

Research Digest:
Early Childhood Education and Intervention

Aukrust, V.G., Pope Edwards, C., Kumru, A., Knoche, L., & Kim, M. (2003). Young children's close relationships outside the family: Parental ethnotheories in four communities in Norway, United States, Turkey, and Korea. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 27*(6), 481-494.

This study sought to discover whether parents “differ by culture in their ethnotheories related to young children’s enduring relationships in childcare, preschool, and primary school” (p.481). The sample included 521 parents from four cities: Oslo, Norway; Lincoln, Nebraska; Ankara, Turkey; Seoul, Korea.

Using surveys, parents were asked specific questions that addressed how the cultural community, parental education, and residential stability influenced parental ideas regarding: *descriptions* of their child’s relationships outside the family; *beliefs* about the young children’s needs for friendships; *judgments* related to the importance of continuity in the child’s life; and *values* about what is most important in the curriculum.

Findings about parental *descriptions* found Seoul parents believed that their child had a best friend in preschool, where as Ankarans parents believed their child to have a best friend in the family or neighborhood. Findings regarding *beliefs* about close relationships outside the family found that culture played a large role in Seoul and Oslo parents. *Judgments* about continuity of care in preschool suggested that parents’ cultural community predicted their favoring a decision to keep a child at a current school. Oslo parents scored the highest with a rationale that the child’s relationships can move forward. With regard to the *value* of what’s most important in the curriculum, Oslo parents favored a collectivist approach. Lincoln parents saw an importance in individuality, small classes, and a sense of belonging. Ankara preferred school identity, stable class, and the same friends, while Seoul parents focused more on the academics and school leadership. Parental education and residential stability were less effective in predicting parental descriptions, beliefs, value, and judgments.