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### Cultural diversity in center-based child care: differences and similarities in caregivers' cultural beliefs

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## **2. Cultural diversity in center-based childcare: Childrearing beliefs of professional caregivers from different cultural communities.**

### **Abstract**

The present study investigated the cultural childrearing beliefs of 116 caregivers from different cultural communities in the Netherlands (Dutch, Caribbean-Dutch, and Mediterranean-Dutch), working with two- to four-year-olds in day-care centers. Cultural childrearing beliefs were assessed with standard questionnaires, focusing on general and daycare-specific individualistic and collectivistic childrearing beliefs. Cultural differences were evident regarding general individualistic and collectivistic beliefs. Both immigrant groups agreed more with collectivistic ideas and less with individualistic ideas than Dutch caregivers. Regarding caregivers' daycare-specific beliefs, much smaller cultural differences were found. This indicates consensus among caregivers from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds on core issues of childrearing in day-care settings. Results further showed that caregivers' individualistic ideas were best predicted by their cultural community, whereas collectivistic ideas were also predicted by the diversity of caregivers' close colleagues and their years of experience. These findings demonstrate that caregivers' childrearing belief systems are in part determined through a prolonged socialization process by the belief systems of their cultural and religious communities, and in part by their professional experience and their colleagues. Discussing childrearing beliefs should therefore become customary both in day-care centers as in caregivers' professional preparation, to make caregivers more aware of their own and their colleagues' cultural beliefs. Once aware of their childrearing beliefs, caregivers can make a start in actively discussing pedagogical guidelines, in order to reach a shared approach to childrearing.

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## **2.1 Introduction**

Childcare centers in Western countries face increasing cultural diversity both among the staff and the children and families that are served (Burchinal & Cryer, 2003; Leseman, 2002; Rosenthal, 1999). Despite this increased cultural diversity, little research is available on the challenges childcare workers face everyday to match socialization goals and childrearing practices optimally, and to resolve possible cultural conflicts (cf. Bernhard & Freire, 1999; Gonzalez-Mena & Bhavnagri, 2000; Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000). Several studies in preschool settings have demonstrated the importance of teachers' educational and developmental beliefs as determinants of process quality (Abbott-Shim, Lambert, & McCarty, 2000; Maxwell, McWilliam, Hemmeter, Jones Ault, & Schuster, 2001; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abott-Shim, 2000; Scott-Little & Holloway, 1992). However, little is known about the educational and developmental beliefs of teachers from non-mainstream cultural communities.

The present study addresses cultural diversity in day-care by examining the childrearing beliefs of professional caregivers from Western and non-Western cultural communities in the Netherlands, working within one day-care system with two to four year olds. An interesting area of tension related to cultural diversity in day-care, is that official childrearing beliefs and quality standards in day-care match the individualistic child-centered model best (cf. Rosenthal, 1999), whereas the characteristics of the setting seem at least compatible with a more collectivistic orientation on part of the caregivers. Although the present research pertains to the Dutch day-care system, the broad issues studied here – individualism and collectivism in culturally diverse day-care – have more general significance.

Cultural belief systems on childrearing can be defined as a set of cognitions that parents and other caregivers personally hold about the nature of children and their development, and about their functioning in social groups, such as the peer group, the family, the community, and society at large. Belief systems include values and norms regarding children's personal and social development, and specify appropriate strategies to socialize these values and norms (Harkness & Super, 1999; McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Subramanian, 1996). Following Harkness and Super (1999), we propose that the personal childrearing beliefs of caregivers basically stem from two sources: everyday personal experiences with childrearing in par-

ticular contexts, and socially shared cultural beliefs on childrearing within particular communities. Furthermore, we propose that these sources are dynamically terrelated (cf. Bornstein & Cote, 2003; Raeff, 2000; Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996). Socially shared cultural beliefs provide the schemes for interpreting and evaluating particular events in situations of childrearing, for defining action goals and deciding upon action strategies to obtain these goals. Psychologically, processes of cognitive reconstruction, or deduction, are involved, which transform cognitions from shared and general into personal and situation-specific. In turn, personal experiences are, through processes of cognitive construction, or induction, combined into new general ideas that are shared with fellow members of the cultural community (Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996). Through these recurrent dynamics of caregivers' reasoning, cultural childrearing belief systems are both organizing experience as well as adapting to experience, providing caregivers with guidelines and reassurance while changing to meet new challenges.

Cultural belief systems on childrearing differ between cultural communities, as has been demonstrated in numerous studies in the past decades (for overviews, see Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1997; Rubin & Chung, 2006). A convenient way, adopted in many studies, to address cultural differences is the individualism-collectivism distinction, that refers to belief systems stressing individuality, competition, and independent selfhood versus relatedness, cooperation, and interdependent selfhood (cf. Triandis, 1995). The distinction has proven to be of heuristic value to order and qualify clusters of beliefs of different cultures, in particular Western and non-Western communities (Cote & Bornstein, 2003; Kemmelmeier et al., 2003), and to interpret differences in childrearing practices (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Rudy & Grusec, 2001). According to current understanding, individualism and collectivism should neither be conceived as a dichotomy, nor as mutually exclusive and opposing systems of ideas, but as graded, interrelated, and multi-dimensional instead. Individualistic and collectivistic ideas are found to coexist in many cultures (Harkness, Super, & van Tijen, 2000; Harwood, Schölmerich, & Schulze, 2000; Killen & Wainryb, 2000; Raeff, 2006). Yet, different cultures may emphasize or focus on different constellations of ideas (Greenfield et al., 2003; Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996).

