

Privileged Treatment of Toddlers: Cultural Aspects of Individual Choice and Responsibility

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This study examined the idea that toddlers in some communities are accorded a privileged status in which they are allowed what they want, assumed not yet to “understand” how to cooperate. U.S. middle-class and Guatemalan Mayan mothers and 3- to 5-year-old siblings were observed while the siblings and toddlers (14–20 months) both sought access to attractive objects. The Mayan toddlers’ desires were usually respected by both the mothers and the siblings, who often voluntarily cooperated without mothers’ intervention. In contrast, the U.S. middle-class toddlers seemed to be expected to follow the same rules for sharing (with some leniency) as the older children. The Mayan pattern fits a cultural model prioritizing both responsibility and respect for others’ freedom of choice.

Distinct cultural models regarding individual choice and responsibility may accompany community differences in treatment of conflicts between older siblings’ and toddlers’ desires for access to attractive objects. One cultural model seems to involve efforts to help children learn to share by applying the same rules (albeit with some leniency) to toddlers as to older children. Another model seems to involve efforts to develop voluntary cooperation in childhood by according toddlers freedom of choice through not overruling their wishes.¹ We observed whether U.S. middle-class and Guatemalan Mayan toddlers were accorded privileged access to desired objects—with their interests not overruled even when their slightly older siblings wanted the same object—or whether toddlers seemed to be required to follow the same rules as their older siblings.

Ethnographic Accounts of a Privileged Status for Infants and Toddlers

Toddlers in some communities are reported by ethnographers to be treated with respect for their freedom of choice even before they become accountable for their own actions and learn to cooperate with group members (Briggs, 1970; Harkness & Super, 1983; Hewlett, 1991; Joseph, Spicer, & Chesky, 1949; Martini & Kirkpatrick, 1992; Ochs, 1982; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin,

1990). Toddlers are regarded as not understanding how to cooperate with others and so their will should be respected like any other person, even though they are not yet expected to be able to do the same for other people.

Cultural patterns of privileged treatment of toddlers are often interpreted as “indulgence” by U.S. researchers. However, we argue that it is not simply indulgence or a relaxation of standards for following rules (such as rules for taking turns with desired objects). Instead, we believe that privileged treatment of toddlers represents a contrasting cultural model in which toddlers, assumed not yet to misbehave willfully or to understand how to cooperate, are protected from being forced to comply, so that they will learn to voluntarily cooperate. The view that privileging toddlers’ wishes is indulgence seems to be based on an assumption that correction should be applied to ensure that toddlers follow proper behavior in order to learn to do so on their own. In contrast, respect for toddlers’ freedom of choice may provide them with a model for how to treat others, fostering cooperative children through cooperation with toddlers’ wishes and avoidance of adversarial relations (Blount, 1970).

Responsibility *With* Freedom of Choice?

A cultural model that promotes both responsibility to the group and freedom of choice challenges a widespread assumption in psychology that these cultural values are mutually exclusive. The usual view assumes that coordination of a group implies lack of freedom of choice, in an either–or dichotomy sometimes referred to as *individualism–collectivism* or *independence–interdependence*

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This research was supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation. We are especially grateful to the families who participated in the study. We also thank Pablo Chavajay, Marta Navichoc Cotuc, and Cindy White for their skillful assistance during data collection and coding and Irwin Altman, David Dodd, Alan Fogel, Wendy Haight, Pablo Chavajay, Deanne Perez, Linda St. John, and Ruth Paradise for their helpful suggestions.

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¹ There are undoubtedly more than two cultural models, especially as we consider the great diversity of non-Western cultural practices. In the present article, however, we argue that these two cultural models are helpful in understanding differences between the communities studied as well as some others. Our purpose is to point out the importance of going beyond the one model that is often assumed in Western research; future research is needed for further articulation.

(e.g., P. M. Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998; Kagıtcıbası, 1996; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; see Rogoff, 2003, and Strauss, 2000, for critiques). The assumption is that cultural communities either prioritize individual choice over the group's needs or prioritize the group's needs over individual choice.

However, the polarity of freedom from others or obedience to authority is challenged by ethnographic research indicating that in some communities, the goal is for individuals to choose by their own will to cooperate with others. Rather than being in opposition, freedom of choice with personal responsibility for decision making can be compatible with values of interdependence and cooperation among group members (Lamphere, 1977; Oerter, Oerter, Agostiani, Kim, & Wibowo, 1996; Paradise, 1994b; Schieffelin, 1990; White & LeVine, 1986; Yau & Smetana, 1996). As Chisholm (1996) noted,

There seems to exist in Western societies an eternal, inescapable tension between autonomy and cooperation—between the individual's right to do as he or she pleases, and the need for the individual to control his or her ego for the common good. For the Navajo, on the other hand, far from being opposed to cooperation, individual freedom of action is seen as the only sure *source* of cooperation. . . . Navajo people place immense value on cooperation . . . while simultaneously holding great respect for individual autonomy. (p. 178)

Observers suggest that American Indian children from a number of tribes cooperate by their own will; in becoming self-reliant and responsible for others in the group, they make mature decisions on their own (Gaskins, 1999; Joseph et al., 1949; Lee, 1986). Making one's own responsible decisions that also respect others' personal freedom of choice is a distinct model from one in which freedom of choice is seen as self-oriented actions that do not involve others (Martini, 1994) and cooperation is seen as compliance to others' will. We believe that privileging toddlers' freedom of choice, until they are older and assumed to be capable of voluntary cooperation, fits with a cultural model of responsibility in conjunction with freedom of choice.

Two Models: Special Treatment Before the Age of Understanding Cooperation or Enforcing the Same Rules for Toddlers as for Older Children

The ethnographic accounts indicate that infants' and toddlers' special privileges to do as they like extend until the age at which they are expected to "understand" their actions' consequences for others. Often about the time a new sibling arrives, children rapidly shift into a more responsible role of helping to care for a new baby and contributing to family functioning. They give up nursing, being carried, and sleeping with their mother and are encouraged to cooperate with a new infant and may be accountable for the younger child's welfare (Barry & Paxson, 1971; Briggs, 1970; Harkness & Super, 1983; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1989; Weisner & Gallimore, 1977; Whiting & Whiting, 1975).

In contrast, observations suggest that European and U.S. middle-class toddlers and their siblings seem to be expected to follow similar rules and have similar responsibilities (Kreppner, Paulsen, & Schuetze, 1982; Weisner & Gallimore, 1977). Siblings may expect parents to treat them similarly, alerting their parents to the offenses of their siblings in order to maintain equal rights and privileges, as in the English families that Dunn (1989) studied, and

older children may frequently be allowed to take toys from infant siblings (Kreppner et al., 1982; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Although younger siblings are often treated somewhat differentially (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982), this may involve lenient application of the same rules rather than a qualitative difference in the rules applied to toddlers and those applied to older children.

Rather than privileging freedom of choice during a toddler period of moratorium for expectations of responsible behavior, middle-class parents may compel toddlers' "cooperative" behavior in order to teach them proper behavior and to counter willfulness. Adversarial relations appear in several aspects of middle-class parents' and children's relationships (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000).² Middle-class parents often get into battles of wills with infants and young children over sleeping apart from parents and over food (Morelli et al., 1992; Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasulo, 1996), contrasting with observations that Mayan children in Mexico are given the responsibility to decide how much to eat and sleep, whether to take medicine, and whether to go to school (Gaskins, 1999). U.S. middle-class mothers were much more likely than Mayan mothers to try to compel toddlers to act in ways determined by the mothers or to overrule toddlers' objections to an activity (Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993).

