A Multifaceted View of the Concept of *Amae*: Reconsidering the Indigenous Japanese Concept of Relatedness

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**Key Words**

*Amae* · Attachment · Japan · Relatedness

**Abstract**

The indigenous Japanese concept of *amae* has provoked interest from scholars across disciplines. Many have provided their own version of defining *amae* without much attempt to synthesize it into a demonstrative definition. Non-Japanese scholars have attempted to understand the concept through their own interpretations, which has often led to confusions and erroneous conclusions. The present paper analyzes the concept of *amae*, focusing on its everyday use with illustrative evidence to provide contextual meanings of varied *amae* phenomena. A multifaceted view to approach *amae* is introduced. The new approach proposes to consider *amae* in different contexts and in three developmental phases, with evidence to support that *amae* is, in fact, different in each category. Future *amae* research is discussed.

Over the past few decades the concept of *amae*, known as the indigenous Japanese concept of relatedness, has invited debates among scholars in various disciplines. Unfortunately, these debates have resulted in few agreements regarding a consensus for a definition and description of the function of *amae*. *Amae* has provoked much interest not only because this concept is often believed to play a key role in understanding Japanese psyche, but also because it appears to be similar to another major concept of relatedness, such as that found in attachment theory. Attachment theory has been proven to be one of the most influential theories of relatedness based on the evolutionary perspective. Attachment is a species-specific, innate behavioral system that guides the young to stay close to their mothers to
assure survival, and thus all children attach to their caregivers [Bretherton, 1992]. Both attachment and *amae* phenomena are believed to first emerge in infants after 6 months of age, and the first experience is likely to occur in mother-child relationships [Bowlby, 1958; Doi, 1973]. Yet attachment and *amae* as conceptualized differ in important ways, which I will discuss later in this paper. Nevertheless, van IJzendoorn and Sagi [1999], major cross-cultural attachment researchers, consider Japan a real challenge, partly because the concept of *amae* has an implicit emphasis on psychological dependence, whereas autonomy is one of the key elements that represents security in attachment theory. Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, and Morelli [2000] have challenged the universality of attachment theory and selected the concept of *amae* in supporting their own view of attachment and dependence. Rothbaum et al. claim that typical *amae* behaviors, which are supposed to be plausible and acceptable to Japanese mothers, will be considered as type C (‘insecure-ambivalent’), based on the standard attachment classification system1: this questions the validity of attachment theory as an exclusively Western-biased theory. What characterizes ‘typical’ *amae* behavior, however, needs to be re-examined.

**What Is Amae?**

When conceptualized, *amae* represents a cluster of behaviors, an emotional or internal state, and a philosophical construct for Japanese people that can be viewed either positively or negatively, depending on what is deemed appropriate with respect to maturity or degree of social intimacy. *Amae*, sometimes translated simply as ‘dependence’, is a phenomenon with multiple aspects or meanings, including (a) one’s desire to be intimately close to another person or to be basked in the warmth of the other [e.g., Doi, 1973]; (b) to act playfully, like a baby [e.g., Take-tomo, 1986]; (c) to be lenient toward one another or have an indulgent relationship [e.g., Lebra, 1976]; (d) to importune somebody [e.g., Okonogi, 1992], and (e) to presume upon another person’s goodwill or to take advantage of them [e.g., Mitchell, 1976]. *Amae* is viewed as an interpersonal process and thus the phenomenon can be observed only in interactions [e.g., Kumagai & Kumagai, 1986; Maruta, 1992]. *Amae*, in my view, always consists of some expectation or assumption on the part of the *amae* doer of being understood and accepted, whether it is for pure affection or instrumental needs, either within intimate or non-intimate relationships. Further, *amae* is always relational and often involves the desire to be accepted for asking for something that one is perfectly capable of doing oneself. Therefore dependency on others (for something one is incapable of doing), I argue, does not constitute *amae*. Very briefly, *amae* can be described as the presumption on others to be indulgent and accepting [G. DeVos, pers. comm., February 4, 2003].

To date, however, there have been little systematic investigations of *amae*, both empirically and theoretically. The goal of this paper is to depart from the way

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1Ainsworth, Bell, and Slayon [1971] recognized three major developmental patterns of attachment – A, B, and C – based on the laboratory procedure known as the ‘Strange Situation.’ Group-B children are regarded as secure, whereas Group-A children are classified as insecure-avoidant and Group-C children are classified as insecure-ambivalent/anxious.
researchers and scholars have viewed amae, and to provide a new framework to approach this indigenous Japanese concept of relatedness. I intend to show that amae can show itself in many different forms and functions, depending on the context in which amae is exhibited. It is possible, however, to understand and work with amae if we treat amae separately in each context, thus applying the multidimensional approach that I propose together with recommendations for future research.

In this paper, I first present existing definitions of the concept of amae, beginning with a brief linguistic explanation. I then review debates regarding the concept of amae to show variations in interpretations. Second, I review some amae research to provide possible empirical evidence. Third, I propose a new, multifaceted approach to viewing the concept of amae by analyzing it in various contexts, thus showing that it has different qualities and developmental phases. Here I provide evidence to illustrate amae in various contexts, demonstrating what amae means to Japanese people today in its everyday use. Finally, I discuss how this new approach to amae can help to promote other research in Japan, attachment research in particular. I attempt to clarify the similarities and differences between the concept of amae and attachment theory, suggesting how both can possibly work together.

The evidence I present here is by no means complete or sufficient to cover all possible amae phenomena. Nonetheless, it provides a contextual framework to get a sense of what amae is, and the evidence shows how varied theoretical definitions are actualized. To show how the word amae is, in fact, used by native Japanese, I quote directly from the participants’ responses to the amae question. I have left amae unchanged in the text to show how the participants use it. I should also add that, due to a lack of data, I am not discussing the father’s role in amae interactions. Future research needs to include the role of the father in Japanese family relationships.

**Amae – A Traditional View**

*Linguistic Background*

The word amae is a noun and shares the same root with the adjective amai. The adjective amai has two basic meanings: ‘sweet/sugary’ and ‘not strict/generous’ or ‘seeing through rose-colored glasses/being naïve’, the latter with rather negative connotations. The transitive form of the verb amae is amayakasu, which refers to an act of letting someone amae. In order for an act of amae to be completed, these two complementary roles – amae-taker and amayakasu or amae-giver – are necessary [Lebra, 1976]. Amae can be induced in this amae-amaeru-amayakasu interaction [Kumagai & Kumagai, 1986]. Further, mutually satisfying amae can be achieved only when one who amae and one who amayakasu are both in agreement [Taketomo, 1986]. It is believed that in an affective mother-child relationship, the child is likely to be the one who amae and the mother is likely to be the one who amayakasu, letting or accepting the child amae more or less passively [Doi, 1973]. The mother can also take an active role in amayakasu behavior, for example, by encouraging and inviting child to be physically close to her and be cuddled [Lebra, 1976].
Doi’s Definition of Amae

A Japanese psychiatrist, Doi, focused on the concept of *amae* as something peculiar to the Japanese; he published his first book on *amae*, entitled ‘Amae no Koozo’ (The Structure of *Amae*) in 1971. The English translation, entitled ‘The Anatomy of Dependence’, was published in 1973. Doi has been accused of not providing a clear definition of *amae*, thus leaving the concept vague and ambiguous. Doi [1973] regards the mother-child relationship as the prototype of the *amae* relationships throughout a person’s lifetime. The prototype of *amae*, then, is the infant’s desire to be close to his mother after realizing that she has a separate existence from himself. Doi claims that *amae* fosters ‘a sense of oneness between mother and child’ (p. 75), similar to Mahler’s [1968] concept of symbiosis. Doi defines the *amae* mentality as ‘the attempt to deny the fact of separation that is such an inseparable part of human existence and to obliterate the pain of separation’ (p. 75). Taking Balint’s [1966] idea of ‘passive love’ and ‘active love,’ Doi also characterizes *amae* as ‘passive love’. According to Doi, such craving for closeness should be a universal phenomenon, as love should be a primary need of all human beings, as Balint claimed. The very existence of the word *amae* in Japanese, however, has enabled Doi to single out this psychological phenomenon. Doi does also recognize deviated *amae* behaviors as the root of many pathological behaviors that are prompted by the inability to express *amae*, or when *amae* was not granted.

