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What happens when parents and nannies come from different cultures? Comparing the caregiving belief systems of nannies and their employers

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ABSTRACT

In multicultural societies with working parents, large numbers of children have caregivers from more than one culture. Here we have explored this situation, investigating culturally-based differences in caregiving beliefs and practices between nannies and the parents who employ them. Our guiding hypothesis was that U.S. born employers and Latina immigrant nannies may have to negotiate and resolve conflicting socialization strategies and developmental goals. Our second hypothesis was that sociodemographics would influence the cultural orientation of nannies and mother-employers independently of ethnic background. We confirmed both hypotheses by means of a small-scale discourse-analytic study in which we interviewed a set of nannies and their employers, all of whom were mothers. From an applied perspective, the results of this study could lead to greater cross-cultural understanding between nannies and mother-employers and, ultimately, to a more harmonious childrearing environment for children and families in this very widespread cross-cultural caregiver situation.

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1. Introduction

Irving Sigel pioneered the study of parental belief systems (Sigel, 1985; Sigel, McGillicuddy-De Lisi, & Goodnow, 1992). Cultural perspectives on parental belief systems constituted the closing section of Sigel et al.'s (1992) edited book, *Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children*. Therefore, it seemed fitting in a memorial tribute to Irving Sigel to present a study that builds on this important line of research in developmental psychology.

The tradition of exploring cultural perspectives on parental belief systems was expanded by Harkness and Super's (1996) *Parents' cultural belief systems: Their origins, expression, and consequences*—to which Sigel contributed a chapter (Sigel & Kim, 1996). All of the chapters in both books assumed that a given child is being raised by his or her parents and is exposed to only one set of cultural beliefs about childrearing and development. However, this assumption does not always hold. In multicultural societies with working parents, large numbers of children have caregivers from more than one culture. This is the situation that we explored in this article.

The major goal of the present study was to investigate the possibility of culturally-based differences in caregiving beliefs between nannies and the parents who employ them. Cultural values and beliefs are embedded in the practices of caring for young children, and what caregivers do with young children is so familiar that caregivers take their reasons for granted. In our study, pairs of Latino immigrant nannies and mother-employers of varying ethnicities and sociodemographic backgrounds highlighted practices and beliefs that were not shared under conditions of joint caregiving. By comparing the perspective of both the nanny and the mother-employer, this article also explores the ways in which two or more adults must negotiate/coordinate caregiving beliefs and practices with one another.

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1.1. Cultural pathways through development

An important theoretical premise of the present study is the concept of two developmental pathways, one more oriented toward the developmental goals of interdependence and intelligence in the service of social responsibility, the other oriented toward developmental goals of independence and cognitive development for its own sake (Greenfield, 1994; Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003). The social characteristics of the first pathway are often summarized with the term collectivistic; the social characteristics of the second pathway are often summarized with the term individualistic.

The first pathway is traditionally valued in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and by native peoples of North America and elsewhere; the former is traditionally valued in the United States, Canada, Northern Europe, and Australia (e.g., Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Hofstede, 2001). Socialization for a cultural pathway begins in early infancy. Each pathway is adapted to a different ecological niche: the first to the niche of a large-scale, urbanized, technologically advanced environment; the second to the niche of a small-scale, rural, technologically simple environment (e.g., Greenfield, submitted for publication; Harkness & Super, 1992; Keller, 2007). We will now review some characteristics of the two pathways that have particular relevance to the present study.

We begin with an example from infancy, the start of the two developmental pathways. In Mexico and Central America, indigenous babies, living in rural village environments, are typically in constant contact with their mother or another caregiver, often through carrying. This is true of other parts of the world, such as Africa, as well (Keller, 2007). Babies go to sleep in contact with their caregivers; this is an interdependent mode of care. In the urban, high-tech environment of the United States, in contrast, parents often try to induce their babies to fall asleep “independently” of the caregiver, in their own crib or room. A popular way to accomplish this has been to let them cry it out. The notion is to extinguish the crying response until the babies learn to fall asleep “independently” of a caregiver (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998).

Another contrast between the two pathways relates to sibling caregiving. In agrarian societies, sibling caregiving is an important social responsibility that is learned at an early age (Weisner & Gallimore, 1977). The child goes from being cared for continuously by older members of the family to caring for younger members. This is an important developmental sequence in the pathway to interdependence and social responsibility. But in complex urban societies like the United States, sibling caregiving is considered a negative practice and has even been given a clinical pathological term, parentification (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998).

Harkness and Super (1992) contrast the developmental niche of the rural, agricultural Kokwet of East Africa with European American children in the urban center of Cambridge, MA. They point out that play and its role in cognitive development are emphasized in the life of Cambridge children and that cognitive development is valued for its own sake. In contrast, Kokwet children in East Africa are expected to help out, both in household chores and in the care of younger siblings; the dominant meaning of intelligence was taking the initiative to carry out family responsibilities. Children's competence in culturally marked areas was accelerated whereas development in other domains lagged—if, indeed, it was even recognized. For example, in Kokwet, children learned to cook and take care of siblings; however, they did poorly on simple cognitive tests. Cambridge children were linguistically advanced; however, they made slow developmental progress in relation to household responsibilities. One can conceptualize the pathways as child-centered (Cambridge) and other-centered (Kokwet). Children's pattern of competencies reflects the pathway of development that is valued in the ecocultural niche in which they are developing.

