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ABSTRACT

Forty caregivers in five child care centers in Israel and seven centers in the United States were asked to complete the Teacher Temperament Questionnaire about the children in their care. Total numbers of children participating were 108 Israeli children and 132 American children. Caregivers were first asked to describe an ideal child, and then to collect actual temperament ratings for children in the center. Caregivers also completed the Adjustment Ranking Scale to rank children on peer adjustment, adjustment to program, and adjustment to adults. Crosscultural differences were found in the ideals held by caregivers, and in temperament-adjustment relationships. In addition, reported actual temperaments of the children varied between the two groups and between genders. Data tables are provided. (PCB)

Temperament and Adjustment Relationship:

Israeli and American Preschoolers

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Running Head: TEMPERAMENT

Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore 23-26 April, 1987.

The concept of temperament has been used to describe long term and enduring features of behavior that relate to adjustment (e.g., Buss & Plomin, 1975; Carey, 1973; Eysenck, 1967; Goldsmith & Campos, 1982; Thomas & Chess, 1977). The individual's temperament can be seen as the basis for active involvement with the world (Bell, 1968; Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel, 1981; Scarr & McCartney, 1983). The Goodness-of-Fit model includes environmental and cultural context in considerations of temperament and adjustment relationships (Gordon, 1981; Keogh & Pullis, 1980; Lerner & Lerner, 1983; Thomas & Chess, 1977). Within this model, the fit between temperament and cultural features predicts the child's adjustment. If there is a good fit between contextual demands and temperament, then the child will be viewed positively.

Each culture has its own standards and values for children (Super & Harkness, 1981; Thomas & Chess, 1977). This suggests that temperament and adjustment relationships should vary across cultures. The present research investigated the differences in ideal or desired temperaments as seen by Israeli and American caregivers. It was expected that there would be differences in ideals reflecting cultural differences in evaluations of children. This would be consistent with a Goodness-of-Fit Model. It was also expected that the relationships between temperament and adjustment would differ between cultures.

Method

Site

Five (5) child care centers in the vicinity of Jerusalem and seven (7) in a metropolitan area of Southwestern Ohio participated in this study. All provided full day preschool programs. The centers were representative of those available in their region and served families of comparable social, educational and occupational levels.

Participants

Participants were trained and experienced female caregivers in preschool programs. The 18 Israeli caregivers were from Sephartic, Eastern European or English speaking families but were predominantly Israeli born and all Israeli educated. The 22 American caregivers were predominately white and all were American born and educated. Each caregiver contributed a temperament rating for a hypothetical 'ideal' child, adjustment rankings for children in their care, and temperament ratings for six children in their care. The analysis included 132 American and 108 Israeli children.

Materials

Materials consisted of two versions of an Adjustment Ranking Scale, four versions of the Teacher Temperament Questionnaire and instruction sheets. The Adjustment Ranking Scales were used to rank children in adjustment. Instructions

were provided for the completion of the scale. One scale was in English and one in Hebrew.

Keogh, Pullis and Cadwell's (1982) Short Form of the Teacher Temperament Questionnaire was used to assess temperament dimensions including activity level, adaptability, approach/withdrawal, distractibility, persistence, mood, and threshold of responsiveness. The instructions for two forms elicited ratings of an ideal child for the group care settings while the other two focused on an actual child. One ideal and one actual form was in each language.

Procedures

The Teacher Temperament Questionnaire was first used by caregivers to describe an ideal child: one who would make the best possible adjustment to their preschool center taking into account peers, program and adults. The Adjustment Ranking Scale was then used to rank ten children (five girls) on three areas of adjustment. Peer adjustment meant forming healthy age-appropriate relationships with peers. Program adjustment meant adjustment to the curriculum, routines and schedules of the program. Adjustment to adults meant developing healthy and age-appropriate relationships with adult staff members in the center. Finally, the Teacher Temperament Questionnaire was used to collect actual temperament ratings for six of the children (three female) who had been ranked on the adjustment scale.

