



Title	JAPANESE AND AMERICAN MOTHERS PERCEIVING AND EVALUATING THEIR 5-MONTH-OLD INFANTS' EMOTION EXPRESSIONS : A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE
Author(s)	KANAYA, Yuko; BRADSHAW, Donna L.; CAMPOS, Joseph J.; MIYAKE, Kazuo
Citation	乳幼児発達臨床センター年報, 14, 41-51
Issue Date	1992-03
Doc URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2115/25277">http://hdl.handle.net/2115/25277</a>
Type	bulletin (article)
File Information	14_P41-51.pdf



[Instructions for use](#)

## JAPANESE AND AMERICAN MOTHERS PERCEIVING AND EVALUATING THEIR 5-MONTH-OLD INFANTS' EMOTION EXPRESSIONS: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Yuko Kanaya

*Kokugakuin College*

Donna L. Bradshaw

*The Japan Society of Boston*

Joseph J. Campos

*University of California, Berkeley*

Kazuo Miyake

*Kawamura Gakuen Woman's University*

This study was carried out as a part of a Japan-US longitudinal, comparative study on emotional socialization in infancy. Forty-three Japanese mothers and 15 American mothers were interviewed in their own homes. Their perceptions and evaluations of the infants' emotion expressions were examined. There were considerable cross-cultural similarities in the perceptions of basic emotions and uncomfortable emotion expressions. Mothers in both cultural groups answered that infants' negative expressions were uncomfortable for them. An examination of the data reveals that the two cultures differed in the extent to which they emphasized different emotions. The Japanese viewed *amae* as emotions and the Americans perceived frustration as emotion. With regard to emotion control, Japanese mothers tended to view patience and resignation as control. By contrast, American mothers viewed distraction as control. These results suggest that cultural differences in mothers' perceptions and evaluations of infants' emotion expressions may produce different styles in expression regulation.

Key words: infant emotions, mother's perceptions, culture, socialization of emotion

---

This research was supported by grants from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (No. 60301011, Principal investigator: Kazuo Miyake), and Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (US Japan Educational and Cultural Cooperative Research: Principal investigator: Kazuo Miyake) as well as by a grant for maternal and child health from the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

We express special thanks to Dr. Rosemary Campos (University of California, San Francisco) and Marcia Fleener (University of Illinois), for data collection in America. We are also grateful to Mayumi Matsumoto, Chiaki Nakamura and other research group members of Hokkaido University for data collection in Japan.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to Yuko Kanaya, Kokugakuin College, Takikawa, Hokkaido, 073, Japan.

Campos *et al.* (1987, 1989) have outlined new approaches to emotional development. They have also suggested important domains for future research regarding the function of emotions, the adaptive behavior-regulatory effects of different emotions, action tendencies associated with different emotion families, the developmental course of social emotions, socialization factors influence children's style of responding to these social emotions, and the function of emotional language. These are some of the many questions that deserve further study.

From cross-cultural studies, evidence in favor of the universality of certain emotion expressions have been yielded. But Izard (1980) has suggested that cultures differ in their display rules, the cultural norms and conventions regulating affective expression. As Sommers (1984) stated culture seem also to differ in their way of experiencing, perceiving, and evaluating various emotions. Malatesta and Haviland (1985) examined the thesis that the emotion words of a culture exert a powerful influence on the actual experience of emotion. The study of Geertz (1959) has shown that Javanese adults exercise strong control over their emotion expressions. Caudill and Weinstein (1969) have found different practices in American and Japanese groups early in life. Solomon (1978) reported the rarity of anger among the Utku Eskimos. Lutz (1985) revealed that cultural values of the Ifaluk people of Micronesia stress nonaggression, cooperation, sharing, and hierarchical behavior.

The foregoing studies on emotional development and the relationship between culture and emotion are very suggestive for our research. The present study was carried out as a part of Japan-US longitudinal, comparative study. We focused on socialization of emotion and development of emotional regulation. We have already found some trends towards similarities in maternal behavior (Kanaya et al., 1987, 1989). Those results suggest mothers' role of modulator of their infants' negative and positive emotion expressions. It would be worthwhile trying to ask the mothers about their perceptions to see if there were any dramatic differences in how American mothers view emotional development in comparison with what we know about Japanese mothers' views.