LeVine (1974) contrasted the goal of survival, which is prepotent in poor, subsistence, low technology environments, with the goal of socialization for education, which is prepotent when survival needs are taken care of, in rich, commercial, high technology environments. Because the nannies in our study came from poorer countries with higher infant mortality rates than the U.S., the home country of almost all the mother-employers, LeVine's formulation had the potential to generate nanny–mother differences and potential conflicts. In addition, maternal education also varies with such environments. Hence, one would expect that large differences in education would create conflicting models of child development between nannies and their employers.

Another difference in the two ecological niches relates to sources of knowledge. In agrarian small-scale, homogenous societies, the experience of elder family members is valued as a source of information, knowledge, and guidance. In large-scale, heterogeneous, technologically complex societies, experts and books are preferred sources of knowledge and guidance. In the first type of social environment, elder members of the family guide childrearing, based on their personal experience and wisdom. In this role, they engender respect in the younger generations. Another side of this same coin is the importance of having caregivers who are part of the family. The notion of hiring someone from outside the extended family to take care of your children would be unheard of in this kind of setting. In the second type of social environment, parents are supposed to discover “good parenting” independently of the older generation; and they often do so by reading or listening to unrelated “experts” (Keller, 2007).

An additional difference between the two pathways is the contrast between respect for authority and individual self-expression. For example, Latino immigrant parents want their children to be respectful. This involves being obedient and not expressing wishes different from those of their parents. However, when the next generation becomes parents, they are willing to let their children express their opinions and desires, and they are willing to negotiate with them when there is a difference of opinion (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). In other words, Mexican immigrants undergo an acculturation process in the individualistic direction: in this process, self-expression gradually becomes dominant over respect for authority.

1.2. Immigration: Cross-cultural value conflict between home and school

Our UCLA research group has explored these differences between the two pathways of development. We have found that children from relatively poor immigrant families originating in Mexico and Central America are often socialized into an individualistic developmental pathway by their teachers at school while they are socialized into a more collectivistic developmental pathway by their

parents at home (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2000). A major example of this difference is the individualistic emphasis on independence, a developmental goal strongly held by the school, and the collectivistic emphasis on interdependence, a developmental goal strongly held by the parents (Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996). Our school ethnography uncovered a common conflict between Latino immigrant families and Los Angeles elementary school personnel. In connection with a federally funded school breakfast program, Latino immigrant mothers were walking their children to school, sharing the schoolchild's breakfast with the family members, and helping their children to eat. These practices produced negative reactions from school personnel, who responded by locking the parents out of the school yard. The parents were furious and demonstrated against the school.

What were the issues? All derived from the fact that parents were making collectivistic value assumptions, while the school made individualistic ones. The parents assumed that sharing among the family was positive, whereas for the school (and the government breakfast program), the free breakfast was an individual, not a family, entitlement. Another issue was spoon-feeding the elementary school child: this practice was in line with the strong collectivistic value of family members helping each other. However, school personnel saw the practice as keeping the child dependent, interfering with the desired growth of independence.

In the course of training early education teachers as part of an intervention, *Bridging Cultures*, we discovered that cross-cultural value conflicts, parallel to the school breakfast issue, also occurred in infant and toddler daycare (Zepeda, Rothstein-Fisch, Gonzales-Mena, & Trumbull, 2006). There was a sharp difference between those who saw spoon-feeding a baby positively, through the lens of a collectivistic/interdependent value system (e.g., "The mother is helping the child and that communicates care for the child—the child learns to be helped so she can help others later on." "Feeding this way develops a close relationship with the child.") and those who saw it negatively, through the lens of an individualistic/independent value system (e.g., "The mother is not letting her child be independent." "She is spoiling her child." The mother is too controlling, not allowing choices, overprotective." "The child won't develop motor skills.").

1.3. Cross-cultural value conflict at home

After developing *Bridging Cultures* workshops for infant, toddler, and preschool teachers, we began to see that the same value conflicts were occurring at home. In Los Angeles there is a large nanny labor force from collectivistic countries (Mexico and Central America). These nannies are usually taking care of U.S. born, especially European American, children. We began to see parallel conflicts between individualistic and collectivistic approaches to childrearing in the cross-cultural nanny situation. For example, the Central American nanny in one family always spoon-fed her young charge, up through preschool age. The European–American father was upset with this practice, saying that the nanny wanted to keep control of the child. His criticism implied that child autonomy was an important developmental goal; closeness and caregiver helpfulness were not. The lens of an individualistic value system was being used to interpret a child care practice that was derived from a more collectivistic value perspective.

Ethnographic observations such as these led to the present study. Little is known about how parenting styles may vary within the same household when parents and nannies are raised in cultures that differ in collectivistic-individualistic dimensions. This issue is important because a nanny is traditionally employed to take care of a child in infancy and toddlerhood. These years are also the most formative and developmentally influential in the child's life.

