Further Explorations of the "Western Mind." Euro-American and German Mothers' and Grandmothers' Ethnotheories[1]

Heidi Keller & Carolin Demuth

Abstract: This paper tries to disentangle the conception of independence as the dominant socio-cultural orientation of care giving in Western postmodern societies sometimes referred to as the "Western mind." Mothers and grandmothers in Los Angeles, USA and Berlin, Germany were interviewed about their socialization goals and their ideas of good parenting with respect to a three months old baby using a semi-structured picture card interview technique. The analysis was based on qualitative content analysis. All participants share equally independent and interdependent socialization goals. They also have a common understanding about which care giving practices are important. There is, however, a cultural difference with respect to their conception of care giving. German participants share a holistic view in that they expect breastfeeding, body contact and *Beschäftigung* ("dealing with the child") to be composed of closeness and stimulation that facilitates relational closeness as well as healthy mental/psychological development. Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers share a functionalistic view (with the exception of breastfeeding) in that they conceive of different care giving practices differently with distinct developmental outcomes (breastfeeding is for health, playing is for stimulating cognitive development, bodily proximity is for soothing). All participants share an understanding that (motor) over-stimulation is not good for children's development. Grandmothers and mothers basically do not differ in their views as the grandmothers seem to have in part adopted their daughters' opinions. Results are discussed with respect to contextual factors, especially women's participation in the labor force.

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1. Introduction

Ethnotheories about parenting and child development are mediating links between cultural "metamodels" (HARKNESS, SUPER, & VAN TIJEN, 2000) and parenting behavior. Cultural metamodels represent "a cluster of ideas that characterize cultures at a broad level and that should logically have wide-ranging functions for the organization of human development and social relationships" (p.23). They can be regarded as constituting filters through which the broader sociocultural orientations are implemented into parenting contexts and practices (SUPER & HARKNESS, 1996). The conceptions of independence and interdependence have been identified as such metamodels or general sociocultural orientations (FISKE, KITAYAMA, MARKUS, & NISBETT, 1998) specifying conceptions of the self and conceptions of relationships within particular eco-cultural environments. Independence denotes the self as separate from the social environment; interdependence denotes the self as intrinsically interconnected with the social environment. Independence conceives of the self as an autonomous agent, inter-dependence conceives of the self as a co-agent (GEERTZ, 1974; KAĞITÇIBAŞI,

1996a; MARKUS & KITAYAMA, 1991; SHWEDER & BOURNE, 1982). Although there is a broad consensus that some cultural environments can be described as oriented more towards independence and others as oriented more towards interdependence (FISKE et al., 1998; GREENFIELD & COOKING, 1994; KELLER & GREENFIELD 2000; ROTHBAUM, POTT, AZUMA, MIYAKE, & WEISZ, 2000), there is an ongoing debate about the nature, the structure and the boundaries of these conceptions (HARKNESS et al., 2000; KELLER, 2003; KILLEN, MCGLOTHLIN, & LEE-KIM, 2002; MILLER, 1997). [1]

We conceive of the cultural models of independence and interdependence as two independent dimensions representing systems of priorities (GREENFIELD, KELLER, FULIGNI, & MAYNARD, 2003; KELLER, YOVSI, & VÖLKER, 2002) that are instantiated both culturally and individually, thus containing substantial intercultural as well as intracultural variation. [2]

In this paper, we would like to concentrate on the independent sociocultural orientation which has often been equated with the Western conception of the person (GEERTZ, 1974; MARKUS & KITAYAMA, 1991) or the "Western mind" (GEERTZ, 1974; HARKNESS et al., 2000). The person is regarded as bounded, autonomous, self-confident, self-reliant, unique, competitive and curious. Relationships are conceived of as voluntary, negotiable and finite. Parenting can be understood as communicational exchange between two (quasi) equal partners (KELLER, 2003). It can be assumed that parents' socialization goals reflect these orientations, stressing the individual as an agent with own needs, feelings, desires and preferences from birth on (KELLER, 2003; KELLER, HENTSCHEL, YOVSI, ABELS, LAMM, & HAAS, 2004; LEVINE, 1988; SUPER & HARKNESS, 1996; WHITING & EDWARDS, 1988). In this paper, we want to analyze parental ethnotheories of mothers and grandmothers from two sociocultural environments that can be regarded as representing the Western independent sociocultural model, Euro-American urban middle class families in Los Angeles, USA, and Berlin, Germany (HOFSTEDE, 2001). There are not many studies analyzing similarities and differences in parental ethnotheories between Euro-American and European samples. The existing studies, however, reveal an interesting and rather consistent pattern that challenges the coherence and consistence of Western individualism and independence. In these studies which vary substantially in scope and methodology, Euro-American participants' attitudes to parenting appear to pursue straightforward individualism and independence, whereas the European participants' attitudes pursue independence as well as interdependence. Sara HARKNESS and collaborators (2000) have interviewed Dutch and Euro-American parents of small children with respect to descriptions and interpretations of their children's personality. The Dutch and the Euro-American parents both emphasized individualism, yet with a significant difference in meaning using different descriptors for individualism. The Dutch parents valued an enterprising and strong willed personality whereas the Euro-American parents valued a smart, self-confident personality and traits like being a leader. With respect to dependence, there was no agreement between the Dutch and the Euro-American parents. The Dutch parents saw dependence as a normal behavior of small children that they assumed to be innate. For the Euro-American parents,

dependence was undesirable and rather interpreted as clingy. AUKRUST and collaborators (2001) analyzed Euro-American and Norwegian (as well as Turkish and Korean) parents' ethnotheories. They also found that Norwegian parents emphasized the importance of (long-term) close relationships, whereas the Euro-American parents had a more academic than a relational focus. Similarly, Swedish parents believe that the newborn and young child must be made to feel safe and secure within the home which symbolizes the strong attachment Swedes have to the family. Breastfeeding is seen as taking care of the child's emotional needs. Nevertheless, their socialization goals are individualistic, although traditional commandments with respect to self-inhibition and conformity are also existing (WELLES-NYSTRÖM, 1996). [3]

Comparisons of maternal beliefs of mothers in Southern Europe with those of Euro-American mothers revealed a similar pattern. NEW and RICHMAN (1996), for example, compared Euro-American and Italian participants' long-term and short-term socialization goals. While the Euro-American mothers first and foremost valued economic and emotional independence, Italian mothers primarily focused on the child's social relations. Short-term goals mentioned by the Euro-American mothers included a concern for the child's cognitive and emotional development and highlighted the mother's role in providing an environment rich in language with opportunities for exploration and play. Short-term goals of the Italian mothers were related to the care of an infant in terms of protection and assurance of health. TAMIS–LEMONDA, WANG, KOUTSOUVANOU and ALBRIGHT (2002) analyzed US-American and Greek (as well as Taiwanese) mothers' childrearing values with respect to 3 to 4 year old children. The Greek mothers emphasized decency (honesty/sincerity, responsibility) as well as education and independence, whereas Euro-American mothers emphasized self-maximization (assertiveness, creativity, curiosity) but at the same time values such as sharing and respecting others. [4]

Similarly, the attitude to teach children to conform to social norms in order to be "bien élevé" has been reported from several studies with French (Parisian) parents (SUIZZO, 2002) who, nonetheless, have also been described as oriented towards independence (RABAIN-JAMIN & SABEAU-JOUANNET, 1997). Studies differ though with respect to the importance of body contact (for a summary see SUIZZO, 2002). Also, developing good manners and placing importance on rules and respect for authority have been less emphasized by French parents (BAER, CURTIS, GRABB, & JOHNSTON, 1996; BORNSTEIN et al., 1996). Similarly, the Dutch parents in the study of HARKNESS and collaborators (2000) reported only a low profile for obedience. Obedience as a component of interdependence may be more adaptive in traditional hierarchical communities and not so much part of the conception of interdependence in Western societies (HARKNESS et al., 2000). [5]

Although these studies cover a variety of individualistic Western societies ranging from Northern to Southern Europe, there seems to be unexpected commonalities in contrast to the Euro-American society. European parents obviously emphasize interrelatedness as well as autonomous agency for their children, whereas Euro-

