

Play Behaviors of Mothers of Preschoolers: Attachment and Cultural Comparison

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The present study applied the Q-set of Maternal Play (QMP) to describe the individual differences as well as cultural differences of maternal play behaviors. Study 1 investigated the individual differences of attachment in maternal play behaviors. Thirty Chinese mothers and their preschoolers (mean age = 4 year 10 month) from Taipei were visited at home. Children were assigned to either Secure or Insecure Group according to their behaviors described by the Attachment Q-Set (AQS). These mother-child dyads also participated in a 15-minute laboratory free-play session. Maternal behaviors during play were described by QMP-Version 2.0, which includes seven dimensions of (1) Creativity, (2) Praises & Affections, (3) Teaching & Directives, (4) Sensitivity, (5) Appreciation, (6) Responsiveness, and (7) Physical Interruption. Each mother's QMP description was correlated with the criterion sort of the play behaviors of "hypothetically most secure child's mother." Results revealed that mothers of the Secure Group exhibited more physical interruption, $F(1, 28) = 4.96, p < .05$, employed less teaching and directives, $F(1, 28) = 3.97, p < .06$, and were marginally more sensitive, $F(1, 28) = 3.60, p < .07$, than did mothers of the Insecure Group. Study 2 explored whether mothers from Taipei and New York were different in their tendency to display the "opportunity-education" (Fung, 1999) and "self-esteem promotion" (Mintz, 1999) play construct that represents the Chinese and Western child-rearing value respectively. Participants included the 30 dyads in Study 1 (Taipei) and 16 dyads (preschoolers' mean age = 4 year 5 month) from Long Island, New York. The procedure of the laboratory free-play session was the same as in Study 1 just that the maternal play behaviors were described by QMP-Version 1.0. The criterion sorts of "opportunity-education" and "self-esteem promotion" were established using QMP. Results confirmed prior findings that Chinese mothers were more likely to use teaching and directives, $F(1, 42) = 4.91, p < .05$, while mothers from the US applied marginally more praises and affections, $F(1, 42) = 3.86, p < .06$. The Culture Group by Play Construct two-way ANOVA revealed significant interaction effect, $F(1, 44) = 4.77, p < .05$. Chinese mothers' play styles matched the construct of "opportunity-education" more closely than that of "self-esteem promotion", while mothers from the US applied the two play constructs similarly. Cultural differences of rearing style were discussed.

Keywords: attachment, cultural comparison, maternal behavior, opportunity education, Q-sort