Guatemalan Mayan mothers almost never overruled their toddlers' objections to or insistence on an activity—they attempted to persuade but did not force the child to cooperate (Rogoff et al., 1993). For example, toddlers were not compelled to stop hitting others. Their hitting was not regarded as motivated by an intent to harm because they were expected to be too young to understand the consequences of their acts for other people. Rogoff (2003) observed,

A hefty 15-month-old walked around bonking his brothers and sisters, his mother, and his aunt with the stick puppet that I had brought along. The adults and older children just tried to protect themselves and the little children near them, they did not try to stop him. (When the little guy got close to me, I took the puppet out of his hand, and he gave me an indignant look. His mother hurriedly gave him a wink that meant I was just teasing, and he relaxed. What I had done was socially inappropriate—I had forced him to stop what he was doing.) When I asked local people what this toddler had been doing, they commented, "He was amusing people; he was having a good time."

Was he trying to hurt anybody?

"Oh no. He couldn't have been trying to hurt anybody; he's just a baby. He wasn't being aggressive, he's too young; he doesn't understand. Babies don't [misbehave] on purpose." (p. 165)

Learning Voluntary Cooperation

Attempting to overrule another's will to exact obedience is at odds with premises underlying learning voluntary cooperation with respect for each individual's freedom of choice in the interest of group cooperation. As Maccoby and Martin (1983) argued,

² Ironically, some of these battles are parental efforts to encourage children to become independent "individuals." Middle-class parents may justify forcing their children to sleep alone to encourage self-reliance (Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, & Goldsmith, 1992) and may require older children to work independently in the family and in school (Fogel et al., 1992; Parsons, 1959).

“Mutual responsiveness . . . provides the conditions in which genuinely cooperative interaction can occur. . . . Parental emphasis on the child’s individuality and freedom of choice [may] contribute to the child’s sense of cooperating in family interactions voluntarily” (p. 67). Research within U.S. communities shows distinct approaches supporting this idea: Some U.S. middle-class mothers and children show mutual responsivity—mothers resort to less use of power and young children show spontaneous, self-sustained cooperation in cleaning up or refraining from touching off-limits objects, along with readiness to imitate their mothers in a teaching context. In contrast, the compliance of other young U.S. middle-class children is in response to ongoing parental control (Forman & Kochanska, 2001; Kochanska, 1997).

Community-wide cultural expectations may yield broad differences in the relation of individual freedom of choice and responsible coordination with others. A Mayan researcher, Marta Navichoc Cotuc, speculated (personal communication, September 25, 1986) that the middle-class U.S. cultural practice of forcing toddlers to sleep apart from their family may create a feeling of distance and estrangement that may make it more difficult (compared with the practices used with Mayan toddlers) to develop a cooperative attitude with the family and to learn how to act by observing family members.

Enforcing compliance to another’s will to teach proper behavior also contrasts with a cultural model that has been observed in Japan, where being voluntarily cooperative, *sunao*, is encouraged:

A child who is *sunao* has not yielded his or her personal autonomy for the sake of cooperation; cooperation does not suggest giving up the self as it may in the West; it implies that working with others is the appropriate way of expressing and enhancing the self. . . . How one achieves a *sunao* child . . . seems to be never go against the child. (White & LeVine, 1986, pp. 58–59)

Middle-class Japanese mothers explained that in teaching 2-year-olds, mothers should not oppose the child’s will but elicit spontaneous compliance that is experienced as voluntary rather than as reluctant (Kobayashi, 2001). Through the mother’s empathy toward the child and encouragement of the child’s empathy toward the mother’s own and others’ feelings, with time, children bring their conduct in line with cultural norms, when “the child is subjectively ready to understand and accept [social rules] or to comply with them voluntarily” (Lebra, 1994, p. 263).

Our study explores the idea that in some communities, rather than regarding childhood as a linear track of development in which toddlers need to be held to standards of proper behavior so that they will understand it, toddlers are allowed a period of moratorium in which they are not expected to follow the same rules. They are expected not to be capable of understanding how to cooperate with the group and incapable of intentionally mistreating others, so in such a model, there is no sense in hurrying them to follow the rules. Instead they may be patiently given their way until they leave infancy, with the expectation of voluntary cooperation in childhood.

A Study of Toddlers’ and Older Siblings’ Access to Desired Objects in Two Communities

The present study systematically compared how 3- to 5-year-old siblings and mothers handled access to objects desired by the

siblings and toddlers, in Mayan families of San Pedro, Guatemala, and middle-class families in Salt Lake City, Utah. We observed whether toddlers (14–20 months) were accorded privileged access to objects that their siblings also desired or whether toddlers and slightly older siblings were held to similar expectations.

In San Pedro, we expected toddlers to be accorded privileged access to objects, relative to their older siblings. We predicted that San Pedro mothers would usually endorse the toddlers’ privileged access to objects and would more often do so than Salt Lake mothers—for example, by urging the older sibling to relinquish a toy requested by the toddler or by reminding a sibling of the responsibility they have as the older sibling. Similarly, we expected San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds usually to privilege toddlers’ access to objects (e.g., voluntarily relinquishing an object upon the toddlers’ request) and to do so more often than Salt Lake 3- to 5-year-olds.

In contrast, we expected that Salt Lake toddlers would not hold a privileged position—they and their siblings would have similar rights to desired objects (perhaps with leniency toward the toddler). We expected Salt Lake mothers often to endorse similar rights of the toddler and the older sibling (often with rules of equal sharing, such as taking turns or privileging whoever had a toy first) and Salt Lake 3- to 5-year-olds often not to privilege the toddler’s wishes (e.g., by taking objects from the toddler or by negotiating turn taking). We expected the endorsement of similar rights of toddlers and older siblings to be more common in Salt Lake than in San Pedro.

In interviews, we expected San Pedro mothers often to report that they support the toddlers’ wishes in conflicts with the sibling and Salt Lake mothers to report enforcing equality of rights. In addition, we expected Salt Lake mothers often to report that toddlers already understand the social consequences of their own actions and to be capable of intentional harm. In contrast, we expected San Pedro mothers often to credit such understanding only after the toddler years, consistent with ethnographic accounts tying the unique privileges of toddlers to mothers’ attributions of “not understanding” the social consequences of their acts.

Finally, we explored the possibility that in San Pedro, the traditional pattern of according toddlers a privileged position would be less common with greater maternal involvement in school—an imported Western institution. This analysis is based on findings that more years of schooling for the San Pedro mothers has been correlated with more attempts to compel toddlers to act according to their mothers’ agenda, resembling the approach of U.S. middle-class mothers (Rogoff & Mosier, 1993). Mothers with more experience in schooling may adopt some of its formats, which are consistent with those of middle-class European American families (such as prioritizing instruction as the source for learning and being concerned with adult control of child behavior; Chavajay & Rogoff, 2002; Kojima, 1986; Lewis, 1995; Paradise, 1994a, 1994b; Rogoff et al., 1993).

Method

Participants and Community Background

The participants included 16 Mayan families from the town of San Pedro la Laguna, Guatemala, and 16 middle-class European American families in

Salt Lake City, Utah.³ San Pedro participants were recruited through invitations to families identified from census data. Salt Lake participants were recruited through a preschool, married student housing, and word of mouth. Visits were scheduled to include the mother, toddler, and older sibling; other family members were sometimes present.

Toddlers ranged in age from 14 to 20 months ($M_s = 17.1$ in Salt Lake, 17.0 in San Pedro); siblings ranged from 3 to 5 years ($M = 4.2$ in both communities). There were equal numbers of male and female toddlers and male and female siblings in each community. The genders of sibling pairs were matched, with 5 boy–boy, 5 girl–girl, 3 boy–girl, and 3 girl–boy pairs in each community. Although some families had additional older siblings (6 Salt Lake families, 8 San Pedro families), none had an infant or a child between the toddler and the 3- to 5-year-old, and only 1 mother was pregnant (3 months). There were 2–7 children in the families of each community ($M_s = 2.6$ in Salt Lake, 3.8 in San Pedro). In both communities, the toddlers and siblings were reported to be each other's playmates.