American parents seem to focus primarily on autonomous agency. HARKNESS
et al. (2000) as well as SUIZZO (2002) interpret their findings as supporting the
conception of emotional interdependence that KAĞITÇIBAŞI (1996a) has
proposed as a new synthesis of the dimensions underlying independence and
interdependence: agency and interpersonal distance. The Euro-American
mothers embody the model of independence, combining autonomous agency
with separateness whereas the European mothers embody the model of
autonomous relatedness, combining an autonomous agency with relatedness. [6]

The present study wants to further contribute to the understanding of parental
ethnotheories as related to the sociocultural orientation of independence. We
analyze Euro-American participants from Los Angeles, USA, and compare their
views with those of participants from Berlin, Germany. Previous studies of parent-
child interactions have revealed that German parents as well as US-American
parents display primarily distal interactional behaviors that can be assumed to
pursue independent socialization goals. Face-to-face exchange allows the infant
to experience contingency, i.e. prompt responsiveness to own facial cues which
supports the perception of the self as an independent agent (KELLER et al.,
1999; KELLER, VÖLKER, & YOVSI, 2005). Object stimulation supports separate-
ness and the development of technological skills (KELLER & GREENFIELD,
2000). Spending time on their own is regarded as fostering self-reliance
(GROSSMANN & GROSSMANN, 1981). The display of those independence
promoting behaviors has become significantly more pronounced in German
middle class families (KELLER & LAMM, 2004), as well as in Euro-American
families (DENCIK, 1989; ELDER, MODELL, & PARKE, 1993; GIDDENS, 1991)
over the last decades. Both, Euro-American and German middle class mothers
stress socialization goals that rely on independent cultural models (KELLER et
al., under review) and, moreover, embody an independent orientation in their
narrating styles (KELLER et al., 2004; KÄRTNER et al., 2004). [7]

Since parental ethnotheories can be regarded as expressing cultural
metamodels, it can be assumed that they change in line with sociocultural
changes over time within societies (LEVINE, MILLER, RICHMAN, & LEVINE,
1996; PALACIOS & MORENO, 1996; SUPER & HARKNESS, 2003; YOUNISS,
1995). In the Western world, an increasing individualism is recognized with
respect to the globalization of capital, information, ideas and lifestyles describing
the post-industrial society. These changes can be assumed to also inform
parental socialization goals and parenting ideas and practices towards an
increase in orientation towards the model of independence (GIDDENS, 1991;
KELLER et al., 2003; KELLER & LAMM, 2004). Mothers of small children and the
grandmothers of these children thus can be assumed to have been raised in
different sociocultural environments. In the present study, we therefore also
analyze grandmothers' socialization goals and ethnotheories and compare them
to those of mothers of three months old infants. [8]

The present paper follows two objectives: 1. Examining the contents of parental
ethnotheories in Euro-American and German middle class families with the
assumption of a more independent orientation of the Los Angeles participants

and an independent as well as interdependent orientation of the Berlin participants; 2. Examining intergenerational changes in parental ethnotheories with the assumption of an increase of the independent orientation in the younger generation in the Euro-American as well as in the German samples. [9]

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants of this study were mothers of three months old infants and their mothers living in Los Angeles, CA, and Berlin, Germany. The families all belong to an urban educated middle class (18 of the German mothers and 5 of the German grandmothers had at least the entrance qualification for the university ("Abitur"); all the Los Angeles mothers and all the Los Angeles grandmothers except one hold at least a bachelor's degree). The samples reported here form sub-samples of a larger study of N = 25 mothers in the Los Angeles and N = 41 mothers in the Berlin sample. Criterion for inclusion in this study was that assessments with mothers and grandmothers were possible. The socio-demographic information of the participants is reported in Table 1.

	Berlin		*Los Angeles*	
Demographic	*Mothers (N=21)*	*Grandmothers (N=21)*	*Mothers (N=7)*	*Grandmothers (N=7)*
Age	33.76 (SD=4.09)	62.05 (SD= 6.53)	34.43 (SD=3.74)	62.14 (SD=5.46)
Age of husband/partner	35.48 (SD=4.34)	63.67 (SD=6.51) (N=18)	35.43 (SD=3.26)	63.25 (SD=6.18) (N=4)
Birth position	1.38 (SD=0.74)		1.43 (SD= 0.53)	
Firstborns	76.2%		57.1%	
Female	38.1%		71.4%	
Number of school years	15.76 (SD=3.28)	11.24 (SD=3.06)	17.14 (SD=1,57)	15.43 (SD=2.51)
Single mother	4.8%		14.3%	
Monthly family income	2,500.00 Euro (SD=1,058.43) (N=19)	2,531.18 Euro (SD=1,172.83) (N=17)	18,800.00 $ (SD=29,319.28) (N=7)	4,500.00 $ (N=1)
Working outside home	4.8%	23.8%	28.6%	71.4%
Time spent with baby (hours per day)	23.58 (SD= 1.00)	1.27 (SD=1.44)	22.86 (SD=2.27)	1.77 (SD= 1.47)

Table 1: Sociodemographic information for the different samples [10]

The differences in sample size (21 mother-grandmother pairs in Berlin and 7 mother-grandmother pairs in Los Angeles) are mainly due to the local distance of their places of residence. The grandmothers of the Los Angeles sample were living all across USA and thus in part not accessible for the study. Only those mothers were included in the study where both, the mother and the grandmother were available. Considering the resultant small size of the grandmother sample, the present findings with respect to the grandmothers will be regarded as exploratory. However, the sociodemographic characteristics of the Los Angeles mothers included in this study are not different from the rest of the Los Angeles sample where the grandmothers were not available. Also, further analysis of the ethnotheories of these two sub samples (mothers and grandmothers) did not reveal differences in their ethnotheories (NETTE, 2003), so that they can be regarded as representative of Euro-American middle class families. This approach capitalizes on prototypical cultural samples that are defined by sociodemographic characteristics. The age of the mothers and grandmothers as well as of their partners and the birth rank of their children are comparable across the samples. Differences concern the gender composition of the samples, the marital status of the mothers, and the participation in the labor force of mothers and grandmothers. [11]

2.2 Procedure[2]

2.2.1 Sampling

The Los Angeles sample was recruited between mid July and mid October 2002. Participants were contacted through the distribution of information material in baby classes, clinics, as well as through personal recruitment and snowball technique. The appointment for the assessment was set by telephone. US-American and (bilingual) German research students made home visits when the baby was between 11 and 14 weeks of age in order to collect the data. After completing the data collection, mothers were asked whether their mothers lived in Los Angeles or nearby and whether they would be willing to participate. An extra appointment was then set with the grandmother who was also interviewed in her home. Participation was completely voluntary on the basis of informed consent[3]. [12]

The German sample was recruited between September 2003 and January 2003. Participants were recruited through a community hospital. Pregnant women and women with very small babies were informed about the study through distribution of information material. Interested mothers could sign up and were then contacted by research assistants. Families were also recruited through snowball technique. The procedure of contacting families was equivalent to the Los Angeles procedure[4]. All participants agreed to take part in the study on a

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2   The authors are very grateful to Patricia GREENFIELD, UCLA, who graciously hosted the research team of the Los Angeles study, to the "DRK-Klinik Westend" in Berlin-Charlottenburg for recruiting the Berlin families and to Karin and Gunter GERTH who graciously hosted the German research team of the Berlin study.