## METHOD

### *Subjects*

The Japanese sample consisted of 43, 5-month-old infants and their mothers living in Sapporo, and participating in a longitudinal study of emotional socialization. The American sample was composed of 15, 5-month-old infants and their mothers from middle-class families residing in Champaign, Illinois. The American pairs also were the participants in a longitudinal, Japan-US comparative study. Japanese mothers' average age is 27.4 and their average years of schooling is 14. American mothers' mean age is 30.5, and their mean schooling years is 15.5.

## PROCEDURE

### *Emotion Interview*

The 5-month home visit consisted of at least 90 minutes (60 minutes in the united States) of naturalistic observation followed by 5 brief experimental procedures.

Usually 3 people went to the home, 2 camera persons and 1 experimenter/interviewer. Mothers were interviewed about their perceptions of their infants' emotion expressions. The interview was included while the infant was taking a nap. If the infant's nap was too short to finish the interview, we finished it just before leaving after the other data had been collected. One camera was assigned to film the mother's face and gestures. The interviewer filled the answers in the emotion questionnaire form.

### *Interview Questions*

The main part of the interview concerns mothers' perceptions and evaluations of their infants' emotions and is similar to Emde, Klinnert et al's questionnaire/interview. The interview questions were developed by Donna Bradshaw after the research members have discussed how to translate English emotion words into Japanese and what to ask to get some hint about cultural differences.

The interview questions analyzed here were as follows :

- Q1. Can you list for us the emotions your baby has shown since he/she was born ?
- Q2. I want to ask you how each emotion is shown, at what age it is shown, and in what situations it is elicited. (Mothers were asked to go into details about her responses to Q1, and then about other emotions which were not mentioned spontaneously. Happiness, anger, sadness, fear, surprise, disgust, interest, displeasure, shyness, shame, and guilt were emotions to be asked.)
- Q3. What emotions does your baby show that make you feel particularly uncomfortable? (Is it ever a problem for you or your husband if your baby shows any of these emotions?)
  - (a) In your home?
  - (b) Outside the home?
- Q4. Does it bother you if the baby gets emotionally aroused?
- Q5. Does your baby show evidence that he or she can control his or her emotions? How do you know this?

## RESULTS

### (1) *Perceived emotions*

Responses to each question were analyzed separately. First, the response distribution for Q1 was tabulated revealing the number of subjects in both cultural samples who named emotions their infants showed. As can be seen in Table 1, basic emotions (happiness, anger, sadness, surprise, disgust and fear) were referred not only by Japanese mothers but also by American mothers. The majority of mothers in both cultural groups perceived happiness and anger as their infants' emotion expressions. Japanese and American mothers also referred to interest, displeasure, pain and hunger. When answers to Q1 and Q2 were combined, shyness and shame emerged.

An examination of the data reveals that the cultures differed in the extent to which they emphasized different emotions. The Japanese viewed *amae*, complaining (the infant wants his mother to pay attention to him), and demanding (the infant wants to be held by his mother) as infants' emotion expressions. The Americans vi-

TABLE 1  
Response Distribution for Q1 (in percentages): Can you list for us the emotions your baby has shown since he/she was born?

Emotions	Japanese (N=43)	Americans (N=15)
Happiness	56(100)	100(100)
Anger	79( 95)	73( 73)
Sadness	26( 67)	40( 53)
Surprise	26( 98)	13( * )
Disgust	16( 95)	27( * )
Fear	7( 47)	53( * )
Interest	5( 98)	20( * )
Displeasure	16( 91)	7( * )
"Amae"	28	0
Frustration	0	87
Contentment	0	33
Excitement	0	33
Affection	0	13
Shyness	0( 47)	7( 13)
Shame	0( 5)	0( 7)
Guilty	0( 0)	0( 0)
Pride	0	7
Complaining (wants attention)	5	0
Demanding (wants to be held)	5	0
Pain	19	7
Hunger	7	13
Boredom	0	13
Tiredness	0	7

N. B.: The numbers in parentheses indicate percentages when answers to Q1 and Q2 were combined. "\*" represents missing data.

ewed frustration, contentment, excitement, affection, pride, boredom, and tiredness as infants' emotion expressions.