In many studies, different terminologies have been used for the same or related concepts. For example, Schaefer and Edgerton (1985) and Palacios and Moreno (1996) used the terms modern and traditional to address individualistic and col-

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lectivistic beliefs respectively (see also Patel-Amin & Power, 2002; Rodriguez & Olswang, 2003), whereas, for instance, Raeff (2006) coined the terms independence and interdependence in issues of separateness and connectedness in human development and socialization. The focus in studies of collectivism or traditionalism on childrearing goals and strategies that foster respect for authorities, obedience, conformity, and social responsibility (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985) is consistent with a basic underlying goal of subordinating the individual's concerns to that of the social unit of the family and community.

Research on the role of childrearing beliefs and socialization goals of caregivers in childcare centers is scarce. A notable exception is the study by Killen, Ardila-Rey, Barrakatz, and Wang (2000). This study compared the beliefs of preschool teachers in the United States, Colombia, El Salvador, and Taiwan on a number of typical issues of group-based care and education, such as the importance of allowing individual freedom of choice and the necessity of maintaining group rules. The results indicated profound cultural differences. Compared to US teachers, Colombian, El Salvadorian, and Taiwanese teachers put more emphasis on submitting to the group and obedience to the teachers, but attached considerably less value to individual choice and initiative, which are considered important elements of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood care and education (Bredenkamp, 1985).

A recent study by Burchinal and Cryer (2003), concerning secondary analyses of the data from the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study and NICHD Study of Early Child Care, addressed cultural diversity in day-care for children up to 36 months of age. The main aim of this study was to examine whether quality of care had the same effect on developmental outcomes for white and ethnic minority children. The results confirmed the presupposition that all ethnic groups benefited about equally from 'positive parenting,' that is, sensitive and stimulating care. Furthermore, the role of caregivers' cultural childrearing beliefs was addressed in the Burchinal and Cryer study. The results indicated that the extent to which professional caregivers endorsed traditional, authoritarian beliefs was negatively related with development in the cognitive and social-emotional domains for all groups of children. Unfortunately for the present purpose, Burchinal and Cryer (2003) did not report on the relationship between endorsed childrearing beliefs and caregivers' ethnic/cultural background. Nevertheless, we expect that caregivers from ethnic minority communities - who in general were raised in collectivis-

tic communities, either in the Netherlands, or in their countries of origin (sens, Pels, Deković, & Nijsten, 1999; Mayo, 2004) - more often subscribe to traditional beliefs than caregivers from mainstream white communities. Therefore, Burchinal and Cryer's results, and indirectly also Killen et al.'s (2000) findings, may cause worry in the context of increasing diversity in day-care.

In addition to the distinction between individualism and collectivism, we differentiate between general and daycare-specific childrearing beliefs in this study. General childrearing beliefs are the underlying, implicit, and taken for granted ideas about the nature of children and their development. As these general beliefs are often not consciously held, they are less likely to be actively discussed by caregivers (cf. Harkness & Super, 1999). We expect that the cultural beliefs of caregivers' particular communities are an important source for their general childrearing beliefs. Daycare-specific beliefs, on the other hand, are those ideas directly linked with childrearing in a day-care center. These ideas are solutions to everyday problems and therefore closely tied to ideas about best practices (Harkness & Super, 2006). As caregivers share the responsibility for a group of children together with one or two colleagues, they continuously need to attune to and discuss each other's childrearing approach. As shared beliefs are transformed into new, personal beliefs (Harkness & Super, 1999; Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996), we expect that this constant discourse with colleagues provides an important source for caregivers' daycare-specific beliefs (cf. Rosenthal, 1991).

A core issue in the rearing of young children concerns finding a balance between promoting independence, or autonomy, and promoting interdependence, or relatedness, as primary goals of socialization (Greenfield et al., 2003; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005, 1997). For center-based day-care in predominantly individualistic Western countries, striking a balance between fostering individuality and independence on the one hand, and participation in the group and interdependence on the other hand, is a particularly critical issue (Singer, 1993). The reason is that center day-care is group-based, with, in most countries, one caregiver being involved with an age-heterogeneous group of up to six to eight children (OECD, 2001). Many of the daily activities are group activities, requiring observation of group rules and sociocentric attitudes. In addition to caregivers' interactions with individual children, collaborative peer interactions in group activities are considered important vehicles of cognitive and social development. In this context, the issue of cultural diversity in day-care is particularly interesting.

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In the Netherlands about 1.7 million inhabitants, 11 % of the total population, are first- or second-generation immigrants from non-Western countries. The largest immigrant groups living in the Netherlands nowadays are the Surinamese (333.500), the Antilleans (130.000), the Turkish (368.600), and the Moroccans (329.500) (CBS, 2007). Over the past 15 years, as a response to the high demand for staff in the rapidly growing Dutch day-care system, many young females from these immigrant communities have entered the day-care workforce (Bekker et al., 2005). Given the increased cultural diversity of the Dutch day-care workforce, questions arise about caregivers' cultural childrearing beliefs. The present study was set up to provide the first answers to these questions.

