A Cultural Comparison of Conflict-Solution Styles Displayed in the Japanese, French, and German School Texts

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The purpose of this study is to examine the ways how to solve the conflicts between parents and children by statistical analyses displayed in Japanese, French, and German school texts published in 2000. The results were as follows: (1) Japanese parents and children acting in those texts have much more compromising tendency to avoid conflicts than French and German ones. Japanese children are much more expected to behave in harmony with others by avoidance of any conflicts, whereas French and German ones by presenting their opinions for their solution; and (2) French and German parents and children use a much more verbal communication style than Japanese ones do. Those children are expected to express their own opinions much more than Japanese children. These results show that the solution styles of parent-child conflicts would be an interesting indicator reflecting culture and society.

Keywords: conflict-solution, cultural comparison, West-East, school texts, parent-children relationship, self

Introduction

It is an important issue what and how the children should be educated in every society. Although many societies share an expectation for the next generation's happiness and prosperity through their education, each society has its own ideas on value judgments and behavior styles through the education of its children. For example, the children of some societies are taught to tell their opinion to their parents actively on an equal footing, while those of other societies are taught to obey their parents. It depends on the social consensus what kinds of value and behavior styles as the educational goal should be passed on to the children. What are shared and regarded as suitable in each society? This study focused on the behavior styles of solving conflicts between parents and children in Japan, France, and Germany, and analyzed what kind of the parent-child conflict-solution styles is expected in those three countries.

Conflict plays a critical role in the ways in which people come to understand the functions of social interaction to promote individual needs within personal relationships (Canary, Cupach, & Messman, 1995). There are some definitions of conflicts. For example, Lewin (1935) defined that a conflict is to be psychologically characterized as a situation in which oppositely directed, simultaneously acting forces of approximately equal strength work upon the individual. A conflict is produced by competition among incompatible responses (Miller, 1944). R. Likert and J. G. Likert (1976) viewed it as the active striving for one's own preferred outcome which, if attained, precludes the attainment by others of their own preferred

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outcome, thereby, producing hostility. Deutsch (1973) saw conflict as some incompatibility between people. The parent-child conflict is defined in this study as the situation where parents and children have different ideas and wishes which cause ill feelings and dissatisfactions between them, although they want to maintain a suitable relation each other.

The parent-child conflict is one of the important topics in the human-relation studies. For example, many cases of parent-child conflict were reported in clinical psychology. Some are caused by parents' divorces, domestic violences, and juvenile delinquencies (Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989; Lee, Lansford, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2012; Huth-Bocks & Hughes, 2008; Tanaka, Raishevich, & Scarpa, 2010; Hoeve, Stams, Put, Dubas, Laan, & Gerris, 2012). These conflicts and their solution styles have various patterns in different families, they are, at the same time, influenced by some social elements: the cultural relationship and self styles. The comparison of the cultural styles of human relation and self has been done by the methods of questionnaire (Singelis, 1994; Kashima & Hardie, 2000), observation (Tomo, Gao, & Tung, 2003), and experiment (Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, & Suzuki, 2004; Yamagishi, Hashimoto, & Schug, 2008; Moriguchi, Evans, Hiraki, Itakura, & Lee, 2012) in the field of cultural psychology. This study will additionally apply a distinctive method based on the analysis of the contents depicted in the elementary school textbooks in Japan, France, and Germany.

Some cultural comparisons of text analysis had been already introduced by McClelland and Winter (1969) using literature works. Its purpose is to study in motivation. For the investigation of gender roles in family as well as the control behavior styles, Tomo (1995; 2000; 2006) and Tomo, Gao, and Tung (2003) analyzed the contents of the school textbooks in Asian and European countries under the assumption that they play a very important role in the socialization of children. They may not directly influence the children's behavior and value styles. But the behaviors displayed by characters in those texts are understood as representing the behaviors that each culture regards as suitable.