1.4. Sociological background

The globalization of household labor has produced a large number of foreign-born nannies in the U.S. (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). Census figures show that as of 2006, there were more than 37 million foreign-born people in the United States, up from about 31 million as recently as 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau Fact Sheets, 2007). A significant proportion of working class Latina immigrant women from Mexico and Central America work as nannies (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001). From the perspective of mother-employers, it is hard to imagine a day in Los Angeles—where this study was carried out—without Latina nannies or nanny/housekeepers. Growing income inequality has contributed to this trend: the trend is concentrated in geographical regions in which a large proportion of the female labor force is made up of African Americans and Latinas (Milkman, Reese, & Roth, 1998). The latter ethnic group is of particular importance in Los Angeles where, as of 2005, Latinos constituted 46.8% of the population of Los Angeles County (U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts, 2007).

1.5. Investigating cross-cultural value conflict between nannies and employer-mothers: The present study

We started with a small-scale qualitative interview study in which we interviewed a set of nannies and their employers, all of whom were mothers. Our guiding hypothesis was that children were being raised with both the individualistic practices and philosophies of their US-born parents and the collectivistic practices and philosophies of their immigrant Latina nannies and that this cross-cultural nanny situation would lead to value conflicts concerning child-rearing attitudes and practices along the individualism–collectivism dimension.

One important factor influencing these value differences is national background. Cross-national research, holding socioeconomic status constant, has shown that regions providing most of the nannies in Los Angeles—Mexico and Central America—were much more collectivistic than citizens of the U.S. (Hofstede, 2001). In line with work in both anthropology and cultural psychology (e.g., Keller, 2007; Greenfield, submitted for publication), we hypothesized that sociodemographic variables would also mediate the impact of national origin as determinants of value orientation. Urbanization, greater formal education, technology, and higher SES were hypothesized to lead to a more individualistic and independent value system. In contrast, rural

origins, less formal education, less technology, and lower SES were hypothesized to lead to a more collectivistic value system. Cross-cultural study of infant care and development in India, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Greece, Germany, and the U. S. has led to the conclusion that "formal education initiates a trend toward the cultural model of independence" (Keller, 2007, p. 264). That is, shared sociodemographic characteristics yield shared cultural values, which in turn frame the very nature of childrearing.

It follows that sociodemographic differences, as well as differences in national origin, would lead to differences in value orientation. We expect that *differences* between nanny and mother will lead to conflict. This does not refer to overt conflict, but to conflicting values that produce conflicting practices and hence discomfort or misunderstanding between nanny and mother.

While the cross-cultural nanny and mother-employer situation is common, no research exists on the implications of cross-cultural childrearing within a family for (1) the potential for conflicting socialization pressures on children and (2) the potential for conflict between parents and nannies. Such issues are significant, given the prevalence of immigration and importance of understanding its specific dynamics. The results of this study could lead to greater cross-cultural understanding between nannies and mother-employers and, ultimately, to a more harmonious childrearing environment for children and families in this very widespread cross-cultural caregiver situation.

The study tested the hypothesis that Latina immigrant nannies would be more collectivistic in their childrearing beliefs and practices, while European American parents would be more individualistic, and that this could lead to conflict between them concerning childrearing practices. A second hypothesis was that, in addition to national origins, sociodemographic factors—more specifically, higher levels of formal education, urban origins, higher socioeconomic status, and a high-tech environment—would be associated with a more individualistic orientation. Lower levels of formal education, rural origins, lower socioeconomic status, and low-tech environments were predicted to be associated with a more collectivistic orientation. In sum, the theoretical formulation is that cultural values are very much affected by sociodemographic variables.

Our sample unexpectedly included one case where both nanny and mother-employer came from the same country, El Salvador, but differed in sociodemographic characteristics: the nanny had considerable formal education and was brought up in an urban environment, whereas the mother-employer had little formal education and was brought up in a rural, agricultural environment. This caregiver pair allowed us to explore sociodemographic factors while holding national origin constant. In another case, an employer was Filipina American, but had the same sociodemographic characteristics as the European American mother-employers. This case aided in testing the sociodemographics independent of ethnicity. Indeed, the precise constitution of the sample ended up demonstrating the much greater influence of sociodemographics than national origin or ethnicity on caregiving values and practices.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

All of the mothers interviewed were mothers of the children cared for by the nannies. There were four complete nanny/mother pairs who were interviewed individually. Nanny 4 was also Employer 5; she worked as a nanny and also employed a nanny to take care of her own children, so she was interviewed about her experiences as both a nanny and a mother-employer. The questions regarding her two roles were asked in one sitting, but were distinct from each other and are considered to be two interviews. We interviewed her nanny (Nanny 5) but her employer was unavailable. Hence there were eight participants (four nannies, three employers, and one employer/nanny), nine interviews (five nanny interviews, four employer interviews), and five nanny–employer pairs (with one participant as part of two pairs, but in different roles, and a missing employer participant in one pair). Table 1 presents the organization of the nanny–employer pairs, the participants, and the interviews.

All five nannies were Latina immigrants. Three of the four mother-employers interviewed were European American and one was a Latina immigrant. Employer 4 (who was not available to be interviewed) was of Filipino ethnicity, born in the U.S. We elicited demographic information about country of birth, rural vs. urban upbringing, country and level of formal education, and access to electronic technology.