(2) *How shown, age shown, and eliciting circumstances*

Responses to Q2 are summarized in Tables 2-1 and 2-2, and Figures 1 and 2. It is apparent that there was considerable cross-cultural agreement in ways of perceiving happiness, anger, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, interest, and shyness (see Tables 2-1 and 2-2). Examining the mothers' descriptions of what situations they see the emotions in, we find that the same situations as "when left alone too long" were repeatedly applied to different emotion expressions. In American sample, sadness or frustration will be elicited, while in Japanese sample, anger, sadness, displeasure, or *amae* will be elicited. As shown in Table 2-2 the mothers judged their infants' different emotion expressions from face, voice, limbs, and body. It was difficult for most of the mothers to retrospect to the age shown. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, there were cultural differences in perceiving the age shown. American mothers attributed various emotions to infants from the newborn period to the age of 4 months. While Japanese mothers

TABLE 2-1  
Responses to Q2: In which circumstances was each emotion shown?

Japanese	Emotions	Americans
<Happiness>		
playing with M/ peek-a-boo/ tickling/ talking to/ smiling to/ held by M/ when F returns/ when recognizes F, GM/		playing with M or F/ M's songs/ talking to/ smil- ing to/ held by M/ when F returns/ when recog- nizes parents/ when put in a bath tub/
-----		
<Anger>		
hunger/ can't sleep/ when left alone too long/ when placed in a baby seat/ can't satisfy a demand/ want M to go on hold- ing/ want M to pay attention to/		hunger/ tiredness/ can't sleep/ dirty diaper/ frus- trated/ when placed in a car seat or walker/ when lying in bed doesn't want to sleep/ when left with a baby-sitter/ when sib pounces on
-----		
<Sadness>		
when left alone/ want to pay attention to/ when M won't come long time/ disapperan- ce of M/ when M speak roughly/ M's sad face		hunger/ tiredness/ want to pay attention to/ when left alone
-----		
<Disgust>		
changing clothes/ bottle feed/ when wiped face/ when carried on M's back/ unusual posture too long/ sib's interruption/ when given solid food/		when given medicine, disliked or solid food, pacifier or a bottle/ licks fingers in mouth/ tired and get objects that are not interesting/
-----		
<Fear>		
loud voice/ sudden voice/ unexpected noises of toys/ suddenly picked up and rocked/ strange, unusual appearance of M or F/ presence of stranger/ sib's aggres- sion/		unexpected noises/ loud noises/ offer children's cries/ fell off bed/ suddenly picked up in M's arms/ when left with GM/ presence of stranger/
-----		
<Surprise>		
loud noises/ ringing telephone/ sneezing/ suddenly talked to or suddenly someone appears/		loud noises/ new toys/ when the dogs come close/
-----		
<Interest>		
new toys, objects, or persons/ person's face when he is speaking/		new toys, or objects/ new situation (lights)/
-----		
<Displeasure>		
hunger/ want of sleep/ sleepiness/ sick- ness/ dirty diaper/ heat/ unknown causes/ want M to pay attention to/		playing when the baby is tired/
-----		
<Amae>		
just before breast-feeding/ when wants to be held/ when wants to play with M/ when M leaves/ when the baby is sleepy, he(she) looks at M/ playing alone, and M appears/		have not noticed
-----		
<Frustration>		
have not noticed		hunger/ tirednes/ awkward position/ tired of position/ bored/ can't reach for what he(she) wants/ when left alone too long/ doesn't want to be held by sib
-----		
<Shyness>		
stranger talks to/ held by F/ F talks to/ someone looks into/ when looks at an un- familiar baby/ when praised by M or F/		person approaches her when she is being held by M/ people in general/

TABLE 2-2  
Responses to Q2 : How was each emotion shown ?

Emotion	Face	Voice	Limbs	Body
Happiness	(J) smiles	playful voice laughs	flaps limbs	
	(A) smiles	happy voice laughs	kicks legs, arms out	
Anger	(J) frown redden face	cries, growls screams	throws a toy	squirms
	(A) redden face	cries, squeals growls, screams	clinches fists arms fly away	wriggles, thrashes
Sadness	(J) lips go down weeping eyes	weeps, whimpers feeble, nasal voice	reaches for M (wants to be held)	
	(A) lips go down, pouting face, wrinkles face	cries whimpering cry		turns head from side to side
Disgust	(J) make a wry face shuts mouth	cries, screams	wave hand negatively	turns face away shakes head throws head back
	(A) wrinkles face frown, open mouth make a wry face			
Fear	(J) startled	suddenly cries bitterly	quiver	stiffen
	(A) holds breath startled	cries, screams	clinches fists draws legs up	
Surprise	(J) eyes bigger	suddenly cries swallows voice	startle	startle
	(A) eyes bigger blinks	smiles/laughs/cries depends on situa- tion	startle, arms fly up	moves head back
Interest	(J) stares, earnest look	pleasant voices laughs	reaches	
	(A) stares, wide eyes opens mouth		reaches manipulates	turns head to objects
Displeasure	(J) sullen shuts mouth	frets, doesn't stop crying		
	(A) screws up face	whimpers, cries		
Amae	(J) tearful smile	nasal voice, whines, cry for M		clings to M, wants to be snuggled
Frustration	(A)	fussing, screams complaining cry growling, tense voice	clinches fists hand stiffens tenses limbs	banging on table
Shyness	(J) smiles and looks down, smiles and averts	utter "a" sound and look down		buries head into M's shoulder
	(A) smiles and nuzzles to shoulder			buries head into M's shoulder