The samples appear to fit the demographic profiles common in 1992 in San Pedro and in the middle-class segment of Salt Lake. Both mothers' and fathers' schooling in San Pedro ranged from no school to graduation from high school (mothers: $M = 3.2$ years, $SD = 4.0$; fathers: $M = 4.4$ years, $SD = 5.4$). In Salt Lake, all mothers and fathers had graduated from high school and almost all had gone to college (mothers: $M = 15.8$ years, $SD = 1.9$; fathers: $M = 16.4$ years, $SD = 2.2$). San Pedro fathers engaged in such occupations as fisherman, farm worker, and merchant. All 16 San Pedro mothers were homemakers; some wove and embroidered clothing to sell or washed clothes for extra income. Salt Lake fathers engaged in such occupations as chef, lawyer, architect, vocational counselor, and real estate broker. Eleven Salt Lake mothers were homemakers and 5 were students and/or had outside jobs (such as school teacher and receptionist). In San Pedro, 9 families were Catholic and 7 were Protestant, and in Salt Lake 11 families were Mormon and 5 were Catholic, Jewish, or agnostic.

Procedure

The interviewer in each community was a local person, accompanied by Christine E. Mosier (who served as camera operator and had been involved with both communities over several years). Barbara Rogoff had done research in both communities for many years, including years of ethnographic research on child-rearing practices in San Pedro.

The session opened with an interview adapted from Rogoff et al. (1993) asking conversationally for family demographics and child-rearing practices. After completing part of the interview, the interviewer introduced the nine novel objects that were used in Rogoff et al. (1993), one at a time in a standard order: embroidery hoop, pencil box, nesting dolls, jar with a doll inside, jumping-jack puppet, stick puppet, videotape case with a latch, baby doll, and playdough. The objects were attractive to toddlers and older siblings in both communities; children in both communities play with toys, although the Salt Lake children have many more toys.

As the interviewer presented the objects, she asked the mother to get the toddler to operate them and explained that the toddler would probably need help. Piloting revealed that without such instructions, Salt Lake mothers often handed the objects to the sibling, which often resulted in toddlers never gaining access to them. The instructions did not exclude the sibling from becoming involved. The family engaged with each novel object for as long as the toddler demonstrated interest, before a new object was introduced (after about 6 min, on average, in both communities).

With the objects lying about, the interview resumed with questions regarding socialization of appropriate social behavior, including toddlers' and older siblings' rights in conflicts over objects. The questions listed below were asked (in a conversational form) to examine support for the view noted in ethnographic work in San Pedro that toddlers should not be held responsible for misbehavior because they are too young to understand the social consequences of their acts or to intend harm—and to gather comparable information from the Salt Lake mothers. The interview re-

sponses were transcribed verbatim by the interviewers, and the responses were straightforwardly tallied.

1. What do you do if the children fight over a toy? What if it belongs to the toddler? To the sibling?
2. When do you think children begin to understand the consequences of their acts, for example, regarding places not to go and things not to touch?
3. If the toddler were to destroy something, how would you handle it? Would she/he be punished? How? Is it possible for the toddler to destroy things on purpose at this age? If so, when did the toddler begin to understand? Is it possible for the sibling to destroy things on purpose? When did the sibling begin to understand?
4. Does the toddler understand that hitting or pulling hair hurts? If so, at what age did the toddler begin to understand? When did the sibling begin to understand that what he/she does might hurt someone?

In addition, the mothers were asked who helps with the toddler and the sibling, whether the sibling helps care for the toddler, and whether (and how) the children help in household chores.

The entire session of about 1.5 hr was videotaped and used for recording the mothers' responses to the interview questions and for coding how the toddlers, siblings, and mothers handled the children's access to objects. There was no difference in length of the sessions.

Coding

Coders first identified all "interactions that involved both children." These were segmented by using interactional pauses of several seconds or changes in topic (e.g., from disputing over an object to operating an object together). Coders then transcribed all "events involving an attempted takeover of an object (or access to the mother's attention) in which the toddler's or the sibling's rights to that object were at stake." Most of these events involved access to an object rather than access to attention—95% in San Pedro, 96% in Salt Lake. (Results using only the events involving the objects were the same as those for all events.)

Coding then determined whether the toddler was treated as having a privileged position in these conflicts. We examined both the outcome—coded as whether "the toddler eventually gained access" to the object—and the process involved, coded as "the mother or the older sibling endorsed a privileged position" (or not) for the toddler. These aspects of the events provided somewhat overlapping information.⁴

Eventual access to the object: Privileged or not. Evidence for the toddler's privileged access was whether the toddler ultimately possessed the object or was in charge of deciding to whom the object went. For example, the sibling gave a requested object to the toddler; the mother took a requested object from the sibling and gave it to the toddler; or the sibling politely requested something from the toddler, extending the toddler the right to either give or keep it.

Outcomes reflecting the toddler's nonprivileged access (indicating that the toddler and the older sibling had similar rights to the object) included

³ Sample size was selected on the basis of a power analysis of pilot data in which an estimation of 32 subjects ($dfs = 30, 1$) would yield power $> .90$ for an alpha of .01.

⁴ Correlations between endorsements of privilege and eventual privileged access yielded the following values in each community: for mothers, Salt Lake $r = .76, p < .01$, San Pedro $r = .63, p < .05$; for siblings, Salt Lake $r = .72, p < .01$, San Pedro $r = .68, p < .05$.

the sibling successfully superseding or disregarding objections by the toddler or not returning an object right away when the toddler requested it. Examples included the sibling refusing to give something the toddler requested, the sibling winning a tussle with the toddler over an object, and the mother taking something from the toddler without the toddler's permission and giving it to the sibling or dividing it between them.

Mothers' and siblings' endorsements of the toddler's privileged position. In addition to coding eventual access to the object, coders noted whether mothers' and siblings' actions and words during the event endorsed a privileged position for the toddler, a nonprivileged position, or a mixture. Coding of endorsement sometimes included evidence of access to the object. (Occasional involvement of caregivers besides the mother was collapsed with that of the mother.)

Mothers: Examples of mothers' moves that endorsed toddlers' privileged access included saying, "Let the baby have it," blocking an older sibling's reach or request for an object in the toddler's possession, or taking something from the sibling that the toddler wanted and giving it to the toddler. On the other hand, the mother was coded as endorsing nonprivileged access if the mother urged the children to share (e.g., promoting taking turns or dividing a disputed object) or allowed the sibling to supersede the toddler's wishes.

A mother could also have been coded as "uninvolved" if she did not watch the children determine access or watched but did not do anything as the children handled the issue on their own. However, if there was escalating disagreement between the children over rights to an object—to the point of tussling or crying that might call for intervention—and the mother did nothing, she was coded as endorsing nonprivileged access, not as uninvolved.

Siblings: Examples of older siblings' endorsement of the toddler's privileged position included the sibling politely asking the toddler for something or willingly giving up an object the toddler requested or took, or the sibling immediately letting go of an object when the toddler fussed. The sibling's actions were coded as endorsing the toddler's nonprivileged position if the sibling acted as if he or she had the same rights as the toddler—for example, the sibling took something from the toddler without the toddler's permission or refused to give the toddler something that the toddler requested; the mother told the sibling to give something to the toddler but the sibling did not comply; or the sibling insisted, "It's my turn" or "I had it first."

Mixed endorsements. If endorsements changed within an event, we treated them as endorsements of a privileged position if the mother or sibling changed from endorsing a nonprivileged to a privileged position, and as nonprivileged if the endorsement ultimately became nonprivileged. Results are the same whether mixed events are included or not. In the Results section, we present the data including the mixed events, along with supplementary information about prevalence and patterns within the mixed events (which were consistent with the overall findings).