3   The socialization goal questionnaire is available from the authors.

voluntary and informed consent basis. No reimbursement was given to the participants. [13]

2.2.2 Data collection

Although qualitative methodology is meanwhile becoming established in the field of psychology, qualitative methods are still rarely used in empirical studies within the realm of developmental psychology, and a stronger and more equal use of a qualitative methods in this field has been called for (MEY, 2000, 2003). In our present study, we therefore decided for a twofold methodological approach and used two types of measurement: a questionnaire specifying socialization goals for the first year of life (see also Table 2) and a qualitative semi-structured picture card interview based on our own previous work on parental ethnotheories (BORKE, 2002; EICKHORST, 2002; KELLER, YOVSI, & VÖLKER, 2002; KELLER, VOELKER & YOVSI, 2005). In addition, sociodemographic data was collected. This method triangulation (e.g., FLICK, 1995) was used to systematically enhance and complement the findings. [14]

The home visits were structured as follows: One research assistant visited the family at a time that was indicated as convenient for the mother. After a warming-up phase, socio-demographic information was assessed and the participant was asked to answer the questionnaire. Then, the picture card interview was conducted. [15]

Socialization goals questionnaire. Participants answered 18 statements, embodying socialization goals for the first three years of children's lives with a 1 – 6 point rating scale (1 = do not agree at all; 6 = agree completely). The items were compiled on the basis of literature reviews on the definition of independence and interdependence (e.g., KAĞITÇIBAŞI, 1996a). Nine statements represent independent socialization goals: (1) develop joy in life, (2) develop independence, (3) develop self-confidence, (4) become assertive, (5) develop the ability of en-forcement, (6) develop a sense of self-esteem, (7) develop creativity, (8) develop competitiveness, (9) develop a sense of self; 9 statements represent interdependent socialization goals: (1) learn to control emotions, (2) develop close personal relationships, (3) learn to understand the emotions of others, (4) learn to obey the parents, (5) learn to obey elderly persons, (6) learn to care for the well-being of others, (7) learn to help others (mother, siblings), (8) learn to cheer up others, (9) develop attachment to the family. [16]

Picture card interview. At the beginning of the interview, it was stressed that we consider women as experts of child development and that we are interested in women's opinions about baby care in different cultures. It was emphasized that there are no right or wrong answers and that we are interested in the personal opinion of the particular woman. The mother was presented 5 picture cards (21cm x 15cm) demonstrating five parenting systems as suggested by the Component Model of Parenting (KELLER, 2000, 2002) covering the following

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4   The study was approved by the ethic committee of the University of California, Los Angeles, as well as of that of the University of Osnabrueck, Germany.

infants caretaking experiences: (1) breastfeeding/nursing, (2) body contact, (3) body stimulation, (4) object stimulation, and (5) face-to-face contact. The pictures were taken from mother-infant interactions from the same sociocultural group the mother belonged to (Berlin middle class and Los Angeles middle class mothers). The mother was asked to pick the card which represented best maternal care for a three months old baby from her point of view. The other cards were removed and the mother was asked why she considered the selected card as best care and what was important about it in her opinion. She was probed until she did not add any new information. The same procedure was repeated until only one card was left. With the last card, the mother was asked why she picked this one last. The procedure was equivalent for the grandmothers. The picture cards served as narration inciting stimuli, therefore the ranking of the picture cards itself was not considered in the later analysis. All interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed afterwards. For the sake of better legibility, the interview excerpts quoted in the following do not include any pause symbols (*) although they were used in the original transcription. The interview procedure (questionnaires not included) lasted about 20 to 30 minutes. [17]

2.2.3 Data analysis

Socialization goals questionnaire. The mean scores for the independent and the interdependent scale were computed (see Table 2). [18]

Picture Card interview. Data analysis was accomplished by inductively identifying topics that the participants addressed in regard to parental ethnotheories (cf. HARKNESS et al., 2000; MILES & HUBERMAN, 1994, for similar procedures). Following the principles of qualitative text analysis, the aim was to develop categories as close as possible to the verbal material. We used a technique that borrows in large from qualitative content analysis (e.g., MAYRING, 2000a, 2000b). Qualitative content analysis aims to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis for a more qualitative text interpretation, e.g. by observing rules of analysis (the material is to be analyzed step by step, following systematic rules of procedure) and by combining inductive category development with deductive category application. Categories were carefully derived from the text material and checked against the data within the process of analysis. In the first step of the procedure, criteria of definition derived from the theoretical back-ground of the Component Model of Parenting, as well as the present research question were formulated in order to determine which aspects of the textual material should be taken into account. Following these criteria, the material was worked through and categories were step by step inductively derived. Examples from the text for each category were discussed with a group of three researchers trained in checking for reliability. 90% of agreement were reached. In the next step, the derived categories were applied to the text material. [19]

In this way, main topics in regard to parental ethnotheories were identified in the verbal material. Topics were identified independent of the pictures, i.e. if a participant talked about the same topic with respect to different picture cards; it became part of the same narration unit. The position of a topic is equivalent with

the first mentioning. In a second step, the interview data was systematically analyzed with respect to each of the identified topics for each participant. The relevant text passages were analyzed in regard to the way these topics are described by the individuals. Descriptors for each topic were identified and listed as codes under the relevant category (topic) (e.g. holding close, body contact, cuddling etc. were listed under the category "body contact"). Developmental consequences were coded separately. In a final step, descriptors belonging to the same functional category were compiled, e.g. "food, "breast milk," "nutrition," "health," "immune system" were coded as "health." Furthermore, quantitative aspects were included in the analysis by taking into account the frequencies of coded descriptors. The lists of descriptors per topic are the basis of the presented analysis. Moreover, the frequency of descriptors per topic was counted and is indicated in brackets in the result section. Frequency of mentioning a topic was interpreted as indicator for the subjective importance of the topic to the mother. Because of the compilation, the frequencies of descriptors may exceed the number of participants. [20]

3. Results

3.1 Socialization goals questionnaire

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of the independent and interdependent scales according to generation and region.

Orient ation	During the first three years of life, children should:	Berlin (N=20)				Los Angeles (N=7)			
		Mothers		Grandmothers		Mothers		Grandmothers	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Ind.	develop joy of life	5.8	0.41	4.95	0.22	5.86	0.38	5.71	0.49
Ind.	develop independence	4.45	1.39	4.15	2.08	4.71	1.11	4.29	1.38
Ind.	develop self-confidence	5.35	0.99	5.6	0.82	5.43	0.79	5.43	0.79
Ind.	become assertive	3.32 (N=19)	1.42	4.1	1.77	4	0.58	4.57	1.72
Ind.	develop the ability of enforcement	4.55	1.15	5.05	1.19	3.83	1.33	4.57	1.62
Ind.	develop a sense of self-esteem	5.55	1.0	5.1	1.62	5.43	0.79	5.43	0.79
Ind.	develop creativity	5.35	0.88	5.7	0.92	5.43	0.79	5.14	1.21
Ind.	develop competitiveness	3.6	1.54	4.85	1.35	2.57	1.13	4.43	1.81

Orient ation	During the first three years of life, children should:	Berlin (N=20)				Los Angeles (N=7)			
		Mothers		Grandmothe rs		Mothers		Grandmothe rs	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Ind.	develop joy of life	5.8	0.41	4.95	0.22	5.86	0.38	5.71	0.49
Ind.	develop independence	4.45	1.39	4.15	2.08	4.71	1.11	4.29	1.38
Ind.	develop a sense of self	4.7	1.17	4.15	1.81	5	1	5.43	0.79
Inter.	learn to control emotions	3	1.34	3.65	2.21	4.07	1.97	3.43	1.81
Inter.	develop close personal relationships	5.45	1.0	5.6	0.82	5.86	0.38	5.14	1.21
Inter.	learn to understand the emotions of others	5.05	1.0	4.4	2.06	4.43	1.51	5	1.15
Inter.	learn to obey the parents	4.4	1.1	4.85	1.60	4.57	1.40	4.86	1.21
Inter.	learn to obey elderly persons	3.15	1.31	3.95	1.82	4.57	1.62	4.14	1.86
Inter.	learn to care for the well-being of others	3.7	1.38	3.9	2.1	3.86	1.86	4.57	2.15
Inter.	learn to help others (mother, siblings)	5.2	0.83	5.75	.44	4.43	1.40	5.14	0.90
Inter.	learn to cheer up others	3.5	1.43	4.4	1.98	4	1.63	4.57	1.13
Inter.	develop attachment to the family	5.6	0.60	5.7	0.41	6	0	5.71	0.49
	Interdependence score	4.2	0.59	4.59	0.59	4.49			0.82
	Independence score	4.71 (N=19)	0.69	4.95	0.83	4.74			0.71

Table 2: Socialization goals for the first three years of life (1 = do not agree at all, 6 = agree completely) [21]

Other than expected, there are no significant differences between the samples and between the generations. Independent and interdependent socialization goals are selected to similar degrees by all participants. Yet there are slight tendencies for higher independence scores as compared to the interdependence

scores across all samples. There are also tendencies for higher interdependence scores for grandmothers in both samples, which supports our second assumption of an increase of independent orientation in the younger generation. Given the relative small sample size, complementary results from the analysis of the picture card interviews will be taken into account in order to further substantiate our findings. [22]

3.2 Picture card interviews

The numbers of topics mentioned in the four samples are listed in Table 3.

