographic. It is this third approach that we adopted in our program of research by examining, in each society from which we have collected data, two groups that are differentiated by education and occupation.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this project has been drawn from two related theories, Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory on the one hand, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory on the other. We have written more extensively about these theories and their relevance for research on young children elsewhere (Hogan & Tudge, in press; Tudge, 1996, 1997, Tudge; Ouy, & Hogan, 1997; Tudge, O’Cress, Hogan, & Ete, 1998; Tudge & Putnam, 1997; Tudge, Putnam, & Siddon, 1993, 1994; Tudge, Putnam, & Valsiner, 1996; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). Here we would simply like to stress the following points. Both Vygotsky’s and Bronfenbrenner’s theories require that our understanding of development encompasses three interrelated factors – namely, aspects of the individual, the sociocultural and physical context (at both the immediate, interpersonal level as well as at the broader, cultural-historical level), and the passage of time (also see Gaskins, this volume). In Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) ecological systems theory, context is differentiated into the microsystem (where children are engaged in activities with partners), mesosystem (relations among two or more microsystems), exosystem (a context, such as the parent’s workplace, in which the child is not present but which nonetheless influences the child’s microsystem), and macrosystem (the values, beliefs, and practices of a cultural group). Time can be thought of in two distinct senses, in one sense as the microgenetic processes of interaction that occur between the developing individual and those around him or her, and in the other sense as the passage of historical time that has helped to shape the culture.

The links between these different aspects or levels are multidirectional; culture or context does not cause or “explain” individual development any more than individuals create culture. Instead, the causal link between the different levels of these theories is one that has been termed transactional, co-constructive, or dialectical. This is what Bronfenbrenner had in mind when he argued, borrowing from Lewin, that development is a function of person and environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995). Similarly, Vygotsky’s “general genetic law” that all higher psychological functions are social prior to being individual takes for granted that “social” in this context necessarily includes the individual (Tudge, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978, 1994). Individual and social factors are thus mutually constitutive. The appropriate unit of analysis is one that involves neither individual nor social factors alone but rather one that encapsulates both. Human activity constitutes such a unit, for any such activity, including that of a child playing alone, as simultaneously individual and social.

The link between the cultural-historical level and the individual level is to be found in everyday activities. Vygotsky defined one such link as activity that creates a “zone of proximal development” or the ways in which a child manages to understand or achieve something at a more competent level (culturally defined) after having been helped to do it with the assistance of someone already more competent (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987; also see Guberman, this volume). Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (1993) defined “proximal processes” as the “engines of development” for children, by which he meant engagement with others in “progressively more complex activities and tasks” (p. 11).

These views of the links between culture and individual development are similar to those of cultural anthropologists and cultural psychologists
who define culture in terms of the values, beliefs, activities, and practices that continue from generation to generation (see Farver, Gaskins, Göncü et al., and Haight, this volume). These values, practices, and so on are not simply adopted wholesale by the parents from the culture in which they live and then transmitted by the parent generation to the child generation in any unidirectional fashion (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Subramanian, 1996). Although cultural messages are available through books, television, and other forms of mass media, and thus may appear to be the source of such messages, members of the culture are of course responsible for producing that material. Moreover, some parents pay more attention to some messages than others, ignore some while enthusiastically endorsing others. Some families encourage certain types of activities in their children and discourage others, while other families encourage quite different activities. Simultaneously, the children themselves are engaged in a constant process of figuring out what the appropriate practices are, what to believe, how to act, and so on. As they interpret the messages (both explicit and implicit) that are made available by members of the parent generation, the messages are transformed in subtle ways, in such a fashion that there is never a straightforward copy from one generation to the other, but the practices, activities, and beliefs are reproduced in novel ways (Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996). Cultures, in other words, continually develop just as the members of those cultures develop.

If we accept this definition of culture, as one involving delineated values, beliefs, practices, and activities, it is clear that culture and society are not synonymous, and that within societies many cultures are to be found. (Although these cultural groups are sometimes known as “subcultures,” we will not use that term because it carries with it the pejorative meaning of being subordinate, as opposed to the dominant cultural group within society.) Within-society cultural groups, like cross-societal cultural groups, can be identified to the extent to which they encompass different lifestyles, resources, and opportunity structures; espouse different values and beliefs; engage in different types of activities; encourage different practices in their young; and try to pass on to them their values and beliefs. This position is similar to Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) definition of the macrosystem. Examples of within-societal cultural groups in the United States include racial or ethnic groups, regional groups, and socioeconomic groups.

In our research we have, until now, concentrated on socioeconomic groups as our example of within-society cultures. The primary reason for this stems from the work of the sociologist Melvin Kohn (1977, 1979, 1995, Kohn & Schooel, 1983; Kohn & Sloczynski, 1990), whose interest has long been in the role of parental position in the social stratification system as an influence on parental values and beliefs about child rearing. This work is particularly relevant to Bronfenbrenner’s theory, because it proposes a link between the macro system (values of a cultural group) and the micro system (parental child-rearing practices) via the exosystem of parental workplace experiences.