Reliability

The two interviewers (natives of each community) each coded the videotaped interactions from their own community, with a third reliability coder (a native of San Pedro residing in Salt Lake City), overlapping 50% of their codings (8 families) in each community. All three coders were uninformed of the hypotheses. After the reliability coder established reliability with the San Pedro coder, he and the Salt Lake coder were trained together on pilot Salt Lake sessions to ensure that the Salt Lake coder followed the same criteria as in the San Pedro coding. To minimize definitional slippage, the reliability coder alternated between Salt Lake and San Pedro sessions, allowing for continuous reliability checks and discussion of definitions for the coding of data from both communities. Where coders disagreed, they discussed their codings to reach consensus; these consensus codings were used in the analysis along with the remaining half of the data, which was solely coded by the primary coder (interviewer) in each community.

The overlap in coders' identification of interactions was 80%. Pearson correlation for number of interactions per session was estimated as .96. Reliability on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of events involving an issue of rights to an object was estimated at 94%, and Cohen's kappa was .88. The reliability estimate for whether eventual access to the object reflected the toddler's privileged or nonprivileged position was 96%, and Cohen's kappa was .87. Reliability estimates for occurrence of mothers' endorsements were 89%, and Cohen's kappa was .82; those for occurrence of siblings' endorsements were 81%, and Cohen's kappa was .67. In the analyses, we used all interactions identified by the primary coders (the interviewers) after consensus discussions, including their codings of events involving an issue of rights to an object, toddlers' privileged versus nonprivileged access, and mothers' and siblings' endorsements.

Results

There were differences in the number of interactions involving the toddler and older sibling, although the sessions were the same length. Toddlers and siblings engaged in an average of 80 events in San Pedro ($SD = 26$) and only 50 events in Salt Lake City ($SD = 20$), $t(30) = 3.7, p < .001$ (a difference accounting for 28% of the variation).

Despite the fact that the toddlers and their siblings were more involved with each other in San Pedro than in Salt Lake, the numbers of interactions involving issues of access to objects were similar (Salt Lake: $M = 30, SD = 15$; San Pedro: $M = 32, SD = 15$). This means that the proportion of total interactions in which there were issues of access to an object was significantly greater in Salt Lake than in San Pedro (61% vs. 40% of the interactions), $t(30) = 3.8, p < .001$. Thus, more of the interactions in Salt Lake involved solicitations for and attempts to take over objects, and more of the interactions in San Pedro included offering or helping with objects and joint working of objects, and communication that did not involve competition over an object.

Analyses of eventual access to the object and of the mothers' and siblings' endorsements of toddlers' privileged versus nonprivileged position were based on proportion of the interactions that involved issues of access to objects.^{5,6}

Toddlers' Eventual Access to the Object

As expected, the proportion of events in which eventual access to the object reflected the toddler's privileged position was greater in San Pedro than in Salt Lake, $t(30) = 5.1, p < .0001$ (a difference accounting for 44% of the variation). The San Pedro toddlers gained access to the object in most (87%) of the events in

⁵ The Salt Lake families varied more in the amount of nonprivileged versus privileged treatment of the toddler than San Pedro families, who were part of a more homogeneous community. Levene F tests indicated that the Salt Lake variances were significantly greater on access to the object, $F(1, 30) = 6.1, p < .02$; mother's endorsement of toddler's nonprivileged rights, $F(1, 30) = 13.7, p < .0001$; and sibling's endorsement of toddler's nonprivileged rights, $F(1, 30) = 9.2, p < .01$. Given these differences in variances, we employed t tests using separate variances with conservative reduction of degrees of freedom to analyze the variables indicating heterogeneous variances. We analyzed the remaining variables with t tests using pooled variances.

⁶ Exploratory analyses of differences related to the sibling's and toddler's gender were examined conservatively with a cutoff for significance at $p < .01$. No gender differences were found.

which access was an issue, whereas the Salt Lake toddlers gained access in just over half (59%) of the disputes. (See Table 1.) San Pedro toddlers were apparently allowed the choice of whether to give an object to their siblings, compared with Salt Lake toddlers, whose position apparently did not entail different rules than their older sibling.

Mothers' Endorsement of Toddlers' Privileged Position

In both communities, mothers were involved in all but a third of the events involving an issue of the children's access to an object (Salt Lake: $M = .32$, $SD = .21$; San Pedro: $M = .33$, $SD = .21$; no difference).

Although both groups of mothers were more likely to endorse the toddlers' privileged position (compared with a nonprivileged position) during events involving an issue of the children's access to an object, San Pedro mothers more consistently did so than Salt Lake mothers. This was tested in a mixed two-factor analysis of variance, comparing between and within communities in the extent to which mothers endorsed toddlers' privileged treatment during the events in which mothers were involved. A significant main effect of mothers' endorsements of the toddlers' privileged versus nonprivileged position, $F(1, 63) = 77.4$, $p < .0001$ (accounting for 48% of the variance), showed that mothers from both communities were more likely than not to endorse the toddlers' privileged position. In addition, a significant interaction indicates that the effect was greater for San Pedro mothers than for Salt Lake mothers, $F(1, 63) = 21.3$, $p < .001$ (accounting for an additional 13% of the variance). San Pedro mothers almost always endorsed toddlers' privileged position (in 94% of the events in which the mothers were involved). In contrast, Salt Lake mothers endorsed equal (nonprivileged) rights in over a third of their interactions.

Consistent with these results, our predictions were further supported by findings that the San Pedro mothers endorsed the toddler's privileged position in a greater proportion of events involving issues of access to an object than did Salt Lake mothers, $t(30) = 2.4$, $p = .01$ (accounting for 13% of the variance, see Table 1). In contrast, Salt Lake mothers were much more likely than San Pedro mothers to endorse the toddler's nonprivileged position, $t(19) = 6.2$, $p < .0001$ (58% of the variance).

Table 1
Mean Proportions (and Standard Deviations) of Events in Which Access to an Object Was at Stake

| Event | Salt Lake City | San Pedro |
|--|----------------|-----------|
| Toddlers eventually gained access to the object | .59 (.20) | .87 (.09) |
| Mothers endorsed toddler's privileged position | .43 (.24) | .63 (.22) |
| Mothers endorsed toddler's nonprivileged position | .25 (.13) | .04 (.05) |
| Siblings endorsed toddler's privileged position | .45 (.19) | .80 (.09) |
| Siblings endorsed toddler's nonprivileged position | .54 (.21) | .19 (.09) |

Note. Mixed ratings were recoded to the category that resulted when mothers or siblings endorsed one category and then the other.

Thus, San Pedro mothers appeared to privilege the toddlers' desires and to expect siblings to do the same far more often than did Salt Lake mothers, who only sometimes and nonsystematically favored the toddler. The following typical examples illustrate Salt Lake mothers' endorsement of toddlers' nonprivileged access and San Pedro mothers' endorsement of toddlers' privileged access:

Salt Lake City: Julia (20 months) reached out to take the baby doll from her older brother (3 years 6 months). A tug-of-war ensued. Their mother asked the brother if Julia could have the doll and the brother replied that he was not finished yet. The mother told Julia to play with something else until her older brother was finished.

San Pedro: Rosa (16 months) vocalized to her mother and pointed to the videotape case with which her older brother (3 years 8 months) was playing, on the opposite side of the mother. The mother clarified, asking the toddler, "I take it away from your brother?" Rosa nodded and said, "Yes." The mother grasped the videotape case and told the brother, "She says she wants it." The brother let the mother give it to the toddler.