At first, the content analysis of the school texts is briefly reviewed to clarify their position as a socialization tool. Studies through the content analysis of the school texts can roughly be classified into two types: One is the analysis of the methods and contents of the learning (Linton, 1992; Landrum, 1993; Mayer, Sims, & Tajika, 1995), and the other is that of the value and behavior styles of the people in some area or era (Vaughn, Tompkins, Hitchcock, & Oldham, 1989; Peterson & Kroner, 1992; Ortmanns, 1993; Foster & Iannaccone, 1994; Sakita, 1996). These contributions assume that the school texts are important tools for the socialization of children.

Under the similar assumption that school texts are regarded as one of the reflections of the values and behavior styles expected in each society, the contents of the school texts had also been used to compare the values and the behavior styles in each society through cross-cultural analysis. Minoura (1975) analyzed the kinds of characters and their behaviors in the texts of two countries. Tomo (1995) analyzed the family structures and communication styles in the texts of Japan and U.K.. In this study, it will reveal that the solution styles of parent-child conflict displayed in Japanese, German, and French school texts are closely linked to the cultural projections reflected in the value judgments in those countries.

Methods

Sources of Subject Materials

The reader textbooks selected for this study are what are basically used for children to learn the mother

tongue in the schools: how to read and write. Readers for these children are not used for the direct teaching of life style or behavior style of each culture, but they also contain adults' social expectation for their next generation to learn the behavior patterns that each culture regards as suitable.

Thirty-six Japanese, 52 French, and 43 German elementary school readers used for 6−9-year-old children published in 2000 were investigated in this study. All Japanese readers, published by only six publishing companies in 2000 under the strict regulation by the Ministry of Education, were analyzed in this study. On the other hand, French and German readers were not so strongly controlled by government and freely published by many companies. Thus, French texts were selected in those readers by the six major publishing companies affiliating in "Savoir Livre" (a French textbook-publishing organization), whose share of French texts market is 80% (The Research Committee About the Textbook of Foreign Countries, 2007). German texts were selected by checking the recommendation lists of school texts which were issued by 16 different state governments in Germany. The textbooks that were selected for this analysis were recommended in more than 10 German states.

Although these three countries have different institutional systems of adopting school textbooks, the school texts are comparable from the fact that they are edited by the adults in each society expecting the children to adjust themselves to the suitable behavior of the society. They must reflect the educational expectation for the next generations in each society. This hypothetical feature of school texts allows us to select stories in those school texts for our study in the solution behaviors of parent-child conflicts. The number of stories amounts to 12 stories in Japanese texts, 79 in French, and 39 in German.

Selecting the Objects for Analysis

The behaviors of the conflict causers, and those of the target persons who confront some conflicts, and their final solution styles were focused on in this study. Firstly, persons that caused some conflicts were located in each text. Conflict causers were categorized as "father", "mother", "son", and "daughter". Secondly, the contents of conflicts caused by parents and children were analyzed. Thirdly, target persons were categorized and the contents of their coping styles were analyzed. Finally, the contents of final conflict-solution styles between parents and children were categorized as "parent's keeping claim", "child's keeping claim", "others' commitments or mind substitutions", and "unsolved conflict and others". "Others' commitments" means that a third person helps to solve the conflict by involving the causers and the targets. "Mind substitutions" represents the situation where a conflict is escaped by causer's or target's modification of his/her understandings on its meanings. When a boy had some conflict with his mother who scolded him, he reconsidered the meaning of the mother's serious attitudes before resisting her, and he replaced the actual conflict with his own virtual persuasion for mental betterment. "Unsolved conflict" means that the conflict between parent and child remained without any solution as it is.

Results and Considerations

Conflict Causers

Table 1 shows kinds of causers. There was a significant difference in three countries with respect to the proportions of parents and children as causers ($\chi^2 = 30.67$, $df = 2$, $N = 143$, $p < 0.001$), and Japanese parents tend to be conflict causers more than French and German ones. There was no significant difference between France and Germany with respect to the proportions of parents and children as conflict causers ($\chi^2 = 1.02$, $df = 1$, $N = 129$, n.s.). These results suggest that Japanese children are not expected to make some troubles with their

parents. "Image of good child" which the child is permitted to cause some conflicts may be different between the East and the West.