In both the sociological and psychological literature, there has been a great deal written about values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas, without any great definitional or conceptual clarity being achieved (see, for example, discussions by Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Harkness & Super, 1996; Sierel, McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Goodnow, 1992). Kohn (1977) defined values as “conceptions of the desirable” (p. 10). He argued that all parents want certain things for their children—to do well at school, to be happy, become successful in later life, and so on. However, they differ in the emphasis they place on some characteristics, and especially on the extent to which they value self-directed independent behavior in their children. Why should these different emphases be related to position in the social stratification system? For Kohn, the most important determining factor was parental occupation, and specifically experiences at work. People with higher education, and who work in the professional sphere, typically have occupations that are complex and nonroutine, and that require working with people. In order to do well in jobs such as these, parents have to exhibit a lot of self-direction; not surprisingly, Kohn argued, these parents value those qualities for their children. By contrast, parents who do not have higher education and whose jobs are nonprofessional are more likely to be relatively routinized and to work with things rather than people. Their success at work has required them to follow directions carefully, directions that others have often established for them. These parents are relatively more likely, therefore, to want their children to learn to obey rules and to conform to external standards.

Kohn did not observe what actually occurred in families, but Luster and his colleagues (Luster, Rhoades, & Haas, 1989) went one step beyond. Although they accepted Kohn’s definition of values, they argued that beliefs represented a mediating factor, defining them as “parents’ ideas on how they can help their children achieve valued outcomes” (1989, p. 40). Luster et al. collected observational data from 90 mother-
child dyads from New York State, heterogeneous in terms of social class. In addition to collecting data about mothers’ values and beliefs about child rearing, Luster and his colleagues, using observations, examined the extent of similarity between mothers’ expressed values and beliefs and the ways in which they treated their children. Luster’s data supported his hypothesis that beliefs serve as a mediating link between values and behavior, as well as for the most part supporting Kohn’s general thesis of a relationship between class and values. Our intention was to use the work of both Kohn and Luster, but to collect far more observational data than Luster and his colleagues had done, so that we would be able to focus on children’s everyday activities.

In this research, we decided to focus on families in several industrialized societies, all of which are at an approximately similar level of technological complexity (United States, Korea, Russia, and Estonia). In each society, we have collected data from families from a medium-sized city (approximately 100,000 to 700,000 inhabitants) from two separate groups, divided by education and occupation. That is, in each city some of the participants have higher education (the equivalent of a college degree in the United States) and occupations that are professional, while other participants do not have higher education and have jobs in the nonprofessional sphere. For simplicity’s sake, we refer to these groups as “middle class” and “working class,” respectively, although we recognize that these are simply labels that in this case refer to differences that are a function of education and occupation.

We have thus three related interests. First, whether it is possible to find differences in values, beliefs, and activities at the “society” level (to the extent to which these cities can in any sense represent their society as a whole). This was particularly interesting, given that the cities are from societies that differ in terms of both ideology and family orientation toward collectivism and individualism (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Kohl, Kim, & Choi, 1993; Kim & Choi, 1994; Kirveenmummi, Räsänen, & Virtanen, 1994; Lec, 1992; Schwartz, 1994; Triandis, 1993, 1995; Tudge, 1991), but which nonetheless are not so drastically different from each other in degree of industrialization as those most often compared. Our second interest, derived from Kohl, Lusten, and others, was whether social class (as we have defined it) distinguishes parents in terms of their values and beliefs. Our third interest, assuming that differences in values and beliefs were found, was whether children actually behaved in ways that reflected their parents’ differing values and beliefs.

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Methodology

Observations

Families were asked to keep their daily routines unchanged as much as possible during the observation period. Each child was observed, wherever he or she was, for 20 hours over the course of a week to capture the equivalent of an entire waking day. Observations were continuous in 2 and 4 hour blocks, but activities were coded only during 30-second “windows” every 5½ minutes, using modified spot observations (Tudge, Sidden, & Putnam, 1990). Activities were coded as being “available to” the child if they occurred within his or her hearing or sight. Children were coded as being “involved in” the activities if they were physically participating or were observing. As well as observing which activities were available to the child and which he or she became involved in, we coded how activities were initiated and by whom, the manners in which the child became involved in any activity, any partners in activity, their respective roles, and so on.

The activities in which we were interested were lessons (4 categories); work (5 categories); play, exploration, and entertainment (10 categories); conversation (3 categories); and “other” (6 categories, including sleeping, eating, etc.). (For full details of the coding scheme, refer to Tudge et al., 1990). In brief, lessons were defined as involving the deliberate attempt to impart or receive information in four areas: academic (spelling, counting, learning shapes and colors, etc.); interpersonal (teaching etiquette or “proper” behavior); skill/nature (how things work, why things happen); and religious lessons. Work was defined as “activities that either have economic importance or contribute to the maintenance of life” (Tudge et al., 1990) and was broken down into work involving no technology, clear technology (such as sweeping with a broom), or more complex technology (such as using a vacuum cleaner). Play (including exploration and entertainment) was defined as activities that were being engaged in for fun or for their own sake, with no apparent curriculum (which would constitute a lesson) or sense that the activity had economic importance (work). Types of play included pretend/role play, play with an academic object (such as looking at a book), playing with objects typically designed for children, play with adult objects, other types of play (such as chase or rough and tumble), and watching television. Thus a child looking at a book or being read to would be coded as engaging in
“play with an academic object,” whereas a child asking what a particular word was, or being asked to name colors, would be coded as being involved in an academic lesson. Conversation was defined as talk that was not related to an ongoing activity and had a sustained or focused topic. Talking that accompanied play, work, or a lesson was not coded as conversation during any 30-second window. More than one activity could occur and could be coded.