Alternative View of Amae

Taketomo [1986] claims that Doi misses a metacommunicational feature in *amae*, namely that it has a message for both interactants – the one who *amaeru* and the one who *amayakasu*. The message may be ‘this interaction is undertaken with a mutual agreement that it may deviate from certain ordinary rules of behavior’ (p. 535). Taketomo agrees with Doi on infantile *amae* being prototypical, however, he focuses more on the *amae* phenomena in childhood and adulthood, beyond infancy. He claims that a child’s ‘*amae* entails a playful interaction with a parental (especially maternal) figure in which social pressures on the child to behave age-appropriately are temporarily relaxed’ (p. 532). According to Taketomo, when a child playfully mimics an infant’s behavior, the child is not really becoming an infant, as Doi proposes. Instead, by such behaviour the child is trying to communicate with his mother that he wants to *amaeru* and wants her to *amayakasu* him. If the mother does not agree with or recognize the child’s message, there will be no *amae*. Taketomo further presents adult manifestations of *amae* in the coquetry situation, in which a woman behaves playfully, like a child who is acting as an infant – in other words, a mimicry of a mimicry of the infant’s *amae* behavior. In romantic relationships, both partners are likely to mutually agree with ‘the temporary lifting of the code of ordinary, or “proper”, mature behavior’ (p. 532) for an *amaeru-amayakasu* interaction to occur.
Amae Symposium

A symposium on ‘Attachment and Dependency’ was held in Kyoto, Japan, in 1990. Its treatment of amae appeared in a designated section of the Infant Mental Health Journal [Osofsky, 1992]. Four well-known psychiatrists, three of whom are Japanese, presented their views on amae, with varied interpretations. Maruta’s [1992] critical view on Doi’s claim is that Doi only focuses on the child who amaeru, disregarding the role of the mother who amayakasu, without which amae cannot exit. Maruta argues that either the infant or the mother can initiate the amae process ‘in search of renewed intimacy or a sense of security’ (p. 15). Maruta also briefly touches on amae among adults in everyday social situations, which Doi barely discusses, such as relationships with friends, relatives and colleagues. The key to successful amae, when it is pleasurable to both interactants, is to carry on in a ‘mutually comfortable’ manner. Maruta adds ‘learning what is “mutually comfortable” is a significant part of growing up and surviving in Japan’ (p. 16).

Okonogi [1992] focuses on the child’s initiating role of amaeru through certain expressions and behaviors to elicit an adult’s role of amayakasu. Okonogi points out that a child never actually says that he wants to amaeru, but rather goes through a series of expressions, often highly manipulatively, to achieve his goal, which is to let the adult amayakasu him. Okonogi argues that it is the adult who actually uses the word amae to refer to the particular behavior of the child. He then classifies amae into secure amae and anxious amae, simulating the concept of attachment. For example, he argues that just as in a case of anxious attachment, a child who clings excessively can be said to be exhibiting anxious amae. Okonogi argues that many people often view amae negatively and some mothers firmly believe in not amayakasu-ing in order to discipline the child.

Watanabe [1992] claims that when a mother amayakasu her child, thus fulfilling the child’s needs, it can be secure and beneficial to the child. However, it can be insecure and harmful if the mother amayakasu her child to ‘fulfill the mother’s egoistic need’ (p. 28). Watanabe’s view of amae assumes that the mother’s role is that of an initiator, contrasting Okonogi’s emphasis on the child’s active role in initiating the amae process. Watanabe distinguishes amae in childhood from amae in adulthood and claims that in adulthood, social expectations and obligations need to be met to fulfill amae.

Emde [1992], the only non-Japanese participant in this symposium, does recognize the need for operationalizing and clarifying the concept and observable behaviors to make it useful for clinicians. He also proposes possible amae research on individual and gender differences within the mother-child relationship (i.e., mother-son amae relationship vs. mother-daughter amae relationship).

Summary of Amae as a Concept

Amae has always been a part of life for Japanese people. Yet Doi was the first to recognize its significance in affecting the way people think and behave in a cultural context. Since his first introduction of amae as an indigenous Japanese concept, Doi has provoked many scholarly reactions, as we have seen above. Johnson [1993] has dedicated an entire volume to provide the most comprehensive review
of the concept of amae. Johnson’s thorough review of amae seems to have conveyed the depth and complexity of amae on the anthropological, philosophical and psychological levels. Johnson provides a summary of his argument with the following nine points (pp. 200–207):

1. *Amae* is part of a larger domain of dependent and interdependent relationships.
2. *Amae* is identified by Doi as a basic desire, motive, or ‘drive’.
3. *Amae* constitutes a Japanese cultural expression of indulgent dependency; versions of this universal dynamism take on different forms in different cultures.
4. *Amae*-like dependency and interdependency are observable throughout the life-span.
5. *Amae* is not a simple or unitary phenomenon; it may be examined at several different levels of subjective and behavioral experience.
6. Doi’s theory of amae does not specify sharp continuities and discontinuities in regard to indulgent dependency.
7. *Amae* can be productively applied to psychotherapeutic and clinical encounters.
8. *Amae* may be examined through a study of language and culturally specific terminologies.
9. Doi’s social-philosophic commentary concerning amae is a useful contribution to the understanding of modal Japanese personality.

Johnson’s extensive work is undoubtedly helpful in interpreting amae on a theoretical level. What is missing in this and other work emerging from the debate on amae is empirical data or evidence of what amae means to Japanese people today on a practical level. Next, I review empirical amae research.

**Amae Research**

**Amae Research in Japan**

Although the concept of amae has interested many scholars abroad, its complexity has led to inconsistent interpretations. A study of amae outside of Japan is not readily available, making it difficult to gain greater understanding of the concept. Empirical research on amae in Japan appears to be still surprisingly scarce.

Most amae studies conducted in Japan are based on questionnaires rather than direct observational or experimental studies. To conduct their study, Yamaguchi et al. [1998] applied Taketomo’s [1986] definition of ‘a mutually agreed-upon suspension of certain ordinary restraints on behavior’ (p. 541) by rephrasing it as ‘inappropriate behavior with the expectation of being accepted’ (my translation). They asked subjects to judge whether twenty scenarios of inappropriate behaviors were amae or not. The subjects were presented with these scenarios under three conditions and asked whether or not these descriptions reflected amae: (1) purely inappropriate behavior, (2) inappropriate behavior with no expectation of acceptance and (3) inappropriate behavior with expectation of acceptance. For example, one scenario depicted a high-school student with a part-time job at a coffee shop, even though this is strictly prohibited at his high school. The first condition simply stated that he was violating a rule. The second stated that he expected to be expelled from his school if the school found out, and the third condition was that he expected to be forgiven even if the school found out. Yamaguchi et al. [1998]
found that less than 28% (n = 376) regarded ‘inappropriate behavior’ alone without expectation as amae, whereas more than 83% regarded inappropriate behavior with expectation to be forgiven as amae. Thus, ‘expectation’ of acceptance of inappropriate behavior played a key role in identifying amae. The second follow-up study also confirmed the role of an expectation of acceptance of inappropriate behavior through a word association task.

Ohsako and Takahashi [1994] conducted a study in two parts: the first part examined how amae may relate to gender and birthorder, the second investigated the effects of amae in hypothetical interpersonal conflict situations. Ohsako and Takahashi found that female students scored generally higher in terms of a degree of amae expressed in romantic relationships than did male students. As for a birthorder effect in sibling relationships, the secondborns expressed more amae than did the firstborns. In the second part of the study, college students were asked to rate emotion scales and conflict solution strategies scales in six hypothetical interpersonal conflict situations. Those who were significantly more likely to feel negative emotions and apply various strategies to attempt to resolve the conflicts were grouped into the high-amae, the others into the low-amae group. This study shows that high- and low-amae groups co-exist, thus not all Japanese people express amae in the same way or to the same degree. The findings also indicate that amae may be implicitly applied in resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Unlike Ohsako and Takahashi [1994] who treat amae more as a disposition or trait, Kim and Yamaguchi [1995] approach amae as an episode involving two interactants: one to engage in amae and another to let amae. They gave a comprehensive questionnaire to 847 subjects in four age groups (junior-high, high school, college, and adults) to examine their responses to open-ended questions. The questionnaire covers situations when respondents amae and let amae. For example, they were asked to whom, when, and how they amae as well as about feelings when they could not amae. They were also asked who, why, when, and how they let people amae as well as about feelings when the person does not amae to them. Lastly, they were asked about word associations with regards to amae, emotions, positive aspects of amae and letting amae, negative aspects of amae and letting amae, who they thought was good or poor at amae, whom they felt difficult or comfortable to amae, and what was acceptable or unacceptable amae.