It is informative that the Salt Lake mothers were twice as likely as San Pedro mothers to give a mixed endorsement of privileged and nonprivileged rights of the toddler, changing from one to another within the same event (in 9% of issues in Salt Lake, $SD = .05$, vs. 4% of issues in San Pedro, $SD = .08$), $t(30) = 2.3$, $p < .03$. This may reflect more maternal negotiation over possession of objects in middle-class Salt Lake families than in San Pedro families, in which the toddlers' privileged position seems to be a rule rather than an option to be considered after reviewing who had the toy first, to whom the toy belonged, and so on. The fact that Salt Lake mothers' endorsements were equally likely to change from privileged to nonprivileged (51% of the occasions) as from nonprivileged to privileged (49% of the occasions, $SD = .46$) suggests that in moments of hesitance or ambiguity, Salt Lake mothers often did not prioritize the rights of one child over another. In contrast, the San Pedro mothers' changes in endorsement almost always went from nonprivileged to privileged (89% of instances, $SD = .21$). San Pedro mothers may have misinterpreted their toddlers' wishes when they let the sibling have an object and then rectified this by endorsing privileged access when toddlers clarified what they wanted.

Siblings' Endorsement of Toddlers' Privileged Position

We first analyzed sibling endorsement of toddlers' privileged position without regard to whether the mothers were involved. Siblings acting according to self-interest would be expected to endorse toddlers' access in 0% of the episodes, because endorsing the toddler's privileged position involves willingly giving the toddler what the toddler wants. As expected, the San Pedro siblings were more likely to endorse the toddlers' privileged position than were Salt Lake siblings, $t(21) = 6.3$, $p < .0001$, with 55% of the variance accounted for. (See Table 1.) San Pedro 3- to 5-year-old siblings, like their mothers, privileged the desires of toddlers by willingly allowing the toddlers to have their way in most (80%) of the events in which both children wanted access to an object. They did so more often than the middle-class Salt Lake siblings (45%). Salt Lake siblings endorsed their own rights to desired objects in a little more than half (54%) of such events—almost three times as often as the San Pedro siblings, who endorsed their

own rights in only about a fifth (19%) of the events. (Because siblings' endorsements of the toddler's privileged or nonprivileged positions are complements summing to 100%, we analyzed only their endorsement of toddler's privileged position.) The following typical examples illustrate the siblings' approaches in the two communities:

Salt Lake City: The older brother (3 years 0 months) was playing with the pencil box and lid. Sam (15 months) wanted the lid and grabbed for it. A tug-of-war ensued until both mother and father separated the two boys. The older brother ended up with the complete box and Sam ended up playing with the embroidery hoop.

San Pedro: The older brother (3 years 9 months) put his hand on the knob of the jar lid. Lidia (15 months) reached out and gently pushed his hand off. The brother removed his hand.

The higher rate at which San Pedro siblings endorsed a privileged position of the toddler was not a function of greater maternal intervention. As explained above, the extent to which mothers were involved in events involving issues of the children's access to an object was equal between the two communities, amounting to two thirds of these events. Additional coding indicated that mothers in both communities rarely forced children to comply: Physical intervention was used in only 1% of San Pedro interactions and in only 2% of Salt Lake interactions in which the mother attempted to get the sibling to respect the toddler's wishes; the remainder involved persuasion.

In episodes in which mothers were uninvolved, San Pedro siblings willingly endorsed the toddler's privileged access more frequently than did Salt Lake siblings (70% vs. 38%), $t(30) = 3.07, p < .01$, accounting for 21% of the variance. This supports the idea that San Pedro siblings were already learning and voluntarily acting according to expectations, in the absence of their mothers' immediate involvement.

San Pedro siblings more often gave mixed endorsements of a privileged and nonprivileged position of the toddler than did Salt Lake siblings, in 22% ($SD = .16$) and 12% ($SD = .09$) of the interactions involving issues of access to an object, $t(24) = 2.3, p < .03$. However, the community differences in siblings according toddlers a privileged position were still significant when the "mixed" category was excluded, with averages of siblings willingly endorsing toddlers' access from the outset in 58% of the events in San Pedro and 33% in Salt Lake ($SDs = .18$ and $.20$), $t(30) = 3.5, p < .01$, accounting for 26% of the total variance.

In almost all cases in both communities, siblings' mixed endorsements went from nonprivileged to privileged (Salt Lake: 96%, $SD = .09$; San Pedro: 98%, $SD = .08$). This makes sense, because if the sibling initially gave the toddler access, there would seldom be an impetus for the sibling to begin to insist on his or her own access to the object. (Perhaps this would only occur when the older sibling had second thoughts about giving the object up, and took it back.)

Mixed episodes more often involved the mothers in Salt Lake than in San Pedro. Salt Lake mothers were involved in an average of 91% of siblings' mixed episodes, whereas San Pedro mothers were involved in an average of 74% of the mixed episodes (for the 11 Salt Lake and 14 San Pedro siblings who had mixed episodes; $SDs = .04, .06$, respectively; $t[23] = 6.44, p < .001$).

This means that out of all the toddlers' endorsements, 6% in San Pedro and 1% in Salt Lake switched from one form of endorse-

ment to the other without maternal involvement (almost always from an initial attempt to get the object to giving access to the toddler). So, considering only the episodes in which mothers were uninvolved, San Pedro siblings endorsed the toddlers' access in 70%, with 6% involving a switch to giving the toddler access and the remaining 64% occurring from the outset. In contrast, in the episodes in which Salt Lake mothers were uninvolved, siblings endorsed the toddlers' access in only 38%, with 1% involving a switch and the remaining 37% occurring from the outset. Thus, compared with the Salt Lake siblings, San Pedro siblings were both more likely to willingly accord the toddler access to the desired object from the outset and more likely to shift from an initial attempt to get the object to giving it to the toddler. San Pedro siblings' willing endorsement of the toddlers' privileged access was usually without maternal intervention.

Changing Practices in San Pedro With Maternal Experience in School

The rapid change (and great variability) in schooling in San Pedro provides an opportunity to examine what may be a community transition in cultural practices to more closely resemble middle-class U.S. practices, through contact with this European American institution.⁷ San Pedro mothers' schooling related negatively to their privileged endorsements ($r = -.50, p < .05$) and uninvolved ($r = -.57, p < .05$) and related positively to their nonprivileged endorsements ($r = .56, p < .05$). Thus, the more schooling that San Pedro mothers had, the less they privileged toddlers and the more they were involved in issues over the children's rights to objects (perhaps negotiating between the children), resembling the Salt Lake pattern.

San Pedro mothers with more experience in this Western institution may substitute some formats learned in school for traditional Mayan approaches. For example, they may adopt more of a "switchboard" model, with an adult mediating between children, which Philips (1972, 1983) suggests prevails in schools. They also seem to adopt more of a managerial model of group relations, with division of labor among participants, rather than a more traditional horizontal and collaborative multiparty organization of group participation (Chavajay & Rogoff, 2002; Paradise, 1994a; Pelletier, 1970).

Mothers' Reports of How They Handle Disputes Between Siblings

Salt Lake mothers' reports of how they handle disputes between the children more often did not privilege the toddler or even privileged the older child; in contrast, San Pedro mothers' reports were more likely to involve granting the toddlers the right to have their way, expecting the older sibling to cooperate with the tod-

⁷ In Salt Lake, schooling does not represent contact with a new cultural practice for middle-class families. There were no significant correlations between years of mothers' schooling and whether toddlers were accorded a privileged position. This is also to be expected from the uniformly high involvement with formal schooling among these U.S. mothers. Note that in San Pedro, community changes in extent of schooling and other features of families' lives may lead to less use of the practices that we observed to be common there in 1992.

dlers' wishes, $\chi^2(2, N = 30) = 5.1, p < .05$. (This result is based on 15 responses from each community that were complete enough to be categorized as either "privileging the toddler," "privileging the older sibling," or "not privileging either child.")

Only 2 Salt Lake mothers reported privileging the toddler if the children fought over a toy, and 3 reported distracting the toddler away from the toy to leave it with the older sibling. The other 10 reported resolving matters in ways that did not privilege either child: resolving in favor of the child who had the toy first or owned it or encouraging taking turns (7), letting the children fight it out (1), or taking the toy from both (2). For example, one Salt Lake mother reported that she lets the child who had the toy first keep it, but if she is not there to see who had it first, she has the kids take turns.