	Berlin		Los Angeles	
	Mothers	*Grandmothers*	*Mothers*	*Grandmothers*
Mean	4.0	4.1	3.4	3.7
Range	3-5	3-5	2-4	3-4

Table 3: Number of topics mentioned by the participants [23]

The LA mothers and grandmothers address fewer topics than the Berlin mothers and grandmothers. Mothers and grandmothers within the same culture, however, do not differ from each other. The following topics were identified for all samples: (1) breastfeeding, (2) body contact, (3) playing/*Beschäftigung*, and (4) avoiding overstimulation. Only the Berlin grandmothers addressed one more topic: importance of the father. This topic is, however, not included in the further analysis. [24]

a) Preference of topics: the participants from the different samples address similar topics with similar priorities as is indicated in Table 4. Breastfeeding and nursing has the highest priority for all participants, followed by body contact and close (bodily) proximity. Play and stimulation are the next frequent mentioned category. The German *Beschäftigung* is even almost equally frequent as close proximity. The next frequent aspect concerns the avoidance of mainly over-stimulation, especially with respect to motor development (cf. Table 4).

	Berlin		Los Angeles	
Topic	*Mothers*	*Grandmothers*	*Mothers*	*Grandmothers*
Breastfeeding/nursing	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.0
Body contact	2.0	2.7	2.0	2.5
Playing/*Beschäftigung*	2.0	2.2	3.3	3.6
Avoiding overstimulation	3.6	3.3	2.1	3.7
Other	2.5	3.0	3.5	3.0

Table 4: Preference of topics (mean rank) [25]

b) Descriptions of the four common topics: (The numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of descriptors mentioned per topic). [26]

3.2.1 Breastfeeding/nursing

The Berlin mothers. The main importance of breastfeeding for the Berlin mothers lies in the intimate and intensive mother-child situation, characterized by close body contact (11). The possibility for eye-contact is appreciated as well (2). The second important aspect is seen in the healthy nutrition (7). Breastfeeding, on the one hand, is simply seen as a necessity to survive and as a very practical solution to feed the child; on the other hand, it is considered to provide the infant with love, security and confidence which might not be possible to the same extent when feeding the child with a bottle. These are the important cornerstones for a good mother-child relationship that have a positive impact on development and well-being of the child. This bodily and emotional closeness is also believed to contribute to the development of self-confidence in the child.

> Example:
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> "Weil Stillen und die körperliche Nähe für das Kind ganz wichtig sind […] Also die körperliche Nähe für die geistige und körperliche Entwicklung, um Körpererfahrung zu kriegen und Liebe zu erfahren. Und das Stillen, weil Muttermilch nun mal für Babys sinnvoll ist."
>
> "Because breastfeeding and bodily proximity are really important for the child. […] I mean for the mental and physical development to experience body sensations and love. And breastfeeding [is important] because breast milk is simply good for babies." (Berlin mother 08, translated by the authors) [27]

The Berlin grandmothers. The Berlin grandmothers likewise value the intimate situation, the heartfelt relationship and the body contact between mother and baby as the most important benefits of breastfeeding (11). They too appreciate the nutritional value as a basis for healthy development (4). For them,

breastfeeding lays the foundation for love, security and confidence. However, they do not refer to broader developmental consequences.

Example:

"Weil es das alles beinhaltet, also die Nähe, dieses, äh, ja, sagen wir mal Nähe, Zärtlichkeit, Sprechen, Geräusche, all das, was hier auf den anderen Bildern sowieso passiert, ist dann noch verbunden mit dem, mit der gleichmäßigen Nahrung, dass man das immer bei sich hat, dass man dem Kind das immer geben kann, wann immer es Hunger hat, dass man, ja, der, der totale Körperkontakt."

"Because it implies all of that, that is, the closeness, this, uhm, let's say, closeness, tenderness, talking, noises, all of that what is happening on the other pictures anyway, is then still combined with the, with the consistent nutrition, that you always have it [the food] with you, that you can give it to the child at any time whenever it is hungry, that you, yes, the downright body contact." (Berlin grandmother 02, translated by the authors) [28]

The Los Angeles mothers. For the Los Angeles mothers, the nutritional value of breastfeeding and the support of the infant's health are the crucial aspects (8) Breastfeeding is, for example, believed to have a high nutritional value and to strengthen the immune system. Yet, they also value the possibility of bonding with the baby and the close (bodily) proximity (5). They also mention the more distal forms of interactions, like looking at and talking to the baby (4) which is considered to teach the child how to interact with the world as well as to foster language development. Safety, security and shelter as a result are only mentioned once. The major consequences of breastfeeding are seen in benefits for the cognitive development, like increasing the child's self-esteem, making the child smarter, and fostering the child's brain development."

Example:

"… I think that breastfeeding is the healthiest for the baby. I don't, I don't want to use formula if I don't have to, so […] gives them … builds their immune system, makes them smarter, apparently, […] for the health of the baby, the intelligence, you know, bonding also is important to, you know […] it's really important in the beginning, in the first months of the baby's life for you to feed the baby, the mother to establish that bond. Especially in the first year of the baby's life." (LA mother 01) [29]

The Los Angeles grandmothers. The Los Angeles grandmothers are more similar to the Berlin participants in their evaluations. For them, the most important aspect of breastfeeding concerns the intimate situation, the closeness between mother and baby, the emotional bond and the body contact (8). Health and nutritional value are mentioned equally frequent as distal interactions (talking, looking) (4). Breastfeeding is believed to give the baby a good start and to be important for growth and development. It fosters the recognition of the mom and love.

Example:

"I think it's just very intimate. And she's able to give the baby a good start. Healthy and rest. It's good. (Laughter) […] Uhm, I think it's the bond. The baby can use the feeling of the mother. In whole, it develops to feel really close because babies, they can feel you, they can give you part of yourself. To feed the child. And they can—I liked it, because it's so easy you know, to get the child nurtured and but also uhm it just feels good." (LA grandmother 02) [30]

Summary of the analysis of breastfeeding. Although all participants, mothers and grandmothers give breastfeeding the highest priority for good care for infants, they do refer to different care contexts. For the German mothers and grandmothers, the bodily closeness between mother and infant and the affective bond is the primary aspect. The intimate, loving relationship provides the infant with safety and security. The Berlin mothers value this as the basis for a good development and well-being of the child. The Berlin grandmothers express a related view on breastfeeding. The Los Angeles mothers, however, have a different perspective. For them, the nutritional and health aspects are predominant. Comments referring to "distal interaction" and "body contact" were mentioned with equal frequency which suggests that both topics seem equally important to the mothers. The consequences are mainly attributed to cognitive development. The emphasis on warmth and closeness thus is a distinguishing generational aspect between Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers and might be interpreted as a possible cultural difference. [31]

3.2.2 Body contact and bodily closeness

The participants also refer to body contact without necessarily referring to nursing/breastfeeding, as will become apparent in the following paragraphs. [32]

The Berlin mothers

Body contact signifies closeness and proximity for the Berlin mothers (7) which often includes cuddling, snuggling and fondling (4), expression of warmth, affection and tenderness (6). Body contact conveys security (*Geborgenheit*) and trust (*Vertrauen*, even *Urvertrauen*—the Eriksonian term of basic trust) (4). It is also considered to be fundamental to brain development and cognitive developmental progress.