The findings show that the majority of the students’ group listed ‘mother’ as someone to whom they amae most, although ‘friends’ came a close second, especially among older students, whereas the adult group listed ‘spouse’ most frequently, followed by ‘mother’ and ‘friends.’ In the situation when respondents let amae, students listed ‘friends’ at the top, whereas the adults’ choice was more varied: ‘son’, ‘daughter’, or ‘spouse’ [see Kim & Yamaguchi, 1995, for a full review]. One of the intriguing findings is that many reported to feel ‘lonely and sad’ when they could not amae and when the person does not amae to them, indicating the vital role that amae plays in maintaining the psychological well-being of Japanese people. Kim and Yamaguchi [1995] also indicate that the older the respondents are, the more complex views about amae they are likely to have.
Other Amae Research

Three concepts, *amae*, attachment, and dependency, were compared by non-Japanese researchers to illuminate the interrelations between them and the role they play in what is deemed desirable children’s behavior in a two-part study [Vereijken, Riksen-Walraven, & Van Lieshout, 1997]. In the first part of the study, Vereijken et al. first asked US experts in the field to hypothetically describe a secure and a dependent child, to construct an ‘attachment security criterion sort’ and a ‘dependency criterion sort’ using the Attachment Q-Sort (AQS). The AQS consists of 90 small cards that describe infants’ and young children’s behavior in the home setting. Japanese experts in the field were asked to describe the concept of *amae*, also using the AQS. Additionally, Vereijken et al. used an existing Japanese AQS desirability criterion sort that depicts the ideal child according to Japanese mothers. In the second part of the study, Japanese children were observed at 14 and 24 months and rated on the AQS. Vereijken et al. found that children’s *amae* behaviors correlated with their dependency behaviors, although neither *amae* nor dependency were related to security. Furthermore, they found that Japanese mothers view the behavioral construct of a securely attached child as desirable, whereas neither the behavioral construct of dependency nor of *amae* was considered desirable – in stark contrast to Rothbaum et al.’s [2000] claim. Whether mothers who do not desire hypothetical *amae* behaviors will not allow their children *amaeru* in real life is, however, unknown. Although this study is helpful in demonstrating interrelations between *amae*, dependency, and attachment security and how Japanese mothers view these behaviors in the global sense, use of the AQS limits a list of behaviors to a framework of attachment to describe *amae* behaviors: it is not likely to cover the full range of *amae* behaviors.

Morsbach and Tyler [1986] presented examples of *amae*, mostly from Japanese literature. Their attempt to ‘convey some of the “flavour” which *amae* has in Japanese social interaction’ (p. 291) is highly plausible and effective when seen in the literary context. However, their selected excerpts appear to remain solely within Doi’s theoretical framework without exploring possibilities for alternative *amae* interpretations. It would also be more helpful if those examples were introduced and grouped in some meaningful way so that readers can perhaps recognize some *amae* phenomena and cross-reference them. My goal is to do just that.

Next I attempt to reorganize and differentiate *amae* by context. I hope to demonstrate why viewing *amae* separately in each context and considering its developmental aspect may better clarify this phenomenon. Here I provide narratives to illustrate *amae* in different contexts through the eyes of Japanese people today. I first show how I obtained evidence and how the separate categories of *amae* emerged.

Amae Reconsidered

Sources of Evidence

Sapporo Mothers. In this study, data were analyzed from a larger study in which 40 mothers from Sapporo, a large city on the northern island of Japan, participated. To consider possible social class differences, half the sample was recruited
from the parents of a low-tuition-fee preschool (serving mainly working-class families) and half from a high-tuition-fee preschool (serving middle to upper-middle-class families). This study investigated Japanese mothers’ general parenting practices in relation to their parenting self-efficacy and the relationship with their children. It was comprised of open-ended interview questions followed by a questionnaire on parenting efficacy [for results, see Holloway & Behrens, 2002]. Interview questions included three *amae*-related questions that were not published with the findings of the study, but which I present here to provide evidence. The specific *amae*-related questions were, (a) What are the situations when [child] wants to do *amae*?; (b) Are there any particular situations when you want [child] to do *amae*?, and (c) Are there any particular situations when you want [child] to do less *amae*? Mothers of the two preschools did not show any notable differences in their responses to these *amae* questions. A majority of mothers responded that their child is likely to exhibit *amae* most when he/she is sleepy or tired, whereas some mothers stated that their child would come to them for *amae* after having been scolded by another adult or having had a bad day at school. Many mothers stated that they would want their child’s *amae* when they have free time or feel they spent too much time with the child’s siblings, whereas some felt that their child should come to them for *amae* more often and tell them more about what he or she had experienced at school and so on. A majority of mothers also stated that they would not welcome their child’s *amae* when they are tired or too busy. Some mothers wished that their child be more autonomous and not be clinging to them when they felt that he or she should be with his/her peers. These responses indicate that *amae* is not a static event that is always accepted or rejected (even within the same interactive partners), and that children’s *amae* behaviors are diverse and contextual.

San Francisco Bay Area Japanese Interviewees. Another set of evidence was provided by 10 native Japanese interviewees who are mostly professionals and currently reside in California’s San Francisco Bay Area. A particular context was not provided, as the purpose was to learn what kind of episode native Japanese would spontaneously relate in response to the word *amae*. The stories were recorded during general conversations covering a variety of topics, not as part of a formal study to be presented elsewhere. They responded to the question, ‘Have you observed or experienced *amae* lately?’

Japanese Interviewees in Japan. Another set of evidence was provided by 13 native Japanese interviewed when visiting several cities in Japan. Stories were again recorded while the participants were engaged in general conversations, not as part of a formal study to be presented elsewhere. To assure spontaneity, no particular context was provided. They responded to the questions, ‘What is your most recent *amae* experience?’, and ‘Have you observed or experienced *amae* lately?’

Amae Categories

Separate categories of *amae* emerged, suggesting both theoretical and empirical considerations. I found it necessary to differentiate between *amae* situations because each *amae* discussed by different theorists is contextually different from

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*Amae Reconsidered* Human Development 2004;47:1–27
the others. In addition, examples of amae experience provided by native Japanese who reside in the San Francisco Bay Area as well as by those who live in Japan have presented yet more dimensions of amae that have not been elaborated by the theorists. Watanabe’s [1992] claim that amae in adulthood represents part of the complex social system and Maruta’s [1992] emphasis on ‘mutually comfortable’ amae as a key to successful socialization in Japan indicate that amae has an aspect of ‘learning’ that evolves in the course of development. However, one’s ‘intuitive’ aspect of amae is also likely to remain, involving possibly different interactive partners in different contexts. Thus I believe that maturation does not necessarily correspond to the emergence of different categories of amae. Instead, the expansion of the social network that comes with maturation will lead to different amae experiences. Each amae category I introduce here represents a distinct amae experience (with a distinct quality and in a distinct context) that average Japanese people are likely to encounter in their lives.

First, I consider the amae that Doi [1973] and Taketomo [1986] focus on are likely to serve similar purposes. In my view, Doi’s amae and Taketomo’s amae involve different interactants only by age and relationship. Doi’s focus is on mother-infant amae, which he claims to be the prototype, and is mainly affective. Taketomo, on the other hand, focuses on a child’s amae when an older child acts like an infant, being playful to enjoy affective interactions. Taketomo further discusses an adult’s amae, when, for example, a woman behaves coquettishly toward a man to enhance mutual closeness. These three amae situations – mother-infant amae, a child’s infantile amae, and a woman’s coquettish amae toward a man – share the same basic desire: to enjoy affective interactions. Therefore I argue that this particular category of amae can be observed in any developmental phase in different expressive and interactive behaviors. Here I propose to differentiate this category of amae (Amae I) into three separate developmental phases, roughly corresponding to the three situations presented above: combining Doi’s and Taketomo’s views, Amae I can thus be defined as ‘affective’ situations in infancy, childhood, and adulthood.

