

# Cultural influences on early infant-mother interactions: A comparative study of UK and Malaysian mothers

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Understanding early infant-mother interactions is essential for assessing developmental and cultural influences on caregiving practices. Current literature suggests that individualistic cultures practice distal interactions, emphasizing face-to-face and language stimulation, while collectivist cultures focus on proximal interactions, including body stimulation. **Materials and Methods:** This study compares the interaction patterns of mothers from the UK and Malaysia with their infants by examining the percentage of time spent close to the infant, in face-to-face positions, and in social face-to-face interactions. Spot observations of mother-infant interactions were video-taped when the infants were 9 weeks old at their homes. **Results:** The data showed significant differences between UK and Malaysian mothers in all categories. Specifically, Malaysian mothers spent significantly more time close to their infants compared to UK mothers. Conversely, UK mothers spent significantly more time in face-to-face and social interactions with their infants compared to Malaysian mothers. These findings align with the current prototype that mothers in individualistic cultures engage more in face-to-face interactions with their infants. However, we lack comparable data on body stimulation for UK mothers to determine whether Malaysian or UK mothers spend more time in tactile stimulation, as we only have data analysing tactile stimulation among Malaysian mothers. Malaysian mothers showed no significant differences in terms of the time spent in tactile stimulation. Spearman's rho analysis showed no significant associations between face-to-face contact or social interactions and tactile stimulation, preventing conclusions that fully support the distal-proximal prototype. **Conclusion:** These results highlight the need for further investigation into cultural differences to optimize infant development and improve mother-infant relationships.