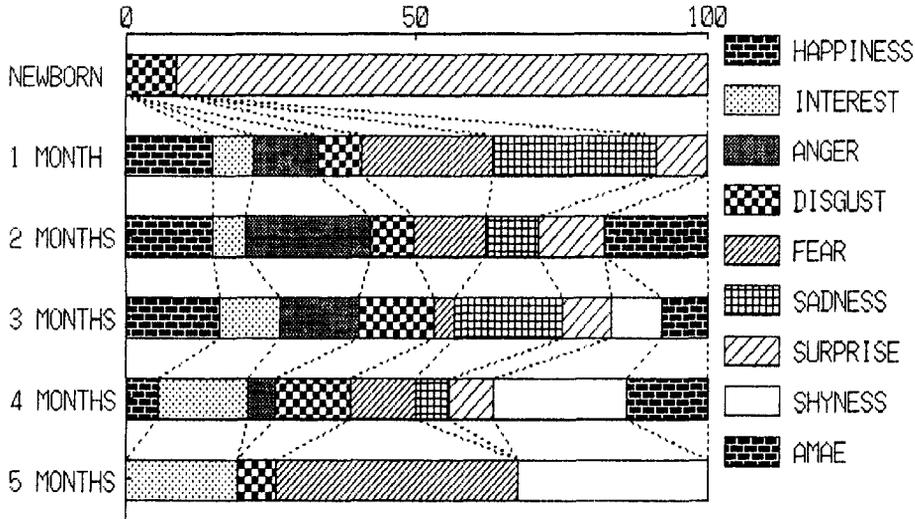


FIGURE 1 Japanese Mothers' Responses to Q2: When was each emotion shown?

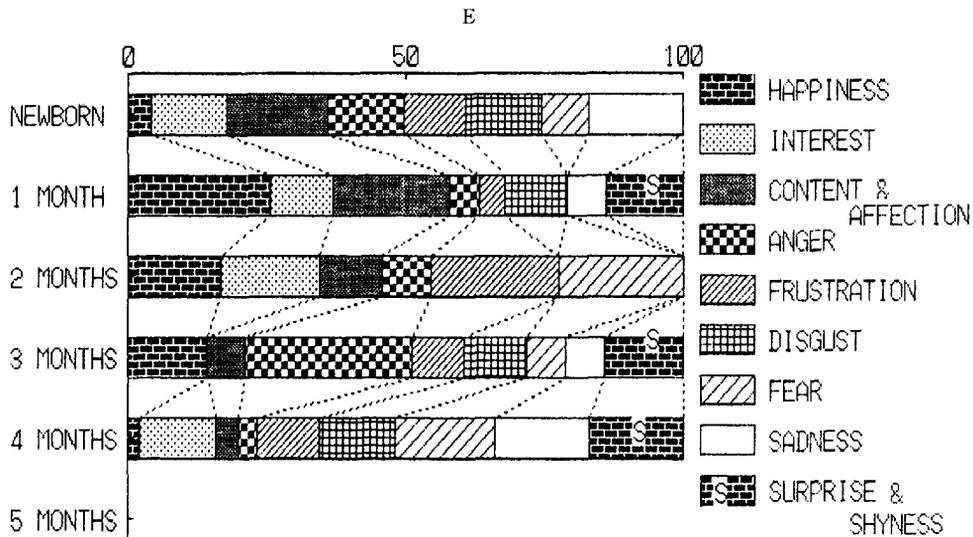


FIGURE 2 American Mothers' Responses to Q2: When was each emotion shown?

attributed various emotions to infants from the age of 1 month to 5 months. American mothers were found to be more likely to classify positive emotions in comparison with Japanese mothers.