In contrast, in San Pedro, 6 mothers reported resolving matters in favor of the toddler, and none reported distracting the toddler away from the toy to leave it with the older sibling. The other 9 mothers reported resolving the dispute by giving the toy to the child who owns it (5), telling the children not to fight over toys (2), or separating them or removing the toy from both children (2). There was no mention of favoring the child who had the toy first or of encouraging turn taking.⁸ One San Pedro mother said, "Because [the older sibling] is big, she already understands. I just tell her to leave the toy to the baby, that she loans it. She understands and leaves the toy with the baby."

Mothers' Reports of Children "Knowing Better"

More Salt Lake mothers than San Pedro mothers (14 vs. 1) reported that their toddlers already understood the social consequences of their own actions (e.g., of willfully touching prohibited objects), 5 stating that this arises at about 6–12 months, $\chi^2(1, N = 32) = 18.1, p < .01$. One Salt Lake mother reported that babies understand the social consequences of their acts "early—they are sneaky" and that she knows that the baby knows because he teases her. The youngest report from a San Pedro mother regarding understanding the social consequences of actions was 19 months; the rest of the San Pedro mothers gave a range of 2–3 years as the starting point for children to understand this. All 16 mothers in each community reported that the older siblings aged 3–5 years understood the social consequences of their actions.

Salt Lake mothers also usually regarded their toddlers as capable of intentional misbehavior, whereas most San Pedro mothers regarded toddlers as not yet capable of intentionally misbehaving. Ten Salt Lake City mothers but only 1 San Pedro mother reported that the toddler understood that hitting or pulling hair hurts, $\chi^2(1, N = 32) = 8.8, p < .01$. For example, one Salt Lake mother reported that the baby hits to hurt, on purpose; the mother grabs her and tells her "no." The two groups of mothers were similar in attributions that the older sibling understood that hitting hurts (13 and 12, respectively). When asked when children begin to understand this, Salt Lake mothers reported a range from 1 to 3 years whereas San Pedro mothers reported an older range from 2 to 4 years.

Nine Salt Lake mothers reported that the toddler was capable of breaking things on purpose. For example, one mother said that the toddler understands about destruction; sometimes she rips the other children's artwork and she "knows better." Another claimed that her 14-month-old can destroy things on purpose, gave an

example of destroying the mother's wallpaper, and said the child destroys other kids' toys on purpose. All of the San Pedro mothers reported that the toddler was not old enough to break something on purpose, $\chi^2(1, N = 32) = 9.9, p < .01$. Three San Pedro mothers explained that the toddler cannot have the intention to willfully break things and if it happens, it is by accident; 8 others commented that the toddler does not understand misbehavior because she is still little.

None of the San Pedro mothers reported punishing the toddlers, whereas 9 of the 16 Salt Lake mothers reported punishing the toddlers (usually scoldings and/or time-out; 1 used hand slapping). For example, a Salt Lake mother said that if there is any problem, even if the older sibling started it, both children will have time-out, because the mother is afraid the sibling would have bad feelings toward the baby if only the sibling got time-out. Another Salt Lake mother said that the two children are comparable—the toddler is not a baby anymore; both children "are toddlers"—and both get time-out. The community differences in accountability and attributions of toddlers' intentional misbehavior are consistent with the idea that San Pedro toddlers may be accorded a privileged role due to being regarded as not yet capable of willful misbehavior or understanding the social consequences of their acts, whereas Salt Lake toddlers are held to the same rules as older children.

Mothers' Reports of Children's Responsibilities

The mothers' reports indicate that the San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds already have responsibility for themselves and for contributing to their families.⁹ In contrast, Salt Lake 3- to 5-year-olds, like toddlers, are seldom contributors to their own care or to household responsibilities.

Already, 11 of the 16 San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds were reported to be their *own* primary caregivers. They spent much of their time in the company of other young children without direct supervision of an adult or older sibling caregiver (although relatives and neighbors are generally available for assistance while children play around town). In contrast, all Salt Lake mothers reported that the 3- to 5-year-olds had direct supervision in similar caregiving arrangements as the toddlers—they had the same caregivers or went to daycare to a similar extent as the toddlers. The community difference in 3- to 5-year-olds having a direct primary caregiver was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 32) = 13.9, p < .01$. (All San Pedro and Salt Lake mothers reported that their toddlers had an adult primary caregiver.)

San Pedro 3- to 5-year-old siblings also were reported to have more mature household responsibilities. All Salt Lake and San Pedro mothers reported that both toddlers and siblings were involved in household chores—picking up toys, throwing away trash, bringing dirty clothes for washing, and so on. However, 8 of the San Pedro siblings (and none of the Salt Lake siblings) were also reported to be taking on economic and mature responsibilities for the household, such as working in the fields, purchasing necessities, running other errands for the family, and providing

⁸ The San Pedro mothers' reports of how they handled disputes did not relate to their extent of schooling.

⁹ There was no systematic relationship between the San Pedro mothers' extent of schooling and their reports of the children's responsibilities.

responsible care of the toddler, $\chi^2(1, N = 32) = 8.2, p < .01$. Thus, although Salt Lake 3- to 5-year-olds required care and performed similar chores to the toddler, San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds' chores already began to reflect responsible care for themselves and cooperation in the group, diverging from the toddlers.

Discussion

In middle-class European American families, 1-year-old and 3- to 5-year-old siblings often tussled over desirable objects, and the toddler ended up with the coveted objects in only a little more than half (59%) of such events. Their mothers often tried to get the 1-year-olds to follow the same rules of equal sharing as the older children (in over a third of the events in which they intervened). They often tried to get both the toddlers and the older siblings to negotiate dividing the property or to take turns. Nevertheless, the mothers were somewhat lenient with the 1-year-olds, endorsing a privileged position of the toddler somewhat more often than a nonprivileged position (in 43% vs. 25% of the disputes). The older siblings asserted their own rights to the object (in 54% of the events in which access to an object was at stake) at least as often as indicating that the toddler should have it.

In contrast, Mayan toddlers in San Pedro seem to have been accorded a privileged position by both their mothers and their slightly older siblings—they were usually allowed access to objects that their siblings also wanted (in 87% of the events). The Mayan 3- to 5-year-old siblings generally did not grab things away from the 1-year-old and willingly handed over an object if the toddler wanted it (endorsing the toddler's privileged position in 80% of the events in which access to an object was at stake). They usually asked the toddler's permission for access to a desirable object; if the toddler said no, the 3- to 5-year-old would seldom insist. When the Mayan mothers were involved, they almost always (94% of the events) prioritized the toddler's right to the object. The higher rate at which Mayan siblings willingly accorded a privileged position to the toddler was not due to more maternal intervention, and these mothers did not refer to turn taking. Occasionally, they reminded the older child to let the toddler have the object, because a toddler "does not understand."

The San Pedro toddlers were not expected to cooperate, and in everyday discussions this is often justified in terms of toddlers not understanding the social consequences of their acts and not being capable of intentional misbehavior. (Although San Pedro toddlers were not expected to understand or to be willful in social interaction, they seemed to be at least as socially skilled as Salt Lake toddlers. In an earlier study, San Pedro toddlers were observed to be more alert to the group's activities and to function in a way that coordinated with the group more frequently than did Salt Lake toddlers; Rogoff et al., 1993.) The Mayan mothers reported that toddlers are not old enough to break things on purpose or to understand that hitting or pulling hair hurts. Rather than requiring toddlers to follow mature rules for sharing, San Pedro caregiving practices seem to model respect for individual freedom of choice and responsibility.

