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Differential parenting of children from diverse cultural backgrounds attending child care

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Australian Institute of Family Studies

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

Parenting is known to vary as a function of culture and education. It may also depend on the nature of the caregiver's relationship to the child (whether the caregiver is a parent or unrelated day care provider, for example), as well as the context in which the relationship takes place. It may therefore be quite common for Australian children to experience differential parenting in their transitions between home and day care, particularly if they are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Using data from the Australian Institute of Family Studies' Child Care in Cultural Context (CCICC) study, this paper explores how children from Anglo, Somali and Vietnamese cultural backgrounds are parented at home and in day care, focusing on the extent to which parenting beliefs and behaviours vary according to cultural background. The nature and extent of differences in parenting across home and day care environments, and the association of differential parenting to similarities and differences in the cultural backgrounds of carers from each of these two settings, are also addressed.

The analyses show cultural variations in parental beliefs and behaviours, as well as differences in these aspects of parenting between parents and day care providers generally. However, the nature and extent of disagreement between parents and carers varied among culturally 'mixed' dyads and culturally 'matched' dyads, suggesting that children from CALD backgrounds who are looked after by a carer from a different cultural background may encounter competing and potentially confusing expectations and responses in day care. It is suggested that carers take the necessary steps to understand children's home environments so that new and potentially conflicting day care experiences can be acknowledged and addressed.

Executive summary

A great number of Australian children spend time in non-parental day care, and studies continue to address important questions about the impact of these experiences on children's adjustment and development. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that the effects of day care need to be considered in the light of children's circumstances and experiences at home. However, little attention has been devoted to understanding differences between children's home environment and their child care context, and whether or not discontinuities between these two social systems have implications for development.

The Child Care in Cultural Context (CCICC) study puts the spotlight on the experiences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) cultural backgrounds attending long day care services in Melbourne, Australia. Its aim was to measure social aspects of children's home and day care environments, and to quantify the *nature* and *extent* of differences between these two systems.

As beliefs about child development and the factors that influence it vary considerably according to cultural context, it was expected that children raised according to a 'non-Anglo' cultural tradition would be required to make considerable adaptations to a mainstream day care service that is organised and managed according to the dominant Australian culture and a 'Western' perspective of child development. The level of early childhood education and training received by child care workers, as well as their years of experience in the early childhood profession, are also thought to have considerable influence on ways of thinking about children and childrearing, potentially increasing differences between parents and carers.

Study participants were recruited through contact with long day care services and family day care schemes in inner-city Melbourne with large enrolments of Somali and Vietnamese children. The parents and carers of 238 individual children took part in the study, reporting on 87 children from Anglo–Celtic backgrounds, 82 children from Somali backgrounds, 68 children from Vietnamese backgrounds, and 21 children from other diverse (non-Anglo) backgrounds. The children were aged 0–4 years ($M = 29.2$) and 143 (55.4%) of the study children were boys.

Parents and carers provided independent information about aspects of parenting, including parenting goals, discipline beliefs, and expected ages and stages of development. The current paper examines variations among parents and carers along these dimensions of parenting, and reports associations between parenting and culture among the parent and carer samples, and associations of parenting to early childhood education/experience among the sample of carers. Finally, differences between the parenting beliefs and behaviours of parent/carer dyads overall, and in contexts where parent/carer dyads are culturally 'matched' and 'mixed', are discussed.

Mean sample scores showed that both parents and carers regarded child independence and social skills very highly, whereas child compliance was valued to a lesser, albeit moderately important extent. In respect of discipline beliefs, both parents and carers believed reasoning was an effective discipline technique. In contrast, parents and carers believed the use of adult power was relatively ineffective. The age at which parents and carers expected children to acquire

particular skills varied to a considerable degree, perhaps reflecting the wide range of what is normal development. Rates of child development were within age ranges adopted in most 'Western' child development references, although carers had generally later expectations for development than parents.

Cultural variations in parenting beliefs and behaviours were clearly evident in the study's sample of parents and carers, reflecting generalisations of 'individualistic' ('Western') and 'collectivist' ('traditional) societies. Independence and social skills were characteristics valued more among Anglo parents than Vietnamese and Somali parents, whereas compliance was valued more by Vietnamese parents than the other three cultural groups. In relation to discipline beliefs, Somali parents believed reasoning was a more effective strategy than Anglo parents, and Somali parents also believed that power assertion was a less effective strategy than all other cultural groups. There was also a clear cultural patterning of differences in relation to developmental expectations. Somali parents expected earlier motor development than Vietnamese parents, but expected children to achieve language, cognitive and obedience/self-regulation milestones later than all other cultural groups. Anglo parents, by contrast, expected children to achieve obedience/self-regulation milestones significantly earlier than the other cultural groups. The length of time Somali and Vietnamese parents had spent in Australia accounted for significant differences among Somali and Vietnamese parents in relation to discipline beliefs and developmental expectations. This provides some evidence of acculturation in this sample of migrant parents.

Comparisons across groups of carers on parenting beliefs and behaviours revealed fewer differences among Anglo/diverse and Vietnamese carers than there were among Anglo and Vietnamese parents, although Anglo/diverse carers still valued independence more and compliance less than Vietnamese carers, and Vietnamese carers had later expectations for language development than Anglo/diverse carers. In contrast, Somali carers had significantly different responses to Anglo/diverse carers across all aspects of development. With the exception of motor development, they expected development to occur at a slower rate, they valued independence and social skills less and compliance more, and believed power assertion and inductive reasoning was less effective.

Vietnamese and Somali carers differed in their responses across all aspects of development, except in relation to the importance placed on independence and compliance, the effectiveness of inductive reasoning and expectations for motor development. Vietnamese carers valued social skills more than Somali carers, had earlier expectations for all other aspects of development except motor development, and thought power assertion was more effective. Both level of education and years of experience in the early childhood field accounted for differences observed between Vietnamese and Somali carers.

The expectation that there would be differences between parents and carers on parenting beliefs and behaviours was supported. Parents valued both compliance and social skills significantly more than carers. Parents also believed that power assertion was more effective in managing difficult child behaviour than carers. Generally, parents held earlier expectations than carers for motor and cognitive milestones, as well as independent behaviour. Differences between parents and carers in relation to the importance placed on compliance and independence, language development, independent behaviour and obedience/self-regulation were also accentuated when parents and carers were from different (or 'mixed') cultural backgrounds. Interestingly, and in contrast to the general group trend, in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads, parents valued independence less than carers, and had *later* expectations for language development, independent behaviour and obedience/self-regulation.

While differences across home and child care environments were evident in the sample overall, the fact that parents had generally earlier expectations for development and possibly higher requirements for obedience leads to the conclusion that day care experiences were unlikely to be confusing or disorienting for the children concerned. However, there appeared to be real incongruities in day care for CALD children whose parents and carers were from different cultural backgrounds. Higher expectations placed on them in relation to obedience/self-regulation and language development could be stressful for these children.

While further analyses will tease out the association of home–child care discontinuity to child outcomes, the current findings suggest that children from CALD backgrounds encounter new and potentially conflicting expectations in day care. This indicates the need for carers to understand the home environments of all children in their care, especially those from CALD backgrounds, so that sources of difference can be identified and moderated where this is deemed to be making a negative impact on children's adjustment.