One of our interests in conducting this research was not simply to document similarities and differences in children’s everyday activities but to focus on variability in those activities that might be expected to relate to later academic competence. As yet, we have follow-up data only on the U.S. children (Odaro, Hogan, & Tudge, 1996; Tudge et al., 1998), but the research is designed to be longitudinal, with teachers and parents providing information on their perception of the children’s social and academic competence in their first years of formal schooling. Accordingly, we have examined with particular interest those activities we felt might be most relevant to academic competence—namely, the academic and skill/mature lessons in which children were involved, their play with academic objects, and their conversation with adults. We focus for much of the chapter on these activities.

Questionnaire and interview

Following the observation period, the parents were interviewed and completed questionnaires to assess, among other things, their values and beliefs about child rearing.1 In order to assess values, we used the same Q-sort methodology that Kohl (1977) had used. Parents are asked to choose, from a list of 13 values, the three that they rank highest and the three they rank lowest. From these, the parents then choose the one they value most and the one they value least. Of these 13 values, 5 relate to self-direction (e.g., “have good manners,” “be free to follow one’s own interests”), 4 to conformity (e.g., “have good manners,” “obey their parents well”), and four are related to neither (e.g., “get along well with other children”). A high score on this scale represents a higher value for self-direction compared to conformity, with scores that can range from a minimum of 10 to a high of 26.2

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1 In Greensboro, the interview and questionnaire data gathering occurred only during a second phase of the study, approximately 3 years after the first.

2 A self-direction score was computed by summing the scores for the six values chosen, in the following fashion. All “filler” items were scored 3. Of the

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In order to assess their beliefs about child rearing, we asked parents to complete the Parental Beliefs Survey (Hogan & Tudge, 1994), which had been adapted for use with parents of school-age children from the Parental Beliefs Survey (Luster, 1985, cited in Luster et al., 1989), and which deals with parental beliefs about the appropriate child rearing. Parents were asked to circle the response that best represented their opinion for each of the 59 items, on a 6-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” In this chapter, we refer to three subscales: beliefs about spoiling the child by attending closely to him or her (for example, “I worry about spoiling my child by being an overprotective parent”); beliefs regarding freedom in and around the home (for example, “As long as the child is safe and the object will not be damaged, he/she should be allowed to play with almost any object in the house that interests him/her”); and beliefs regarding discipline and control (for example, “The most important task of parenting is disciplining the child”). These were the three subscales that were most related to self-direction and conformity.

Participants

Greensboro, NC, USA. This town consists of approximately 200,000 inhabitants, located approximately 250 miles (400 km) south of Washington, DC. The city was founded early in the nineteenth century and by the end of the century was an important textile manufacturing center (Potzman, 1995). The city’s economy is still based in manufacturing, primarily of textiles, furniture, and tobacco products, but much employment is also to be found in the banking and insurance industries as well as in the five colleges and universities within the city borders. Participants were recruited from birth records if they lived in one of two areas (each 2 to 3 sq. km) judged to be relatively homogeneous in terms of housing and racial background. A total of 20 families with young children were recruited from these two communities (one of which was middle class, in which most parents have higher education and tend to work in professional occupations; and one of which was working class, in which most parents typically do not have higher education and tend to work in the nonprofessional sphere). Acceptance rates from those initially contacted were quite

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In this passage, the most-liked value was scored 5, liked values scored 4, not liked values scored 2, and least-liked values scored 1. Conformity items were reverse scored.
high (64% and 78% in the middle-class and working-class communities), and the two groups of families that participated consisted of 11 middle-class families and 9 working-class families with children aged from 30 to 48 months. The families were clearly differentiated by education (no working-class parent had a college degree, whereas virtually all middle-class parents had at least a degree) and by occupation criteria, using Hollingshead (1975) rankings.

Suwon, South Korea. This town of approximately 700,000 inhabitants is located approximately 70 kilometers from Seoul and is one of the satellite cities around the capital. It houses a branch of Seoul National University. As was the case with each of the non-U.S. cities, our intention was to locate families that were the closest equivalent to "middle-class" and "working-class" families in U.S. terms. This translated into choosing two groups of families that were distinguishable in terms of education and occupation in the same manner as in the U.S. groups. This proved to be relatively straightforward in Suwon, where two communities were located. In one of them lived families who were mostly well educated (most of whom had at least a college degree) and in which the fathers had professional occupations, whereas the other consisted primarily of working-class parents, none of whom had completed a college education.

Inspection of birth records was not possible in Suwon, so we contacted community representatives who had detailed information about people residing in the community. They helped us to locate potential participants, and screening calls were then made to gain information about parental education and occupation. Families had to meet the same educational and occupational criteria as was the case in Greensboro. Twelve families participated in Suwon, divided equally by community and gender. However, recruitment was far more difficult in Suwon than in the other cities. Of 36 families who were contacted in the middle-class community, 13 (36%) were willing to participate, but seven of the children were enrolled in preschools that did not permit observations. In the working-class community, 16 families were contacted, of whom 7 (44%) were willing to participate, but one child was enrolled in a preschool that did not permit observations.