For the purpose of the study, we pooled immigrant caregivers into two broad groups on the basis of their immigration history, and their cultural and religious roots, and compared them with a group of Dutch caregivers working in the same day-care centers. The Caribbean group in this study consists of Surinamese and Antillean caregivers. Surinam and the Dutch Antilles are located in the Caribbean region in South-America, and have been Dutch colonies for several centuries. Both countries have a school system modeled on the Dutch system, and Dutch is the main language in schools and other official institutions. Most Surinamese and Antilleans are descendants of former African slaves and Indian and Indonesian contract laborers, who were employed on colonial plantations. Surinam and the Dutch Antilles can be characterized as predominantly collectivistic societies, characterized by extended families, close family ties and matrifocality, with a mixture of religious orientations (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, and Hindu). Research on parental beliefs of Surinamese and Antillean parents in the Netherlands shows that respect for authorities, conformity to rules of conduct, obedience to parents and sociability are still highly valued childrearing goals, whereas personal autonomy is valued only by the higher educated (Janssens et al., 1999; Mayo, 2004).

The Mediterranean group in this study consists of caregivers with a Moroccan or Turkish background. They are the descendants of the guest workers who in the 1960s and 1970s were recruited from poor rural regions in Morocco and Turkey. In the 1970s and 1980s of the previous century, many of them decided to stay permanently in the Netherlands and had their wives and families come over (CBS, 2000). Rural Turkey and Morocco can be characterized as predominantly collectivistic societies as well, but they differ from Caribbean societies in several

respects. The extended family type in these countries is strongly patrifocal and the religious orientation is rather homogeneously Islamic, predominantly of the Sunnite branch. Furthermore, there was no previous contact with the Dutch culture and education system. Moroccans and Turks living in the Netherlands still value their traditional religion and culture highly, including its collectivistic childrearing goals, such as respect for authorities, conformity to rules, and relational values, whereas the development of an autonomous self is much less valued (Janssens et al., 1999).

The focus of this study is to give insight into the issue of cultural diversity in day-care, it is the first study in the Netherlands to address cultural diversity in day-care. First we investigate whether there are cultural differences in professional caregivers' childrearing beliefs. Even though all caregivers have a Dutch professional education and all work within the same day-care system, we expect to find cultural differences in childrearing beliefs. We expect Dutch caregivers to value general individualistic metaphors, socialization goals, and socialization strategies more than Caribbean-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch caregivers do, whereas both non-Dutch groups are expected to value collectivistic ideas, goals, and strategies more than Dutch caregivers do. Second, we investigate if caregivers' childrearing beliefs are a typical ethnic/cultural phenomenon, or whether their beliefs are also determined by professional training and by the context of the day-care center, including years of experience and colleagues' beliefs (cf. Rosenthal, 1991; Smith & Sheppard, 1988). General childrearing beliefs are presupposed to reflect the fundamental ideological orientation regarding general issues of child development of the cultural communities to which caregivers belong. Daycare-specific childrearing beliefs are presupposed to reflect the particular childrearing beliefs, socialization goals and practical constraints of day-care, and are expected to be influenced by professional training and shared experiences with colleagues.

## **2.2 Method**

### *2.2.1 Subjects and Procedures*

A list of child care centers in three major cities in the Netherlands was composed using municipal sources and the yellow pages. In order to get a culturally diverse caregiver sample, mainly inner city childcare centers were selected. Letters de-



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scribing the purpose and requirements of the study were sent to 141 childcare centers. The center managers were contacted by phone two weeks after receiving the letter, and asked to participate. Of these childcare centers 95 met our inclusion criteria (they provided fulltime day care for two to four-year-olds and employed several caregivers with a non-Dutch cultural background), of which 58 (61%) agreed to participate. The main reason for refusing participation was the expected workload. Caregivers eligible for the study were identified by the center managers. In total, 178 questionnaires, together with post-paid return envelopes, were mailed to the 58 childcare centers. After three weeks, targeted caregivers who had not yet returned the questionnaire were reminded by phone. Eventually, 116 questionnaires were returned, a return rate of 65%.

Participants in this study were 116 female caregivers, working in licensed day-care centers with two- to four-year old children. Of these caregivers, 59 were Dutch; 27 were first- or second-generation immigrants from the Caribbean countries of Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, and 30 were first- or second-generation immigrants from the Mediterranean countries of Morocco and Turkey. Respondents' cultural background was assessed by self-ascription and controlled for by asking their country of birth and the country of birth of their parents. Of the immigrant caregivers, 68% were born in another country than the Netherlands, 97% had parents who both were born in another country, and 100 % had a least one parent who was born in another country.