Introduction

In Australia's multicultural society, approximately 4% of children under the age of 12 attending formal child care services speak a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). The Australian Institute of Family Studies' (AIFS) Child Care in Cultural Context (CCICC) study was designed to examine whether children from CALD backgrounds are cared for differently in day care and at home, and whether differential childrearing practices experienced across these environments have an impact on children's adjustment and wellbeing. The extent to which day care providers seek information about children's experiences at home and attempt to adjust the day care environment to avoid children having to deal with competing and potentially confusing expectations and responses was also investigated.

In order to examine these issues, children from Anglo–Celtic (Anglo), Somali and Vietnamese cultural groups using mostly formal (i.e., government-regulated) early child care services were represented in the research. These groups were purposely chosen in order to obtain wide variations in children's experiences of differential parenting. The Anglo cultural group was chosen because it is the dominant cultural group in Australia, and more likely to reflect the values of formal or mainstream child care services. The Vietnamese and Somali cultural groups were chosen because they represent cultures that were likely to reflect 'non-Western' childrearing values and beliefs. They have also been in Australia for varying lengths of time, and thus their levels of 'immersion' in and adoption of Australian cultural values were likely to be different. For a comprehensive overview of the study, the reader is referred to Wise and Sanson (2000).

This research paper focuses on similarities and differences in the parenting beliefs and behaviours of parents and day care providers. To simplify matters, parents and carers who are linked to individual children are referred to as parent/carer dyads, and the term 'carer' is used throughout the paper to refer to all those involved in non-parental child care, such as early childhood professionals and informal child care providers.

This introduction begins with a general overview of parenting and the factors related to variation in parenting beliefs and behaviours, with a particular emphasis on cultural influences. Previous research examining variation in parenting among parent/carer dyads, and the implications of these differences on children's adjustment in day care is then reviewed.

Variations in parenting

Parenting encompasses a number of different aspects, including beliefs, values, goals and behaviours. Each of these dimensions can influence, and be influenced by, child characteristics such as temperament (Chen & Luster, 2002), as well as aspects of the macro social system in which children grow up, such as war, the political climate and policies of multiculturalism and assimilation (Rosenthal, 2000). Parenting is also affected by physical and social contexts, childrearing

customs and the psychological characteristics of adults (Boushel, 2000; Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001).

This study focuses on parenting goals, discipline beliefs and developmental expectations as features of the social content in which children participate and thus experience directly. Parenting goals are objectives that adults have in mind when raising a child, such as independent or obedient behaviour. Discipline beliefs are attitudes held by parents and carers about the appropriateness of particular approaches to discipline, such as teaching, removing and spanking. Developmental expectations encompass ideas about what can be expected of children at different ages, such as the age at which a child is expected to reach key developmental milestones (e.g., smiling, crawling and identifying colours). Developmental expectations are generally thought to influence the way in which adults interact with children, although adult/child interactions are multi-determined (see Chen & Luster, 2002 for examples of other influences on parenting).

Cultural influences on parenting

Various aspects of parenting are known to vary both across and within cultural groups. Recent research has identified social class and childrearing experience as key sources of within-culture variation in parenting (Boushel, 2000; Cheung & Nguyen, 2001; Harkness & Super, 1996; McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1992).

Harkness and Super (1992) developed the term 'parental ethnotheories' to help explain cultural differences in parenting. Ethnotheories are collective beliefs held by a cultural group about children's development and behaviour, and include expectations about the cognitive, social and emotional development of children (Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001). They derive from parents' cultural experiences within their community or reference group, and reflect cultural beliefs about children's development and characteristics of children that are valued by the society in which the child is being raised (Harkness & Super, 1992; Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001).

Culturally embedded beliefs and expectations are thought to give shape to the childrearing practices and other elements in the environmental context of the developing child. Specific examples of childrearing practices that are influenced by ethnotheories include the physical and social setting experienced by the child, such as the number and people living in a household, gender expectations, even the child care arrangements that parents make for their children, such as whether a child is looked after by a member of the child's extended family or by an unrelated carer in a group care setting (Harkness & Super, 1992, 1996; Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999).

Basic care regimes are also influenced by culture and cultural customs. Sleeping arrangements, for example, such as whether parents or siblings share their bed with the child or not (DeLoache & Gottlieb, 2000), as well as the time parents spend in close physical contact with their child by carrying/holding them, and soothing them with close physical contact, are both likely to reflect the habits and customs of the parents' culture (Webb, 2001). Cross-cultural differences are also recognised in a number of different aspects of feeding practices, with some parents encouraging independent feeding and others preferring to directly feed their children (see, for example, Harwood, Scoelmerich, Schulze, & Gonzalez, 1999).

Parenting goals

Culture is also thought to influence the three aspects of parenting under examination in this study. Gonzalez-Mena (2001) suggested that parenting

goals, or the attributes that parents hope will be expressed in their children, are a reflection of the cultural context in which parents live. Researchers generally agree that parents hold childrearing goals that are consistent with the goals and expectations held by the culture with which they affiliate (Harwood et al., 1999).

Cross-cultural parenting research has also drawn an association between childrearing aspects (such as parenting goals, discipline practices, and beliefs about children's development) and the characteristics of 'individualistic' and 'collectivist' societies (Harwood et al., 1999).

Individualistic ('Westernised') societies are considered to value autonomy, independence and the ability to get things done on one's own, and thus encourage children to act autonomously and demonstrate initiative from an early age. Collectivist ('traditional') societies, on the other hand, place a sense of community and community responsibility above the interests of the individual. In these societies, children are encouraged to view difficulties as a group issue and are made aware of their responsibilities to their family and community.

In a study comparing Chinese–American and Anglo–American parents, Chao (1995) found that beliefs about building children's self-esteem or sense of self strongly differentiated the two groups of parents. Among the Anglo–American parents, 64% mentioned building children's self-esteem/sense of self as a childrearing goal, compared with only 8% of Chinese–American parents. Similar results were found in a study comparing Puerto Rican and Anglo–American mothers (Harwood et al., 1999).

Honest expression of emotion or 'affect' is another childrearing goal that is known to vary considerably across individualistic and collectivist cultures. If individualism is valued, then the expression of emotion is encouraged and children are taught to communicate their personal feelings. Collectivist societies, however, tend to emphasise emotional control (e.g., in Vietnamese culture; Gonzalez-Mena, 2001), or the expression of only positive emotion, so that group dynamics are not disrupted (e.g., in Hopi culture; Gonzalez-Mena, 2001). In Chao's study, helping the child to be aware of his or her feelings and encouraging the child to be honest about those feelings was considered an important childrearing goal by 40% of the Anglo–American mothers, while none of the Chinese–American mothers considered these aspects as important.

The aspirations that parents have for their children's development naturally influence the way they interact with their children. The extent to which parents wish children to develop a sense of family duty, for example, may determine the amount of time children are involved in household chores or watching over siblings compared to the time they spend in 'free play' (Harkness & Super, 1992).