Example:

"Na, weil die Mutter auch, ähnlich wie bei den anderen, ne? Der Körperkontakt ist irgendwo da, die Mutter wendet sich dem Kind zu. Das hat sicherlich, kriegt ne gewisse Zärtlichkeit, Zuwendung, fühlt sich sicherlich geborgen."

"Well, because the mother also, similar to the other [pictures], you know? The body contact is somehow there, the mother turns to the child. I am sure it has, receives a certain tenderness, attention, feels safe I'm sure." (Berlin mother 06, translated by the authors) [33]

The Berlin grandmothers

For the Berlin grandmothers, the essence of body contact also is closeness and affection (7). Togetherness and love allow the baby to develop a sense of security and trust and thus support the overall psychological/mental development.

> Example:
>
> "Ja, für die innere Stabilität in einem Kind, dass es keine Ängste entwickelt und keine äh ja, das Gegenteil wäre Ungeborgenheit und das bringt dann schon Verhaltensstörungen mit […]. Also, in dem selben Sinne, auch dieses Eingekuschelt-sein in Mutter's Arm […] dass es eben optimal Liebe und Geborgenheit empfindet, und Zuwendung und Angesprochen sein."
>
> "Yes, for the inner stability in a child, so that it won't develop any fears and no, uhm, well, the opposite would be not feeling safe and that will entail behavioural disorders […] so, in the same sense, also this snuggling in the mother's arm […], so that [the child] feels optimally loved and safe, and being attended to and addressed." (Berlin grandmother 09, translated by the authors) [34]

The Los Angeles mothers

For the Los Angeles mothers, close physical contact and bodily warmth (7) is often related to soothing and comforting a distressed baby (4). It serves the purpose of reassuring the baby, making the baby feel good, loved and safe.

> Example:
>
> "Because she's holding the baby and it looks like she's trying to soothe the baby or to calm the baby down […] make sure that you are ok, that Mommy loves you, you know, touch, talk [with] the baby and uhm […] Mommy is there – uhm – I think it's just – uhm – comfort – comforting the baby! […] That they feel like – that she's loved and the baby is gonna be ok." (LA mother 07) [35]

The Los Angeles grandmothers

Body contact is similarly interpreted by the Los Angeles grandmothers. Closeness, holding and bodily warmth (3) soothing the baby (3), reassuring the baby and making him or her feel good.

> Example:
>
> "Well, it's important 'cause it appears to me that the mother is soothing the baby. She looks a little tiny bit tense and the baby may be crying, I can't tell, but the baby is in a position that holds some body tension. And because the mother is holding it that way and because of her face, I just tend to think the baby might be fussing and she's trying to provide some soothing. And that's a terribly important motion that mothers do." (LA grandmother 15) [36]

Summary of the analysis of body contact

For the Berlin mothers and grandmothers, close bodily proximity primarily expresses warmth and affection which is supposed to build basic trust and security in the infant and to be beneficial for the whole development. For the Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers, proximity and closeness is mainly related to the more functional aspect of comforting a distressed child. Yet, the developmental consequences are assumed to be similar, i.e. fostering the development of reassurance and trust. The mothers and grandmothers in this sample however, do not refer to the broader developmental context but to the immediate feelings (feeling good and safe) of the baby. Thus, we do not find evidence for intergenerational changes but the findings do suggest some evidence for cultural differences. [37]

3.2.3 Playing/Beschäftigung

We refer to the German term *Beschäftigung* here, because it is not fully equivalent semantically to the term "playing." It covers playing and stimulating on the one hand, i.e. actions that focus on the child; on the other hand, it also denotes initiative and involvement on the part of the caregiver. The semantic differences may be indicative for different conceptions of care giving as we will discuss in the following. [38]

The Berlin mothers

Beschäftigung is the omnibus concept expressed by the German mothers. It covers talking to the child and telling the child stories (11), facial interaction and eye contact (7), playing (7), body contact (4) and presenting a toy (2). The expected developmental outcome of *Beschäftigung* is also manifold. *Beschäftigung* with the child is considered to be necessary because the child still needs to discover and learn about the world. This is difficult if the child is left on it's own. Therefore, it is believed to be important to actively stimulate the child to interact with the surrounding social and physical world. According to the mothers, it helps in achieving developmental milestones like language acquisition, in developing the senses, and learning in general. It helps in supporting brain maturation and cognitive development; it also establishes contact, builds trust, and leads to relationship and love. As a consequence, babies feel attended to (*beachtet*) and realize that they have a person who relates to them (*Bezugsperson*).

> Example:
>
> "Ich beschäftige mich gerne mit meinem Kind in spielerischer Form. Und irgendwie muss der kleine Mensch ja die Welt kennen lernen. Da finde ich sind solche Sachen so eine ganz gute Möglichkeit, um zu zeigen, was es so gibt. Farben, Formen, Gerüche, Materialien. Was es nicht alles gibt, was so kleine Kinder alles lernen müssen."

"I like to play with my child. And somehow the little person has to get to know the world. That's why I think such things are a good possibility to show [him] what there is: colors, forms, smells, materials. There are so many things that small children need to learn." (Berlin mother 33, translated by the authors) [39]

The German grandmothers

Talking to the child, as well as telling stories, is another important aspect of good infant care in the Berlin grandmothers' conceptualizations of *Beschäftigung* (9). Facial interaction and eye-contact is also an asset for the Berlin grandmothers (8). Playing (3), body contact (3), taking care of the child (2), using toys (1), and stimulating the baby (1) are other aspects mentioned. The assumed developmental consequences are mainly directed at cognitive development. For example, *Beschäftigung* with the child is expected to support the development of intelligence, to help the child make mental progress and learn from the world, as well as to stimulate the child's fantasy. The relational aspects like experiencing affection (*Zuwendung*), however, are also mentioned with regard to playing/*Beschäftigung*, e.g. the aspect that babies learn that they are not alone.

Example:

"[…] damit das Kind auch geistig Fortschritte macht, kann ich mir vorstellen. Ne, wenn man es einfach liegen lässt, dann entwickelt sich ja auch im Gehirn nichts und äh, und vor allen Dingen, wenn Kinder selber träge sind, dass man dann auch so ein bisschen mit Ihnen macht.

"[…] so that the child makes mental progress I can imagine. If you just lay down the child and leave it like that the brain won't develop and, uhm, above all, if children are lethargic themselves, that you will do something with them." (Berlin grandmother 40, translated by the authors) [40]

The Los Angeles mothers

When talking about playing, the Los Angeles mothers mainly refer to stimulating the baby's development, e.g. by talking to him or her, playing with toys, stimulating the child with colors, shapes and textures and the like (16). Distal interaction, like making the baby smile and keeping eye contact, was considered to be a part of stimulation, too (13). Physical exercise is also mentioned (3). Bonding and spending time together, however, is not very prominent in the comments by the Los Angeles mothers (4). The developmental consequences are attributed to cognitive development such as learning to imitate, developing senses, learning hand-eye coordination, and language development. The recognition of the mother is another aspect that appears to be relevant to play. The mothers refer, for example, to the child noticing and recognizing the mother, and to getting to know the mother through play situations. Physical development is also mentioned (strengthening of muscles, developing physical skills). More-over, stimulating the baby is considered to foster the child's ability to entertain itself.

Example:

"My baby loves the contrast, the bright colors, the toys. This months, I read in a book
it is important that they touch different textures that they're, you know, developing
their senses, so it's important to have this activity, you know, with sound, teaching
them tracking. Maybe that's what she is doing. You know, a lot of times I would hold
the toy and let [name of the child] watch it, you know, to develop, her ability to, you
know, track things with her eyes, with her eye-muscles. Uhm, so I think it is
important, but again – not as important as the other things." (LA mother 02) [41]

The Los Angeles grandmothers

The stimulation aspect is also the most prominent one in the Los Angeles
grandmothers' explanations of playing (showing toys, stimulating the child with
colors, shapes and movements, providing learning experiences, talking to, and
entertaining the baby) (11). Distal interaction is an important aspect for them, too.
They refer to getting the babies' attention and focusing their attention (5).
Spending affectionate time with the baby as an expression of love is a minor
aspect of playing for the Los Angeles grandmothers. The developmental conse-
quences of play are also mainly attributed to cognitive development. For example,
some mothers argued that play will contribute to develop hearing abilities, to grow
intellectually, to develop more in general, and to learn from what the child sees.
Learning to recognize the mother, developing social skills and getting a sense of
security are minor aspects in the mother's comments on play.