Since mothers and nannies often have dual roles (mothers are employers and nannies may also be mothers), where possible we utilized the term 'mother-employers' when discussing differences between mother-employer and nanny; when we analyze the mother-employer's childrearing beliefs in isolation, the term 'mother' is used.

2.2. Procedure

The authors identified and recruited nannies and parents who employ nannies who were already known to us through family and friendship networks. If a nanny was contacted first and was willing to participate, the nanny contacted her employer to see if the

Table 1
Identification and ethnicities of nanny and parent-employer pairs

	Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	Pair 4	Pair 5
ID	Employer 1	Employer 2	Employer 2	Employer 4 (Not interviewed)	Employer 5 (also Nanny 4)
Ethnicity	European American	European American	European American	Filipina American	Latina immigrant
ID	Nanny 1	Nanny 2	Nanny 3	Nanny 4 (also Employer 5)	Nanny 5
Ethnicity	Latina immigrant	Latina immigrant	Latina immigrant	Latina immigrant	Latina immigrant

mother-employer was also willing to participate. If an employer was contacted first and was willing to participate, she contacted her nanny to see if she would participate as well. We made it clear in all cases that we would not communicate any information we learned from a nanny to her employer or vice versa. Interviews with participants who were native Spanish speakers were done in Spanish by author Flores, who is a native Spanish speaker; she also transcribed the Spanish interviews. Interviews with native English speakers were done in English by authors Greenfield and Davis, both native English speakers. The transcription of the English interviews was done by author Salimkhan, also a native English speaker.

The nanny interview was first developed in Spanish, and then translated into English. It was then modified and the new questions translated into Spanish. It was used as the basis of the mother interview, which was first developed in English and later translated into Spanish. The quality of the translations and the suitability of the interview protocols for each population were assured because all of the authors are bilingual in Spanish and English to one extent or another; all were also familiar with several of the cultures of the participants. All translations were checked by several members of the research team with native linguistic competence in the target language.

Participants were interviewed one-on-one at the location of their choice. The interview lasted 10 to 45 min and was recorded on a digital voice recorder for later transcription. The critical questions asked of the nannies to uncover differences in values and practices were the following:

Is there anything positive that you have learned from your employer about children and their care?

Is there anything that your employer has asked you to do with the child(ren) that you feel is incorrect or you disagree with?

The critical questions asked of the mother-employers to uncover differences in values and practices from their perspectives were as follows:

Is there anything that you have learned from your nanny about children and their care?

Is there anything that your nanny does with the children that you disagree with or have asked her to do differently?

Other planned questions that were not used in this article are found in the online Appendix A. Follow-up questions were asked where appropriate. The planned follow-up questions are shown in Appendix A; other follow-up questions were used as needed to clarify, stimulate, or elaborate. Common examples were re-phrasing and repeating questions that were not fully answered, asking the same question about another child, and asking for examples of behavior. Sample probes in response to the ongoing conversation were (from a nanny interview) "What are the values you had that you think are similar to what your employer had?" and (from a mother-employer interview) "How did she [your nanny] react in terms of your desire for him to do things by himself?"

Demographic questions were asked, including country of birth, time in the U.S., growing up in a rural or urban environment, education, work, and access to technology. In general, a conversational format was used to ensure maximum comfort of the participants and maximum relevant information for the researchers. Interviewees were paid $20 for their participation.

2.3. Analysis

Interviews were analyzed as discourse. The method was based on discourse analysis of cross-cultural misunderstanding between Latino immigrant parents and their children's teachers, examined in the context of parent–teacher conferences (Greenfield et al., 2000). Answers to the two key questions, above, were analyzed to uncover nanny–mother differences. The focus was on the relationship between the nanny's and mother's views concerning childrearing. This was essentially a matter of differences in constructed meanings. In other words, we were concerned with the evaluative interpretations by each party of the other's behavior in relation to her own preferences. Interpretations are best captured in ongoing conversational discourse.

We utilize the speaker's own words in presenting the discourse, including ungrammatical pieces; we have eliminated redundancies, fillers, or comments irrelevant to the point at hand. These edits are shown with the convention of multiple dots. The Spanish interviews are presented in Spanish, with a translation underneath. All examples are fully presented.

3. Results and discussion

As predicted, we found a number of nanny–mother differences that related to the two pathways of development, the more collectivistic pathway toward interdependence and social responsibility and the more individualistic pathway towards independence and cognitive development. There were distinctive differences in childrearing approaches around bedtime and sleeping routines, age-appropriate responsibilities for a young child, how much to dress a child for protection from the elements, legitimate sources of knowledge about childrearing, mother's role in balancing work and family, the role of adults in children's play, and how adults should talk to children.

3.1. The issue of sleep: How much "independence"?

Nanny 4, from a poor family in rural El Salvador, had the opportunity for only a fourth grade education because she had to help raise her five younger brothers and sisters. As a girl, she was sent to work in the U.S. in order to send money back home to El Salvador to help the family. She continues to do this. She has been in the U.S. for 20 years and has been a nanny for 14 of those years. Her employers are a European American father and a Filipina American mother, a pediatrician whose parents immigrated from the Philippines before she was born.