Discipline beliefs

Cultural differences are also found in how parents manage difficult child behaviour. Removing a child from adults or peers for a period of time (commonly referred to as 'time-out') is often seen in Western cultures as an acceptable way to help young children avoid antisocial or difficult behaviour. However, parents who belong to a collectivist culture can view the use of time-out as very harsh, and tend to reserve it for extreme situations. Recent Australian research also found that parents' attitudes to physical punishment differed according to their cultural background. Kolar and Soriano (2000) explored the childrearing practices of Anglo, Vietnamese and Torres Strait Islander parents and found that although most parents most commonly used reasoning to discipline children (e.g., explaining to the child the necessity for rules and the consequences of their actions), beliefs about and the use of physical punishment varied between the three groups.

Developmental expectations

Empirical evidence suggests that parents of Anglo–Celtic origin often hold earlier expectations for development than parents from other cultures. In a study comparing African–American mothers and Anglo–American mothers, Sistler and Gottfried (1990) found that Anglo–American mothers had earlier expectations for the achievement of developmental tasks during infancy, such as eye contact and recognising their mother's voice. Edwards, Gandini and Giovaninni (1996) compared Italian and Anglo–American parents' expectations for the development of social skills, emotional maturity, politeness, verbal assertiveness, independence, school-related skills and compliance. They found that Anglo–American parents held expectations of earlier development than Italian parents in almost all these areas of development, with the most significant differences being in expectations about the development of social skills and verbal assertiveness. In contrast, Goldbart and Mukherjee (1999) found that Asian Indian mothers had the same expectations as Western mothers for aspects of children's motor development, such as the age at which children were expected to be sitting unsupported, walking unaided and feeding unaided. In addition, Asian Indian mothers held earlier expectations for dressing unaided and saying words, and later expectations only for becoming toilet trained.

Expectations of development are also known to influence parents' interactions with their children. Gonzalez-Mena (2001), for example, discussed the relationship between parental beliefs about the development of self-regulation and the encouragement of self-discipline compared to using parental discipline controls during early childhood. Gonzalez-Mena stated that Anglo–American and Canadian parents tend to encourage and support appropriate behaviour from the time children are toddlers, as they believe children have a capacity to control their own behaviour from a young age. In contrast, parents from other cultures, such as African–American and Hispanic cultures, tend to exercise parental control over the child's environment and the way he or she behaves until middle childhood. Moreover, cultural variation exists in when parents expect children to be completely toilet trained, which, in turn, dictates the timing and nature of toilet training. Gonzalez-Mena described situations where mothers from traditional cultures begin to toilet train their children at the age of 12 months. In contrast, Anglo parents typically do not begin to toilet train their children before they are at least two years of age.

Relations between acculturation and parenting

Acculturation can moderate the influence of culture on the rearing of children. Acculturation refers to changes in cultural models of parenting that results from continuous contact with another cultural influence, as in the case of migration (Segall et al., 1999). Although the process of acculturation is diverse and depends upon numerous factors, such as parents' attitudes to cultural assimilation, several studies have documented changes in parents' childrearing beliefs and behaviours across generations of migrant mothers and fathers (Leyendecker, Scholmerich, & Citlak, 2006) and within a single generation, according to the length of time spent in the host culture (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000).

Nature and consequences of differential parenting

Immigrant or first-generation children using mainstream child care services experience intercultural contact at an early stage in development. Given the considerable influence of culture on parenting, these children may be required to manage two environments that have entirely different emotional and social

demands (Fegans & Manlove, 1994). However, while Gonzalez-Mena (2001) has documented examples of 'culture clashes' in child care surroundings – such things as messy play, encouraging play that attempts to break gender stereotypes, and toilet training – very few empirical studies devoted to home–child care variations in parenting exist, and studies which aim to determine the association between such differences and culture are extremely rare.

Findings of researchers who have compared children's home and child care environments have been equivocal. Although empirical research has documented considerable differences between parents and carers along certain dimensions of parenting (referred to as 'differential parenting' from this point), such as responses to child initiations of interaction, social initiations to the child made by the adult, discipline practices and developmental expectations (Coe, Thornburg, & Ispa, 1996; Edwards et al., 1996; Nelson & Garduque, 1991), other studies have found a number of similarities between parents and carers. Feagans and Manlove (1994), for example, found that parents and carers in centre care settings valued certain social and emotional behaviours similarly. They also found that parents and carers agreed on the behaviours they did not find desirable in children.

Despite the inconsistent findings, it may be concluded that CALD children who spend time in child care services based on a Western perspective of development may experience differential parenting (Long & Garduque, 1987). Yet, the experience of differential parenting may not be limited to immigrant children. Various factors such as exposure to research about children's learning and development, the philosophy and objectives of the early child care and education system that are reflected in child care policies and curricula, as well as practical experience in early childhood care and education can create differences between parents and carers, irrespective of whether they are from the same cultural background or not.

Differential parenting, children's development and adjustment to child care

Developmental theory suggests that continuity across the settings in which children spend time facilitates better child outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and may be particularly important in a cross-cultural context. Although some child care research suggests that differential parenting may be less important for development, and may even confer advantages when child care quality is high, or when the child care environment provides children with valuable new experiences and relationships, (e.g., NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996), these studies tend to focus on aspects of the child's environment that are related to cognitive and language development, whereas little attention has been paid to interactions that may relate to children's behavioural and emotional adjustment. On balance, the prevailing theory and research suggests that differential parenting may pose a risk for child development (e.g., van IJzendoorn, Taveccio, Stams, Verhoeven, & Reiling, 1998).

Despite the limited evidence base, there is growing awareness among early childhood professionals, services and policy makers that consistency across the settings in which children spend time constitutes an important dimension of good quality child care. An emerging literature aimed at child care professionals is devoted to the idea of family-centred practice, which advocates respect for cultural diversity and promoting healthy cultural identity development, as well as fostering good relationships with parents to help children manage the demands and expectations derived from culturally distinct child care settings; all thought to contribute to an easier transition to the child care setting (see Hand & Wise, 2006).

Aims and hypotheses

The first aim of this research paper is to document the range of parenting beliefs and behaviours in the sample of parents and carers overall.

The next goal is to determine whether there is an association between the parenting beliefs and behaviours of parents and carers and culture, and whether there is an association between the parenting beliefs and behaviours of carers and their education/training and experience in the early childhood field. Following the notion of parental ethnotheories, it is hypothesised that parenting beliefs and behaviours will differ according to cultural background. It is also expected that carer education and experience will be associated with the parenting beliefs and behaviours of carers.

The third aim of the paper is to examine differences between the parenting beliefs and behaviours of parent/carer dyads (a) in the sample overall, and (b) when parent/carer dyads are culturally 'matched' and 'mixed'. Considerable differences are expected in the parenting beliefs and behaviours of parent/carer dyads, and differences among culturally mixed parent/carer dyads are expected to be larger than differences among culturally matched parent/carer dyads.

Methodology

Participants

The total sample included 258 children (143 boys; 55.4%) enrolled in centre care and family day care, or using informal care only. The children ranged in age from 2 months to 69 months (M = 29.2 months) and used between 8 and 55 hours of child care per week. Within this sample, four cultural groups were defined, according to parent cultural background. Anglo children had two parents born in an English-speaking country, Somali children had two parents born in Somalia, and Vietnamese children had two parents born in Vietnam. Children from other non-Anglo cultural backgrounds had at least one parent who was born in another non-English-speaking country, typically a European country such as Italy (referred to as 'diverse (non-Anglo)' throughout the paper). Accordingly, 87 children were identified as Anglo, 82 as Somali, 68 as Vietnamese and 21 as diverse (non-Anglo).