### (3) Uncomfortable emotion expressions

As can be seen in Table 3, a fairly large number of mothers of both cultural groups answered "Yes" to the question about uncomfortable emotion expressions in the home. We find that fussing and crying (displeasure) were treated by Japanese mothers as uncomfortable emotion expressions. Japanese mothers were found to be significantly more likely to perceive nothing uncomfortable outside the home in compar-

TABLE 3

Response Distribution for Q3 (In percentages): What emotions does your baby show that make you feel uncomfortable?

		Japanese (N=42)	Americans (N=15)
In the home	None	38.1	40.0
	Yes	61.9	60.0
Outside the home	None	73.1	40.0
	Yes	26.9	60.0

ison with American mothers ( $\chi^2=5.55, P<.025$ ). As can be seen, Japanese mothers' response to the question about uncomfortable emotion expression outside the home forms sharpest contrast with the response to the same question in the home. American mothers showed the same tendency both in the home and outside the home to treat their infants' crying and screaming (anger or frustration) as uncomfortable emotion expressions.

As for Q4, no significant differences were found between Japanese and Americans. They were not bothered by their infants' aroused emotion except negative expressions.

#### (4) *Emotion Control*

Concerning emotion control, a large number of mothers in both cultural groups could not say for certain whether their 5-month-old infants control their emotions or not. Some mothers viewed infants' finger sucking as evidence of control, and others did not. As shown in Table 4, about 40 percent of Japanese mothers and half of Amer-

TABLE 4

Response Distribution for Q5 (In percentages): Does your baby show evidence that he/she can control his/her emotions?

	Japanese (N=43)	Americans (N=14)
Yes	39.5	50.0
No	60.5	50.0

TABLE 5

Mothers answered "Yes" to Q5: Evidence of controlling emotions (In percentages)

	Japanese (N=17)	Americans (N=7)
(1) In order to stop bad feeling		
(a) distract oneself by seeing a new object	11.8	42.9
(b) be quiet down by finger sucking	17.6	0.0
(2) Being bored or being in a good mood		
entertain oneself by an object; play by oneself;		
pay attention to mother, a new stimulation or	11.8	57.1
one's environment		
(3) Crying situation		
Be ready to cry, but repress one's tears; cry	58.8	0.0
oneself out with resignation		

ican mothers answered "Yes" to this question. Examining mothers' evaluations of infants' emotion control, we can find cross-cultural differences (see Table 5). Most American mothers tended to view distraction as control, while Japanese mothers showed a fairly strong tendency to evaluate patience or resignation as control.

## DISCUSSION

We found cross-cultural differences as well as similarities in mothers' ways of perceiving their infants' emotion expressions. Many writers have suggested that the range and quality of emotional experience is potentially the same for all human beings. However this potential range becomes altered in various ways, so that certain qualitative aspects are attenuated, emphasized, or embroidered upon (Malatesta & Haviland, 1985, p. 110). Lutz (1985) has argued that there may be major differences among cultures in criteria used in evaluating emotions. Levy (1984) has described how cultures *hypocognize* certain emotions and *hypercognize* others. According to Doi (1973), *amae* is a special emotion word of Japanese which means one's desire to accomplish proximity to others and incorporation with them. It is a key concept for understanding social relationships of Japanese. Our results suggest that Japanese mothers were very sensitive to their infants' *amae* or similar emotional behavior to *amae* (e.g. crying, demanding, or complaining). They used many kinds of expressions to describe infants' crying. They tend to interpret their infants' crying as a request for holding, or as an expression of loneliness. They feel pity for their infants. In other words, *amae* is a hypercognized emotion which is woven in Japanese cultural scripts. By contrast, no American mothers referred to such emotional behavior by using the English equivalent of *amae*. For the Americans, *amae* may be a hypocognized emotion. They showed a strong tendency to perceive frustration which is analogous to anger. Compared with American mothers, Japanese mothers made no distinction between frustration and anger. Sommers (1984) pointed out that Americans were distinguished from the other cultural groups in expressing a strong preference for concealing anger or inhibiting its expression (p. 330). This finding was interpreted as showing that Americans fear that an open expression of anger may lead to a negative outcome in the person's relations with others. However on the other hand they treated anger as useful and constructive to experience. So American mothers may be very sensitive to their infants' expressions of anger and frustration.