Obninsk, Russia. This town is situated about 100 kilometers south of Moscow and has approximately 120,000 inhabitants. It is a new town, built in the 1950s, around a nuclear power plant, which is no longer in use. Because of the need for scientists and skilled technical workers, two institutions of higher education (VUZ) were established, as well as a

number of polytechnical institutes of lesser standing. The town was built on what had been an old estate, owned by the Obninsk family, but few traces of its past remain. Perhaps because of its recent birth, and perhaps because of the demand for skilled workers, Obninsk appears more prosperous than equivalently sized cities in Russia. Compared to the large and staid apartment complexes that are typical of many Russian cities, those in Obninsk are relatively stylish, using color and architectural features to enhance the buildings' appearance.

As with other cities in the former Soviet Union, it is not possible to find areas of the city that are differentiated by social class, type of occupation, and so on. Well-educated professional families are likely to live next door to less-educated workers. Although there are some small single-family dwellings around the outskirts, the vast majority of the city's population lives in apartment complexes. Half of the Russian families consisted of parents who had the equivalent of a U.S. college education or higher and whose primary occupation was judged to be professional (many parents held more than one job, as a way of supplementing their income). The other half had no more than the equivalent of high school in the United States and worked in the nonprofessional sphere. It was not possible to recruit families in the same manner in the Russian town because there was no possibility of identifying families from birth records. We therefore used our initial contacts to recruit via a "snowball" technique. In the middle-class group, all the fathers and all but two of the mothers had completed a higher education degree (typically a 5-year program involving completion of a thesis), whereas in the working-class group, no one had more than the equivalent of a high-school education or "incomplete secondary education" followed by courses in a technical college.

In other respects, these two groups of families were quite similar. For example, they lived in very similar apartment complexes in the same areas of town. In terms of total family income, the group of parents with higher education earned, on average, only slightly more than their counterparts without higher education. It is thus clear that although in terms of education and occupation the two groups in Russia differed from each other in a way very similar to those in the USA, in terms of income and housing the two groups of Russian families did not differ at all. This was in marked contrast to the two groups of U.S. and Korean families.

Tartu, Estonia. This city, of approximately 100,000 inhabitants, is located 180 kilometers south of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. It is an old
city (the first recorded reference stemming from 1030), founded on the banks of the Emajogi river. The University of Tartu was founded in 1632 and is the preeminent institution of higher education in Estonia. The city also has an agricultural university and a teacher education college, as well as local industries, primarily light industry including a brewery, sawmill, the production of furniture, plastics, footwear, and leather goods, as well as enterprises that produce concrete building materials and car parts.

The city may be thought of as being divided into three main areas: the heart of the city, close to the river, where the town hall and university are situated, and where older single-and joint-family dwellings (many of which are wooden) are to be found; the area north of the river, which consists almost entirely of large apartment complexes, predominantly either five or nine stories high, built in the Soviet era; and areas south of the center, which have many old single-family dwellings, as well as new houses that are currently being built. As is the case in Obninsk, and quite unlike the situation in Greensboro, there is no clear division between areas of the city in terms of the inhabitants' occupations; factory workers and doctors are likely to live next to one another and are as likely to be found in the rather unattractive apartment complexes as in the architecturally more interesting new houses.

As was the case in Greensboro, two areas of the city were selected, one of which consisted solely of apartment complexes and the other from an area of single-family houses, both new and old. Each area was smaller than its Greensboro counterparts, approximately 1 square kilometer, but with a similar or higher density of families. Each area was bounded by large roads or by the river. Families were located from birth records, as was the case in Greensboro. Workers at the local ministry supplied names and addresses and occasionally some basic demographic details (such as educational level) of families living in the relevant streets and with children of the approximate age. Of the 34 families who were contacted, 67% agreed to participate, from which 20 families were selected, equally divided by social class. As was the case in Obninsk, the families were clearly differentiated by educational level and by occupational status, but they were not differentiated by income.

Analytic Strategy

Our intention is not to argue that we have drawn samples from known populations, much less to say that these participants were randomly drawn. Our participants consist of families who were recruited from specific cultural groups from specific cities. Although it is possible that similar results might have been found if we had drawn from different groups or different cities, this is a question for future research. We thus do not wish to generalize our findings to people living in smaller villages or towns or larger cities, or from a different part of the respective countries, or from different ethnic or racial groups. As we are thus not interested in using our data to infer what might be true of other sets of families, inferential statistics are not required to test whether differences between these groups are significant; a difference is simply that, a difference. On the other hand, the selection process was designed to include as many as possible of the families with children of the appropriate age from within the communities we chose, and the acceptance rates were good enough to make us reasonably confident that these groups are not unrepresentative of similar types of families living in similar circumstances elsewhere. Therefore, we analyzed the data using a nonparametric statistic (Kruskal Wallis) and have reported significant differences ($p < .05$) where appropriate. Moreover, because we collected values and beliefs data on both parents (where possible) in each family, we have analyzed the data separately for mothers and fathers to ensure independence of the units of analysis.