Carers who were not of Somali or Vietnamese background were grouped together and called Anglo/diverse. There were 176 (68.2%) carers who were identified as Anglo/diverse, 54 (20.9%) as Somali and 28 (10.9%) as Vietnamese. Of these carers, 143 were centre carers (96% Anglo/diverse), 99 were family day carers (45% Somali) and 12 were informal carers (Somali and Vietnamese only).

Recruitment procedures

Child care centres and family day care schemes in Melbourne metropolitan areas with large Vietnamese and Somali populations were contacted initially and asked if they would assist in the recruitment of parents and carers. Additional parents, some using informal care only, were recruited through the community networks of the Vietnamese and Somali research assistants working on the study. Given the practicalities involved in recruiting Somali and Vietnamese participants, the study was not designed to generate samples of parents and children that were

representative of Somali, Vietnamese and Anglo cultural backgrounds using child care services generally.

Data were collected in questionnaire format using a combination of Likert-type scales, categorical variables and open-ended questions. The questionnaires collected demographic information, information about child care arrangements, child development, childrearing beliefs and behaviours, parental expectations of child care and relationships between parents and carers.

Questionnaires were translated into Vietnamese or Somali and then 'back translated' to ensure accuracy. Vietnamese and Somali research assistants administered questionnaires to parents and carers in Somali or Vietnamese if this was preferred. Both the parent and carer of each child involved in the study were asked to complete questionnaires. Parent data were available for 238 children and carer data were available for 254 children. Information on parent/carer dyads was available in 226 cases.

Sample characteristics

Child care aspects

Of the total sample, 146 children were enrolled in centre care, 100 children were enrolled in family day care and 12 children were in informal care. Table 1 provides a breakdown of children by culture and child care type. It shows that the majority of Somali children used family day care, while the majority of Vietnamese, Anglo and diverse (non-Anglo) children used centre care. Of all children in the sample, 188 had carers who were from the same cultural background and 70 children had carers from a different cultural background. More specifically, 98.9% of Anglo children, 39.7% of Vietnamese children, 65.9% of Somali children and 100% of diverse (non-Anglo) children had carers from the same cultural background.

Table 1   Children from different cultural groups and their child care settings

	Centre care n (%)	Family day care n (%)	Informal care n (%)
Anglo ($n = 87$)	57 (65.5)	30 (34.5)	–
Vietnamese ($n = 68$)	42 (61.8)	22 (32.4)	4 (5.9)
Somali ($n = 82$)	29 (35.4)	45 (54.9)	8 (9.8)
Diverse (non-Anglo) ($n = 21$)	18 (85.7)	3 (14.3)	–

Family characteristics

A number of family background characteristics were collected using a categorical response format. Cultural groups were therefore compared on these demographic variables using chi-square tests for relatedness. To ensure that the chi-square assumption that minimum expected cell frequencies were greater than 5 was met (Coakes & Steed, 2001), categories within each of the demographic variables were collapsed. The diverse (non-Anglo) sample was not included as a separate group in these comparisons because of their small number, and was not combined with the Anglo sample due to a number of differences between the two samples on characteristics such as family size, paternal and maternal education, income and maternal employment.

A number of significant differences between cultures were found on family background characteristics. There were significantly more children living in

Somali families compared to Anglo and Vietnamese families, $\chi(4) = 78.35$, $p < .01$. The majority of Somali and Anglo children were living in two-parent families, while over one-third of the Vietnamese mothers were unpartnered, $\chi(2) = 11.89$, $p < .05$. Anglo children were significantly more likely to have mothers over the age of 34 years, while Vietnamese and Somali children were more likely to have mothers aged 34 years or less, $\chi(2) = 36.51$, $p < .01$.

Anglo parents had achieved a higher level of education than Somali and Vietnamese parents, $\chi(8) = 39.11$, $p < .01$ (mothers) and $\chi(6) = 59.21$, $p < .01$ (fathers). Anglo families also reported a significantly higher household income than Vietnamese and Somali families, $\chi(8) = 126.48$, $p < .01$. Somali parents were less likely to be in paid employment than Vietnamese and Anglo parents, $\chi(4) = 110.18$, $p < .01$ (mothers) and $\chi(2) = 29.29$, $p < .01$ (fathers).

In sum, Somali children lived in larger, lower-income families with parents who were less likely to be in the workforce, compared to children in Anglo and Vietnamese families. Mothers of Vietnamese children were more likely than mothers of Anglo and Somali children to be unpartnered.[1]

Measures

Parenting measures

The CCICC study assessed childrearing variables in three domains: (a) parenting goals, (b) discipline beliefs, and (c) developmental expectations. Previous research has shown considerable cultural variation in these aspects, as well as an association to child adjustment.

Parenting goals

Parent and carer questionnaires contain a series of 20 statements about childrearing concerned with self-directing ('thinks for him/her self'), conforming ('quiet and well behaved') and social behaviours ('is kind and considerate'). The scale is based on the Index of Parental Values, as modified by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985), and includes 11 of the original items. Respondents indicated how important it is that a child learns obedience, independence and social behaviours on a 5-point scale, where a score of 1 shows the characteristic is 'not at all important', and a score of 5 shows the characteristic is 'very important'.

Principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was performed, and one item, 'accepts family responsibility', was omitted due to cross loading. PCA was then performed on the remaining 19 items, which resulted in a three-factor solution: 'independent' (10 items: parent data, Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$, $n = 236$; carer data, Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$, $n = 240$), 'compliant' (6 items: parent data, Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$, $n = 236$; carer data, Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$, $n = 241$), and 'sociable' (3 items: parent data, Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$, $n = 236$; carer data, Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$, $n = 253$).

Discipline beliefs

Parent and carer questionnaires contained a series of nine statements derived from the Parenting Effectiveness Questionnaire (PEQ) (Critchley, 1996) about discipline

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[1] It should be noted that the high proportion of unpartnered Vietnamese mothers is an artifact of the non-random recruitment approach, rather than a true reflection of the Vietnamese community.

practices developed for children aged 2½ to 4 years old. Rather than asking respondents to report how often they use various discipline practices, the measure used asks respondents to indicate how effective certain responses would be in teaching a child not to repeat a particular behaviour. It was assumed that such an approach would make respondents less defensive and more likely to honestly report their disciplinary practices (Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1991). Individual items were measured on a 5-point scale, where a score of 1 shows the behaviour is 'never effective' and a score of 5 indicates that the behaviour is 'almost always effective'.

Exploratory principal components analysis with varimax rotation confirmed the two-factor model on both parent and carer data: 'beliefs about effectiveness of power assertion' (5 items: parent data, Cronbach's α = .82, n = 237; carer data, Cronbach's α = .62, n = 246), and 'beliefs about effectiveness of inductive reasoning' (4 items: parent data, Cronbach's α = .58, n = 246; carer data, Cronbach's α = .52, n = 242).