Older San Pedro children are expected to understand how to cooperate with others. They appeared to voluntarily respect the wishes of their toddler sibling over their own desire to handle an attractive object. Their mothers seldom needed to prompt their responsible actions toward the toddler, and on the basis of ethno-

graphic observations, it is unlikely that the children were acting under any covert threat of punishment. Community-wide expectations of responsible behavior appear to be a very strong guide for children's actions and are quite different than requiring or compelling children to behave according to adults' will. It is possible that if their mothers were not present, the siblings might have been somewhat less responsible; however, San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds usually seem to behave quite responsibly toward toddlers, who are sometimes in their charge. Although siblings regretted not getting access to a desired object, they seemed to expect that it was appropriate to allow a toddler what they wanted and did not seem to act as though the toddler had purposely deprived them.

Indeed, the overall interactions of the San Pedro children were more cooperative, with less competition over objects. Whereas most (61%) of the interactions between toddlers and siblings in Salt Lake involved solicitations for and attempts to take over objects, most (60%) of the interactions in San Pedro included offering or helping with objects and joint working of objects, and communication that did not involve competition over an object.

The San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds also cooperated more broadly within the family by taking on responsibilities such as caregiving and economic chores. Most of them were their own primary caregiver. Half of them were also caregivers to the toddler and already engaged in small economic activities outside the home. In contrast, the Salt Lake toddlers and siblings, who were encouraged to follow the same rules of sharing, also reportedly were not distinguished in the types of chores they did or in the type of caregiving they received. They were also subject to similar parental expectations for accountability for their actions and being capable of intentional harm.

The middle-class Salt Lake siblings appeared to negotiate more with their parents over rights as well as to expect similar rules to be applied, consistent with other observations of middle-class siblings (Dunn, 1989). Other research also suggests that parental expectations of middle-class children do not reflect qualitative differences of status for infants and toddlers within the family (Clarke-Stewart & Hevey, 1981; Fogel, Stevenson, & Messinger, 1992; Kreppner et al., 1982).

Children Learning Local Systems of Autonomy and Responsibility

In both the Salt Lake and the San Pedro families, children seem to have been learning how to participate in their own community's approach to freedom of choice and social responsibility. In each community, the 3- to 5-year-old children were already skilled in interacting with toddlers in ways that are locally valued. San Pedro 3- to 5-year-old siblings voluntarily acted with responsibility, usually respecting the toddler's wishes without being compelled by maternal intervention.

Salt Lake 3- to 5-year-old siblings skillfully asserted and negotiated rules of turn taking and sharing without resorting to force. Their roles with younger siblings may assist the toddlers in learning to stand up for their own self-interests in an individualistic model of fairness in family relations. The Salt Lake practices appear to value children's learning of independent negotiation and division of resources. Salt Lake mothers often enforced equal sharing with a division of time spent with the coveted objects. For example, Salt Lake mothers stated rules for taking equal turns in

20% of the interactions with issues of access to an object. Here is an example of a Salt Lake mother enforcing turn taking, over the interests of the toddler:

The mother offered the older brother (4 years 5 months) the nesting dolls. Little Jake (18 months) fussed and tried to grab the nesting dolls away from his brother. The mother stopped Jake and told him, "It's Andy's turn." Jake continued to fuss and pursued his own efforts to get the dolls from his older brother, eventually giving up.

In contrast, although San Pedro mothers sometimes told the older sibling to wait until the toddler was finished, they never made reference to taking turns. The promotion of separate turns and each child having their own toys (sometimes duplicates) are practices that we believe correspond to the U.S. middle-class values of equal but separate treatment (see also Ross, 1996). This is a different kind of coordination between people than when participants find ways to simultaneously meet their separate interests, as some older siblings in San Pedro did—attaining access to an object by helping the toddler or by elaborating the toddler's agenda together with the toddler.

Cultural Valuing of Voluntary Cooperation

Respect for individual choice in San Pedro seems to be a broad culturally important concept, not limited to toddlers. Observations suggest that family members do not force sick people to take medicine or restrain them even in the face of danger; they do not hold a child down for a medical procedure or to change a diaper; they do not force a toddler's jaw open in order to brush teeth even if that means teeth never get brushed (L. Paul, personal communication, 1976; Rogoff, 1976). They may coax and bribe, but they do not force. If someone asks why an important treatment has not occurred, the answer is usually "*M'tirajo?*"—"he/she doesn't want to." Although privileged treatment of toddlers may relate to heightened concern for their survival (LeVine, 1977; Romney & Romney, 1966), respect for freedom of choice throughout the lifespan appears to be a priority in San Pedro, as well as in a number of other communities.

Among other North and Central American Native groups, "inviolability of the individual" is a widespread cultural value. This is "the idea that individuals of any age have the right to make their own decisions with respect to personal action, and that it is rude or improper to directly order or force them to do something against their will" (P. J. Greenfield, 1996, p. 492, building on a concept borrowed from Downs, as cited in Greenfield). For example, in traditional Sioux ways, even the youngest children were extended "a profound respect for individual autonomy, even when that might affect life and limb, threat of disease, or choice of life career" (Wax, 2002, p. 126). Among the Nahua of Mexico, constraining others' actions is rare, and absent with toddlers, because "they are little and do not understand" (Chamoux, 1986, p. 222).

In such settings, cooperation and respect for freedom of choice accompany each other (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Gaskins, 1999; Lamphere, 1977; Lee, 1986). For example, Navajo child-rearing emphasizes fostering respect, as a way of being responsible for others and oneself (Chisholm, 1996). The individual is responsible for knowing what is right and choosing the proper course of action, in cooperation with others. According respect for others' freedom

of choice is a foundation of interdependence in native Northern Canadian and Alaskan ways:

Nonintervention or mutual respect for the individuality of others is an essential element of system stability [of the community]. Without reciprocal nonintervention there would be no larger system. The potential runaway autonomy of individuals is held in check by the mutual respect of others, which is held in equally high regard.

We have then the seeming paradox that . . . the autonomy of the individual can only be achieved to the extent that it is granted to one by others. Individual autonomy is, in fact, a social product. One gains autonomy to the extent one grants it. . . . Each person in each situation is constrained only by his own wish to be granted autonomy. Even in this the autonomy of the individual is preserved. One respects others as one's own choice motivated by one's own wish for mutual respect. (Scollon & Scollon, 1981, p. 104)

Similarly, in Japan, mutual cooperation involves respecting freedom of choice (Hendry, 1986; Peak, 1989). In traditional practices that may seem indulgent to Western eyes, Japanese mothers do not go against the young child's will but use other ways to foster self-motivated cooperation (White & LeVine, 1986). Traditional Japanese belief holds that it is not appropriate to control young children from the outside, because use of controlling behavior (such as anger or impatience) leads children after age 10 or 11 to resent and disobey authority rather than to cooperate with others (Kojima, 1986; see also Abe & Izard, 1999).

Lewis (1995) has suggested that the impressive behavior of young Japanese schoolchildren is due to the freedom and supportive empathy of the early years at home and at school. Japanese first graders take on responsibility, without direct management by an adult, for managing such aspects of school as seating and quieting the class for lessons to begin, breaking into small groups to carry out and discuss science experiments, and running class meetings. When a teacher is absent, the class runs itself, with other teachers or a principal occasionally checking in. Lewis claimed that a feeling of responsibility for the welfare of the group stems from muted adult authority.