Example:

"Then I'll go with that, because then you're showing or you're stimulating the child with
interesting colors, shapes and movement uhm and you're a resource of those things,
too, for the child. […] I think for mental growth, uhm, I think that a child that is
stimulated in a lot of positive ways that way tends to grow intellectually and develop
more uhm uh uh of a sense of obviously a lot of variables […] and they're not dumb
mentally in that way. So I think it's important to let it grow." (LA grandmother 07) [42]

Conclusion of the analysis of playing/Beschäftigung

The German conception of *Beschäftigung* covers an emphasis on the baby in
terms of stimulation, but also an emphasis on the mother in terms of her
involvement with the baby. The animation and incitation is as important as is the
closeness and affection. The Berlin mothers relate bonding as well as cognitive
development to *Beschäftigung* whereas the Berlin grandmothers mainly focus on
the cognitive aspects of development. For the Los Angeles mothers and
grandmothers, the functional aspect of stimulating the baby's cognitive and
physical development is predominant in their conception of playing. Playing
covers stimulation of the senses with objects and toys and distal, face-to-face
interaction. Closeness and affection seems to be a minor part of playing as they
did not talk about these issues when talking about playing. We find a minor
intergenerational difference to the Berlin grandmothers who do not expect the
relational development to be influenced by *Beschäftigung* as much as the Berlin

mothers do. The cross-cultural differences, however, reveal substantial differences in the meaning of playing and *Beschäftigung* which is already visible in the semantic meaning of these terms. [43]

3.2.4 Avoiding overstimulation

The fourth and last common descriptor of infant care concerns the avoidance of overstimulation. [44]

The Berlin mothers

For the Berlin mothers, avoidance of overstimulation applies primarily to motor development (7). They do not want the babies to sit too early, to control their heads too early or to involve the babies into "wild games." The reason for this is that the spinal cord is not yet stabilized. The Berlin mothers think that parents should wait until the babies do things on their own. Three mothers also feel that overstimulation with toys is not good for the child's development because the child would be overwhelmed by the amount of stimuli. However, two Berlin mothers feel that some motor stimulation is beneficial for infant development.

> Example:
>
> "Also die Wirbelsäule selber ist ja noch nicht stabil genug. Also sämtliche Dinge, beim Sitzen usw. das geht ja nur sekundenweise. Man muß ihn da ja sehr stark halten, weil das Köpfchen hin und her wackelt noch."
>
> "Well, the spine itself is not stable enough yet. So, anything, be it sitting or something else, only works for a few seconds. You have to hold him firmly because the little head is still wobbling back and forth." (Berlin mother 15, translated by the authors) [45]

The Berlin grandmothers

Similarly, the Berlin grandmothers also dismiss "body training" and "excessive demands" like practicing sitting (4). For them, this would be equivalent to "pushing development." Two Berlin grandmothers also feel that too many toys and even too many people are not good for children's development. Two Berlin grandmothers, however, see beneficial effects in doing physical exercises with the baby like practicing sitting and head control. They feel that children like it.

> Example:
>
> "Das ist jetzt körperliche Ertüchtigung, das ist auch wichtig, dass man, aber fast noch zu früh in dem Alter. Also, ich glaube, dass ist noch gar nicht so gut, wenn man es, ich weiss es nicht genau, in welchen Alter das jetzt ist […] Also das wüßte meine Tochter genau, in welchem Alter das nun gut ist, das über die Wirbelsäule so hochzuziehen."
>
> "This now is physical training. That's important, too, that you, but almost too early at that age. Well, I think it is not such a good thing when you, .I don't know exactly at what age that is. […] well, my daughter would know exactly at what age that would be

appropriate to pull the child up by the spine like that." (Berlin grandmother 09, translated by the authors) [46]

The Los Angeles mothers

The Los Angeles mothers also indicate that motor overstimulation has to be avoided (3). One Los Angeles mother states that too much interaction has to be avoided, too. Two mothers acknowledge motor stimulation for developing physical skills like strength of legs and self-esteem. Overstimulation with toys, is not mentioned, however, it was emphasized that it is important that the child has individual time by him- or herself in order not to get over-stimulated.

Example:

"Yeah well I wouldn't put my baby on the feet like that. I think that's why uhm I don't know why. She doesn't like it the baby doesn't like it and I'm always afraid that I'm gonna hurt their legs if I have them on their feet too long! So it just doesn't feel that sturdy to me! I think of my baby as pretty sturdy but I tried just yesterday to hold her up on her feet and she did not like it at all so, that's why I chose it last." (LA mother 07) [47]

The Los Angeles grandmothers

The highest consent concerning motor overstimulation is among the Los Angeles grandmothers. They all express that three months old babies are too young and too small for being held upright, standing or lifted up and down. However, they also do not refer to toys in this respect. The risk of overstimulation thus seems to be primarily related to physical exercises that might be not appropriate at that age.

Example:

"This one became last, because I think that the child is young and it's not meaning to be having that standing upright positioning. […] I think it gets hard on their little bumps because I don't want bowlegs that they're not ready to stand and wait there at this point. So I'm not going to be pushing that issue if her [needs] are later." (LA grandmother 07) [48]

Summary for the analysis of avoiding overstimulation

Overall, the majority of the participants of all four samples conceives of motor stimulation as being inappropriate for a small baby with the Los Angeles grandmothers holding the most cohesive view. Practicing motor milestones like head control, sitting and standing is considered as too demanding for a small baby. With the exception of the Los Angeles grandmothers, there is a proportion of participants in every sample that also sees benefits in motor stimulation, mainly the strengthening of the bones and spinal cords. The proportion of positive aspects is highest among the Los Angeles mothers with 2 out of 7. Overstimulation with toys is no topic for the Los Angeles participants. The

differences between the samples across generations and cultural contexts,
however, are minor. [49]

4. Conclusion

Although Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers did not show a greater
independent orientation than the Berlin mothers and grandmothers neither in the
socialization goals questionnaire nor in the interviews, our analysis of the
interviews revealed substantial differences in the understanding and
implementation of socialization goals. These differences between the samples
might be interpreted as being related to culturally different ideas on what is ap-
propriate for an infant and what is a desirable developmental goal in a certain
cultural context. Berlin and Los Angeles middle class mothers and grandmothers
have a common understanding about infant care practices that can be considered
as good parenting. They also share the understanding of priorities. Nevertheless,
there are also differences which we will summarize as two profiles of infant care
in the following. We would like to summarize these two profiles as the holistic and
the functionalistic approach. The holistic approach seems to be characteristic for
the Berlin mothers and grandmothers whereas the functionalistic approach
seems to be characteristic for the Los Angeles mothers, as we will illustrate in the
following paragraph. The Los Angeles grandmothers express a holistic
understanding of breastfeeding and a functionalistic view on body proximity,
playing and the avoidance of overstimulation. It has, however, to be stressed that
we conceive of the two approaches as not clear-cut distinct categories but as a
matter of degree (KELLER, 2003; SPIRO, 1993). [50]

4.1 The holistic approach to care giving

With the term "holistic approach to care giving," we mainly refer to the basic
interconnectedness of care giving modalities. Likewise, the developmental
consequences of the care giving modalities reflect a unitary conception of care
and development. Although the German mothers and grandmothers have a
distinct understanding of different conceptions of care in terms of breastfeeding,
close body contact and "*Beschäftigung*," they basically refer to all of these
components when defining these conceptions. Breastfeeding is first of all
characterized by the intimate and close relationship between mother and child.
The nutritional value of breastfeeding is clearly secondary. The developmental
consequences that are mentioned refer to the bonding between mother and child,
the security and confidence of the baby, and to the general development.
Similarly, body contact denotes closeness and proximity, warmth and affection.
The developmental consequences also point to the development of security and
trust as well as to the child's cognitive development. *Beschäftigung* for the
German participants means stimulation in the context of distal, face-to-face inter-
actions. It includes the use of toys, but also comprises body contact. The devel-
opmental consequences here relate to cognitive development but also include the
affectionate relationship and the development of trust. As one mother put it:

> "Ich glaube dass das Kind diese sozialen Kontakte braucht, es muss ja irgendwo die
> Ansprache haben. Es wird angefasst, das ist sicherlich auch noch wichtig, es braucht
> ja auch den Körperkontakt und die Reize halt, weil ja die Verbindungen zwischen den
> Gehirnzellen erst mal noch gebildet werden, und insofern, ja, brauch's verschiedene
> Reize und […] dass es merkt, die Mutter geht auf das Kind zu und nimmt es ernst
> und beschäftigt sich mit ihm."