Second, while reviewing the interview responses to the amae questions provided by the Japanese mothers, I found that there were two distinct characteristics of amae that these mothers discussed. One is mostly affective in nature and seemingly enjoyed by both mother and child; it is perhaps used to reassure their intimacy, as described above as Amae I – ‘Affective’ in childhood. The other kind of amae that the mothers described involves a child’s helpless behavior often occurring when a child is tired or sleepy. There is an attempt to get the mother to do things that the child can normally do on his/her own, and this behavior is not always welcome. I believe differentiating between these two kinds of amae is useful not because one portrays more positive feature of amae than the other, but rather because these two serve different purposes. These two kinds of amae are not mutually exclusive and may appear in separate contexts within the same relationship. This Amae II – ‘Manipulative’ in childhood is also visible in adulthood, with an added complexity I will explain below.

Third, when I began compiling examples of amae by asking native Japanese who live in the San Francisco Bay Area, I learned that the stories they told were often about amae behaviors of people in non-intimate relationships. I again identified three distinct characteristics of amae, and all represent different contexts with
different relational meanings. One interviewee presented an *amae* experience reflecting the relationship with her close friend, which she regarded as mutually agreed and reciprocal in nature. This *Amae III* – ‘Reciprocal’ in adulthood represents conscious, mutually accepted behaviors that serve mainly instrumental purposes between close friends. Although I have no example to illustrate this type of *amae* in childhood, I speculate that *Amae III* – ‘Reciprocal’ also exists in childhood, as children spend increasingly more time with peers, gradually replacing time with their parents.

Many told *amae* experiences at work, in which the interviewees were rather forced to accept unreasonable demands from their bosses or from their subordinates, which they perceived as forms of *amae*. Others told their experiences of the times when they felt they were taken advantage of by distant acquaintances with whom they had no obligatory relationship, which they also regarded as *amae*. Due to their connection to social status and the inherent complexities, these last two categories of *amae* are not likely to be observed in intimate relationships or in children’s behaviors. Thus *Amae IV* – ‘Obligatory’ and *Amae V* – ‘Presumptive’ in

### Table 1. The five *amae* categories

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Noninstrumental</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Amae I</em> – Affective</td>
<td><em>Amae II</em> – Manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infancy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>desire for physical and emotional closeness, oneness</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>snuggling, seeking to be held</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>intimate, affective, close</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactant(s)</td>
<td>parents (mothers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Childhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>desire for physical and emotional closeness, fun</td>
<td>get their way, benign manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>snuggling, seeking to sit on lap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>intimate, affective, close</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactant(s)</td>
<td>parents (mothers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adulthood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>desire for physical and emotional closeness, fun</td>
<td>get their way, benign manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>playful, childish, coquettish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>intimate, affective, close</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactant(s)</td>
<td>romantic partners</td>
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</table>
adulthood emerged. Moreover, reviewing more examples of *amae* from interviewees in Japan enabled me to reexamine each category of *amae* and to further expand on its meanings and functions.

Lastly, I recognized that these five categories of *amae* that I identified above can be further divided into two larger domains, instrumental and noninstrumental. *Amae I* – Affective, naturally represents *amae* behaviors with noninstrumental motives, whereas the other four categories of *amae* share some instrumental motives in either intimate or nonintimate relationships. Thus, the *amae* categories that I introduce here have been derived in part theoretically and in part empirically. The labels that I attach to each category of *amae* – Affective, Manipulative, Reciprocal, Obligatory, Presumptive – do not necessarily represent a fixed sequence, stage, or level. They more or less indicate some ‘accrual’ in terms of complexity as well as experiencing and learning different relational meanings. Nonetheless, *Amae II–V*, under the instrumental domain, appear to show a rough gradient in distance of relationship of *amae* interactants (i.e., *Amae II* within the family, *Amae III* among friends, *Amae IV* between co-workers and *Amae V* between strangers). Below, I examine the five categories of *amae* in three developmental phases, providing evidence where it is available. I present a chart that summarizes these five contextual forms of *amae* in a conceptual framework, which may, I hope, serve as a helpful guide for the readers (see table 1).

To assure the *amae* category system that I established here is valid and reliable, a native Japanese bilingual research assistant reviewed forty transcripts for responses to the *amae* questions. Reliability coding reached 92% agreement. The reliability coder also categorized eleven stories from ten San Francisco Bay Area interviewees, which were randomly presented, with 100% agreement. For twenty stories from thirteen interviewees in Japan, there was 90% agreement.

**Amae in Infancy – Noninstrumental**

*Amae I* – *Affective*. Infants’ ability to influence their caregivers through protocoversations or various forms of nonverbal communications is well documented [e.g. Tomasello, 1999; Reddy, Hay, Murray, & Trevarthen, 1997]. Infants’ *amae* behaviors, however, are expected to be largely affective in nature, as Doi [1973] stresses. In the US, mother-infant interactions have been observed and their affective speech and behaviors have been analyzed in depth for the significance of infants’ overall development [e.g., Stern, 1977; Stern, 1985]. In cross-cultural studies, Japanese mothers used ‘affect-salient’ speech toward their infants more than ‘information-salient’ speech, whereas the reverse was true for American mother-infant dyads [Bornstein, Tal, Rahn, Galperin, Pechux, Lamour, Toda, Azuma, Ogino, & Tamis-LeMonda, 1992; Morikawa, Shand, & Kosawa, 1988; Toda, Fogel, & Kawai, 1990]. I argue that such affect-focused speech by mothers can facilitate *amae* behaviors that the mothers attempt to elicit in their young infants. In those studies, Japanese mothers may have tried to show their infants that they are the same and attempt to be ‘one’ with the infant by mimicking his vocalization in order to maintain the infants’ focus on themselves rather than on external stimuli.

Doi [1973] claims that the first *amae* behavior is welcomed as a happy occasion to celebrate the infant’s healthy growth, but at the same time it may represent a
bit of sadness to the mother, realizing that the infant now recognizes itself as a separate entity from his mother. Doi claims that the prototype of the amae relationship can be observed in the mother-infant relationship. Amae behaviors do vary, however, even in this developmental stage. Not all Japanese infants engage in amae behaviors, as would be expected. The following example was given by a mother in our sample who recalled that her 6-year-old son did not engage in amae behavior even when he was an infant:

Since he was small [he didn’t amaeru much] ... When you leave a child at his grandparents’ house to do errands and things, a normal child is likely to cry, missing the parent even at his grandma’s place, you know? ... But he never was like that at all. So, my mother got worried and asked me, ‘Is he okay?’ [laughs]. She was worried. So, in those situations, it’d be troublesome if he actually did cry, but I also kind of wished that he could at least whine or something’ (mother of 6-year-old male).

Amae in Childhood – Noninstrumental

Amae I – Affective. Normally developing young children still enjoy closeness to their mothers, sometimes by even mimicking infants’ behaviors. Many children are likely to desire to be cuddled or sit on their mother’s lap. I argue that this kind of amae behavior in children is qualitatively the same as the one in infancy. Take-tomo’s [1986] claim that amae refers to a child who playfully acts like an infant fits into this category. The following examples illustrate such amae behaviors:

Uh, he doesn’t do baby talk anymore, but if I say his name like this ‘[name of the child in a sweet voice]’, then he says ‘babu babu’ [a sound a baby makes]. He’s joking but comes to me, crawling, that’s also a joke, but ... (mother of 4-year-old male).

When I smile at her or when I show my sweet face, she comes toward me or clings to me ... When I praise her, she becomes like a baby [laughs] (mother of 6-year-old female).

I argue that a child’s basic desire to be close to his/her mother does not necessarily end in early childhood. One interviewee in Japan gave the following example to describe her son and daughter, both in their early teens:

Once in a while, my son pretends to sit on my lap; if I tried to hug him he’d run away. I think he wants to amaeru ... My daughter, I don’t see her too often these days, but still she suddenly comes next to me and pushes her body against me. I think this is amae (Tokyo female).