Developmental expectations

Expectations of appropriate ages for children to reach particular developmental milestones were assessed using a 21-item scale developed for the study. Respondents were asked to indicate the age at which they expected children to show a number of behaviours. Items addressed five developmental areas: motor development, language development, independent behaviour, cognitive development, and obedience and self-regulation. There were seven response categories: 0–6 months, 7–12 months, 13–24 months, 25–36 months, 37–48 months, 49–60 months and 61+ months. In the analyses, item responses were treated as continuous data, where a score of 1 indicated 0–6 months or 'early' and a score of 7 indicated 61+ months or 'late'. One motor development item, 'sit alone for 10–15 minutes on the floor', was excluded from the analysis due to the presence of a number of outliers. Based on the data reduction procedures used by Rosenthal (1994) on a similar scale, planned analyses were conducted on the five developmental areas and Cronbach's α scores were obtained.

The 'motor development' factor contained three items related to crawling, standing and walking, and Cronbach's α scores were .76 for parent data and .78 for carer data. The 'language development' factor contained three items reflecting the ability to communicate using sounds, words and conversation, and Cronbach's α scores were .78 and .81 for parent and carer data, respectively. The third factor, 'independent behaviour', included four items about independent toileting, feeding and dressing, and Cronbach's α scores were .77 for parent data and .83 for carer data. The 'cognitive development' factor contained four items pertaining to counting, reading and grouping objects. Cronbach's α scores were .83 for parent data and .81 for carer data. Finally, 'obedience and self-regulation', contained six items assessing behaviours such as being quiet and well-behaved and controlling emotions. Cronbach's α scores for parent and carer data were .89 and .90, respectively. A high score on each of these factors indicated that respondents expected children to show these behaviours at a later stage.

Acculturation

The year mothers and fathers arrived in Australia was collected to assess the length of time parents had lived in Australia. The year of arrival was subtracted from the year the questionnaire was completed in order to obtain a continuous variable indicating number of years in Australia. Among the group of Vietnamese parents, mothers had been in Australia for an average of 10.7 years (*SD* = 7.1,

range between 1 and 27 years) and fathers had been in Australia for an average of 15.1 years (*SD* = 6.8, range between 1 and 35 years). Among the Somali parents, mothers had been in Australia for an average of 5.9 years (*SD* = 2.3, range between 1 and 12 years) and fathers had been in Australia for an average of 6.8 years (*SD* = 3.6, range between 1 and 17 years). These variables were used as a proxy for acculturation, with the suggestion that, as length of time in the host culture increases, individuals become more acculturated to the mainstream culture (Segall et al., 1999).

Results

Parenting beliefs and behaviours in the sample overall

To obtain an overall picture of parenting beliefs and behaviours among the sample of parents and carers, mean and standard deviation scores were generated for each aspect of parenting measured (see Table 2 on p. 11).

Parenting goals

In respect of parenting goals, both parents and carers regarded child independence and social skills very highly. Child compliance was valued to a lesser extent by both parents and carers. Mean scores were moderately high, however, indicating that compliance was also regarded favourably.

Discipline beliefs

In respect of discipline beliefs, both parents and carers believed reasoning to be a relatively effective measure in managing difficult child behaviour, and thought the use of power to be considerably less effective.

Developmental expectations

Individual items in the developmental expectations scale are reported in Table 2, in addition to summary sub-scale scores for easier interpretation of parents' and carers' beliefs about the timing of children's developmental milestones. The analyses show that parents and carers generally expect to see children sitting unsupported, crawling, standing independently, walking, and making sounds to communicate before their first birthday. Carers and parents expected 1-year-olds to be able to speak a few words and understand more. Parents and carers both expected 2-year-old children to be able to carry on a simple conversation, to indicate toileting needs, to feed themselves with a spoon or fork and to understand that some things are not allowed. Although the responses of parents and carers ranged widely, parents also expected 2-year-old children to be toilet trained and to be able to sort objects, whereas carers did not expect this until children were aged 3. Parents and carers expected 3-year-old children to be able to dress themselves, to recognise some letters and to be able to count up to 10. Parents and carers also expected that 3-year old children would be able to understand the reason for rules and the effect of their own behaviour on others. Parents also expected 3-year-old children to be well behaved and to obey adults, and also expected them to be able to recognise familiar signs, whereas carers did not expect this until children were aged 4. Both parents and carers expected 4-year-old children to be able to control their emotions.

Table 2   Mean and standard deviation scores on parenting measures

Measure	Parent	Carer
	Mean (*SD*)	
Parenting goals		
Independent	4.26 (.59)	4.20 (.61)
Compliant	4.08 (.62)	3.64 (.84)
Sociable	4.41 (.66)	4.20 (.66)
Discipline beliefs		
Inductive reasoning	3.87 (.66)	3.99 (.65)
Power assertion	2.25 (.89)	1.66 (.61)
Developmental expectations		
Motor development	2.36 (.44)	2.56 (.46)
Sits unsupported	1.91 (1.16)	2.16 (1.34)
Crawls on all fours	1.94 (.48)	2.08 (.58)
Stands independently	2.39 (.57)	2.63 (.61)
Walks alone	2.76 (.55)	2.98 (.46)
Language development	3.18 (.72)	3.34 (.81)
Makes sounds to communicate	2.32 (.99)	2.14 (1.17)
Speaks 2–6 words, understands more	3.20 (.75)	3.50 (.76)
Carries on a simple conversation	4.10 (.87)	4.32 (.80)
Independent behaviour	4.58 (.67)	4.77 (.76)
Says when need to go to the toilet in enough time	4.23 (.68)	4.52 (.66)
Is completely toilet trained	4.83 (.85)	5.07 (.84)
Feeds self independently with spoon or fork	4.03 (1.07)	4.15 (1.22)
Dresses alone	5.24 (.85)	5.33 (.95)
Cognitive development	5.27 (.76)	5.65 (.76)
Reads familiar signs/logos	5.70 (.95)	6.09 (.89)
Recognises some letters by name	5.36 (.88)	5.72 (.87)
Counts to 10 in correct order	5.08 (.91)	5.38 (.97)
Sorts objects	4.92 (1.01)	5.36 (1.04)
Obedience and self-regulation	5.37 (.97)	5.54 (1.00)
Understands that some things are not allowed	4.67 (1.35)	4.92 (1.32)
Understands effect of own behaviour on others	5.36 (1.22)	5.41 (1.11)
Understands reason for rules	5.50 (1.12)	5.61 (1.07)
Obeys parents/other adults	4.96 (1.36)	5.27 (1.32)
Is quiet and well-behaved	5.56 (1.19)	6.00 (1.17)
Controls own emotions	6.18 (.98)	6.21 (1.05)

Cultural variation in parenting beliefs and behaviours

To explore cultural differences in parenting beliefs and behaviours, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs), utilising post-hoc Scheffe tests, were conducted. Analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were used to ascertain whether cultural differences in parent scores on parenting measures were confounded by the length of time spent in Australia (believed to be a marker of acculturation), and whether carer scores on parenting measures were confounded by early childhood education/training and experience.

Cultural variations in parent scores on parenting measures

ANOVAs (see Table 3 on p. 13) suggested all aspects of parenting varied according to cultural background. The source of significance for all aspects of parenting is discussed below.