Results

Group Differences in Ideal Characteristics of Children's Temperament

A multivariant analysis of variance was computed for temperaments and countries. This MANCVA showed a significant country effect $F(7, 32) = 5.22$, $p = 0.0004$ with the F statistic approximation using Wilks' Lambda. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and F values of the seven ideal temperament dimensions for the Israeli and American samples.

Group Differences in Actual Temperament Judgments of Children

A MANOVA was computed with the temperaments and the countries. There was a significant country effect $F(7,232) = 8.06$, $p = 0.0001$). Table 1 presents actual mean temperament ratings for each group along with the F Values for each temperament dimension between countries.

A MANOVA for gender differences in temperament and adjustment scores for the two countries showed no overall gender effect ($F(10, 228) = 1.77$, $p = 0.0671$). A country effect was found ($F(10, 228) = 6.05$; $p = 0.0001$). Table 2 provides temperament scores, adjustment rankings, and F values for the Israeli and American groups by gender. The American caregivers reported more gender differences than did the Israelis. Activity, persistence and distractibility showed significant gender differences. Country by gender interactions were

significant for mood ($F = 10.66$, $p = 0.0001$), distractibility ($F = 10.87$, $p = 0.0001$) and adaptability ($F = 6.49$, $p = 0.0018$).

Relationships Between Temperament and Adjustment

Table 3 provides Spearman Correlation Coefficient for the relationships between temperament and adjustment. There were a number of significant correlations between temperament and adjustment. A multiple regression analysis was used to describe the temperaments that best predict adjustment in each group. (Table 4). An assumption of normality for the ranked data was made for this analysis. It is a conservative assumption and acounts for the slight discrepancy between Tables 3 and 4. Predictors for peers were the same in both samples and were different for program and for adults.

Discussion

Crosscultural differences were found in the ideals held by caregivers. The Americans reported their ideal to be more like the easy pattern of the New York Longitudinal Study. The Israeli caregivers reported their ideal child to be more active and less adaptive. They also placed less value on a positive mood. 'Firey' was the concept used by Israelis for their ideal.

The cross-cultural differences in ideal or desired characteristics of children are consistent with earlier work (Super & Harkness, 1980). This is important within the goodness-of-fit model (Gordon, 1981; Keogh & Pullis, 1980; Lerner & Lerner, 1982; Thomas & Chess, 1984). The adjustment of

a child describes his/her fit within a particular culture. Specific features of the physical and social environment reflect the cultural ideals and influence adjustment as a function of the individual child's temperament (Thomas & Chess, 1984).

The reported actual temperaments of the children varied between the two groups and between genders. Israeli children were viewed as less positive in mood, more distractible and less adaptable. Temperament differences by gender were more prevalent in the American than in the Israeli sample. These differences may be the end product of socialization. They may be the interactive outcome of the differences in fit to teachers in the different cultures. Finally, the differences may reflect differing views of children and of gender.

Cross cultural differences in temperament-adjustment relationships between the two groups supported the Goodness-of-Fit model. Where adult relationships and adult prescribed programs were considered, temperament differences were related to differences in adjustment or 'fit'. For peer adjustment, where adjustment is less influenced by adult cultural demands, both groups regarded the same two variables, as important.

This research provides support that temperament and cultural ideal are interacting factors in the adjustment of the individual. The child's temperament characteristics vary in success depending on fit with ideals in the culture.