Amae in Childhood – Instrumental

Amae II – Manipulative. As children get older, they become more capable of taking the perspectives of others. Developmental theorists claim that young children acquire the basic principles of folk physics and folk psychology by the age of 4 or 5 years, either through simulation or through a tacit theory [e.g., Gopnik & Wellman, 1992; Harris, 1992]. At the same time they may also engage in manipulative behaviors, understanding what behaviors may get others’ attention. Children
by 4 and 5 have developed a ‘representational model of the mind’, and the mind becomes more ‘intentional’ [Gopnik & Wellman, 1992]. These children may engage in amae behaviors, pretending to be helpless, demanding extra care and attention from adults in general and from their mothers in particular. Infants’ sensory-motor actions are known to exhibit clear intentions with specific goals [e.g., Tomasello, 1999]. Lewis and Ramsay [1999], however, discuss different levels of intention, adaptive, knowledge, and conscious. Children’s intentions, acting to manipulate the interactive partner through amae, I argue, refer to conscious intensions, the highest level of intensions according to Lewis and Ramsay. Okonogi’s [1992] claim that a child takes an active role in the amae process through a series of expressions and behaviors, some of which are manipulative, fits into this category.

Japanese preschool children engage in amae behaviors usually when they are tired, sleepy, or when they go to bed, exhibiting helpless behaviors with an attempt to get their mothers attend to them. Sixty percent of mothers in our sample stated that their preschool children amaeru either when they are sleepy or tired, illustrated as follows:

… when he goes to sleep, we still have to sleep together, that’s something he hasn’t even attempted to change. We still hold hands and talk about things and this is the only way he can go to sleep … (mother of 4-year-old male).

When she wakes up in the morning and when she goes to sleep, she still acts like a [helpless] baby (mother of 4-year-old female).

Forty-three percent of the mothers in our sample who have more than one child stated that their preschool children come to them to amaeru when their siblings are amaeru-ing to demand their share of the mother’s attention or to compete with their siblings, not necessarily because they genuinely want to amaeru, illustrated as follows:

Well, when the younger one comes to me to amaeru, then she comes to me also. She seems to be saying, ‘me too’. She does that often (mother of 5-year-old female).

Well, sometimes we can’t help paying more attention to the younger one. Then, at those times, he will come with a look on his face of, ‘how about me?’ (mother of 5-year-old male).

Some mothers may simply relent to their children’s demands. Not all Japanese mothers, however, automatically welcome such amae behaviors and they may wish their children to be more autonomous, often when the mothers are faced with other demanding tasks or are simply physically tired themselves. The following examples illustrate these situations when amae behaviors are not welcomed:

Of course when I’m tired, I get irritated easily. So, at those times, I beg my children, ‘Mommy is very tired now and I’m in a bad mood. So, please do not come any closer right now’ [laughs] (mother of 6-year-old male).

… [in the mornings], I have to get my husband ready to go, prepare [child] for Youchien, and wake the little one up. So in the middle of those things, if [child] comes to me and says, ‘I can’t do it unless you give me a hug’ or something like that, I lose my temper (mother of 5-year-old female).
Some mothers appear to have a more or less clear idea of what amaে is acceptable or unacceptable. These views support Taketomo’s [1986] argument and Maruta’s [1992] claim that both interactants (mother and child) must mutually agree for the amaेru desire to be satisfied. The following statements illustrate such views:

When I know it’s not the time for amaेru, then I won’t [let her]. I don’t like to spoil her and always indulge or pity her for just about anything, like always saying ‘poor thing’ ... So, I can tell when I watch her, you know? If such and such a thing has happened and that’s why she wants to mentally amaेru, then I hug and let her [amaेru] (mother of 5-year-old female).

When everyone is playing with friends, I don’t want her to cling to Mommy but I want her to play with them ... When we meet other adults, I want her to be able to greet them properly without clinging to Mommy (mother of 4-year-old female).

When Vereijken et al. [1997] reported that Japanese mothers did not desire amaेru children, it is possible that the list of amaę behaviors included mostly those from the Amaę II category. Such amaę behaviors can be observed in older children. They may exhibit amaę behaviors toward parents with less purely affective motives but more in relation to financial needs. Children as old as high-school or even college age do approach their parents in helpless and desperate manners when they want new clothes, shoes, or cars. In Kim and Yamaguchi’s [1995] study, respondents (over 80% were students) reported that they amaेru when they want money or objects, which they listed as one of the top five reasons to amaेru. I regard these amaę behaviors as qualitatively equal to younger children behaving helplessly or throwing tantrums to get what they want. In Japan, parents often provide children with allowances to purchase whatever they want as long as they maintain a certain level of academic achievement [Iwao, 1993]. Through this form of ‘financial’ amaę, Japanese adolescents and young adults may be more dependent on their parents than their counterparts in the US. The following examples illustrate such amaę behaviors in young adults in Japan. I insert the narratives in this section because they are still assuming the child role within the family:

Well, I’m just not financially independent yet (Tokyo male).

I’m over 30 now but still live with my parents. I keep telling myself that I should leave home and be independent, but I am doing amaę because of the convenience of having ‘home’ (Tokyo female).

Amaę III – Reciprocal. When children begin to form new relationships with their peers, some amaę behaviors can be observed in those relationships and may substitute amaę behaviors with their parents. Good friends expect to do favors for each other, whether it means sharing their favorite toys, borrowing and lending notes, or taking each other’s side when there is a fight. Older children may know the limit and reciprocal nature of amaę, which differs from Amaę I – ‘Affective’ and Amaę II – ‘Manipulative’, which are performed mostly within intimate family relationships. Negotiations between children or mutual expectations that emerge among peers, I argue, constitute this category of amaę. Research has shown that true mutuality or reciprocity exists in early communications between infants and
interactive partners [e.g., Brazelton, Koslowski, & Main, 1974; Reddy et al., 1997]. However, reciprocal amae is neither cyclical nor a simultaneous event. Execution of reciprocal amae is not necessarily immediate and requires negotiation and acceptance between peers. Older children may view this kind of amae behavior more objectively and fairly, knowing that excessive and unidirectional amareru behaviors will not lead to popularity with their peers. At the same time, they know that permitting others’ excessive amae behaviors or amayakasu peers excessively may also be viewed as weakness. In Kim and Yamaguchi’s [1995] study, the majority of students indicated that they let their friends ameru more than they let their family members do. The top five reasons for their acceptance of such amae include ‘aite ga suki dakara’ (because [I] like them) and ‘amaeru no wa otogaisama dakara’ (because amaueru is [a] reciprocal [act]; my translations).

Amae in Adulthood – Noninstrumental

Amae I – Affective. Adult men and women in romantic relationships do engage in amae behaviors, acting a little helplessly or being coquettish and thus enjoying other people’s care and attention. Their simple desire for closeness within the loving relationship is similar to an infant’s desire to enjoy intimate closeness with his mother (except for sexual gratification). Such behaviors appear to be common across many cultures. For example, American adults in affective relationships often call each other ‘baby’ or use nicknames that are typically addressed to young children. They are not truly ‘regressing’ to the infant state per se but behave in a way that may induce others to increase closeness and intimacy. Taketomo [1986] discusses amae in adult situations in which women behave coquettishly toward men. According to Taketomo, women are motivated to ameru to enhance mutual closeness, for fun, or to be released from reality as well as from superego pressure. Men, on the other hand, feel the gratification of caring for a need or to achieve greater self-esteem and proceed to amayakasu (see p. 542). Although Taketomo’s focus was more on the direction from women toward men, I expect this interaction to be bi-directional, with men amaru-ing women to enjoy playful interactions as well.

Amae in Adulthood – Instrumental

Amae II – Manipulative. In contrast to Taketomo’s [1986] emphasis on women’s ameru behaviors toward men, I argue that there is another intimate situation in which ameru behaviors are perhaps overrepresented in men toward women. Sometimes adult men ameru toward women for instrumental rather than affective needs. Iwao [1993] argues that the rather intense mother-son relationship in Japan may lead boys, when they grow up and get married, to expect ‘their wives to take over their mother’s role’ (p. 151). Lebra [1994] also elaborates this point:

The Japanese husband expects his wife to be an overall caregiver for him, including body care, as if he saw a mother substitute in his wife. The wife is amused to call her husband her ‘oldest child’, who demands the greatest attention and nurturance’ (p. 267).
One mother from our sample, in the other section of the interview, complained about the lack of support from her husband due to his *amae* behavior:

I only have a sister, so when the first child was born, I wondered whether all men were like this ... No comforting, just requesting [me] to cook what he wants to eat, I wasn’t in the condition [to do things like that] ... He is busy, but maybe he was also doing *amae*, using the ‘busyness’ of his occupation as an excuse (mother of 6-year-old female).