Apparently, the mother subscribed to the popular sleep philosophy of pediatrician Richard Ferber (1985) who believes babies should be conditioned to sleep on their own by letting the baby cry it out and extinguishing the crying response. This was a difficult lesson for the nanny to learn. She said:

También lo que aprendí es de que el bebé se tiene que dejar llorar en la cama. Yo no lo dejaba llorar. Es algo que yo aprendí también eso de ella. También yo aprendí eso, que yo no lo hacía. A mí no me gusta que lloraba…. A mi me duele que los niños lloren.

(Also what I learned is that you have to let the baby cry in bed. I was not in the habit of letting [a baby] cry. It is something that I also learned from her [employer]. I also learned that, because I was not in the habit of doing it. I do not like letting [a baby] cry …. It gives me pain when children cry.)

The mother-employer wanted the baby to go to sleep on his own, whereas it is implicit that the nanny was used to comforting a baby physically when he or she cried. Here is the first clue concerning the importance of sociodemographics. The Philippines has a collectivistic national culture (Hofstede, 2001); this mother was from a Filipino immigrant family, although she herself was born in the U.S. However, the mother's philosophy regarding infant sleep stressed early independence, as one might have expected from her sociodemographic profile as a highly educated physician born and raised in the U.S. Later we return to the issue of sociodemographic influences with controlled comparisons involving Nanny 4/Employer 5.

3.2. Helping others or helping oneself?

Nanny 1 was raised in an urban environment in El Salvador; she completed high school and some college. For her, the development of children's social responsibility was an issue with her employer. Here is what she said:

El otro día le dije a su mamá, él tiene que tener responsabilidad con la niña, no? Ella me dijo "No, porque" ella ya le había dicho de que él tenía que ser responsable cuando ella no está, de cuidar la niña. Pero él cuidarla es que él mismo no la lastime. Entonces cuando yo le dije esto a ella, ella me dijo que ya le había dicho y que él le había dicho que "no" porque él no es la babysitter ni es la mamá. (The nanny laughs.) Entonces todavía no le podemos… poner mucha responsabilidad.

(The other day I said to his mother [her employer], he has to take responsibility with the little girl [his sister], doesn't he? She said to me, "No," because … she [the mother] had already told him that he had to be responsible when she is not there, to take care of the little girl [his sister]. But, him taking care of her is that he should not injure her himself. So, when I said that to her, she said to me that she had already told him, and he had told her "no" because he is not the babysitter nor is he the mommy. [The nanny laughs.] So, we still cannot… give him much responsibility.)

As the interview continued, Nanny 1 contrasted this situation with the way she had taught her own daughter to be responsible for the care of her two younger brothers. It is interesting that her employer's child was really expressing the idea of parentification (giving an older sibling parental responsibility) as a negative and at a very young age (he was only three and a half!). This contrasts with the very positive attitude of the nanny toward sibling caregiving, a cultural practice that is widespread and important in many parts of the world, including Mexico and Central America (Weisner & Gallimore, 1977).

The interview with *Nanny 1's European American employer* confirmed the cultural difference from the mother's perspective. Nanny 1's European American employer identified a difference between herself and her nanny that revolved around the independence–interdependence theme. Here is the relevant piece of the interview with the mother:

Mother-employer 1: *She [the nanny] was more likely to do things for him [the three and a half year old son]. Then I was starting to say, "You know you're old enough to start doing that." So if he threw something down at the floor, she would pick it up and I would say "No no no, he's old enough. He just threw that on the floor; just please ask him to pick it up".....*
Interviewer: *How did she react in terms of your desire for him to do things by himself?*
Mother-employer 1: *I have a feeling that maybe when I wasn't around she did more for him than if I was here.....*
Interviewer: *How did you feel about her not letting him do things for himself that you would've liked him to do?*
Mother-employer 1: *Ummm, how did I feel about that? I just felt like I didn't want him to take advantage of her. I remember one time in particular, actually he was quite young when this happened, he threw something down on the floor and I said, "Don't throw that on the floor; you're big enough to pick these things up by yourself now;" and he said literally, "Don't worry, Barbara will pick it up." He said that and I told her that, and I told my husband that, and I said "Do you know, I really don't want to have this kid that feels entitled to having somebody else picking things up after him;" and so I really, you know, I know I talked to her about that.*

Here the theme of independence as a conflict issue came up, with the European American mother wishing that her nanny would make the child do more for himself. On the other hand, the nanny's behavior clearly indicated that she was putting a priority on the value of helpfulness. The mother wanted the child to help himself; the nanny thought the child should help another. This was a value conflict that had come out strongly in our prior research, in which Latino immigrant parents favored helpfulness and their children's teachers favored independent task accomplishment and personal responsibility for those tasks (Raeff et al., 2000). But note, too, that the European American mother's reason for wanting the child to pick up after himself was so that the nanny would not have to do it.