Table 1

Kinds of Conflict Causers

Kind of conflict causers	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Parents	14 (100.00)	26 (29.89)	9 (21.43)	49 (34.27)
Child	0 (0.00)	61 (70.11)	33 (78.57)	94 (65.73)
Total	14 (100.00)	87 (100.00)	42 (100.00)	143 (100.00)

Table 2 shows kinds of parents as conflict causers. There was no significant difference in all three countries with respect to the proportions of fathers and mothers as conflict causers ($\chi^2 = 2.57$, $df = 2$, $N = 49$, n.s.), and mothers have more tendency to cause conflicts than fathers do. These results suggest that the idea of gender-role in intervening in children's affairs significantly dominates mothers much more than fathers among all three countries.

Table 2

Kinds of Parents as Conflict Causers

Kind of parents	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Father	2 (14.29)	8 (30.77)	4 (44.44)	14 (28.57)
Mother	12 (85.71)	18 (69.23)	5 (55.56)	35 (71.43)
Total	14 (100.00)	26 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	49 (100.00)

Table 3 shows kinds of children as conflict causers. There were no stories of children causers in Japanese textbooks. There was a significant difference with respect to the proportions of sons and daughters as conflict causers between France and Germany ($\chi^2 = 17.32$, $df = 1$, $N = 94$, $p < 0.001$). Sons tend to be conflict causers more than daughters in France, and daughters tend to be causers more than sons in Germany. These results suggest that the sense of gender-role diversities between France and Germany. German girls may be tolerated to claim towards parents in the society, and French boys may be much more tolerated to be trouble-makers than girls.

Table 3

Kinds of Children as Conflict Causers

Kind of parents	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Son	0 (0.00)	47 (77.05)	11 (33.33)	58 (61.70)
Daughter	0 (0.00)	14 (22.95)	22 (66.67)	36 (38.30)
Total	0 (0.00)	61(100.00)	33 (100.00)	94 (100.00)

Contents of Conflicts Caused by Parents

Table 4 shows the contents of conflicts caused by parents. The unintentional conflicts which the parents did not intend to give their children some conflicts, as "parents' condition", "unintended external condition", and "moving parent's interest" tend to be described much more than the intentional conflicts as "behavior against child's wishes" and "parents' demand" in Japan. On the other hand, the intentional conflicts in France and Germany were described much more than the unintentional conflicts. There was a significant difference between Japan and two European countries with respect to the proportions of intentional and unintentional

conflicts caused by parents ($\chi^2 = 5.94$, $df = 1$, $N = 50$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4

Contents of Conflicts by Parents as Causers

Content of conflicts		Further information	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Unintentional conflicts	Parents' conditions	Parents' illnesses, pregnancies	3 (21.43)	0 (0.00)	1 (10.00)	4 (8.00)
	Unintended external conditions	Wars, poverty	3 (21.43)	0 (0.00)	1 (10.00)	4 (8.00)
	Shifting parents' interest	Parents' interests shift to new baby	4 (28.57)	4 (15.38)	0 (0.00)	8 (16.00)
	Parents' characters	Parents do not have intention to his/her child Parent as a worrier	0 (0.00)	4 (15.38)	2 (20.00)	6 (12.00)
Intentional conflicts	Parents' behaviors against child's wishes	Parents' disagreements, objections against child's wishes Parents do not love his/her child Parents cannot wake up in the morning to make his/her child breakfast	3 (21.43)	15 (57.69)	5 (50.00)	23 (46.00)
	Parents' demands	Parents' requests for child to help them, or to go to shopping	1 (7.14)	3 (11.54)	1 (10.00)	5 (10.00)
Total			14 (100.00)	26 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	50 (100.00)

These results suggest that the Japanese parents are expected not to have direct-confrontation and the intentional conflicts with their children. Japanese mother-infant attachment is more adhesive, and their relationships tend to be more dependent than in France (Bornstein et al., 1992). Miyake, Chen, and Campos (1985) indicated the high percentage of ambivalent group of attachment in Japan, and they supposed that Japanese society encourages the child's emotional interdependence on family members, and thus, renders his/her experience of separation from the mother extremely rare. For example, the parent-child sleeping style differs between Japan and European countries, and most Japanese mothers love to sleep with their children. Co-sleeping of mother with infant is a characteristic in Japan, and the mother-infant tie is often more important than the husband-wife one (Caudill & Plath, 1966). Direct-confrontations may be thought to cause some critical damages to mother-child relationships, and Japanese mothers tend to avoid intentional and direct conflicts with their children. Especially when one takes into consideration the result of Table 2 in which mothers appear to be conflict causers, the different attachments may reflect the different parent-child conflicts.