This kind of behavior, expecting things will get done without their involvement and expecting their wives to understand what they want and comply with even unstated requests at times, constitutes *amae* with rather manipulative motivations. I argue that this is similar to young children acting age-inappropriately and helplessly for their mothers to come and attend to their needs because they know this manipulative strategy often works. Thus, Japanese wives, in such a status-sensitive society, sometimes have no choice but to accept their husbands’ behaviors or to *amayakasu* them as part of their roles, either willingly or reluctantly. Lebra argues that such childlike behaviors exhibited by the husband signify his ‘machoness’, representing ‘an extreme gender hierarchy of male master and female servant’ (p. 267).

This kind of *amae* behavior is not exclusive to men. Married women can also take advantage of their husbands’ good nature or manipulate them into situations where husbands are given little chance to contest. The following examples illustrate such *amae* behaviors:

I don’t ask him to get me things or do something, but I often expect him to accept [the situations] when things are not done. Well, it’s more like I just decide on my own ‘ah, this is good enough’ and expect him to say ‘OK’ (Osaka female).

My husband and I are going on a trip to [places] to visit friends I met at a language school ... My husband doesn’t know any of them, but I’m telling myself, ‘I’m sure he’ll enjoy my reunion with them, too’ – this could be my *amae* too (Osaka female).

*Amae III – Reciprocal.* Much like *amae* in peer relations in childhood, *amae* exists between close friends or co-workers in adulthood. They allow each other a roughly equal degree of *amae*. One-sided, excessive, or abusive *amae* behaviors should not be tolerated for too long, because when that happens, it may cost a friendship. Close friends may let each other borrow some personal items, money or cars, or may arrange occasional dates for each other and play go-between or mediator; expectations of any such request being accepted are regarded as *amae*.

These behaviors also seem to be observable in many other cultures, although they are not called *amae*. For example, popular American comedy dramas such as ‘Seinfeld’, ‘Friends’, or ‘Will & Grace’ appear to depict close friends who exhibit this type of *amae* within a less defined boundary between themselves and their friends. Such mutual expectations, that basically any behavior is acceptable in close friendships built on trust without romantic feelings, are regarded as *amae* in Japan. One of the interviewees from the San Francisco Bay Area sample discussed such a relationship:

My friend and I are very close but we are so different in every aspect ... I have a key to her apartment and to her car. When I need a car, I usually just use her car. She often invites me for dinner ... and I always *amaeru* for that. But she also rings me when she needs some
assembly work. Also, when her car needs some work done, she expects me to take it to the mechanic to get it fixed ... I’d say we amaeru each other pretty fairly ... (San Francisco Bay Area female).

One interviewee in Japan discussed this kind of amaeru when it was pushed over the limit:

Our high school alumni members have been frequently exchanging e-mails lately. One member spent his own time to create a CD-R for reunion pictures. Then, one member started to say, ‘How about including more pictures of old friends’ get-togethers at various places?’, but then others said: ‘The one who made the CD-R spent his own time to do it, don’t do amaeru, if you think it’s a good idea, do it yourself.’ I realized that we have a limit to our amaeru between classmates’ (Osaka female).

Amae in Adulthood in Nonintimate Relationships

Next I present the last two categories of adult amaeru, which occur in nonintimate relationships. The first category in the nonintimate relationships, Amae IV – ‘Obligatory’, concerns amaeru in unequal relationships with respect to social status, social roles, or gender. This kind of amaeru is commonly observed by Japanese, sometimes with resentment. The last category, Amae V – ‘Presumptive’, represents another amaeru behavior, which is also often viewed negatively. Okonogi [1992], in fact, claims that the word amaeru is often used with resentment, referring to desires for ‘preferential treatment beyond the other person’s tolerance level’ (p. 21).

Amae IV – Obligatory. In nonintimate, unequal power relationships (such as a boss and a subordinate or a businessperson and a client), excessive demands can be made by the one in power toward the one in the weaker position. Expectations for the acceptance of such unreasonable demands also constitute amaeru of this category. Although such behaviors are certainly observable in other societies, they are viewed extremely negatively. Excessive and highly visible cases may run the risk of a lawsuit (especially in the US). In Japan, although awareness of harassment and discrimination issues has been rising, such behavior appears to be often underreported. It is felt to be easier to accept it as part of people’s roles in a given situation [Iwao, 1993]. The following narratives illustrate this kind of amaeru behavior. A Japanese boss expects his Japanese subordinates to accept his unreasonable demands on the grounds of ‘being Japanese’, assuming that Japanese people do not like confrontations and that Japanese people understand each other without explicit explanations:

I work at a Japanese company ... Because we work a lot with Japanese people and I’m the only one who speaks Japanese, I often get twice the workload as the American employees, who basically do the same job. ... The difference is clearly observable, but still my boss comes to me with some more work, even if the particular task doesn’t require any Japanese, simply because it’s easy for him to ask in Japanese! I’d say that’s amaeru ...’ (San Francisco Bay Area female).

I work for a Japanese corporation. I was hired locally just like any other local American. When the time for a review comes, ... he [my boss] would say something like ‘you’re Japanese, too, and you should know better’, basically hesitating to give me the same salary increase as other American co-workers. Giving me a reason like ‘you’re Japanese, too’ is
definitely *amae* and he is expecting me to accept whatever he says, leaving me with little option’ (San Francisco Bay Area female).

Iwao discusses the symbolic meaning of serving tea not just in the light of it being a service but also as a lubricant in human relations. She presents contrasting views that some Japanese women are apparently not bothered by a task of serving tea to maintain office harmony, whereas some are clearly opposed to the expectation of the task as a woman’s job. One interviewee equates such expectation as a form of *amae* as illustrated below:

I used to work for a Japanese financial institution. I was one of the ‘rare’ Japanese female AVPs. Hired locally, my colleagues were mostly American men, but my immediate supervisor was a Japanese man. One day, ... my boss had a Japanese visitor and he came over to me and asked me to serve tea. I looked at him in shock but he said, ‘It looks better if a Japanese woman serves tea, you understand, don’t you?’, expecting that I would agree. ... That’s definitely *amae* ...’ (San Francisco Bay Area female).

The following example was given by a Japanese interviewee in Japan as an observer of *amae* behavior of this category:

Recently, there was an incident at the Country Dance Club which led to it breaking up. I understand the reason was the instructor who, being the eldest and the leader, really abused his *amae* on the club members (Osaka female).

In unequal power relationships, *amaeru* behaviors in the reverse direction – from subordinates toward superiors – can be also exercised, with the subordinates expecting their desires to be understood and accepted without being explicitly stated, as in the following example:

Students (college) often come and ask me about jobs, things that they should be asking administrative people about, or whatever ... Students do no ask me directly, ‘please teacher, do so and so’, but say something like ‘oh, gees, I don’t know’ or ‘ah, whaat?’, acting in a way that they want me to do something (Sapporo male).

An act of *amayakasu* can also be initiated by a superior toward his favorite subordinate or simply to avoid a foreseeable conflict with a subordinate who is viewed as a potential threat or trouble. The example above pointed out Japanese bosses’ *amayakasu* behaviors toward American employees by letting them get away with less work while asking the Japanese to do more work. This Japanese boss’s behavior – *amayakasu* of Americans and *amaeru* on Japanese – is also pointed out by the other interviewee whose Japanese boss’s unwillingness to give her a salary increase while he meets American employees’ demand for a raise. Both interviewees commented that these Japanese bosses are afraid of American employees because of the commonly practiced work-related lawsuits in the US, and also because of the language barrier. Another interpretation may be that these Japanese bosses may regard Americans as ‘children’ who do not know better, simply because they are not Japanese, leading to *amayakasu* behaviors.

Kashima and Callan [1994] discuss *amae* in relation to other Japanese concepts such as *on* (indebtedness) and *gimu* (obligation) in the Japanese workplace.
They claim that if Japanese workers’ desires to amaeru to their superiors are satisfied, the subordinates feel on and gimu, which in turn motivate them to work hard in a paternalistic work environment. However, with a recent drastic change in the working conditions in Japan due to recession, it is not certain how much the amaemon-gimu system still holds true as lifetime employment or other benefits, including guaranteed salary increments and promotions based on seniority, can no longer be fully expected.