Parenting goals

In respect of parenting goals, Anglo parents valued child independence significantly more than Vietnamese and Somali parents, and Vietnamese and diverse (non-Anglo) parents valued child independence significantly more than Somali parents. Child compliance was valued significantly more by Vietnamese parents than both Anglo and Somali parents, and social skills were valued significantly more by Anglo parents than Vietnamese and Somali parents. Diverse (non-Anglo) parents also valued social skills significantly more than Somali parents. The length of time mothers and fathers had been in Australia did not account for differences between Somali and Vietnamese parents.

Discipline beliefs

Analyses revealed significant differences between cultural groups on beliefs about the effectiveness of power assertion and reasoning in managing difficult child behaviour. Somali parents thought power assertion to be less effective than each of the other three cultural groups. Somali parents also thought reasoning was more effective than Anglo parents. The years that mothers and fathers had spent in Australia accounted for significant differences in beliefs about the effectiveness of reasoning observed between Somali and Vietnamese parents.

Developmental expectations

Somali parents expected children's motor skills to develop earlier than Vietnamese parents. In contrast, Somali parents expected cognitive and language milestones later than all other cultural groups. Somali parents expected independent behaviour later than all other cultural groups, and Vietnamese parents expected independent behaviour later than Anglo parents. Similarly, Somali parents also expected obedience/self-regulation later than the other cultural groups, and Vietnamese parents expected children to achieve obedience/self-regulation milestones at a later stage than Anglo parents. The length of time parents had spent in Australia accounted for differences in all developmental expectations observed between Vietnamese and Somali parents.

Cultural variations in carer scores on parenting beliefs and behaviours

Parenting beliefs and behaviours of carers from different cultural backgrounds were compared. One-way ANOVAs were conducted and significant differences were examined using post-hoc Scheffe tests. Summary statistics are shown in Table 4 on p. 13.

Anglo/diverse carers valued independence more and compliance less than Vietnamese carers, and Vietnamese carers had later expectations for language development than Anglo/diverse carers. Somali carers had significantly different responses to Anglo/diverse carers across all aspects of development. With the exception of motor development, they expected development to occur at a slower rate, valued independence and social skills less and compliance more, and believed power assertion and inductive reasoning was less effective.

Vietnamese and Somali carers differed considerably in their responses. Vietnamese carers valued social skills more than Somali carers, had earlier expectations for all aspects of development except motor development, and thought power assertion was more effective. However, both level of education and years of experience in the early childhood field accounted for differences between Somali and Vietnamese carers.

Table 3   Cultural variations in parent scores on parenting measures

	Anglo	Vietnamese	Somali	Diverse (non-Anglo)	F(sig)	n
			Mean (*SD*)			
Parenting goals						
Independent	4.63 (.32)	4.19 (.42)	3.83 (.62)	4.33 (.78)	33.30***	236
Compliant	3.91 (.58)	4.37 (.53)	4.01 (.64)	4.06 (.72)	7.80***	236
Sociable	4.77 (.33)	4.45 (.52)	3.88 (.68)	4.45 (.88)	31.64***	236
Discipline beliefs						
Power assertion	2.51 (.65)	2.72 (.70)	1.39 (.74)	2.47 (.82)	47.57***	237
Inductive reasoning	3.71 (.70)	3.83 (.54)	4.05 (.66)	4.08 (.66)	4.20**	237
Developmental expectations						
Motor development	2.38 (.37)	2.47 (.57)	2.23 (.36)	2.35 (.33)	3.64*	237
Language development	2.78 (.50)	3.28 (.69)	3.72 (.68)	2.92 (.58)	30.47***	237
Independent behaviour	4.31 (.49)	4.61 (.57)	4.92 (.80)	4.42 (.60)	12.20***	237
Cognitive development	5.00 (.70)	5.12 (.73)	5.78 (.60)	5.12 (.83)	17.79***	237
Obedience and self-regulation	4.81 (.78)	5.45 (.88)	6.11 (.74)	4.94 (.91)	34.07***	237

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4   Cultural variations in carer scores on parenting measures

	Anglo/diverse	Vietnamese	Somali	F(sig)	n
		Mean (*SD*)			
Parenting goals					
Independent	4.39 (.49)	3.98 (.44)	3.71 (.73)	34.87***	254
Compliant	3.49 (.89)	4.04 (.65)	3.94 (.61)	9.35***	249
Sociable	4.29 (.61)	4.26 (.66)	3.85 (.72)	9.85***	254
Discipline beliefs					
Power assertion	1.76 (.61)	1.91 (.51)	1.25 (.43)	19.34***	253
Inductive reasoning	4.08 (.68)	3.90 (.50)	3.72 (.57)	6.83**	253
Developmental expectations					
Motor development	2.64 (.50)	2.52 (.29)	2.30 (.27)	12.48**	253
Language development	3.00 (.63)	3.38 (.45)	4.38 (.51)	112.60***	254
Independent behaviour	4.49 (.61)	4.64 (.48)	5.74 (.45)	101.03***	254
Cognitive development	5.53 (.70)	5.13 (.74)	6.32 (.51)	38.03***	254
Obedience and self-regulation	5.21 (.87)	5.21 (.76)	6.74 (.39)	81.86***	254

Notes: ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Differential parenting among parents and carers

Discrepancy scores were created in order to describe the difference between parent/carer dyads (the responses of parents and carers linked to a specific child) along parenting measures used in this study. Discrepancy scores are the result of subtracting carer scores from parent scores (parent score – carer score = discrepancy score).

Positive discrepancy values indicate that parent scores were higher than carer scores (indicating greater importance of a parenting goal, stronger beliefs in the effectiveness of a discipline method and *later* expectations for an aspect of development), and negative values indicate that carer scores were higher than parent scores. A positive score for the 'compliant' parenting goal measure, for example, would indicate that parents value compliance in children more than carers, whereas a negative score would indicate the reverse. The size of the discrepancy score indicates the relative size of the difference between parent and carer scores (a score of –3 indicates greater difference than a score of –1, for example). A score of zero indicates parents and carers rated that particular item/ scale the same.

Table 5 presents mean discrepancy scores for each parenting measure. Minimum and maximum values are also presented to indicate the variation in discrepancy scores among parent/carer dyads. Results of these analyses suggest considerable variation among individual pairs of carers and parents across all parenting measures, with perhaps the greatest discrepancy being in relation to beliefs about power assertion and the extent to which compliance is a valued characteristic in children.

Table 5   Discrepancy scores for parenting measures

	Mean (*SD*)	Min	Max	*n*
Parenting goals				
Independent	.01 (.70)	–3.10	2.05	232
Compliant	.43 (1.05)	–3.00	3.00	230
Sociable	.18 (.85)	–3.67	2.67	232
Discipline beliefs				
Power assertion	.59 (1.02)	–2.60	3.40	232
Inductive reasoning	–.12 (.94)	–3.33	2.00	232
Developmental expectations				
Motor development	–.21 (.63)	–3.00	3.33	232
Language development	–.11 (.94)	–3.00	3.33	233
Independent behaviour	–.16 (.83)	–2.25	2.75	233
Cognitive development	–.35 (.98)	–2.58	2.50	233
Obedience and self-regulation	–.14 (1.23)	–3.67	4.83	233

Comparisons between parents and carers groups on parenting beliefs and behaviours

To determine whether differences between parents and carers were statistically significant, parent and carer scores on parenting measures were compared using *t*-tests for paired samples. These analyses compare the average or mean score obtained for parents with the average mean score obtained for carers, and thus do not take into consideration variations among individual parent/carer dyads. The analyses also include only those cases in which carer and parent data could be linked to a particular child. Table 6 on p. 15 shows the results of the paired *t*-tests for the total sample.

