

Attachment theorists maintain that cultural differences are relatively minor, and they focus on universals. Here the authors highlight evidence of cultural variations and note ways in which attachment theory is laden with Western values and meaning. Comparisons of the United States and Japan highlight the cultural relativity of 3 core hypotheses of attachment theory: that caregiver sensitivity leads to secure attachment, that secure attachment leads to later social competence, and that children who are securely attached use the primary caregiver as a secure base for exploring the external world. Attachment theorists use measures of sensitivity, competence, and secure base that are biased toward Western ways of thinking. The measures emphasize the child's autonomy, individuation, and exploration. In Japan, sensitivity, competence, and secure base are viewed very differently, calling into question the universality of fundamental tenets of attachment theory. The authors call for an indigenous approach to the psychology of attachment.