The next two narratives illustrate a relationship between a businessperson and a client where the client has more control in the situation and expects the Japanese service provider to follow his unreasonable request:

I’m a travel agent ... One time, I had arranged a rent-a-car for a Japanese businessman and basically, my job was done. But he realized that he had left his personal belongings in the car when he returned the car. So, he called me and expected me to trace the stuff ... That’s, I’d say, ama (San Francisco Bay Area female).

I used to work as a case manager for Japanese patients with [disease] ... We always explain the support and service we provide as clearly as possible ... Too often, when we follow up, we find that those patients haven’t finished the paper work or other tasks that the patients are responsible for. Those patients expect me to do absolutely everything ... I consider that ama (San Francisco Bay Area male).

Amae V – Presumptive. The final category of ama is a set of behaviors seen largely among adults; it is nonaffective and involves no hierarchical relationship or even no relationship at all in some cases. This kind of ama is sometimes intricately intertwined with other subtle behaviors. Ama can be exercised tactfully under the disguise of another Japanese concept, enryo, defined as ‘self-restraint’ [Lebra, 1976] or ‘ritualized hesitation or deference’ [Johnson, 1993]. For example, if a woman is offered a delicious piece of cake to go with coffee, she is supposed to say ‘oh, no thanks’ at first to exhibit enryo. By refusing the cake, she is actually hoping and expecting that the host will offer the cake at least a few more times. She will eventually have the cake without having to make herself appear vulgar by jumping at the cake the minute it is offered. This expectation is indeed one form of ama. In other words, one expresses enryo to display socially desired behaviors, but at the same time one counts on the other person’s understanding of what one ‘really desires’ beneath this behavior, thus practicing ama toward people in nonintimate relationships. Such subtle interactions understandably appear very vague and confusing to non-Japanese. If one expresses a true desire from the very beginning, it may seem straightforward and easy to be understood. Using these seemingly contrasting concepts together appears to be part of Japanese socialization among mature members of the society. The following narrative demonstrates such case of ama:

I had this woman staying in my house for a week or so, a visitor from Japan. ... Well, this woman was very modest at first, doing enryo a lot ... she said she’d call for a cab to go to her appointments downtown. I told her that I’d give her a ride since it’s on the way to some place I’m going. She was still doing enryo at first but then accepted my offer. Well, once she came out of the enryo mode, she then became pretty demanding. ... She started telling me where she needed to go next and basically, I had to spend much time driving her around. This is ama, at first disguised as enryo ... (San Francisco Bay Area female).
As a general rule, Japanese are expected to show some hesitation, known as 
enryo, before they exhibit amae behaviors, except within very close relationships. The following narrative demonstrates how some Japanese people bypass enryo and attempt to engage in almost forceful amae with an individual whom they personally do not know well:

One day, I got a call, all of sudden, from someone whom I barely knew, saying that she had just arrived at the SFO airport. Well, I was like ‘So?’ Without her asking me if I could pick her up, she just remained silent, waiting for me to say something. Of course, she expected me to say that I’m coming to the airport to pick her up. That’s amae (San Francisco Bay Area female).

One interviewee described the situation below, when she was placed in an awkward position because of amae by someone she hardly knew:

I’m a professional [occupation] ... One day, I was asked by my acquaintance’s wife if I could help her translating a tax form or something. ... I only charged a modest fee as a favor to my acquaintance, ‘Just for once’, I thought. One day, I got a call from this woman again and she asked me if I could translate a letter. ... she insisted to bring it to me myself. Well, it turned out that the letter she wrote was a love letter for someone who she’s having an affair with! It was definitely amae because somehow, even though she knew that I knew her husband, she expected that I wouldn’t tell him about her affair. … (San Francisco Bay Area female).

The final example below demonstrates how some Japanese adults engage in socially inappropriate behaviors but expect to be accepted because they are ‘temporarily’ released from their social obligations, following Takatomo’s [1986] basic principle. These people exhibit amae and target a nonspecific audience:

Once I was hired as one of the interpreters for a big group of Japanese businessmen ... At one of the restaurants, as soon as we walked in, they started yelling loudly for beer and ... It was really embarrassing, because somehow they think they can get away with immature behaviors here in America because they are not in Japan ... And then, one middle-aged man suddenly squeezed the waitress’s breasts! … We sincerely apologized ... In the mean time, that man was proudly talking to the other guys about how good the breasts had felt. I was so disgusted and embarrassed, but this is amae because they just expected … they could get away with whatever they do here in the US (San Francisco Bay Area male).

Summary

The spontaneous responses to amae questions presented above by native Japanese adults appear to characterize amae as an everyday phenomenon for Japanese people today. Its uses vary considerably from the amae that Doi (1973) focused on. It is worthy to note that Japanese living outside Japan seem to share experiences of witnessing amae on the ground of ‘being Japanese’, as we have seen above. In fact, it is possible some amae behaviors become more salient to Japanese living outside Japan because they can compare it with the behaviors of non-Japanese in everyday life. It is also interesting to note that nearly half of the interviewees in Japan first discussed the way they would do amae to themselves, describing behaviors of ‘not taking good care of myself, trying to carry over the project to the next day when it
could be done in a few more hours’, ‘trying to run away from my own research’, and so forth. Lebra [1976] referred to this *amae* as self-indulgence to imply ‘disapproval for not taking responsibility seriously’ (p. 55). We humans are sometimes known, however, to ‘treat ourselves as interactants’ [Fridlund, 1994, p. 160]. In this paper, I maintain my view of *amae* as a concept of relatedness and interaction, thus this *amae* on oneself is not included in the chart.

**Discussion**

*Amae* has many functions and characteristics and should not be treated as a global construct with a single meaning. All *amae* phenomena, however, do share some implicit or explicit assumptions of being understood and accepted in a given context. Nevertheless, for non-Japanese observers, *amae* phenomena in various contexts may not be readily recognizable. *Amae* is undeniably part of Japanese culture, and Japanese researches should be paying more attention to it. In my view, Doi’s [1973] and other theorists’ [Kumagai & Kumagai, 1986; Lebra, 1976; Maruta, 1992; Okonogi, 1992; Taketomo, 1986; Watanabe, 1992] claims about *amae*, their critiques and proposals for a modification of Doi’s original definition are all essentially correct, although they do not reach agreement between themselves. I believe that Dale [1986] also has a valid point when stating that Doi and other Japanese scholars should caution against using linguistic differences as an excuse to gain a special permit to leave everything down to ‘myth’.

Like Doi, I do believe that *amae*-like phenomena, at least some of the *amae* categories I introduced above, do exist in non-Japanese cultures, although there is perhaps no single word, to my knowledge, equivalent to *amae*, which covers multiple meanings and functions. A recent study [Lewis & Ozaki, 2002] compared *amae* with the British slang term ‘mardy’ for its usage, which was thought to be very similar, and concluded that mardy focuses only on the negative aspect of *amae*-like phenomena, such as childish self-indulgence that should be discouraged. The new approach that I propose here should help clarify the contextual meaning of a particular *amae* phenomenon by evaluating the relationship between the interactants, the motive of the *amae* doer, and the likelihood of the *amae* being granted. Corresponding terms in English, then, could perhaps be applied to each particular *amae* phenomenon separately to promote better understanding. Furthermore, confusion surrounding attachment and *amae*, as I stated earlier, should hopefully be settled here by illuminating similarities and differences, as summarized below.

**Similarities and Differences between Attachment and Amae**

**Similarities.** As I have pointed out at the beginning, there are similarities between attachment and *amae* in rather objective aspects, e.g., their onset time (both are emerging in the second half of the first year of life) and the interactive partners (both phenomena are likely to be first observed in the mother-child relationship). Behavioral strategies can also be similar between attachment and *amae*, as some researchers have argued [e.g., Rothbaum et al., 2000; Mizuta, Zahn-Waxler, Cole, & Hiruma, 1996]. In particular, certain attachment behaviors – insecure-ambivalent
behaviors – may indeed appear similar to amae behaviors, but are, in fact, only similar to a particular category of amae, as I argued earlier.