3.3. Learning from experience or learning from experts and books

Nanny 2 was raised in an urban environment in Guatemala, where she finished high school, and had a few months of university. Her European American employer had a college degree. Nanny 2's issue of difference related to the contrast between learning from experience and learning from experts and books. She said that when she had advice to give the mothers, the mothers would reply that if the books or their doctors didn't recommend it, then they wouldn't follow it. This nanny felt bad because she said that she knew about these things not through books, but through experiences with her own children. This is a conflict between placing a value on learning from the personal experience of important others in one's social network (in this case, the mother learning from the nanny, who had raised her own children, now adults), contrasted with learning from strangers, in the form of books or experts.

At the same time, it is also important to note that the identical characteristic—the nanny's experience as a mother—could also be valued by the mother-employer. *Mother-employer 1*, a college-educated real estate agent, placed a high value on her nanny's experience as a mother. She said of Nanny 1:

> *I definitely benefited from her experience of having raised three babies herself and great kids, I mean, I think her kids are just exceptional. They're so kind and loving and compassionate and all those things that I want my own kids to be, you know? And completely unspoiled, you know?*

3.4. Prioritizing family responsibility or personal accomplishment

Nanny 3 raised another issue of potential difference: placing a priority on the family (collectivistic) vs. prioritizing personal accomplishment (individualistic). Implicitly, she criticized mothers who used a nanny and did not spend enough time with their children when they did not have to go out to work. She did this in a positive way, praising the type of mother who did spend a lot of time with her child. However, she made it clear that the ideal was for a mother not to have to work and, therefore, to be able to take care of her own children. The high value of maternal care was clear in her statements:

> *Porque no lo tuvieron de que fueron a trabajar; entonces le dedican el tiempo a sus hijos. Esa es la mamá que a mi me gusta.*

> (Because they did not have to go out to work; therefore they dedicate their time to their children. That is the [kind of] mother that I like.)

3.5. The pediatric model: More or less?

There were also signs of a greater survival orientation (LeVine's pediatric model) on the part of some of the nannies, although these practices were not necessarily considered a bad thing by the mother-employers. Keeping warm, for example, can be a survival issue in the mountains of Mexico or Central America. This is not the case in Los Angeles, with its mild climate and heated homes. In answer to the question "Did she [your nanny] do anything that was different from the way you expected children to be taken care of?" *Mother-employer 1* answered:

> *She bundled the kids up more than I necessarily would have definitely. They were always toasty warm definitely.*

3.6. Cultural differences are not always conflictual: Cross-cultural learning welcomed

Nanny 3's interview brought up the important point that cultural differences were not always conflictual; sometimes they were simply a welcome source of learning. Nanny 3, who graduated from high school and beauty school, and was also a nurse's aide in her home country of Guatemala, genuinely admired the education-centered approach of one of her former employers. This extract also confirms the high value that she placed on the mothering role. She said:

> *Mire, yo tuve una patrona, me encantaba... porque ella, como llegaba, no se quitaba más que los zapatos y se tiraba al piso y se ponía a jugar con la niña y se ponía a leerle los libros. Decía ella, una hora, dos horas que yo le dedique a mi hija tienen que ser como las ocho horas que la dejé. Me gustaba mucho la mujer, en ese sentido me entiende porque para ella lo más importante eran esas dos horas…. Con ella, trabajaba de ocho a seis; eran diez horas las que yo me quedaba con la niña.... Pero cuando ella llegaba a las cinco y media, como le digo, no se quitaba nada y se tiraba al suelo… se ponía a leer con la niña. No televisión; no le dejaba mucho tiempo la televisión a la niña. Y todo eso lo he ido aprendiendo. ¿Me entiende? Yo me gusta que la madre le dedique mucho tiempo a leer, que juegue con ellos.*

> (Look, I had an employer, I was delighted by her... because, however she arrived, she didn't take anything more off besides her shoes, and she threw herself on the floor, and she started to play with the little girl, and she started to read books to her. She used to say, 1 h, 2 h that I dedicate to my daughter have to be like the 8 h that I left her. I liked this woman a lot, in that sense she understands me because for her the most important thing were those 2 h …. With her, I worked from eight to six; I was with the little girl 10 h.... But when she arrived at 5:30, like I'm telling you, she didn't take anything off, and she would throw herself on the floor… she would

start reading with the little girl. No television; she did not allow the little girl much time for television. And all that, I have been learning. Do you understand me? I like that the mother dedicates much time to reading, that she plays with them.)

This nanny, with a good level of formal education herself, was receptive to learning about how to bring educationally oriented interactions into the home. She also expressed admiration for the mother's dedication to the maternal role.

Cross-cultural learning was a two-way street: nannies could, and did, learn from their employers; employers could, and did, learn from their nannies. *Mother-Employer 1* was very grateful for what she learned from Nanny 1. She said:

I've always had a thousand things going on and she can really just be in the moment, I mean really, really have the patience to sit there with a nine- or ten-month old and you know, move the blocks around and roll a ball and you know, really, really, you know, just be there, you know, which is really nice....So often, you know, um, us working moms are multitasking. We're doing a million different things at once and just to see that made me go "You know I need to do more of that. I need to just calm down and just be there" and you know I think she really enjoyed her days with the kids. She would come in the morning, give the baby a bath, feed the baby, put the baby in the stroller, go for a nice walk and just leisurely walk you know.