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Table 1

A Comparison of Ideal Temperament Ratings and Actual Temperament Ratings for Israeli and American Samples: Means and Standard Deviations

	Israeli		American		
Temperament	Means	SD	Means	SD	F-ratio
Ideal					
Activity	4.7	.9	5.4	.5	10.10**
Mood	4.2	.8	5.3	.4	29.56**
Persistence	4.7	1.0	4.8	.7	.31
Distractibility	4.4	.9	4.7	.8	1.44
Approach/Withdrawal	4.4	1.1	4.9	.6	2.72
Adaptability	4.3	1.2	5.1	.7	6.77**
Threshold	3.5	1.6	3.9	1.3	1.04
Actual					
Activity	3.9	1.6	3.8	1.4	.04
Mood	3.7	1.1	4.3	.7	22.99**
Persistence	3.6	1.3	3.5	1.2	.32
Distractibility	3.5	1.2	3.1	1.2	7.92**
Approach/Withdrawal	3.6	1.3	3.7	1.4	.12
Adaptability	3.5	1.2	4.0	1.2	13.55**
Threshold	4.0	1.4	4.1	1.1	.65

*$p < 0.05$

**$p < 0.01$

Table 2

A Comparison of Actual Temperament and Adjustment Ratings by Gender for Israeli and American Sample

	Means Israeli			Means American			Gender Differences
Temperaments	Male	Female		Male	Female		
	Means		F-Value	Means		F-Value	F-Value
Activity	3.7	4.1	1.32	3.5	4.1	5.64*	5.17*
Mood	3.7	3.3	.01	4.2	4.3	0.86	0.11
Persistence	3.4	3.7	.91	3.2	3.8	10.02**	7.53**
Distractibility	3.3	3.8	4.94*	2.8	3.4	10.14**	12.53**
Approach/ Withdrawal	3.6	3.7	.23	3.6	3.8	.56	0.35
Adaptability	3.3	3.7	2.45	4.0	4.0	.00	0.61
Threshold	4.1	4.0	.00	4.3	3.9	4.89*	1.94
Adjustment Areas							
Peers	5.3	5.7	.44	5.1	5.8	1.54	1.15
Program	5.3	5.4	.02	4.8	6.1	6.98**	3.01
Adults	5.6	5.1	.72	4.9	5.9	3.25	.30

*p <0.05

**p <0.01

Table 3

Relationship Between Temperament and Adjustment for Israeli and American Samples: Spearman Correlation Coefficients

	Israeli			American		
	Adjustment Areas			Adjustment Areas		
Temperament	Peers	Program	Adults	Peers	Program	Adults
Activity	.21**	.31**	.32**	.20*	.48**	.17
Mood	.36**	.41**	.33**	.50**	.43**	.38**
Persistence	.40**	.46**	.44**	.39**	.44**	.30**
Distractibility	.12	.24*	.20*	.19*	.40**	.16
Approach/Withdrawal	.54**	.43**	.46**	.50**	.21*	.46**
Adaptability	.38**	.31**	.35**	.43**	.19*	.41**
Threshold	.11	.10	.17	-.21*	-.22*	.19*

*p <.05

**p <.01

Table 4

Temperament dimensions as predictors of Adjustment: Stepwise Regression analysis for Israeli and American Samples

	Multiple R	R^2	B	F ratio
Israeli				
Adjustment to Peers				
Approach/Withdrawal	.54	.29	1.09	43.81**
Mood	.58	.34	.63	7.06**
Adjustment to Program				
Persistence	.48	.23	.70	30.79**
Approach/Withdrawal	.55	.30	.52	10.43**
Mood	.57	.33	.61	5.60*
Adjustment to Adults				
Approach/Withdrawal	.44	.19	.75	25.57**
Persistence	.53	.28	.75	12.59**
American				
Adjustment to Peers				
Approach/Withdrawal	.50	.25	.85	42.99**
Mood	.63	.40	1.60	32.14**
Adjustment to Program				
Activity	.48	.23	.83	38.50**
Adaptability	.53	.28	.44	9.94**
Mood	.56	.31	.79	4.86*
Adjustment to Adults				
Approach/Withdrawal	.47	.22	.87	35.98**
Mood	.55	.30	1.21	14.33**

*p <0.05
**p <0.01