Cassidy and Berlin’s [1994] intriguing discussion of a particular attachment classification – insecure-ambivalent patterns of attachment – helps clarify how the strategies work for both children and mothers to bring about such behaviors. For example, the child’s strategy of emphasizing immaturity to regain the attention of his mother upon a birth of a sibling was described by many Japanese mothers in our sample in response to a question of the situations when their children want to do amae. These preschool children come to their mothers to amaeru to compete with their siblings for the mothers’ attention; I categorized this kind of amae as Amae II – ‘Manipulative’ in Childhood. Cassidy and Berlin’s discussion of the strategy of acting immaturely by adults to promote the feeling of competence in others by providing a chance to play a caregiver’s role was demonstrated by Taketomo’s [1986] example of the Japanese woman in New York who consciously did amaeru to her mother to make her mother feel needed. Furthermore, maternal strategies of insecure-ambivalent children that Cassidy and Berlin discussed also appear to be similar to a description of some Japanese mothers. For example, they describe a mother who ‘(consciously or nonconsciously) wants to be particularly assured of her importance to the infant, of his dependence on her, and of his availability to meet her own attachment needs’ (p.984). This mother resembles Iwao’s [1993] description of a Japanese mother who is largely neglected by her husband and relates to her male child as a ‘surrogate husband’, although this strategy appears to be that of over-involvement rather than of being inconsistent, as Cassidy and Berlin claim. Also, a mother who may find the child’s clinginess in some way satisfying and comforting, as they describe, is similar to a mother amayakasu her child to fulfill her egoistic needs, which, as Watanabe [1992] argues, can indeed be harmful.

Differences. The most important difference is perhaps that attachment is a behavioral system that is activated when there is a threat in the environment, the phenomenon becomes most distinct when a child is under distress [Bowlby, 1982]. Amae behaviors, however, can be observed anytime when there is a desire to have either purely affective or instrumental needs fulfilled. Due to society’s implicit emphasis on status differentials, amae phenomena are often intricately linked to status roles in Japanese socialization [DeVos, 1975], whereas attachment phenomena depict the more basic human relatedness. In addition, attachment patterns represent relationship quality, quantity is never measured. By contrast, I believe that amae can be assessed in terms of quantity or frequency to learn about a relationship. Furthermore, although multiple attachment relationships are certainly recognized, attachment classification to a specific individual is not expected to fluctuate too easily [Bowlby, 1982]. On the contrary, one can engage in multiple categories of amae with the same individual in a given day. For example, a child can approach his mother to enjoy her warmth and affection, engaging in Amae I – ‘Affective’, and the same child can also demand the mother’s attention, acting helplessly when he gets tired later that day, engaging in Amae II – ‘Manipulative’.

Other differences may include that ‘attachment’ is not necessarily an everyday word, whereas ‘amae’ can be for Japanese people. The word ‘attachment’ is used primarily by the specialists in the field. Experts in the field tend to distinguish casual usage of the word ‘attachment’, such as ‘I’m really attached to this car’, from
that in attachment theory. On the contrary, *amae* is a word that is frequently used even among children and adults in Japan as well as experts in the field. Children rarely say to their mothers, ‘I am going to *amaeru* now’, as was pointed out by Okonogi [1992], but they may talk to a puppy or a younger child saying, ‘You are *amaeru*-ing, aren’t you?’ in an endearing manner. Adults do often say that they are going to engage in *amae* behavior, presuming upon the other’s kindness, it is one of many formula-like expressions that exist in Japan. We have seen above how native Japanese directly used the word *amae* in their narratives to describe certain behaviors in certain contexts.

**Summary.** The similarities between attachment and *amae* that I identified above assert that there is an undeniable link between them. The concrete aspects of attachment theory and the concept of *amae*, such as the onset time or the basic module of the relationship, appear to reflect the nature of both concepts more generally. The behavioral strategies that reflect internal states of individuals of a particular attachment classification, however, suggest its link to only a particular category of *amae*. The differences between attachment and *amae* that I summarized above also confirm that attachment cannot be simply substituted by *amae* or vice versa. Nor are attachment and *amae* mutually exclusive. I argue that securely as well as insecurely attached children in Japan may engage in various kinds of *amae* at different times. Likewise, adults with secure states of mind as well as adults with insecure states of mind in Japan are likely to engage and experience *amae* in diverse contexts throughout their lifetime.

**Future Amae Research**

Lack of empirical *amae* research is perhaps partly to blame for confusions and inconsistent interpretations surrounding the concept. Therefore there is an urgent need to promote systematic investigations of *amae*. The conceptual framework that I presented in this paper should serve as a guide to help select a particular aspect of *amae* for investigation. Investigators should determine what population in what context should be examined for *amae* behaviors. For example, children’s *amae* behaviors should be observed either at home or at school. The children’s parents or teachers should then be asked about their perception of *amae* behaviors, either through interview or questionnaire. Involving both interactants in the investigation, child and adult in this case, should enable the investigators to elucidate a comprehensive picture of the *amae* phenomena.

While it is essential that researchers continue their investigations on *amae* to present more evidence and further conceptual clarifications, what is perhaps most effective and immediately beneficial is a study that integrates *amae* research into attachment research in Japan in order to investigate a direct link between them. Japan has been considered a challenge for attachment researchers, partly because of *amae* [e.g., van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999], and the validity of attachment theory has been questioned because of *amae* [Rothbaum et al., 2000]. Japan has also been a focus of controversy due to inconsistent findings from two attachment studies that have been conducted in the past [Durrett, Otaki, & Richards, 1984; Takahashi, 1986]. Further replication studies of attachment in Japan are thus necessary. Investigators should examine whether distinct *amae* behaviors can be discriminated from attachment behaviors during the procedure. An *amae* questionnaire should also be
given to the parents to examine their perception of the child’s *amae*. Do Japanese children with different attachment classifications differ in their *amae* behaviors toward the parents? Do Japanese parents’ perceptions of their child’s *amae* differ for children with different attachment classifications? Furthermore, do Japanese parents’ perceptions of their child’s *amae* differ according to their own attachment status? Administering the Adult Attachment Interview [George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996] to parents would first allow us to investigate the concordance between child and parent attachment classifications. It could also tell us how the parents’ own attachment status might be related to their perception of their child’s *amae*.

Another *amae* questionnaire or interview should be administered to examine adults’ more general *amae* experiences with other adults in intimate and nonintimate relationships and to further explore a link with attachment status. For example, are Japanese adults with insecure states of mind likely to engage in or experience generally less favored *amae* (i.e., *Amae II* – ‘Manipulative’, *Amae IV* – ‘Obligatory’, or *Amae V* – ‘Presumptive’) more often than those who have secure states of mind? Are Japanese adults with secure states of mind likely to engage in or experience *Amae I* – ‘Affective’ more often than those with insecure states of mind? Thus responses to the extensive *amae* questionnaire or *amae* interview, incorporated in attachment research, should not only illuminate Japanese people’s thoughts and feelings about *amae* through their experiences, but also help advance our understanding of its possible relation to attachment organizations. Hence, research that combines investigations of attachment and *amae* will enhance cross-cultural research of human relationships.

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**References**


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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper was the analysis of the relationship between boredom and deviance behavior; this is a field not completely explored by the sociology of deviance, despite the increase in alarm due to the increase in: deviant behavior by young people and crimes committed by groups. After a brief presentation of the most important contribution in literature, to deepen this issue, we use data collected from a survey using as principal instrument, the Boredom Proneness Scale, BPS, (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986) to identify the possible forms of prevention to be adopted in family, Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011. Pp. xii + 372. In view of the lively debate about how monotheistic Jews could come to worship Jesus in addition to the Father, Collins addresses an otherwise largely overlooked aspect of it, the divine status of the king and messiah. Collinsâ€™s survey moves through the Hebrew Bible, Hellenistic ruler cults, the Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls, and other extrabiblical Jewish literature such as 4 Ezra. The concept of amae is bound up with cultural expectations. Japanese culture stresses dependence while American culture underscores independence. First, we start out by comparing the affective meanings of dependence and independence across each culture semantically. Second, we search for behaviors that affectively confirm the dispositions of dependence and independence for Americans and Japanese. Third, we construct a series of identity-confirming and disconfirming events that simulate the embodiment, or lack, of amae based on the Japanese conceptualization of dependence for both cultures.