#### *2.2.2 Measures*

Childrearing beliefs were assessed with two structured questionnaires; Schaefer and Edgerton's Parental Modernity Scale (PMS, 1985), and Killen and Smetana's Autonomy and the Group Questionnaire (AGQ, 1999). Both questionnaires were originally developed for English-speaking respondents. For the PMS, a Dutch translation was available (Leseman, Sijssling, Jap-A-Joe, & Şahin, 1995), which was checked and updated by a Dutch-American bilingual psychologist. She also assisted the first author in translating the AGQ into Dutch. Both questionnaires were slightly adjusted, whenever convenient, to fit the context of childrearing in day-care centers, for instance, by replacing the word 'parent' by 'caregiver,' and 'school' by 'day-care center.' The complete beliefs questionnaire consisted of 69 statements. Each statement required an evaluation on a five-point Likert answer-

ing scale, with scale points ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The PMS was originally developed to measure modern and traditional parental childrearing beliefs. In previous research among parents of three- and four-year-olds from Dutch, Caribbean-Dutch, and Mediterranean-Dutch communities, the PMS proved to be a sensitive instrument to determine the degree of individualistic and collectivistic orientations in childrearing, revealing strong differences between these cultural communities and high predictive validity with respect to differences in observed parent-child interactions (Leseman et al., 1995; Leseman & van Tuijl, 2005; Mayo, 2004). This led us to conclude that, although not perfect for measuring caregivers' individualistic and collectivistic childrearing beliefs, for this purpose, the PMS was the best available instrument.

Based on item content, two scales were defined. One, Individualistic Ideas ( $\alpha = .72$ , with  $k = 8$  items) reflected the degree to which subjects expressed an individualistic orientation with respect to root metaphors of children's development and learning, and preferred socialization goals and socialization strategies. Cronbach's alpha's were sufficiently equivalent across the three cultural groups (Dutch  $\alpha = .75$ , Surinamese-Dutch  $\alpha = .75$ , and Mediterranean-Dutch  $\alpha = .60$ ). Examples of individualistic statements were '*Children should be allowed to disagree with their caregiver if they feel their own ideas are better*' and '*Children learn best by doing things themselves rather than listening to others.*' The second, Collectivistic Ideas ( $\alpha = .85$ ,  $k = 25$ ), represented the degree to which subjects reported a collectivistic orientation. Cronbach's alpha's did not differ between the three groups (Dutch  $\alpha = .83$ , Caribbean-Dutch  $\alpha = .85$ , Mediterranean-Dutch  $\alpha = .85$ ). Examples of collectivistic statements are '*The most important thing to teach children is absolute obedience to caregivers*' and '*Children like to teach other children.*' The inter-correlation of both scales was  $r = -.02$  ( $p = .85$ ).

The AGQ addresses individualistic and collectivistic issues within the context of day-care, by striking a balance between children's individual concerns, such as autonomy, and group concerns, such as loyalty and conformity to the group. It was included to assess caregivers' daycare-specific beliefs. Based on item content, three scales were derived. The scale, Individual Choices ( $\alpha = .67$ ;  $k = 4$ ), measures the importance caregivers attach to letting children make their own choices and take their own decisions in the day-care setting, and the reasons teachers value for providing these choices. Sample items are '*Children should*

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*learn to make choices to foster their autonomy,* 'Children should learn to make choices to encourage their independence,' 'Children should learn to make choices to enhance their self-esteem.' Alpha's per group were comparable (Dutch  $\alpha = .67$ ; Caribbean-Dutch  $\alpha = .68$ ; Mediterranean-Dutch  $\alpha = .65$ ). The scale, Rules and Order ( $\alpha = .83$ ;  $k = 12$ ), represents caregivers' views on the importance of conformity to rules and order in day-care for children's own good. Cronbach's alpha's between the groups were equivalent ( $\alpha = .79$ ;  $\alpha = .87$ ; and  $\alpha = .78$  for Dutch, Caribbean-Dutch, and Mediterranean-Dutch caregivers respectively). Sample items are 'Children should follow rules to develop social competence,' 'Children should follow rules to learn self control,' and 'Children should follow rules to learn manners.' The third scale, Group for the Individual ( $\alpha = .85$ ;  $k = 4$ ), assesses to what extent caregivers see participation in the group as a positive choice of the individual child and as benefiting his or her individual development. Cronbach's alpha's did not differ between the three groups (Dutch  $\alpha = .84$ ; Caribbean-Dutch  $\alpha = .85$ , and Mediterranean-Dutch  $\alpha = .88$ ). Typical items are 'How important is it for a child to stay with the group during circle time?' 'A child can leave the group during circle time and learn that group participation is voluntary,' 'A child can leave the group during circle time in order to learn that he can make choices,' and 'A child can leave the group during circle time and learn that his decisions will be respected.'

Table 1 presents the intercorrelations between caregivers' general and daycare-specific beliefs. Caregivers' general individualistic and collectivistic beliefs about children and childrearing, derived from the PMS, were not related to each other. Intercorrelations between the three scales used to determine daycare-specific instances of individualism and collectivism, derived from the AGQ, showed a similar pattern. The correlations between the two scales representing individualistic ideas, i.e. 'Individual Choices' and 'Group for individual,' on the one hand, and collectivistic ideas, i.e. 'Rules and order,' on the other hand, were small and not significant. The two individualism scales of the AGQ correlated weakly with the individualism scale of the PMS, whereas the collectivism scales of AGQ and PMS were moderately correlated.