In the Marquesas (Polynesia), the goal is likewise to coordinate personal goals with group goals. Marquesan toddlers go through a transition at 18–24 months resembling that of the San Pedro toddlers, from having every demand met to being expected to cooperate:

The ideal [Marquesan] situation is one in which people have similar or complementary goals and willingly collaborate in a mutually beneficial activity without anyone dominating anyone else. Young children learn that autonomy is valued and then learn when and how to exercise it while still being group members. (Martini & Kirkpatrick, 1992, p. 218)

Western concepts of autonomy stress the freedom of the person to pursue individual goals unencumbered by social obligations [whereas] Marquesans view mature adults not as those who give up personal goals and the valued goal-direction process to conform to the group, but rather those who coordinate their own goals with those of the group. (Martini, 1994, pp. 73, 100)

We believe that the pattern that we observed in San Pedro, in which the toddlers' wishes were privileged and older siblings showed voluntary responsibility, reflects early socialization in this model of individual freedom of choice in support of responsibility

to the group. An alternative interpretation could be that the older siblings were simply learning to be altruistic. However, this explanation seems lacking in light of the respect given to the toddlers' wishes with the assumption that they are too young to understand how to be responsible. The 3- to 5-year-olds' treatment of the toddlers fits with a cultural value of not forcing people to do something they don't want to do. When a mother encourages a 3- to 5-year-old to hand an object over to a toddler, it is often with the justification, "She says she wants it." This whole set of practices does not fit with the usual definition of altruism. We believe that an explanation requires attention to avoidance of force or coercion, giving others freedom of choice as part of responsibility to the group, consistent with the ethnographic literature in other communities.

Continuities and Discontinuities in Interpersonal Relations: San Pedro

The rapid transition in San Pedro from privileged toddler to responsible young child illustrates Benedict's (1955) concept of discontinuity in development. This discontinuity, however, seems to be accompanied by continuity in respect for other people's freedom of choice, with even a toddler's personal decisions not overruled, in the interest of developing voluntary coordination among group members. The San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds are used to functioning within a consistent system of respect for individuals' freedom of choice. They have not been treated adversarially themselves as babies; they have been treated in a way that gave them a chance to observe how other people respected their own and others' choices. They were no longer the one given leeway, but all their lives they have participated in a system in which responsibility to other people and respect for individuals' choices are inherent to human relations.

Among indigenous Mazahua families in Mexico, babies' status as "little monarch" transforms to a child status of responsibility within a continuous system of respect for personal self-determination from infancy throughout life:

The basic values that indicate that a baby be appreciated and respected, dealt with gently, and that care be taken that his or her will not be thwarted, are experienced from a baby's perspective, and then from another position that corresponds to a different social status. (Paradise, 1987, pp. 132–133)

Paradise (1987) argued that this noninterfering approach that characterized treatment of infants relates to traditional indigenous approaches to community leadership, in which elders guide rather than dominate. Such a system is based on individual freedom of choice in a smoothly functioning informal group coordination (see also Chavajay & Rogoff, 2002; Lamphere, 1977; Pelletier, 1970).

Between toddlerhood and early childhood, San Pedro children learn to be responsible, giving the privileged position to a younger sibling. With a usual birth spacing of 2 years, the transition is commonly between 2 and 3 years of age. Because we deliberately chose ages on each side of this, we did not observe San Pedro children during the transition. In interviews for another study, parents reported preparing toddlers for a new baby (during a pregnancy) by encouraging greater involvement with older children and the father. Often, near the end of the pregnancy, the toddler shifts from sleeping next to the mother to sleeping next to

the father or an older sibling, in preparation for the new baby taking the spot next to the mother.

Without such preparations, or if the birth spacing is tighter than usual, the transition may be a challenge, as we saw in pilot observations of a 2½-year-old San Pedro girl with a 16-month-old brother. The girl whined a great deal and her mother took pains to keep her and the toddler on opposite sides of the mother, moving the 2½-year-old further away from the toddler when conflict over an object seemed likely. The mother indicated that sometimes the 16-month-old pulls the 2½-year-old's hair and sits on her and her 4-year-old sister. When we asked how the girls respond, the mother replied, "They don't do anything, because he is small," with a gesture as if this was obvious.

The transition to maturity with the birth of a younger child seems not to occur in the same fashion for last-born Mayan children. They are expected to remain baby-like for much longer and to be self-centered (and may be allowed to nurse into childhood because no new baby takes over the breast). A personality type identified by the Mayan term for "last-born child" is used to explain the behavior of children and adults who act "spoiled." It appears that the transition surrounding the arrival of a younger sibling is usually an important part of development to maturity in San Pedro.

Some clues to a similar transition appear in Briggs's (1998) observations of family interactions with an Inuit child who was making the transition from being a baby exempt from responsibility for her actions. In everyday conversations, the child's family celebrated her babyishness but also began to tease her about babyish comforts and playfully criticize her babyish obliviousness to social rules and roles. She became increasingly aware that babyish behavior came at the cost of being regarded as mindless, foolish, and lacking in understanding. Questions to the child about whether she is a baby, which encourage her "to introspect (as an agent), to analyze her relationships and act responsibly, may move her a step along the way toward internalizing the rules and acting on them autonomously" (Briggs, 1998, p. 138). Future research could profitably examine the process involved in transitioning from a privileged baby role to a voluntarily responsible child role in San Pedro and other communities with similar practices.

Continuities and Discontinuities in Interpersonal Relations: Salt Lake City

In the Salt Lake families, young children experience different continuities and discontinuities. The middle-class European American toddlers experience continuity in the rules of sharing across infancy and childhood. However, this often entails being compelled to "behave." Adversarial enforcement may relate to the marked discontinuity that these children are expected to show between infancy and childhood, with a sudden appearance of contrary behavior in the "terrible twos"—interpreted as the onset of autonomy (Rothbaum et al., 2000; Wenar, 1982). Middle-class European American children's negotiation of adversarial roles is often something in which they have themselves participated since infancy (e.g., in battles over sleeping alone), as parents attempt to assert their authority. The early enforcement of rules may follow Puritan and Methodist child-rearing practices of the 1600s and 1700s, which emphasized that parents should break children's will in infancy to override their inherent wicked nature, to foster

salvation of their souls by enforcing habits of righteousness (Cleverley, 1971; Moran & Vinovskis, 1985; Morgan, 1944).

The “terrible twos” transition is not universal. San Pedro parents do not report a particular age when they expect children to become especially contrary or negative (see also Freeman, 1978; Rothbaum et al., 2000). Similarly, as noted by Edwards (1994), “in Zinacantan, Mexico, the transition from infancy to early childhood does not involve resistant toddlers demanding and asserting control” (p. 3). Instead, Zinacantecan children seek contact with mothers who until then had treated them with a special status now accorded to a new baby. The toddlers’ transition is not one of asserting independence from their mothers but of changing from mother’s baby to a responsible child who tends the new baby and helps maturely with household tasks.

Conclusion

We suggest that the relation of concepts of responsibility and freedom of choice follow distinct cultural models. In San Pedro, toddlers’ privileged access to resources may be based on a cultural model that children’s voluntary responsible cooperation is promoted by having their own freedom of choice respected while they come to understand how to interact in ways that also respect others’ choices. In Salt Lake middle-class families, toddlers’ similar treatment to that of their slightly older siblings may be based on a cultural model that responsible behavior develops gradually if young children are required to follow rules of equal, separate access to resources. Here, responsible cooperation may consist of engaging in fair competition for resources (reflecting individual rights and freedom) and skillful negotiation to take turns and share.

Understanding the model of voluntary responsibility may be important for institutions such as schools—based on a middle-class cultural model—to be responsive to distinct cultural patterns in which children are encouraged to take responsibility voluntarily, as has been observed in classrooms with indigenous Mexican, Hawaiian, and some U.S. mainland minority children (Cardenas & Zamora, 1980; Jordan, 1984; Paradise, 1994a). In addition, observation of the processes of learning voluntary responsibility can suggest ways to encourage children’s responsibility for their own choices (Allen, 1992; Rogoff, Goodman Turkkanis, & Bartlett, 2001; Wells, Chang, & Maher, 1990). Cultural variation in handling young children’s disputes over resources suggests important differences in cultural models of freedom of choice and responsibility.

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Received September 11, 2000

Revision received June 16, 2003

Accepted July 1, 2003 ■

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