Results

Values and Beliefs

Although we collected the data on the parents' values and beliefs about child rearing after having collected the observational data, we shall first discuss their values and beliefs. With regard to parental values for self-direction, we had predicted that parents in Greensboro would score higher (indicating a greater value placed on self-direction) than their counterparts in the other cities, and that the groups of parents with a college education and a professional occupation ("middle class") would score higher than their counterparts who did not have a college degree and who worked in the nonprofessional sphere ("working class"). The first hypothesis was not supported; mothers and fathers (on average) scored surprisingly similarly in each of the cities. This was true despite the fact that Greensboro is part of a society that places more emphasis on individualism, whereas the parents in each of the other cities were raised in societies that are supposedly more collectivist (Korea and the former Soviet Union). However, middle-class parents scored significantly higher than their working
class counterparts in the case of both mothers ($p < .005$) and fathers ($p < .001$). See Table 3.1.

The situation was not quite so clear with regard to parental beliefs. The three beliefs in which we were interested were those relating to spoiling the child by giving him or her attention (where we expected working-class parents to score higher), beliefs about the importance of discipline and control when bringing up children (again, where working-class parents were expected to score higher), and the belief that children should have freedom to explore things in and around the home (where we expected middle-class parents to score higher). As can be seen in Table 3.2 (for mothers) and Table 3.3 (for fathers), in each case the results were mostly as expected. Working-class parents across the four cities were more likely than their middle-class counterparts to believe that children would be spoiled if they received a lot of attention (mothers: $p < .005$; fathers: $p < .001$) and to believe in the importance of control and discipline (mothers: $p < .005$; fathers: $p < .001$). By contrast, the middle-class mothers, across the cities, were more likely to endorse freedom in and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro (USA) - all</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obninsk (Russia) - all</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartu (Estonia) - all</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwon (Korea) - all</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Middle class</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obninsk (Russia) - all</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartu (Estonia) - all</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwon (Korea) - all</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only 7 U.S. working-class mothers responded to all the questions about freedom, and only 10 U.S. middle-class mothers responded to all the questions about control.

Around their homes for their children ($p < .05$), although middle-class fathers only tended to score higher ($p < .08$).

At the city level, significant differences were found for the concern about spoiling in the case of both mothers ($p < .005$) and fathers ($p < .001$), with Suwon mothers and fathers being the most concerned and Greensboro parents the least concerned. The data were less clear-cut in the case of the other beliefs, although fathers were significantly differentiated in terms of allowing freedom ($p < .001$). Fathers in the two cities that were part of the former Soviet Union (Obninsk and Tartu) were less interested in freedom for their children than were fathers in Greensboro and Suwon. Mothers, however, did not differ significantly. By contrast, fathers were not different in terms of beliefs about control and discipline, whereas mothers differed significantly ($p < .02$), with those in Greensboro and Suwon more interested in control than their counterparts in Obninsk and Tartu.
Table 3.3. Fathers’ Beliefs about Freedom around the Home, Control and Discipline, and Spoiling, by City and Social Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Spoiling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
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<td>Greensboro (USA)</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obninsk (Russia)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartu (Estonia)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwon (Korea)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Only seven U.S. working-class fathers responded to all the questions about freedom.

Because of the issue of independence of the units of analysis, we discussed mothers’ and fathers’ values and beliefs separately. However, a comparison of Tables 3.2 and 3.3 reveals that in all cases fathers were more concerned about spoiling their children than were mothers (p < .005). The data are not so clear with regard to values for self-direction or beliefs about freedom and control, although mothers in Obninsk and Tartu were consistently more likely than fathers to believe that children should be free around the home, and correspondingly less likely to believe that control and discipline were important.

Children’s Activities

Initially, we were interested simply in the amount of different types of activities in which these children were involved. We made approximately 180 observations of each child in the study. In any one observation period (lasting 30 seconds), the children could be involved in (and coded in) more than one activity. Excluding activities in the “other” category (which included eating, bathing, sleep, uncodable), children in Greensboro were involved on average in 153 activities, those in Obninsk were involved in an average of 145 activities, those in Tartu in 165, and those in Suwon in an average of 160.

It is shown in Table 3.4 that in each of the four cities play was the activity in which the children were most often involved (not surprisingly, given their ages), with lessons, work, and conversation much less common. The children in the four cities significantly differed in their observations of each type of activity (p < .005 in the case of play, lessons, and work; p < .05 in the case of conversation). Children in Suwon were most involved in play, in an average of 122 of the 180 observations, and those in Obninsk the least, in an average of 86 observations. The four groups also differed in terms of each of the other types of activities. In terms of lessons, for example, children in Obninsk and Tartu were more involved (averages of 21 and 17 observations) than their counterparts in Greensboro and Suwon (averages of 11 and 8 observations, respectively). The children in Obninsk and Tartu were also more likely to be involved in work, on average 20 and 24 of their observations, than children from
Greensboro and Suwon (averages of 14 and 15, respectively). The four
groups of children also differed in terms of conversation, with children in
Suwon less likely to be involved in conversation than children from the
other three countries (an average of 10 observations for children in Su-
won, compared to averages of approximately 20, 17, and 19 in the case
of children from Greensboro, Obninsk, and Tartu).