Table 1 Intercorrelations of the PMS and AGQ belief scales (N=116)

|                       | Individualistic Ideas | Individual Choices | Rules and Order | Group for Individual |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Collectivistic Ideas  | -.02                  | -.04               | .34**           | -.15                 |
| Individualistic Ideas | 1                     | -.04               | -.06            | .17                  |
| Individual Choices    |                       | 1                  | .05             | .28**                |
| Rules and Order       |                       |                    | 1               | -.05                 |
| Group for Individual  |                       |                    |                 | 1                    |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

In addition, caregivers were asked to indicate the level of professional training they had completed on a six point scale ranging from 1 (junior vocational training) to 6 (completed university training), the number of years working as a professional caregiver in day-care, the number of working hours per week, their age in years, and the importance of religion in daily life, which was rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not religious / not at all important) to 5 (very important). Furthermore, caregivers were asked to indicate the ethnic background of the two colleagues with whom they were working most closely together. The index, Cultural Diversity of Close Colleagues, was computed as the number of non-Dutch close colleagues, ranging from 0 (both close colleagues were Dutch) to 2 (both close colleagues were first or second-generation immigrants).

### 2.3 Results

The results are presented in four parts. First, we describe the background characteristics of the caregivers. Then, we compare the childrearing beliefs of the three cultural groups. Next, we present the results of a correlation analysis, relating caregivers' childrearing beliefs to their background characteristics. Finally, the results of multiple regression analyses are presented with general and daycare-specific beliefs as dependent variables, and center and caregiver characteristics as predictors.

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of a number of background characteristics of the caregivers involved in this study. There were no big

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statistically significant differences in level of training, years of experience as day-care worker and working hours. Due to Dutch legislation on caregivers' educational level, the vast majority of caregivers were trained at the senior vocational training level (value 3); few were trained at a higher (college or university) level, and very few were trained at a lower level (junior vocational training). The groups did differ in mean age (the Caribbean caregivers were older, the Mediterranean caregivers were younger than the Dutch caregivers), importance of religion in daily life (both non-Dutch groups reported religion to be much more important for them than the Dutch caregivers did), and cultural diversity among colleagues (both Dutch and Mediterranean caregivers more often had close colleagues who were first- or second-generation immigrants than Caribbean caregivers).

*Table 2 Caregivers' background characteristics broken down by group*

|                               | Range | Means and SD's  |                     |                         | $F_{(2, 114)}$ | $p$ |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----|
|                               |       | Dutch<br>(N=59) | Caribbean<br>(N=27) | Mediterranean<br>(N=30) |                |     |
| Level of training             | 1-6   | 3.31<br>(.84)   | 3.22<br>(.42)       | 3.03<br>(.18)           | 1.80           | .17 |
| Years of experience           | 1-18  | 6.27<br>(4.67)  | 6.11<br>(3.83)      | 4.92<br>(4.05)          | 1.02           | .36 |
| Working hours per week        | 3-40  | 27.39<br>(8.09) | 30.93<br>(6.92)     | 28.55<br>(5.90)         | 2.16           | .12 |
| Age in years                  | 19-59 | 31.43<br>(8.93) | 34.78<br>(7.29)     | 28.80<br>(7.22)         | 3.83*          | .03 |
| Importance of religion        | 1-5   | 1.83<br>(1.37)  | 3.56<br>(1.12)      | 4.20<br>(.96)           | 43.59*         | .00 |
| Cultural diversity colleagues | 0-2   | 1.31<br>(.73)   | .74<br>(.71)        | 1.10<br>(.66)           | 5.93*          | .00 |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3 presents the mean scores of the three groups of caregivers on the cultural childrearing beliefs scales. Analyses of variance revealed statistically significant differences between the Dutch and both Caribbean-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch caregivers on the Individualistic Ideas ( $F_{(2, 114)} = 5.57, p < .01, d = .73$  and  $d = .72$  respectively) and Collectivistic Ideas scales of the PMS ( $F_{(2, 114)} = 7.82, p < .01, d = .86$  and  $d = .85$  respectively). The differences were considerable. As was ex-  
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pected, Dutch caregivers valued general individualistic metaphors, socialization goals, and socialization strategies more than Caribbean-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch caregivers did, whereas both Caribbean-Dutch and Mediterranean-Dutch caregivers valued collectivistic ideas, goals, and strategies more than Dutch caregivers did. Tukey post-hoc tests indicated statistically significant differences between the Dutch and both non-Dutch groups ( $p$ 's < .01) on the Individualistic and Collectivistic Ideas scales. No statistically significant differences between the Caribbean and Mediterranean groups were found. Overall, the majority of the caregivers in all three cultural groups tended to agree more with individualistic than with collectivistic ideas. Remarkably, only one of the scales based on the AGQ, representing daycare-specific childrearing beliefs, revealed statistically significant differences between the three groups at the  $p < .05$  level. With Mediterranean-Dutch caregivers valuing ideas concerning 'Rules and Order' in the day-care group more than Dutch caregivers did ( $F_{(2, 114)} = 3.36, p < .05, d = .56$ ).