Contents of Conflicts Caused by Children

Table 5 shows the contents of conflicts caused by children. There were no stories of children's conflicts in Japanese textbooks. On the other hand, there was a significant difference between Germany and France with respect to the "intentional" and "unintentional" causing conflicts of children against parents. The former, described as "behavior against parents' wishes" and "opinion against parents' wishes", was more largely found in German texts than in French ones, and as to the latter, described as "child's habits and manners", "child's character", and "child's appearance", the opposite result was detected ($\chi^2 = 21.15$, $df = 1$, $N = 94$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that the Japanese children are also expected not to have confrontation with their parents. It seems that the suitable image of Japanese children would also be that adhering to their mothers just like their parents do. On the other hand, German children may be tolerated to claim directly towards parents much more than French and Japanese ones.

Table 5

Contents of Conflicts by Children as Causers

Content of conflicts		Further information	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Intentional conflicts	Behavior against parent's wishes	Child brings the thing which does not comply with the will of the parent. Child does play the action that the parent hates.	0 (0.00)	21 (34.43)	21 (63.64)	42 (44.68)
	Opinion against parent's wishes	Child does the way of life not to comply with expectation of the parent. Child insists on one's life style and preference to a parent.	0 (0.00)	7 (11.48)	10 (30.30)	17 (18.09)
Unintentional conflicts	Child's habits and manners	Child messes up the room. Child loses something. Child is ill-mannered.	0 (0.00)	12 (19.67)	1 (3.03)	13 (13.83)
	Child's character	Child cannot keep still. Child has intense likes and dislikes. Child is a crybaby. Child does not have ability.	0 (0.00)	19 (31.15)	0 (0.00)	19 (20.21)
	Child's appearance	Child is ugly.	0 (0.00)	2 (3.28)	1 (3.03)	3 (3.19)
Total			0 (0.00)	61 (100.00)	33 (100.00)	94 (100.00)

Parents' Coping Behaviors

Table 6 shows the parents' coping behaviors toward the conflicts caused by children. There were no stories of parents' coping behaviors in Japanese textbooks. There was a significant difference between France and Germany with respect to the proportions of contents of parents' coping behaviors ($\chi^2 = 23.03$, $df = 4$, $N = 100$, $p < 0.001$). German parents tend to cope behaviors, such as "counter-argument" much more than French ones ($\chi^2 = 4.37$, $df = 1$, $N = 100$, $p < 0.05$), and they also tend to "reject their children's wishes" much more than French ones ($\chi^2 = 6.86$, $df = 1$, $N = 100$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, French parents tend to "express anger and punishment" much more than German ones ($\chi^2 = 16.06$, $df = 1$, $N = 100$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that French parents may be tend to express their anger emotion more strongly as coping behaviors than German ones. For example, in a story entitled "Well-Behaved Like Picture" in French textbooks, parents were so enraged that they ordered their son to go to bed immediately when they saw that he decorated their cars by spreading red jam on their car (Brami & Rosy, 2000). French parents also used a lash when they scored their children in a story entitled "A Gentle Little Brother" (Pagnol, 2000). On the other hand, a German father calmly admonished his daughter not to permit for the reason of their religion when she desired to have a Christmas tree in a story entitled "Sirin Desires a Christmas Tree" (Bektas, 2000) in German textbooks.