However, it was also clear that there were within-city differences as a
function of social class in terms of all activities with the exception of the
amount of work in which the children were involved. For example, in
terms of lessons (p < .05) and conversation (p < .002), children from
middle-class families (that is, those in which the parents had a college
education and professional occupations) were significantly more likely to
be involved than those from working-class families. By contrast, working-
class children tended to be (p < .07) more likely than their middle-class
counterparts to be involved in play.

As mentioned previously, our main interest was to focus on subclasses of
activities that we expected to relate to later academic competence.
These were academic lessons, skill/nature lessons, play with academic
objects, and conversation with one or more adults. Academic lessons
were defined as those in which there was a deliberate attempt to impart
information (or receive information; for example, by asking a question)
about something of relevance to school or preschool. Asking a question
about how many sides a square has, or information about a word when
looking at a book, are examples of this type of lesson. Our goal was not
to distinguish between occasions when children were leaning or not
leaning, because our assumption was that children may learn no matter
what activity they are engaged in. Looking at a book or playing with
blocks or drawing or helping a parent cook are all opportunities in which
learning may occur, but lessons were explicit (often didactic) attempts to
Teach the child something explicit or attempt to get information from
someone viewed as more competent (usually, but not exclusively, an
adult). Across the cities, there was a tendency (p < .10) for the children
to be differentiated in terms of involvement in academic lessons. As is
seen in Table 3.5, children in Obninsk and Suwon were somewhat more
likely than those in Greensboro and Tartu to engage in these types of
lessons. In terms of social class differences, middle-class children were,
in each city except Obninsk, more likely than their working-class coun-
terparts to engage in these types of lessons, and the overall effect of social
class was close to significant (p < .06).

A similar pattern was found in terms of skill and nature lessons. These


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Lessons</th>
<th>Skill/ Nature Lessons</th>
<th>Academic Play</th>
<th>Conversation with Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro (USA) – all</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obninsk (Russia) – all</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartu (Estonia) – all</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwon (Korea) – all</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5. Children’s Involvement in Activities Most Related to Academic Competence, by City and Social Class

lessons were defined as ones in which there were deliberate attempts to
impact or receive information about the workings of the natural world
(such as why the sun rises, or why it gets cold in winter) or about how to
do things, such as tying shoelaces, mending a broken toy, and so on.
Lessons about health and safety also were included in this category.
Children in Obninsk and Tartu were far more likely to engage in these
types of lessons than their counterparts in Greensboro and Suwon, with
differences at the city level being significant (p < .001). In each of these
cities, however, social class differences were such that middle-class chil-
dren engaged in more skill/nature lessons than those from working-class
backgrounds (p < .05).

Play with academic objects was defined as play with any object that
was relevant to preschool or school but when there was no specific
attempt to receive or impart information. Thus, for example, if a child
was looking at a book, or being read to, or playing with magnetic numbers
on the refrigerator, he or she was playing with an academic object but not
engaging in an academic lesson. At the city level, differences in level of
play were significant ($p < .005$); children in Suwon were almost twice as likely to play with academic objects as children in the other three cities, and more than three times as much as those in Tantu. However, it is apparent (see Table 3.5) that there were large differences between middle-class and working-class Suwon children, with the former playing with academic objects far more than any other group. In all groups except Ohbinsk, the same was true, though to a lesser extent: Middle-class children were more likely than their working-class counterparts to play with academic objects. These social class differences were also significant ($p < .05$).

The final activity of interest was conversation involving an adult. A conversation was defined in such a way that it was distinguished from talking that was simply an accompaniment to play, or work, or the talk that necessarily went along with lessons. Talking was defined as a conversation if it involved turn taking between interlocutors, with the topic of conversation being something separate from any other activity that was occurring. Thus, if two children were playing, but talking about something that they had seen on television the night before, that would count as a conversation. Similarly, talk between child and mother featuring what had happened at school earlier in the day or about where they would go on vacation would count as conversation.

Looking first at the city level, these groups of children significantly differed in the extent to which they were involved in conversation with adults ($p < .02$), with children in Greensboro most likely and children in Suwon the least likely. However, as has been consistently the case, there were significant differences between the social classes ($p < .005$), with middle-class children more likely to be involved in conversation with adults than their working-class counterparts. As can be seen from Table 3.5, these class differences were particularly noticeable in Greensboro and Suwon, less so in Ohbinsk and Tantu.

This pattern of results by and large is nicely supportive of Kohl's general thesis. At the level of parental values and beliefs about child rearing, the citywide differences are not great, and the most interesting findings are those regarding social class differences. Across these cities, from very different types of societies, middle-class parents were more likely than working-class parents to value self-direction in their children and to espouse beliefs about child rearing that were supportive of those values. Moreover, and here we have been able to extend Kohl's work in much the same way as Luster and his colleagues did with their sample of mothers from the northeast USA, the activities of their children seem for the most part consistent with the parental values and beliefs. Specifically, middle-class children in each of the cities were more likely than their working-class counterparts to engage in activities that were likely to help them become more independent and self-reliant once they entered school.