Table 3 Caregivers' cultural childrearing beliefs broken down by group

| Childrearing Beliefs  | Means (SD's)    |                     |                         | $F_{(2, 114)}$ | $p$ | Contrasts |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------|
|                       | Dutch<br>(N=59) | Caribbean<br>(N=27) | Mediterranean<br>(N=30) |                |     |           |
| Individualistic Ideas | 4.11<br>(.60)   | 3.65<br>(.85)       | 3.75<br>(.58)           | 5.57*          | .00 | C, M < D  |
| Collectivistic Ideas  | 2.38<br>(.63)   | 2.87<br>(.73)       | 2.84<br>(.64)           | 7.82*          | .00 | D < C, M  |
| Individual Choices    | 4.39<br>(.55)   | 4.54<br>(.76)       | 4.46<br>(.78)           | .47            | .65 |           |
| Rules and Order       | 3.64<br>(.79)   | 3.95<br>(.59)       | 3.98<br>(.43)           | 3.36*          | .04 | D < M     |
| Group for Individual  | 3.97<br>(.98)   | 4.03<br>(.89)       | 3.88<br>(.82)           | .21            | .81 |           |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Because no statistically significant differences were observed between the Caribbean-Dutch and the Mediterranean-Dutch group, the groups were pooled. A dummy-variable, Immigrant Background, was computed with values 1 (caregiver is from Caribbean or Mediterranean origin) and 0 (caregiver is from indigenous

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Dutch origin) and was used in subsequent analyses.

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlations of caregivers' cultural childrearing beliefs with their background characteristics. The pattern of correlations confirmed the rather big differences between Dutch and immigrant caregivers when general childrearing beliefs - referring to root metaphors of child development, socialization goals, and socialization strategies - are concerned. Regarding daycare-specific beliefs, Immigrant Background was positively related to beliefs concerning rules and order in the day-care group. However, there were no relationships between Immigrant Background and both the individualistic-orientated belief scales. Similarly, Importance of Religion correlated positively with Collectivistic Ideas and with ideas about Rules and Order, and negatively with Individualistic Ideas. This means that the more important religion is in daily life, the less individualistic is caregivers' orientation with respect to general childrearing issues. However, Importance of Religion was not associated with both individualistic scales on daycare-specific childrearing beliefs. Interestingly, the degree of cultural diversity among close colleagues appeared to be related to both general collectivistic ideas (but not to general individualistic ideas) and specific ideas about rules and order in day-care settings (but not to the other daycare-specific ideas). Caregivers' Years of Experience were found to be related negatively with Collectivistic Ideas, while a positive relation was found between experience and caregivers' ideas about group participation as a positive choice of an individual child. Caregivers' age was found to be positively related with ideas about Individual Choices and the scale Group for Individual. More working hours per week seemed to be positively related to general collectivistic childrearing beliefs. With respect to caregivers' level of training, no relations were found with any of the belief scales.

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*Table 4 Pearson correlations of caregivers' cultural childrearing beliefs and their background characteristics (N=116)*

| Childrearing Beliefs  | Immigrant background | Importance of religion | Diversity of colleagues | Training | Experience | Working hours | Age  |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------|------------|---------------|------|
| Collectivistic Ideas  | .34**                | .34**                  | .28**                   | -.08     | -.27**     | .23*          | -.13 |
| Individualistic Ideas | -.30**               | -.33**                 | .03                     | -.00     | -.07       | .00           | -.15 |
| Individual Choices    | .14                  | -.06                   | .05                     | .02      | .17        | -.13          | .19* |
| Rules and Order       | .23**                | .21*                   | .35**                   | -.05     | -.10       | .04           | -.06 |
| Group for Individual  | .00                  | -.15                   | .03                     | .15      | .24**      | -.09          | .20* |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Finally, five multiple regression analyses were performed to determine the multivariate relationships of caregivers' background characteristics, and their cultural childrearing beliefs. The five scales Individualistic ideas; Collectivistic ideas; Individual Choices; Rules and order, and Group for the individual were the dependent variables. Proximal variables as cultural Diversity of close Colleagues, caregivers' Years of Experience, caregivers' Age, and Working Hours per week, and more distal variables as Immigrant Background, and Importance of Religion, were entered as predictors. The proximal variables are situated in the day-care center, therefore we refer to these predictors as 'context variables.' As both caregivers' cultural background and their value of religion are connected with the larger society, we refer to these predictors as 'community variables.' For the three daycare-specific belief scales, also general individualistic and collectivistic beliefs were entered as predictors. Caregivers' level of education was not included as a predictor because no correlations with the dependent variables were found, probably due to minimal variance in caregivers' educational level. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Individualism was weakly predicted ( $R^2 = .18, p < .01$ ), by the more distal variables Immigrant Background and Importance of Religion. Collectivism was better predicted ( $R^2 = .24, p < .01$ ), with the proximal variables Diversity of close Colleagues and Years of Experience, and the distal variable Immigrant Background, as statistically significant predictors. The degree to which caregivers worked with immigrant caregivers was associated with a stronger orientation towards Collectivism, as were less years of experience, suggesting influence of colleagues on personal beliefs. Furthermore, first- and second-generation Caribbean-



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Dutch and Mediterranean-Dutch immigrant caregivers subscribed more to the broad dimension of Collectivism than indigenous Dutch caregivers.