One can see the mother-employer's self-described quality as that of a mother who, consonant with her culture, was also trying to maximize her personal achievement, through her career. At the same time, her use of the term "multitasking" suggested that she utilized a lot of electronic communication simultaneously with face-to-face interaction, which is an important way that direct interpersonal communication is reduced in a complex, technologically advanced environment. The nanny's behavior might, in contrast, be seen as reflecting the importance her culture placed on caregiving and face-to-face interaction.

3.7. The role of sociodemographics

An interesting case here is *Employer 5/Nanny 4*, who both worked as a nanny and employed a nanny for her own two children. She shared few sociodemographic characteristics with either her nanny or her employer. With a fourth grade education, Employer 5/Nanny 4 had much less formal education than either her employer, who was a medical doctor, or her own nanny, who had attained 6 months of university study in her native country. As a mother-employer, Employer 5 and her nanny shared a national background but otherwise flipped the more common circumstance in which the Employer had more education and urban experience than the nanny. Both Employer 5 and her nanny were from El Salvador. However, Employer 5 was from a rural background, whereas her nanny grew up in the city. Employer 5's father was a sheep herder, whereas her nanny's father was a minister. If ethnicity or national origins were the only factors, one would expect only similarities in childrearing approaches between pair 5. However, if sociodemographic characteristics, such as education and rural/urban environment, were important factors in cultural values, one would expect some difference in childrearing values and practices, with, in this case, the nanny having the more individualistic approach; and that is, indeed, what we found.

On the subject of ways to talk to children, she said that she had learned something from her nanny:

O sea, lo que me enseña, a mí lo que me gusta, sí, una cosa—lo que ella hace es que le habla a mis hijos y le habla como, como su amiga.

(In other words, what she teaches me, what I like, if one thing—what she does is that she speaks to my children, and she speaks to him like, like his friend.)

The interviewer brought up the point of negotiating with children. In reply, Employer 5 said:

Sí, negociando con ellos: es eso que yo no hago. O sea, algo que a mí no me lo enseñaron. A mí me dijeron, "lo haces," y uno lo hace. ¿Sí me entiende? O vas a tener consecuencias. ¡Doblado el cinturón!

(Yes, negotiating with them: that is something I do not do. In other words, something that they did not teach me. I was told "Do it," and you do it. You do understand me? Or you are going to have consequences. The folded belt!).

Basically, what she had learned from her nanny was to relax the parent–child authority relationship that was part of her cultural upbringing and to take on more of the equality orientation so valued in the United States. The issue of encouraging children's self-expression is also part of reducing this authority orientation. This case was a dramatic illustration that sociodemographics, not just one's ethnicity or national origin, drive cultural values.

Indeed, when a difference in values or practices between nanny or employer arose within the whole sample, the member of the pair with more formal education always expressed more individualistic values or practices more adapted to a modern urban lifestyle, whereas the member of the pair with less formal education always expressed more collectivistic values or practices more adapted to a rural subsistence environment. In other words, level of formal education enabled us to predict positions about child care when those differed for nanny and mother-employer. Indeed, the case of Employer 5/Nanny 4 indicated that formal education and other sociodemographics could be more important than ethnicity in determining childrearing differences. In the overall sample, rural or urban residence or presence of technology by themselves did not predict the results. It was notable that

all of the respondents, nannies and mother-employers alike, had high levels of technology (televisions, cell phones, video games, and computers) in their households, and several of the nannies had grown up in urban environments. However, it was only Employer 5/Nanny 4 who had grown up in a poor subsistence economic environment with little opportunity for schooling. Hence, she sharply contrasted on all of these variables with her own nanny who had considerable formal education, an urban upbringing, and a professional father. In the sample as a whole, it appeared that small differences in educational level were sufficient to generate differences in childrearing philosophy concerning which of the two pathways was more subscribed to.

4. Summary and conclusions

4.1. Cultural background, sociodemographics and caregiving beliefs

This initial exploration revealed differences between the caregiving beliefs of nannies and mother-employers from different cultural backgrounds. However, the unexpected situation of Employer5/Nanny4, who employed a nanny from the same culture, validated our theoretical viewpoint that sociodemographics are an important driver of cultural values (Greenfield, submitted for publication). Cultural values develop as an adaptation to sociodemographic conditions. Formal education, and not rural/urban upbringing or the current use of technology, was best aligned with the results. In every case, the more collectivistic viewpoint or the practice most adapted to a subsistence-based, low technology environment was expressed by the member of the pair with the lower education. However, more pairs in which other sociodemographics, particularly parental occupation (of mother and nanny), urban–rural upbringing, and level of formal education, are more differentiated—similar to Employer 5 and her nanny—need to be studied.

Summarizing the findings, we found the following specific differences or conflicts between mother and nanny:

1. Requiring a baby to go to sleep “independently” vs. holding the baby to prevent crying as he or she falls asleep.
2. Requiring a child to do things for himself vs. helping him by doing them for him.
3. Talking to a child as an equal and negotiating with her vs. telling her what to do based on adult authority.
4. A more relaxed approach to dressing a baby warmly enough vs. bundling a baby warmly for protection from the elements.
5. Learning from experts and books vs. learning from the personal experience of a respected member of the family.
6. A mother's devotion to personal achievement and multitasking vs. a mother's single-minded devotion to her maternal role.
7. Adults guiding children's play in educational directions vs. child-directed play.