> "I believe that the child needs these social contacts; it needs being addressed in any
> way. It is touched, this is certainly also important, for it needs the body contact and
> the stimuli, because the connections between the brain cells still have to be
> established, and in that sense it needs various stimuli and […] that it realizes the
> mother approaches the child and takes it serious and deals (beschäftigt sich) with it."
> (Berlin mother 06, translated by the authors) [51]

Avoiding overstimulation is also an important imperative for Berlin mothers and
grandmothers, mainly with respect to body stimulation because they fear that it
might do harm to the still very fragile baby. To a lesser degree, overstimulation is
also referred to with respect to toy and object stimulation which should be used
moderately in order not to overwhelm the infant with too many stimuli.

> "Weiß nicht, hier mit dem würde ich vielleicht noch ein bisschen vorsichtig sein, weil
> das ja doch noch alles recht weich ist, das muss von alleine kommen. Wenn sie also
> das Kind vielleicht so hochziehen oder so das würde ich nicht so."

> "I do not know, I would be more careful with this because everything is still rather soft.
> It has to come out of its own. When they perhaps pull up the child like this or like that,
> I would not [do it] like that." (Berlin grandmother 15, translated by the authors) [52]

In general, the relationship, the warm and affectionate bond of the mother and
the baby are considered to be pivotal to children's development and to be major
ingredients of all caregiving activities. Mothers and grandmothers basically do not
differ in their views on early children's care. [53]

4.2 The functionalistic approach to care giving

With the term "functionalistic approach to care giving," we mainly refer to the
conception of distinct care giving activities with equally distinct developmental
consequences. This conception describes the views of the Los Angeles mothers
and the Los Angeles grandmothers with the exception of breastfeeding. Whereas
the Los Angeles grandmothers hold a similar view on breastfeeding as the Berlin
participants, Los Angeles mothers conceive of it mainly in terms of its nutritional
value and health with the aspect of bonding and closeness being secondary.
Breastfeeding is considered to be good for cognitive development and for safety
and security. "I would say breastfeeding is most important, because the baby
needs, you know, obviously food, shelter, safety before play and things like that,
you know" (LA mother 02). One possible explanation for this interpretation might
however be that many U.S. books on parenting emphasize that the main reason
for breastfeeding is its nutritional value and the fact that women who cannot
breastfeed can rest assured that warmth and affection can be conveyed whether

or not one is breastfeeding. Therefore, the answers of the Los Angeles mothers might not necessarily reflect a higher value of breastfeeding than for closeness. Further studies are needed in order to better understand the relationship of the value of the nutritional aspect of breastfeeding and the underlying sociocultural influences. The conception of body contact of the Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers is similar to the Berlin ones covering closeness and warmth and affection. It is, however, mainly related to soothing and comforting a distressed baby. The development of security is the assumed developmental outcome for this context: "I am burping you, I fed you or maybe you are crying because you've a colic, or may be you are tired, but you are safe with me […] when she is holding her, she is just giving her love. She is saying: I am safe, I am here for you" (LA grandmother 20). Playing mainly implies stimulating the babies, also using distal forms of interaction as means of stimulation. Bonding and affectionate time are secondary aspects. Playing is primarily good for cognitive development, physical development, and the development of social skills. "Stimulating the baby's mind. It's just play, it's very stimulating for a baby, they like to//they like to look at things" (LA mother 20). Motor stimulation is also considered as not good for the baby. "This one is cute except that I think that a baby that is three months old is too young to be on his legs like that. I don't think that's good for him physically. Cause the muscles are still developing" (LA grandmother 19). In general, Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers view caregiving activities as separate patterns with distinct developmental outcomes. The holistic conception of caregiving plays a minor role. [54]

4.3 Cross-cultural similarities and differences

The Los Angeles and the Berlin participants of our study show similar and comparable socialization goals, expressing more or less equally independent and interdependent orientations. TAMIS-LEMONDA et al. (2002) also report the co-existence of values of self-maximization as well as values related to sociability/lovingness in their sample of Euro-American mothers. Further studies are needed to specify parental goals and values with respect to different developmental stages. The Los Angeles and the Berlin participants also express similar preferences with respect to care giving practices. Their understanding of these practices and the developmental consequences, however, differs as we have outlined in the previous paragraphs. These differences can be related to the reported different emphases in parental ethnotheories between Euro-American and German participants. This is in line with other studies on parental ethnotheories that found different conceptions of independence within the European context compared to the Euro-American context (e.g. HARKNESS et al., 2000; AUKRUST et al., 2001; WELLES-NYSTRÖM, 1996; NEW & RICHMAN, 1996; TAMIS-LEMONDA, WANG, KOUTSOUVANOU & ALBRIGHT, 2002; SUIZZO, 2002). The Euro-American participants understand care giving mainly as functionally distinct units; they clearly prioritize the stimulation of cognitive development. The German participants view care giving from a more holistic approach and understand the intimate mother-child relationship as the basis for developmental progress in general, including cognitive development. The results, thus, are in line with other findings that suggest that there are similar views of

taking care of small children across diverse European societies which are predictably different from Euro-American parents' views on this subject. European parents seem to favor parenting practices that may relate to the conception of the self as autonomous relational (e.g. HARKNESS et al., 2000; AUKRUST et al., 2001; WELLES-NYSTRÖM, 1996; NEW & RICHMAN, 1996; TAMIS-LEMONDA, WANG, KOUTSOUVANOU & ALBRIGHT, 2002; SUIZZO, 2002). It is, however, an open question how these ethnotheories are embodied in parenting behaviors. German mothers' interactional behavior with their small children does not mirror necessarily the expressed focus on warmth and intimacy (KELLER, YOVSI, & VÖLKER, 2002; KELLER et al., 2003). In order to better understand the relation between attitudes and behavior, further empirical studies are needed. Also, it may be that Euro-American mothers and grandmothers see different care giving modalities in terms of different independence and interdependence functions. Thus, both independence and interdependence child-rearing goals may be important to them, but these varied goals are not necessarily pursued in all care giving situations. Another cross-cultural difference lies in the fact that, as we have pointed out earlier, most grandmothers in the Los Angeles sample lived in other geographical regions of the US. The spatial distance might of course have an influence on the mother-grandmother relationship. This leads us to the question how the mother-grandmother relationship might relate to women's socialization goals and ethnotheories of parenting. Further studies are needed that address this question in more detail. [55]

4.4 Intergenerational similarities and differences

Although age wise the mothers and grandmothers of our Berlin and Los Angeles samples are almost 30 years apart and although tremendous changes in socialization goals and parenting practices in Western independent societies have been reported (GIDDENS, 1991; GULLESTAD, 1996), the views on good infant care are amazingly and unexpectedly similar across all samples. As the grandmothers were sampled by snowball technique, however, it needs to be further investigated whether these similarities might have been smaller in a sample where the mothers and grandmothers would have been recruited independently of one another. Intergenerational changes in care giving patterns have been reported from both, independent (KELLER & LAMM, 2004) and interdependent cultural communities (KAĞITÇIBAŞI, 1996a). Changes in basically independent societies are mainly related to demands of the postmodern societies. GULLESTAD (1996), for example, analyzed Norwegian women's autobiographies and found substantial differences in the family values and the conceptions of morality between the older generation (born around 1924) and a younger generation (born around 1973). The older generation valued obedience in the context of a role-centered family whereas the younger generation valued being oneself in the context of a person-centered family. Being and creating oneself is a necessary condition of the flexibility cherished by contemporary work life (GULLESTAD, in press). Changes in family values and socialization practices in interdependent societies are reported to be related to economic changes (from subsistence to commerce, e.g., GREENFIELD & CHILDS, 1991; GREENFIELD, 2004), to educational improvement (the lower education of the Berlin

grandmothers as compared to their daughters does not seem to have an effect in our sample, though) (KAĞITÇIBAŞI, 1996B; LEVINE et al., 1996; NINIO, 1988; TCHOMBE, 1997), as well as to the exposure to modernism (FRANKEL & ROER-BORNSTEIN, 1982). [56]