As Izard and Malatesta (1987) have discussed, cultural differences in socialization produce different styles of expression regulation. Our exploratory interview questions about uncomfortable emotion expressions and emotion control gave us a good hint on cultural differences in socialization. Japanese and American mothers showed different attitudes toward infant crying outside the home. Japanese may have a tendency to connive at infant negative expressions before the public. On the contrary a large number of American mothers showed the same attitude both in public and private. American infants may have to deal with their anger earlier than Japanese infants. In connection with these results, it is worth noting Miyake et al's research with the strange situation procedure (1985). They have reported that the percentage of ambivalent-resistant attachment type was much higher in Japan than in America. This result

provided indirect evidence for the differential effects of socialization on emotion expression and emotion regulation.

Although Japanese infants' ambivalent-resistant behavior in the strange situation can be interpreted as the expressions of the reverse side of *amae* to their mothers, from the viewpoint of the Western individualism such behavior can not be permitted. Probably the Americans expect their children to cope with frustration by themselves and transform it into positive emotions earlier than the Japanese do so. Does Japanese special emotion of *amae* facilitate infant emotion regulation? Does it inhibit development of self? What role does it play in personality development? These are questions that deserve further study.

## REFERENCES

- Barret, K. C. & Campos, J. J. (1987). Perspectives on emotional development II: A functional approach to emotions. In J. D. Osofsky (Ed.), *Handbook of infant development*, Second Edition. 494-554, Wiley-Interscience.
- Campos, J. J., Campos, R. G., & Barrett, K. C. (1989). Emergent themes in the study of emotional development and emotion regulation. *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 394-402.
- Caudill, W. & Weinstein, H. (1969). Maternal care and infant behavior in Japan and America. *Psychiatry*, 32, 12-43.
- Doi, T. (1973). The analysis of dependence. Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Geertz, H. (1959). The vocabulary of emotion. *Psychiatry*, 22, 225-237.
- Izard, C. (1980). Cross-cultural perspectives on emotion and emotion communication. In H. C. Triandis & W. Lonner (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology*. Vol. 3, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Izard, C. & Malatesta, C. (1987). Perspectives on emotional development I: Differential emotions theory of early emotional development. In J. D. Osofsky (Ed.), *Handbook of infant development*, Second Edition. Wiley-Interscience.
- Kanaya, Y., Bradshaw, L. B., Nakamura, C., & Miyake, K. (1988). Expressive behavior of Japanese mothers in response to their 5-month-old infants' negative and positive emotion expression. *Annual Report 1986-1987*, No. 10, 55-59, Research and Clinical Center for Child Development, Faculty of Education, Hokkaido University.
- Kanaya, Y., Nakamura, C., & Miyake, K. (1989). Cross-cultural study of expressive behavior of mothers in response to their 5-month-old infants' different emotion expression. *Annual Report, 1987-1988*, No. 11, 25-31, Research and Clinical Center for Child Development, Faculty of Education, Hokkaido University.
- Levy, R. (1984). Emotion, Knowing, and culture. In R. Shweder & P. Ekman (Eds.), *Approaches to emotion*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lutz, C. (1985). Cultural patterns and individual differences in the child's emotional meaning system. In M. Lewis & Saarni, C. (Eds), *The socialization of emotions. Genesis of behavior: Vol. 5*, Plenum.
- Malatesta, C. Z. & Haviland, J. M. (1985). Signals, symbols, and socialization: The modification of emotional expression in human development. In M. Lewis & Saarni, C. (Eds), *The socialization of emotions. 89-116. Genesis of behavior: Vol. 5*, Plenum.
- Miyake, K., Chen, S., & Campos, J. (1985). Infant temperament, mother's mode of interaction, and attachment in Japan: An interim report. In I. Bretherton & E. Waters (Eds.), *Growing points of attachment theory and research: Vol. 50. Monographs of Society for Research in Child Development*, 276-297,

- Sommers, S. (1984). Adults evaluating their emotions: A cross-cultural perspective. In C. Z. Malatesta, & C. E. Izard (Eds.), *Emotion in adult development*. 319-338, Sage Publications, Inc.
- Solomon, R. C. (1978). Emotion and anthropology: The logic of emotional world view. *Inquiry*, 21, 181-199.