Table 6

Parents' Coping Behaviors Toward the Conflicts Caused by Children

Content of coping behaviors	Further information	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Counter-argument	Parents object to the opinion of the child.	0 (0.00)	14 (20.00)	12 (40.00)	26 (26.00)
Rejection of child's wishes	Parents refuse child's demand and the existence.	0 (0.00)	4 (5.71)	8 (26.67)	12 (12.00)
Anger, scold, punishment	Parents scold a child. Parents are enraged with a child. Parents do physical punishment to a child.	0 (0.00)	33 (47.14)	1 (3.33)	34 (34.00)
Claim	Parents demand child something. Parents claim something to child.	0 (0.00)	11 (15.71)	6 (20.00)	17 (17.00)
Avoiding conflict	The parents leave the conflict situation.	0 (0.00)	8 (11.43)	3 (10.00)	11 (11.00)
Total		0 (0.00)	70 (100.00)	30 (100.00)	100 (100.00)

Children's Coping Behaviors

Table 7 shows the children's coping behaviors toward the conflicts caused by parents. There was a significant difference with respect to the proportions of children's "expression of disagreement and claims" in three countries ($\chi^2 = 13.49$, $df = 2$, $N = 49$, $p < 0.01$), and French children tend to express their disagreement toward their parents more than Japanese and German ones. For example, a conflict between a French mother and her daughter was caused by the mother's oversleeping in a story entitled "I Don't Like to Be Late!" (Mars, 2000). The daughter complained to her mother: "If you would not have enough time to be dressed up in the morning, you could make breakfast earlier. I will not be late for school on the first day of the new school term. You have to get up earlier. You know the long vacation has been ended". Here, in French texts, the mother-child relationship is described as reciprocal, unlike in Japanese and German ones.

These results suggest that French children may be expected to express their disagreements and claims toward their parents as the same coping behaviors as their parents do. The children's ideal styles of coping behavior which are socially expected may be different even in European neighboring countries.

Table 7

Children's Coping Behaviors Toward the Conflicts Caused by Parents

Content of coping behaviors	Further information	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Expression of disagreements and claims	Child complains to a parent and refuses something. Child continues claiming parents something. Child insists on one's opinion.	3 (21.43)	18 (69.23)	1 (11.11)	22 (44.90)
Unexpressed disagreement	Child is dissatisfied, but does not express it to a parent.	6 (42.86)	4 (15.38)	4 (44.44)	14 (28.57)
Acceptance or obedience of parent's demands	Child changes one's feeling and matches it with a parent. Child takes the demand of the parent with what there is no help for it. Child obeys the opinion of the parent temporarily.	5 (35.71)	1 (3.85)	3 (33.33)	9 (18.37)
Puzzlement, bewilderment	Child is at a loss against a parent.	0 (0.00)	2 (7.69)	1 (11.11)	3 (6.12)
Others	Child is angry at a parent in the heart, but makes fun of a parent on the action side.	0 (0.00)	1 (3.85)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.04)
Total		14 (100.00)	26 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	49 (100.00)

Final Conflict-Solution Styles

Table 8 shows the characteristics of final solution styles toward conflicts occurring between parents and children. Not the number of causers or targets, but the number of stories is counted. Therefore, even if both father and mother were causers in a story, they were counted as one case in Table 8.

The solution style of "others' commitments or mind substitutions" is dominant in Japan much more than European two countries ($\chi^2 = 49.93$, $df = 2$, $N = 130$, $p < 0.001$). There was no significant difference between France and Germany with respect to the proportions of contents of four final conflict-solution styles: "parents' keeping claim", "child's keeping claim", "others' commitments or mind substitutions", and "unsolved conflict and others" ($\chi^2 = 0.61$, $df = 3$, $N = 118$, n.s.). Table 8 also shows that the direct-confrontation style was dominant much more than the non-confrontation style both in France and Germany ($\chi^2 = 0.22$, $df = 1$, $N = 76$, n.s.), when the styles were divided into two category as "parents' keeping claim by direct-confrontation and child's keeping claim by direct-confrontation" and "parents' keeping claim by non-confrontation and child's

keeping claim by non-confrontation". These results suggest that solution styles could be heterogeneous between the East and the West. In the conflict-solution issue, the Japanese way is almost to involve the others or to make some possible reinterpretations on conflicts, whereas to characterize French and German people in this matter would be that they prefer an individual way of direct confrontation.