It is possible to make the connection between values, beliefs, and activities more tight, however. If middle-class parents are more likely to value self-direction, it should be possible to find direct evidence of self-directing behavior on the part of the children themselves. For this reason, we were also interested in knowing just how activities were started. We coded whether they began because someone other than the child began them or whether the child, either alone or in conjunction with someone else, began them. The latter would be a direct indication of self-direction on the part of the child. We therefore examined each of the activities of interest in terms of whether the child was involved in starting them.

As predicted, middle-class children across the four cities were significantly more likely than their working-class peers to initiate academic lessons, play with academic objects, and conversation with adults ($p < .05$), although they were not significantly more likely to initiate skill/nature lessons. (Full details are provided in Table 3.6.) It was also the case that there were differences at the city level in the case of the initiation of skill/nature lessons ($p < .001$), play with academic objects ($p < .02$), and conversation ($p < .05$); these were not significant in terms of initiation of academic lessons.

Discussion and Conclusion

We had three goals in mind when designing this program of research. The primary goal was to try to understand the ways in which children become competent members of the culture into which they are born. The research was not set within an ecological systemic framework derived from Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky; for this reason, it was important to examine macrosystemic variation - examining groups that were likely to differ in terms of values, beliefs, and practices. We were dissatisfied by comparison of societies at different levels of technology, typical of much cross-cultural research, and we were interested in examining societies that were industrialized. This allowed us to focus on cultural groups without the confounding influence of such factors as schooling and urbanity. Part of this goal was thus to discover whether parents from societies that
Table 3.6. Children’s Initiation of Activities Most Related to Academic Competence, by City and Social Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Lessons</th>
<th>Skill Nature Lessons</th>
<th>Academic Play</th>
<th>Conversation with Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro (USA) - all</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohtušs (Russia) - all</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
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</table>

were industrialized but which differed in terms of ideology and in society-wide views regarding independence and interdependence, would differ in terms of their values and beliefs.

It was thus surprising to us that we found no differences in parents’ (either mothers’ or fathers’) valuation of self-direction in their children in any of the cities – we had expected that the parents from Greensboro would have evaluated this higher than parents from the other cities, given prevailing beliefs that parents in the United States are interested in fostering children’s independence. By the same token, we had expected that Greensboro parents would have believed to a greater extent than other parents that it was important to provide their children freedom in and around the home, to be less interested in control and discipline, and to be less worried about spoiling their children by paying them a lot of attention – all things that might be more expected in groups that emphasize interdependence rather than independence. As was true of values for self-direction, the pattern of results was not as expected: it was not the case

that the Greensboro parents were clearly distinguishable from parents in the other cities.

One possible explanation, at least with regard to Russia and Estonia, relates to the changes that have occurred over the past decade, with the breakup of the Soviet Union. As Russian and Estonian parents have observed such changes, away from collectivism and toward an economy based on individualism and competition, they may have revised their views about the characteristics needed to succeed. Where once the ability to compromise and conform may have been the characteristics most conducive to a successful work life, now initiative and independence in thought and action may be perceived to be more important. On the other hand, it is also possible that clear differences in ideology between the two societies were only minimally reflected in families’ values, beliefs, and practices even prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without equivalent data from the 1980s, we cannot be sure.

However, according to Bronfenbrenner, macrosystem and society are not synonymous, and there are within-society groups that qualify as macrosystems. Bronfenbrenner’s theory thus forces researchers to at least consider the within-society heterogeneity that is the feature of all societies. In our case, we decided to focus on social class, instantiated as differences as a function of education and occupation. Our data made clear that even if the cross-city differences in values and beliefs did not fall into a consistent pattern, the same cannot be said of social class. In terms of both values and beliefs, the results were precisely as predicted.

Middle-class parents in each city were more likely than their working-class counterparts to evaluate positively self-direction in their children and more likely to believe in the importance of allowing their children freedom in and around the home. By contrast, working-class parents were consistently more likely than those from the middle class to believe in the importance of controlling and disciplining their children and more likely to believe that one could spoil one’s children by being overly attentive. In terms of Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical perspective, social class is truly a cultural factor by virtue of these differences in values and beliefs. There is something about social class, or rather the conditions of life associated with class, that makes a difference in parents’ values and beliefs. These results clearly support Kohn’s work linking social class and values, as well as that of Luster and his colleagues connecting class, values, and specific child-rearing beliefs.