Significant differences were observed between groups of parents and carers along most parenting measures used in the current study. Parents valued both compliance and social skills in children significantly more than carers, whereas independence was valued to a similar degree by both groups. Parents also thought power assertion to be a more effective discipline technique than carers did. The difference between parents and carers in their beliefs about reasoning (carers reporting this to be more effective than parents did) was approaching statistical

significance ($p < .1$). Generally, carers held significantly later expectations for children's development than parents. Differences between parents and carers were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level in respect of children's motor development, independent behaviour and cognitive development.

Table 6   Differential parenting between parents and carers

	Parent	Carer	t(sig)	n
Parenting goals				
Independent	4.26	4.25	.21	232
Compliant	4.04	3.66	6.13***	230
Sociable	4.41	4.23	3.18**	232
Discipline beliefs				
Power assertion	2.25	1.67	8.74***	232
Inductive reasoning	3.87	3.99	−1.91	232
Developmental expectations				
Motor development	2.36	2.57	−5.14***	232
Language development	3.19	3.30	−1.75	233
Independent behaviour	4.57	4.73	−2.94**	233
Cognitive development	5.26	5.61	−5.40***	233
Obedience and self-regulation	5.36	5.50	−1.70	233

Notes: ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Association of culture with differences across parent/carer dyads

To determine whether culturally mixed parent/carer dyads differed along parenting measures more than culturally matched parent/carer dyads, independent sample *t*-test analyses were used. For the purpose of these analyses, the following were considered matched dyads:

- Somali parent/carer dyads;
- Vietnamese parent/carer dyads;
- Anglo parent and Anglo/diverse carer dyads; and
- diverse (non-Anglo) parent and Anglo/diverse carer dyads.

Results of these analyses (reported in Table 7 on p. 16) suggest that there is more disagreement among culturally mixed parent/carer dyads than culturally matched parent/carer dyads in relation to how each values child compliance and independence. This is also true of expectations for language development and obedience/self-regulation. Contrary to expectation, however, parents and carers from the same cultural background disagree more in relation to expectations for independent behaviour than parents and carers from different cultural backgrounds, suggesting other sources of parenting variation.

It is also interesting to note the *direction of difference* (that is, whether discrepancy scores are positive or negative in value) between parents and carers in culturally matched and culturally mixed dyads. In culturally matched parent/carer dyads, parents valued independence more than carers, whereas in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads, the reverse was true (that is, parents valued independence less than carers). Moreover, in culturally matched parent/carer dyads, parents had *earlier* expectations for language development, independent behaviour and obedience/self-regulation than carers, but in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads, parents had *later* expectations in these areas than carers.

Table 7   Mean discrepancy scores for culturally matched and mixed parent/carer dyads

	Group type	Mean (*SD*)	*t*(sig)	*n*
Parenting goals				
Independent	Matched	.12 (.68)	3.96***	171
	Mixed	−.29 (.69)		61
Compliant	Matched	.31 (1.05)	−2.71**	169
	Mixed	.74 (1.02)		61
Sociable	Matched	.24 (.86)	1.88	171
	Mixed	.00 (.82)		61
Discipline beliefs				
Power assertion	Matched	.63 (.86)	1.06	172
	Mixed	.47 (1.40)		60
Inductive reasoning	Matched	−.10 (.92)	6.36	172
	Mixed	−.18 (.10)		60
Developmental expectations				
Motor development	Matched	−.23 (.61)	−.614	171
	Mixed	−.17 (.71)		61
Language development	Matched	−.32 (.80)	−6.15***	172
	Mixed	.48 (1.06)		61
Independent behaviour	Matched	−.26 (.79)	−3.25**	172
	Mixed	.13 (.87)		61
Cognitive development	Matched	−.40 (.94)	−1.50	172
	Mixed	−.19 (1.07)		61
Obedience and self-regulation	Matched	−.32 (1.06)	−3.97***	172
	Mixed	.38 (1.51)		61

Notes: ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.

Discussion

This research paper examined differences among parents and carers involved in the AIFS Child Care in Cultural Context study along aspects of parenting beliefs and behaviours, and the association of culture to such differences.

General attitudes towards child development and its influences

Mean sample scores produced a useful description of the parenting beliefs and behaviours of parents and carers involved in the current study. They showed that both parents and carers regarded child independence and social skills very highly. Child compliance was valued to a lesser extent, but both carers and parents considered it to be an important attribute. In respect of discipline beliefs, both parents and carers believed reasoning to be a relatively effective measure in managing difficult child behaviour, but believed that the use of power was considerably less effective. The age at which parents and carers expected children to acquire particular skills varied to a considerable degree, perhaps reflecting the wide range of what is normal development. Parent and carer mean group scores consistently fell within guidelines for expected developmental milestones published in most Western child health and development handbooks and manuals. However, there were some contrasts in parent and carer expectations. Parents expected 2-year-old children to be toilet trained and to be able to sort objects, whereas carers did not expect these skills to develop until children were aged 3.

Parents also expected 3-year-old children to be well behaved and to obey adults, and they also expected them be able to recognise familiar signs. On average, carers did not expect these skills to emerge until children were aged 4.

Cultural variation in parenting

Although substantial variation *within* cultures is to be expected (Gonzalez-Mena, 2001), a large body of empirical research points to culture as a source of disparity in beliefs about children's development and its influences (Harkness & Super, 1992). In accordance with these earlier findings, cultural variations in parenting beliefs and behaviours were clearly evident in the study's sample of parents and carers.

Cultural variations in parent scores on parenting beliefs and behaviours

The pattern of differences observed in parenting goals reflects the generalisations of individualistic and collectivist societies outlined in the introduction to the paper. Independence and social skills were characteristics valued more among Anglo parents than Vietnamese and Somali parents, whereas compliance was valued more by Vietnamese parents than the other three cultural groups. Cultural differences in childrearing goals were not affected by the length of time parents had spent in Australia, however, which is at odds with the literature suggesting that most individuals make some adaptations to their new cultural context after a period of time (Chao, 1995; Harwood et al., 1999).

In relation to discipline beliefs, Somali parents believed reasoning was a more effective strategy than Anglo parents, and Somali parents also believed that power assertion was a less effective strategy than all other cultural groups. However, the length of time Somali and Vietnamese parents had spent in Australia accounted for these differences, suggesting that the sample of Somali and Vietnamese parents altered traditional beliefs about discipline when exposed to Australian norms, which is more in tune with the prevailing literature (Segall et al., 1999).