*Table 5 Regression analysis with General childrearing beliefs as dependents and caregiver background characteristics, and child care center characteristics as predictors (N=116)*

| Predictors:                   | Individualism |              | Collectivism  |              |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|                               | Final $\beta$ | $\Delta R^2$ | Final $\beta$ | $\Delta R^2$ |
| Step 1 'Context'              |               | .02          |               | .15**        |
| Diversity of close colleagues | .02           |              | .21*          |              |
| Years of experience           | -.07          |              | -.22*         |              |
| Age                           | -.17          |              | .03           |              |
| Working hours                 | .00           |              | .16           |              |
| Step 2 'Community'            |               | .16**        |               | .09**        |
| Immigrant background          | -.24†         |              | .25*          |              |
| Importance of religion        | -.21          |              | .08           |              |
| $R^2$ Total                   |               | .18          |               | .24          |

Note. †  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 6 presents the results of regression analyses with daycare-specific childrearing beliefs as dependent variables. The scale Rules and Order was predicted best ( $R^2 = .20, p < .00$ ), with the proximal variable Diversity of close Colleagues, and caregivers' general collectivistic beliefs, as significant predictors. The degree in which caregivers work with immigrant caregivers was associated with a stronger valuation of Rules and Order, as was a higher subscription to general collectivistic beliefs, suggesting influence of colleagues as well as of caregivers' general beliefs, on their personal daycare-specific beliefs. The individualistic orientated belief scale, Group for Individual, was weakly predicted ( $R^2 = .15, p < .05$ ), with caregivers' general individualistic beliefs as a significant predictor. Caregivers who subscribed more to the dimension of Individualism, saw more benefits for children's personal development in participating in the group. The Individual Choices belief scale, could not be predicted by either context variables, general beliefs, or community variables.

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*Table 6 Regression analysis with daycare-specific childrearing beliefs as dependents, and caregiver background characteristics, and child care center characteristics as predictors (N=116)*

| Predictors:              | Individual Choices |              | Rules and Order |              | Group for individual |              |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
|                          | Final $\beta$      | $\Delta R^2$ | Final $\beta$   | $\Delta R^2$ | Final $\beta$        | $\Delta R^2$ |
| Step 1 'Context'         |                    | .06          |                 | .13**        |                      | .07*         |
| Diversity of colleagues  | .10                |              | .37**           |              | .10                  |              |
| Years of experience      | .10                |              | .02             |              | .22†                 |              |
| Age                      | .12                |              | -.06            |              | .07                  |              |
| Working hours            | -.13               |              | -.02            |              | -.07                 |              |
| Step 2 'General beliefs' |                    | .00          |                 | .07*         |                      | .04†         |
| Individualistic beliefs  | -.02               |              | -.09            |              | .19*                 |              |
| Collectivistic beliefs   | .02                |              | .25**           |              | -.08                 |              |
| Step 3 'Community'       |                    | .01          |                 | .01          |                      | .02          |
| Immigrant background     | .16                |              | .07             |              | .23†                 |              |
| Importance of religion   | -.13               |              | .04             |              | -.14                 |              |
| $R^2$ Total              |                    | .07          |                 | .20          |                      | .15          |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

## 2.4 Discussion

The increasing cultural diversity of staff and children in center-based day-care in Western countries presents the challenge of how to reconcile beliefs on child development and childrearing stemming from different cultural traditions. Theoretical models underscore the dynamic and adaptive nature of cultural beliefs through recurrent processes of deduction and induction (Bornstein & Cote, 2003; Raeff, 2000; Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996), but evidence of these processes regarding childrearing in day-care is scarce. The present study contributes to this issue in several ways. First, it was revealed that Dutch and immigrant caregivers working in Dutch day-care centers differ strongly with respect to general ideas on childrearing, despite similar professional training. Differences between caregivers

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were found on two separate dimensions, one broadly reflecting collectivistic ideas and the other broadly reflecting individualistic ideas. These differences between the groups indicate strong influences from the cultural communities to which the caregivers belong.

Second, there appears to be a high degree of consensus among caregivers about some of the core issues of childrearing in day-care settings, despite otherwise differing views. Regarding daycare-specific issues, hardly any differences between Dutch and immigrant caregivers were found. Mediterranean-Dutch caregivers were found to differ only slightly from Dutch caregivers in valuing the need to observe group rules and maintaining order, both seen as instances of collectivism. No differences between Dutch and immigrant caregivers' beliefs were found regarding the individualistic daycare-specific themes such as the importance of allowing individual choice and the benefits for personal development of group participation. These results largely contradict previous findings by Killen et al. (2000), who compared daycare-specific beliefs of caregivers in different – Western-individualistic and non-Western-collectivistic – countries and found several significant cultural differences. Our study differs from that by Killen et al. in that we compared caregivers with different cultural backgrounds within one society and one day-care system. Our results therefore, shed further light on the multidimensional issue of cultural diversity in day-care.

