

# Baby pacifier: the symbol of "me" culture

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Baby Maggie of the Simpsons has contributed to the popularity of baby pacifiers, with her incessant sucking, which can speak volumes, depending on the situation of her family. Baby pacifiers have been part of the American culture for a long time that they have evolved into many names, "soothers, dummies, Binkys," report Kalb and Whitford in "Big Binky Brouhaha." Binkys seem like ordinary tools for calming babies to sleep or silence, but it can also launch some of the most glaring criticisms of American culture.

The baby pacifier represents the overwhelming "me" culture of Americans, because it stands for autonomy, narcissism, and the paradox of social detachment-attachment. The baby pacifier represents the democratic principles of American culture, wherein parents give the autonomy to babies in choosing when and where to use their dummies. When American babies cry, mothers often interpret it as a sign of distress, and they immediately attend to them.

In a study of parenting attitudes among five ethnic groups in the United States, Jambunathan, Burts, and Pierce (2000) observe that European American mothers are most likely to interpret baby cries as calls for help, and so they respond more eagerly to these cries than Asian American, Asian Indian, and African American mothers. The latter ethnic groups are also concluded as possibly more detached to the needs of their infants, because they often live in extended family arrangements and attend to other needs.

This article indicates that American parents tend to provide greater autonomy for their children. On the other hand, autonomy has its dark side, narcissism. A baby wants a pacifier, and because she wants, she gets it. The

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book "The Narcissism Epidemic" by Twenge and Campbell (2009) illustrate how narcissism is growing everywhere in America, which leads to hostility, materialism, and superficial values.

In one example, they describe the Blinky and its connection to the materialist and self-centered nature of modern parenthood, and modern American culture, as well: "Babies wear bibs embroidered with 'Supermodel' or 'Chick Magnet' and suck on 'Bling' pacifiers while their parents read modernized nursery rhymes from This Little Piggy Went to Prada" (Twenge and Campbell 2009). This is an example of how parents are subconsciously training their babies that they can have anything they want, just because they want it. Baby pacifiers can symbolize the revolution of the "me, me, me!

" culture, which is levels higher than the simple and initial "me" culture, which only demanded what is due to the individual, such as basic civil rights. Baby pacifiers also signify the inconsistency and problems of social detachment-attachment in American relationships. In a news article, Kalb and Whitford interview a mother Janna Bosshardt, who would have preferred to not use a pacifier, but was forced to because her third child, Cale is "an Olympic-level screamer," and she believes that "A pacifier was the only thing that would calm him down.

It was for his sanity and mine." A personal interview with a mother of two kids also confirms the tug-of-war between detachment and attachment. Bearns describes how pacifiers make her insane and sane all at once. It makes her insane, because she is allowing the pacifier to do her own job of paying attention to her baby's needs. Still, the pacifier also makes her sane,

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because she will have more time to work. She says: " It's hard to admit, but I am making pacifiers a pseudo-parent. I should breastfeed, but I don't have the time.

" These notions of what should be done with baby pacifiers embody the detachment and attachment in American culture. Americans want to give more love and attention to their children, because of the work-life balance they aim to pursue. Yet, they are still seeing family-work conflict, as something they must do away with, by using easy and quick resolutions (Mortazavi et al. 2009). Baby pacifiers signify something gained and lost. Children learn autonomy, wherein they can get what they want.

But they forget that they must also work hard for what they want, and they must also take time to reflect on their actions and its consequences. Baby pacifiers also embed narcissistic and detachment values and practices that weaken American relationships. What is lost in this hyper-individualistic culture is human bonding and the realization that every choice, no matter how small, can have grave consequences. Finally, fundamentally missing in the " me, me, me! " culture is the idea of being " We. " Works cited Bearn, Jennifer. Personal interview. 27 July 2010. Kalb, Claudia and Ben Whitford.

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