From the perspectives of both Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner, it is
crucial to focus not simply on the broadest aspect of culture as a means of “explaining” development. Instead, it is necessary to examine what Bronfenbrenner termed the “proximal processes” of development — children’s everyday activities within their microsystems. The final goal of the research was therefore to evaluate the extent to which there is a relationship between parents’ socioeconomic status and their children’s activities. Although some revealing differences were found in activities considered at the most general of levels (specifically, that middle-class children in each city were more likely than their working-class counterparts to engage in lessons and conversation), more interesting were the patterns found when we focused on those activities most linked to future competence. With two exceptions, middle-class children were more likely than those from a working-class background to be involved in academic lessons, skill/nature lessons, play with academic objects, and conversation with adults. The exceptions were from Osninsk, where children were not distinguished in terms of academic lessons and where working-class children played appreciably more than their middle-class counterparts with academic objects. The working-class children in Osninsk, in addition, were only slightly less likely than those from the middle class to engage in conversation with adults (the magnitude of the difference was less than in any other city). Some of the data from Osninsk and Tartu may perhaps be explained by the fact that, in the face of greater uncertainty that the State will look after its citizens, parents are more interested in providing their children with the skills they view as essential. On the other hand, parents in both Osninsk and Tartu have long needed to use certain types of skills (for example, sewing, gardening, building, and repairing) in their everyday lives, given limited availability and/or high prices of valued goods and the desire to supplement diets by growing their own vegetables. These are activities in which their children were likely to be involved, and skills that parents would expect their children to learn. In Osninsk, moreover, any connection between occupation and values is likely to be weakened by the fact that many of the parents (but particularly those with higher education), like those in Russian society as a whole, have to work at two occupations in order to make sufficient income and are much less likely than in the past to find occupations that fit their particular specialties (Kashenov, 1995; Khabibovskaya, 1995).

We were also able to look more directly at self-direction in the children, by examining the extent to which the children themselves were involved in initiating these activities. Again, the results were revealing — in virtually every case, middle-class children were more likely than those from working-class families to initiate activities. Of course, if middle-class parents believe that these activities are more important for their children to engage in, they may provide more of them than do working-class parents. But as few of these activities were started by the children themselves, an indication that they had already internalized their parents’ value for self-direction. It also indicates the extent to which children are co-constructing their own environments, rather than simply being the objects of a simple unidirectional transmission of values and practices, as would be expected from the perspectives of both Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner.

The link between macrosystems factors (such as social class) and what occurs in the microsystem may be explained by reference to the exosystem, a setting in which children are not directly involved but which nevertheless exerts a powerful indirect effect. For Kohn, parents’ workplace experiences are key to understanding why parents’ position in the system of social stratification is the key factor in determining the types of values that parents have — more important, he has argued, than education or income. Our data, however, are not able to show that. Our index of social class included both education (parents either with or without higher education) and type of job (professional or nonprofessional). However, in cases in which the mother did not work outside the home, we used the father’s job as the occupational index. Most of the Osninsk and Tartu mothers had full-time occupations (reflecting the typical situation in both Russia and Estonia), but in Greensboro and Suwon, at least in the middle-class homes, many mothers did not work outside the home. It is therefore interesting to note that the difference between Greensboro middle-class and working-class mothers in terms of values for self-direction was actually greater than the corresponding difference for fathers. Similarly, in terms of beliefs, Suwon and Greensboro mothers were not differentiated by class any less than were fathers. This finding casts some doubt on Kohn’s general thesis that the workplace experiences of extent of routinization, complexity of work, and extent of supervision are the key variables relating to parental values and beliefs about child rearing. Education may be at least as significant a factor, as others have argued in a variety of different contexts (LeVine et al., 1990; Patankos & Moreno, 1996; Wright & Wright, 1976).

Kohn has changed his mind over the years regarding the role played by education in the development of values. Early in his career (Kohn, 1977), he had argued that education played a central role, and drew on the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) to suggest that value for self-
direction might be fostered by length of time in school, given that the longer children stay in school, the greater are their chances to exercise (and be valued for) self-direction. Subsequently, Kohn appeared to believe that education’s effect on values was primarily indirect, arguing that “a large part of the reason why education affects psychological functioning is because education is determinative of job conditions, which in turn have a strong effect on psychological functioning” (Kohn & Lomaczynski, 1990, p. 98). In his latest work, however, Kohn has not attempted to determine whether education or job conditions are related, arguing instead that it “is not that education and job conditions are competing for importance; they are part of the same process” (Kohn, 1995, p. 149). Both educational and occupational self-direction are important in the development of values.

The potentially important role of educational self-direction is not relevant only to the United States; the school systems in many countries, including the four that are the focus of this chapter, are highly didactic, with little or no opportunity for students to exercise independence of thought prior to entering higher education, and then only in carefully circumscribed domains (Kerr, 1998; Long, 1999; Tudge, 1991). The situation is often different at university level, where students are more likely to be encouraged to exercise independent thought. Moreover, it is not the case in any industrialized society that there is any clear one-to-one relationship between occupation related to a particular social class position and the opportunity to exercise self-direction, and some positions require more education on the job itself. In other words, the relations between education and occupation are complex and cannot be separated in this study.

What is clear, however, is that we need to pay more attention to the heterogeneity involved in all societies, particularly those that are industrialized or currently industrializing, or developing in other ways, such as the social/political changes currently taking place in the former Soviet Union. In this study, we focused on variations as a function of education and/or occupation, two of the critical attributes of social class. In each of the countries in which we collected data, we studied families from only one city (so holding regional differences and urban−rural differences constant), in which the participants did not differ by race or ethnicity. Nonetheless, the within-city differences, solely a function of social class, were at least as large as the cross-city (cross-societal) differences. When contrasting groups at different levels of industrialization, is it not also

gether surprising to find differences in patterns of child rearing or beliefs about child rearing. Interest in cross-cultural differences must not blind us, however, to the heterogeneous nature of all cultures.

References


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