There was also a clear cultural patterning of differences in relation to developmental expectations. Somali parents expected earlier motor development than Vietnamese parents, which may be a reflection of an African lifestyle that emphasises the importance of physical skills for survival (Dybdahl & Hundeide, 1998). Somali parents, however, expected children to achieve language, cognitive, independent and obedience/self-regulation milestones later than all other cultural groups, whereas Anglo parents expected children to achieve independent and obedience/self-regulation milestones significantly earlier than the other groups. The fact that Anglo parents held earlier expectations than parents from other cultures mirrors much of the American literature that has found earlier expectations in Anglo–American parents as compared to the expectations of parents from other cultural backgrounds (e.g., Sistler & Gottfried, 1990; Edwards et al., 1996). Once again, differences between Somali and Vietnamese parents were accounted for by the length of time parents had spent in Australia. This suggests migrant parents may alter traditional beliefs about the rate of child development to accord with the prevailing attitudes of the mainstream Australian culture.

Cultural variations in carer scores on parenting beliefs and behaviours

Comparisons across groups of carers on parenting beliefs and behaviours revealed that Anglo/diverse and Vietnamese carers were somewhat more similar to each

other in their responses than Anglo and Vietnamese parents were to each other. However, Anglo/diverse carers valued independence more and compliance less than Vietnamese carers, and Vietnamese carers had later expectations for language development than Anglo/diverse carers. Somali carers had significantly different responses to Anglo/diverse carers across all aspects of development. With the exception of motor development, Somali carers expected development to occur at a slower rate, valued independence and social skills less and compliance more, and believed power assertion and inductive reasoning was less effective than Anglo/diverse carers. Vietnamese and Somali carers differed considerably in their responses. Vietnamese carers valued social skills more than Somali carers, had earlier expectations for all aspects of development except motor development, and thought power assertion was more effective. However, both level of education and years of experience in the early childhood field accounted for these differences, suggesting that exposure to Western theories of child development and direct experience in early childhood education may have some moderating influence on carers' attitudes towards child development and its influences.

Differences between home and child care experiences

The expectation that there would be differences between parents and carers on parenting beliefs and behaviours was supported by the current findings. Across most measures of parenting employed in the study, and especially in relation to control-related aspects of childrearing, significant differences were observed between groups of parents and carers. Parents valued both compliance and social skills significantly more than carers. Parents also believed that power assertion was more effective in managing difficult child behaviour than carers. Generally, parents held earlier expectations for children's developmental milestones. This was most apparent in relation to motor development, independent behaviour and cognitive development. The finding of differences between parents and carers is consistent with previous studies (Coe et al., 1996; Edwards et al., 1996).

In addition to exploring differences between parents and carers overall, the current study also hypothesised that differences would be accentuated when parents and carers were from different cultural backgrounds. Results of the analyses supported this prediction, showing more disagreement among culturally mixed parent/carer dyads than culturally matched parent/carer dyads in relation to the importance placed on compliance and independence, expectations for language development and expectations for obedience/self-regulation. Contrary to expectation, however, there was more disagreement in relation to expectations for independent behaviour among culturally matched parent/carer dyads than among culturally mixed parent/carer dyads. On balance, these findings are consistent with Harkness and Super (1992), who suggested that parents and carers from the same cultural background would have more similar childrearing models than parents and carers from different cultural backgrounds.

The *direction of difference* (that is, whether discrepancy scores were positive or negative in value) also changed along some aspects of parenting when culturally matched and mixed parent/carer dyads were compared. In culturally matched parent/carer dyads, parents valued independence more than carers, whereas in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads parents valued independence less than carers. In culturally matched parent/carer dyads, parents had *earlier* expectations for language development, independent behaviour and obedience/self-regulation, but in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads, parents had *later* expectations in these areas than carers.

Implications for services

The study is characterised by several measurement and design issues that restrict the reliability and validity of the findings. First, the non-randomised nature of the sample selection means that the findings described above cannot be generalised. Second, it was not possible to control for parental length of time in Australia in all analyses, so firm conclusions cannot be drawn. Third, analyses of differences among parent/carer dyads focused on group differences, which include group averages or mean scores, and do not take into consideration the considerable range of discrepancy scores among individual parent/carer dyads. Finally, while this paper focuses on culture as an important aspect of parenting beliefs and behaviours, it does not control for a range of other important influences, such as parental education and socio-economic factors. A multivariate approach is clearly indicated to examine the influence of culture on parenting beliefs and behaviours relative to other potential influences.

Despite these limitations, the CCICC study provides an important first step in understanding parenting beliefs and behaviours among a culturally diverse sample of parents and carers in Australia, and importantly, the adjustment that children have to make when they encounter a child care setting.

The current study found considerable differences among parents and carers in respect to parenting goals, discipline beliefs and developmental expectations. However, due to the *nature* of these differences it is not logical to conclude that the demands of child care were new or unexpected for children involved in the study generally, as they were likely to have already encountered similar or higher expectations for obedience and a range of developmental tasks at home with their parents. For example, in relation to developmental expectations, parents were generally more likely to have earlier expectations than carers in relation to skills such as toileting, independent behaviour, motor skills and cognitive development. Moreover, parents valued compliance in children more than carers, and expected obedience at an earlier age than carers, and thus perhaps placed more demands on children in this respect than carers. It also appeared that carers would be more likely than parents to reason with children if they did display unwanted behaviour, which is unlikely to be a confusing experience for a child no matter how they are disciplined at home.

The situation may have been different for CALD children, however, as the results suggest that in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads, parents value child independence significantly less than carers. Parents in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads also have later expectations for independent behaviour and obedience than carers. By way of example, this could have meant that in day care, toddlers may have been expected to serve and feed themselves at mealtime, and perhaps help to tidy the meal area and wash their own hands afterwards, whereas these tasks may have been done for children at home. Given the differences in expectations for obedience among parents and carers in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads (which are consistent with disparate beliefs about the development of self-control between collectivist and individualist cultures), CALD children may have been disciplined more frequently in day care, or disciplined for behaviour that is not corrected at home.

Parents in culturally mixed parent/carer dyads also had later expectations for language development than carers. This could have meant that children were exposed to activities designed to encourage language, such as reading and conversations that they were not exposed to at home. Alternatively, higher expectations for language development may have meant that children were expected to follow instructions that they may not have understood, or they may

have been expected to use words for communication when they were used to non-verbal means of communication at home.

Without further analysis it is unclear whether greater expectations for obedience and independent behaviour in day care makes the day care experience more difficult for CALD children to negotiate or not, nor is it clear whether higher expectations for children's language development in the day care situation confer better language outcomes or are a source of stress and confusion. It is also unclear the extent to which the differing demands of day care studied in this paper influence child development relative to other consequences of children's day care experience, such as separation from parents and siblings, and contact with a peer group, as well as indices of child care quality, such as the staff-to-child ratio.

While the relation between differential parenting and child adjustment in the study sample is addressed in a forthcoming paper (Wise & Sanson, 2006), the fact that children from CALD backgrounds encounter new and potentially conflicting expectations in day care carries some important implications for services. Carers not only have the responsibility of promoting healthy cultural identity development (Gonzalez-Mena, 2001), it would appear they also have the responsibility of understanding the home environments of all children in their care, especially those from CALD background, so that sources of difference can be identified and addressed, either by moderating the carer's expectations or through explicit discussion with the parent where this is deemed to enhance children's adjustment to the child care setting.

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