One possible explanation for the unexpected similarity of views on parenting in this study is the change of view over time as mentioned by some of the grandmothers, e.g. when they value breastfeeding on the one hand, but admit on the other hand that they themselves did not breastfeed their own children. One grandmother from Los Angeles (LA grandmother 18), for example, explains why she feels that breastfeeding is the most important aspect of infant care in the following way:

> "When my babies were babies, nobody was breastfeeding. But now I see the importance of it. It's the closeness and the holding and the health reasons. I don't know. Ask my daughter. And I guess at the time, you even didn't have the freedom. It wasn't even an option. I mean nobody was doing it, and I wasn't forward thinking enough to take a stand and do it, so. Now I see my daughter doing it and I know the importance that it means to her." [57]

This example implies that grandmothers may have changed their own views according to the views of their daughters. This is an interesting example of horizontal transmission of values and might be interpreted in terms of the older generation adopting the views of their daughters in line with the present zeitgeist. However, further investigation would be needed to gain a more complex understanding of the interplay of individual views, family traditions, zeitgeist, and cultural models of parenting. Interestingly, though, this is the opposite of the inter-generational transmission of values, as prevalent in interdependent rural traditional environments, like African villages (HEWLETT & LAMB, 2002). It may signify an independent way to maintain family cohesion. [58]

5. Outlook

In general, our study contributes to the disentangling of the concept of independence in Western societies also referred to as the "Western mind" (e.g. HARKNESS et al., 2000). Societies that are similar on the surface as expressed in post modernism (GULLESTAD, 1996, in press) may host different sociocultural environments for children's development across and also within these societies (KUSSEROW, 1999; PALACIOS & MORENO, 1996). Different studies on parental ethnotheories, using different methodologies and reference to children at different stages of development, have revealed that European parents obviously share the value of warmth and close relationships more than Euro-American parents do. Our exploratory data further substantiate these differences. The Berlin mothers and grandmothers hold a holistic view on childcare and development with close proximate and intimate relationships being the foundation for developmental progress. The Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers focus more on the child and the optimal development and less on the close relationship between mother and child within a mainly functionalistic view on parenting. These

preferences may express that there is a European version of individualism where "individualization is […] not necessarily contrary to conformity" (GULLESTAD, in press, p.5). [59]

At the beginning of this paper, we have argued that ethnotheories are mediating links between cultural metamodels and parenting behaviors. Our results add complexity to the picture. The participants of our study all hold independent as well as interdependent socialization goals to similar degrees. Yet their ethnotheories put different emphases on parenting strategies supporting independence and interdependence. This is in contrast to what is assumed in the literature, i.e. parenting goals are powerful contributors to individual differences in parenting practices (HASTINGS & GRUSEC, 1998). Moreover, ethnotheories, as well as parenting attitudes and beliefs are considered to frame parenting behaviors in terms of acting in accord with them (GRUSEC, 2001). The studies of early interactional behaviors of German parent-infant interaction, however, do not mirror the importance of warmth and closeness as expressed in the interviews (KELLER et al., 2003; KELLER, YOVSI, & VÖLKER, 2002; KELLER & LAMM, 2004). Further research in different cultural environments that relates socialization goals to ethnotheories on the one hand, and ethnotheories to parenting practices on the other hand, is needed in order to better understand these complexities. [60]

With respect to sociodemographic characteristics, our samples are comparable with four exceptions. In the Los Angeles sample, the percentage of girls is much higher than in the Berlin sample (71.4% vs. 38.1%). If the gender of the child or the grandchild resp., however, would have an influence on the formulation of the ethnotheories, the expectation would be contrary to our results, since warmth and closeness are more prevalent for girls than for boys (KELLER & ZACH, 2002). However, previous studies have shown no gender differences with respect to parental ethnotheories and parenting practices with respect to small babies (KELLER, LOHAUS et al., 2004; KELLER, BORKE et al., 2005). Therefore, gender was not further considered in the present study. The second difference concerns the marital status. A higher percentage of the Los Angeles mothers as compared to the Berlin mothers are single mothers (14.3% vs. 4.8%). Single parenthood may have an effect on child rearing attitudes which has to be controlled in further studies (WEINRAUB, HORVATH, & GRINGLAS, 2002). The third differentiating aspect concerns the participation in the labor force. Los Angeles mothers and grandmothers were working to a much higher degree than Berlin mothers and grandmothers at the time of assessment. It could be speculated that the more independence promoting views of the Los Angeles mothers may be related to the fact that they are participating in the labor force much earlier and to a greater extent than the German mothers (28.6% vs. 4.8%), so that the early development of separateness and independence would be a vital demand of care giving (which applies even more to working single mothers). The Los Angeles grandmothers are also fully participating in the labor force (71.4%), whereas only 23.8% of the Berlin grandmothers do so. These differences are also reflected in the study by HARKNESS et al. (2000). About half of their Euro-American sample worked fulltime and one fourth part time. Only 7% of the Dutch

mothers worked fulltime as compared to 53% who worked part time (the samples of this study covered cohorts over the first three years; SUPER et al., 1996). These differences seem to be characteristic for different care giving environments in the United States and in Europe. Most European mothers are on maternity leave for at least the first year of their children's lives. Moreover, communal high quality day care is provided to a large extent (e.g., POPE EDWARDS, GANDINI, & GIOVANNINI, 1996). Norway, Sweden and Italy are among the European countries with the highest level of statutory maternity pay in Europe. Germany is in the middle range. The United States does not provide statutory benefits (MERCER HUMAN RESOURCE CONSULTING, 2003). Besides, the difference in size of the L.A. and the Berlin sample needs to be taken into account with regard to the interpretation of the results. As mentioned before, the limited number of grandmothers available in the Los Angeles sample let to a decreased number of mother-grandmother pairs. Further studies that include a larger number of participants are needed to link socialization goals, care giving attitudes and practices to the general patterns of life (e.g. employment structure and care giving systems) in order to better understand similarities and differences across different postmodern societies. Especially, the combination of sociological analyses of life styles and living circumstances with psychological analyses of socialization contexts may result in a better understanding of development in context. [61]

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Authors

Heidi KELLER is a professor of psychology at the University of Osnabrueck. Her research interests are directed at the integration of biology and culture over the lifespan. She is currently conducting a cross cultural research program on developmental pathways over the first six years of life.

Contact:

Prof. Dr. Heidi Keller

University of Osnabrueck
Human Sciences
Department of Development and Culture
Seminarstr. 20
49069 Osnabrueck
Germany

Tel.: ++49-541-969-4393
Fax: ++49-541-969-4770

E-mail: hkeller@uos.de
URL: http://www.psycho.uni-osnabrueck.de/fach/entwickl/

Carolin DEMUTH is currently a doctoral student of the Graduate School of Integrative Competences (Graduiertenkolleg Integrative Kompetenz) at the University of Osnabrueck. Her main interests are in the fields of cultural psychology and qualitative methods.

Contact:

Carolin Demuth

University of Osnabrueck
Human Sciences
Department of Development and Culture
Seminarstr. 20
49069 Osnabrueck
Germany

Tel.: ++49-541-969-6009
Fax: ++49-541-969-4770

E-mail: cdemuth@uos.de
URL: http://www.psycho.uni-osnabrueck.de/fach/entwickl/

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