Table 8

Contents of Final Conflict-Solution Style

Content of final solution style	Japan (%)	France (%)	Germany (%)	Total (%)
Parents' keeping claim by direct-confrontation	0 (0.00)	13 (16.46)	7 (17.95)	20 (15.38)
Parents' keeping claim by non-confrontation	0 (0.00)	5 (6.33)	1 (2.56)	6 (4.62)
Child's keeping claim by direct-confrontation	0 (0.00)	25 (31.65)	14 (35.90)	39 (30.00)
Child's keeping claim by non-confrontation	1 (8.33)	7 (8.86)	4 (10.26)	12 (9.23)
Others' commitments or mind substitutions	11 (91.67)	9 (11.39)	3 (7.69)	23 (17.69)
Unsolved conflict and others	0 (0.00)	20 (25.32)	10 (25.64)	30 (23.08)
Total	12 (100.00)	79 (100.00)	39 (100.00)	130 (100.00)

These suggestions would be compatible with a general framework that the differences of solution styles are closely related to different "self" style in each culture. The conflict-solution issue could thus be well investigated under the frame of reference by differentiating the location and relation between self and the others. Japanese "self" is said to be dependent, and the Western "self" to be independent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; 1994). These two types of self may correspond to the difference in solution styles: positively compromising and confrontational. Actually, in German texts, there was a story entitled "My Room Belongs to Me" (Student, 2000) where the mother confronts her daughter and tells her the right and duty when the daughter gets her own room. There were no stories like the direct verbal confrontation in Japanese texts. In place of the German type of direct verbal confrontation story, we found a Japanese non-verbal compromising story entitled "Marine Light" (Ojima, 2000). A boy was very jaundiced because his parents' concern moved to the new-born baby, but he did not try to claim his parents. At last, he adjusted to the situation through the support of his grandfather. Both of Japanese parents and children have a tendency to avoid head-to-head verbal confrontation and try to show some sympathy with a mutual feeling. On the other hand, the girl in another French story, entitled "Baby! What a Strange Idea!" (Capdevila, 2000), directly and verbally claimed her parents not to have their new baby since the baby would disorder her everyday life. As to the conflict-solution behaviors, not only the contrast between positively compromising and confrontational, but also that between verbal and non-verbal constitutes a remarkable difference between two European countries and Japan.

Discussions

The conflict-solution styles expected in each country are not homogeneous. Japanese children learn indirect styles for conflict-solution through the school texts. In everyday life, Japanese parents also tend to use indirect disciplinary strategies by sharing feelings and using non-verbal communications (Azuma, 1994). Japanese parents and teachers tend to use indirect strategies without words on the conflict-solution through a lot of discipline. Japanese children may be expected to apply indirect or evasive solution styles by changing their opinions and claims flexible.

On the other hand, the parents in France and Germany are expected to individually use direct strategies to solve their conflicts. Although German children tend to accept their parents' claims much more than French

ones, they tend to try to have some conflicts much more than French ones. Although the processes of the conflict-solution styles were different between in France and in Germany, there was no significance whether their ways of final solution take the direct-confrontation or the non-confrontation styles. These results can indicate that two European children are expected to use verbal communication and express their own opinion much more than Japanese children. Japanese children may be socialized through the school texts as well as the experiences of everyday life since their early childhood, and as a result, learn to adapt to the so-called "Sasshi" behaviors of guessing the others' feeling and something to say.

In this research, through the comparison of the contents analysis in three countries' school texts, the similarity and difference of parent-child conflict-solution styles were analyzed. The children may be imprinted with the behavior and self styles through the characters in the school texts and the solution strategies regarded as suitable in each society may be transmitted to the next generation. By the way, how profound are they then transmitted to the children in the classroom? The analysis of transmitted contents of the textbooks is one thing, but that of their transmission processes and extents in the classroom is another. The property of conflict-solution styles prevails not only in parent-child relationship, but also in the level of diplomacy, country by country. People may normally think from the limited viewpoint of their living society that their imprinted solution strategies must be good and suitable, but if it is needed to solve any future conflicts between countries peacefully and efficiently, various possibilities of solution strategies should necessarily be shown to the children for extending their global understandings beyond their mother countries. In this point, the future study will need to focus on the processes and extents how the solution styles are transmitted to the children.

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