In each of these seven contrasts, the first practice or belief represents one that is adapted to an urbanized, high-technology society with a preferred developmental pathway towards independence. In contrast, the second practice or belief represents one that is adapted to a rural low-technology environment with a preferred developmental pathway towards interdependence.

In all cases (three pairs), the Latina immigrant nanny took the second position in each contrast, while the European American mother took the first position. In these pairs, ethnicity was confounded with formal education and role (nanny vs. mother-employer), with the American-born employer having more formal education than her nanny. However, in her role both as employer and nanny, Employer 5/Nanny 4 enabled us to tease apart some of these factors. Employer 5's nanny was of the same Filipino (both from El Salvador), but had more education than her employer. We found that Employer 5's nanny took a more individualistic perspective than her employer did. This suggests that cultural beliefs about childrearing may be more influenced by sociodemographics than by ethnicity or role (nanny vs. mother-employer).

In her role as nanny, the contrast between Nanny 4's more collectivistic perspective and Employer 4's more individualistic perspective also enables us to see the stronger role of sociodemographics in contrast to ethnicity or national origin. Recall that Employer 4 was a Filipina American physician. The Philippines has a collectivistic national culture (Hofstede, 2001); and her parents were Filipino immigrants. Although Employer 4 was not interviewed, it was clear from the interview with her nanny that the Filipina American mother-employer with an M.D. degree was oriented more toward the early independence of her child than was her nanny with a fourth-grade education. While both Employer 4 (Filipino ethnicity) and Nanny 4 (Salvadoran ethnicity) had roots in collectivistic cultures, the difference in caregiving beliefs was what one would have predicted from the sociodemographic differences, in this case, educational level, rather than from the ethnic differences.

Another finding was that culturally based differences did not always lead to conflict. Sometimes differences were accepted or even valued. Indeed, the overall impression of the interviews was of harmonious relations between nanny and mother. Sometimes culturally based differences led to cross-cultural learning. It is important to note that this cross-cultural learning went in both directions. Nannies learned from European American mother-employers and European American mother-employers learned from Latina immigrant nannies. Some learning was cross-cultural but not cross-ethnic: for example, the Latina mother-employer learned about talking to her children more as equals from her more highly educated Latina nanny, both from El Salvador.

Too often, we focus only on acculturation to the dominant society. We forget that immigrant cultures bring new ideas and values to the host society. They have always done so in the U.S.; but this contribution goes unrecognized except in the more superficial domains of food and holidays. Here we have highlighted values and practices concerning the important domain of childrearing as a locus in which an immigrant culture is making a significant contribution to the host society.

4.2. Relationship to Irving Sigel's ideas and remaining questions

A conceptual underpinning of Sigel's approach to parental belief systems was “the assumption that all beliefs and/or theories parents have about the socialization of their children are anchored in a cultural context and function with certain levels of

automaticity, or.....in tacit understanding and tacit knowledge" (Sigel & Kim, 1996). In the cross-cultural nanny situation, the cognitive mechanism of contrast between two different cultural systems of parental beliefs takes tacit beliefs and automatic behaviors and raises them to the level of awareness for the first time.

In his work on parental belief systems, Sigel was concerned with the role parent beliefs play for both the parent and for the child. This implies looking at the relation between beliefs and behavior on the parent's side and for the relation between parent beliefs and child development on the child side. Our interviews provided a suggestion that contrasting beliefs led to divergent childcare practices. Future research that combines home observation with interview would be needed to explore the relationship between beliefs and practices. Our ethnographic observations indicated that conflicting values/practices can produce discomfort/misunderstanding and other negative feelings between nanny, and mother-employer, when the differences were seen as flaws rather than as reflecting a contrasting cultural value system.

On the child's side of the equation, we do not know whether caregiving differences have developmental outcomes for the child. Indeed, cultural circumstances exist in which mothers' and fathers' cultural backgrounds and beliefs differ from one another or in which caregivers from adjacent generations are involved with rearing the children. The latter circumstances may or may not reflect cultural differences. While there is no literature on this subject, our best guess—from ethnographic observation and our work in the schools—is that only when the differences lead to conflict, misunderstanding, and tension between caregivers do they have adverse consequences for the well-being of the child. These are important matters for future research.

Many other questions remain. Does the child experience inner conflict or does the child learn harmoniously from all caregivers? Are there costs as well as benefits from socialization into the individualistic or into the collectivistic pathways of development? What is the effect on parenting of having a nanny from another culture? What is the effect on a nanny from an immigrant culture of exposure to the home of members of the host culture? What is the effect on the home and the nanny of conflicting beliefs concerning the best way to raise a child? We hope that our documentation of contrasting cultural beliefs in the cross-cultural nanny situation will help future research establish the important relationships and answer these important questions.

Another major thrust of Irving Sigel's distinguished career was applied developmental psychology. On the applied side, we hope that this study and the line of research that follows it will lead to greater mutual understanding and harmony between nannies and parents. We ourselves have some ideas for moving from this more basic research to its real-world application.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2008.04.002.

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