Third, our findings confirm that caregivers' childrearing belief systems are in part determined through a prolonged socialization process by the belief systems of their cultural and religious communities, and in part by their professional experience and their colleagues. Correlation and regression analyses with background characteristics provided information on the factors affecting caregivers' childrearing beliefs. That is, the social context of the day-care center (cultural diversity among close colleagues and caregivers' years of experience), and caregivers' cultural community (belonging to the Dutch or to immigrant communities) predicted caregivers' general childrearing beliefs. These general childrearing beliefs further predicted caregivers' daycare-specific beliefs. We interpret these findings as indicating that the presumed continuous discourse with colleagues on issues that rise in the day-care setting - as caregivers always work in pairs or threesomes - creates a situation where individuals' cognitions are transformed into shared beliefs (cf. Harkness & Super, 1999; Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996) and thus leads to more consensus among caregivers. Even though most available research on this matter

applies to parents, we assume that this holds true also for caregivers who are jointly involved in childrearing issues. The latter is consistent with previous research showing that early childhood teachers construct shared situation-specific beliefs (cf. Smith & Shepard, 1988).

Our results show that the vast majority of caregivers in all cultural groups tended to agree more with individualistic than with collectivistic ideas, but that immigrant caregivers were on average more balanced in this respect. This offers new perspectives on the issue of increasing cultural diversity in day-care, changing the starting point from worry (cf. Burchinal & Cryer, 2003) into possible promise. Ideas about relatedness and cooperation, as can be found in collectivistic communities (cf. Triandis, 1995), present an important addition to current day-care quality standards. According to critics, present day-care quality standards are based on Western models of dyadic adult-child relationships within an individualistic socialization frame and, therefore, not particularly suited for regulating the quality of group-based care (cf. Rosenthal, 1999; Singer, 1993). An important implication of this study is, therefore, that it may enhance awareness of cultural biases in conceptualizing and evaluating quality of day-care.

An interesting question for future research on cultural diversity in day-care arises from the finding that the vast majority of caregivers in all cultural groups tended to agree more with individualistic than with collectivistic ideas, but that immigrant caregivers were on average more balanced in this respect. Can we expect that caregivers who, by virtue of their own socialization, have access to more elaborated and situation-appropriate collectivistic ideas - for instance, about organizing and regulating group processes, or about promoting empathy and collaboration among children - have an advantage over other caregivers in adapting to the demands of group-based day-care?

Also, the indication that caregivers construct shared situation-specific beliefs through continuous discourse with colleagues, offers new perspectives on regulating day-care quality processes. Discussing childrearing beliefs – the nature of children and their development, children's functioning in social groups, values and norms regarding children's development – should become customary in day-care centers and in caregivers' professional preparation, in order to make caregivers more aware of their own and their colleagues' cultural beliefs. A method that can be used to provoke caregivers' beliefs about childrearing practices is the use of picture cards or short video episodes (cf. Kärtner et al., 2007). Such a method

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could easily be implemented in professional meetings. Once aware of their own childrearing beliefs, (future) caregivers can make a start in actively discussing pedagogical guidelines, and how they feel their beliefs affect their childrearing behaviors, in order to reach a shared understanding of what day-care quality is and how it can be achieved. Center directors, considering the cultural differences in childrearing beliefs, can guide these processes by reflecting upon official childrearing beliefs and desirable developmental goals. A way to accomplish this goal is through organizing short courses on certain themes - for instance on children's independence - or theories - for instance on Gordon's or Freinet's, on whose theories many (Dutch) day-care centers' pedagogical guidelines are based. A strength of this study concerns the relationship between the different aspects of caregivers' belief systems, as studied here. The correlations between the individualism and collectivism scales derived from the PMS (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985), as well as the individualism and collectivism scales derived from the AGQ (Killen & Smetana, 1999), were small and non significant. These results support the idea that collectivism and individualism represent different belief systems - not two opposing poles of a continuum - that can co-exist, not only within societies, but even within persons (Harkness et al., 2000; Mayo, 2004; Raeff, 2000). Interestingly, the two individualism scales of the AGQ were only weakly related to the individualism scale of the PMS, whereas the collectivism scales of AGQ and PMS were moderately related, suggesting less coherence in the system of individualistic beliefs compared to the system of collectivistic beliefs (cf. Bornstein & Cote, 2003). An explanation is that the 'ideal' notions of individualism in general fit in less well with the 'real' situation in day-care settings, whereas the 'ideal' notions of collectivism in general provide caregivers with more useful cognitions for adapting to the 'real' situational demands of group-based care. Finally, the current study should be considered in the context of its limitations. First, we used structured questionnaires in printed form to assess caregivers' belief systems. Structured questionnaires are useful to determine childrearing cognitions in a global way, to evaluate differences between groups, and to collect indirect evidence of a dynamic-adaptive model of cultural beliefs. However, a more direct and fine-grained examination of childrearing beliefs and the dynamics of the continuous reconstruction of beliefs, is highly desirable. Also, somewhat higher return rates would have been preferable. A further limitation concerns the AGQ; the possible sub-optimal translation could be an explanation for the lack of

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results found with the AGQ. Also the bipartite formulation of the questions could have influenced the results found with this questionnaire. In this study the focus was on day-care caregivers only. A limited set of possible determinants of caregivers' beliefs was included. Future research should include in particular measures of cultural diversity among the children and should also focus on the influence of parental childrearing beliefs. Despite these limitations, the present study offers valuable insights into the issue of cultural diversity in center-based day-care. This is an important issue in western societies where immigration has resulted in culturally and ethnically diverse communities, which nevertheless remains an underrepresented topic in current research.

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