

**The Culture of Children:**  
A cross-cultural study of attitudes toward children in Spain and the United States

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During my time as a student in Sevilla, I became fascinated with the way that Spanish children behaved and how people reacted to children in general. It seemed that I saw fewer children out in public than at home. When I did see children out in public, it was often at locations that I would not expect to see a child or at an hour of day that it was surprising for me to even see a child awake. Even more striking to me was how everyone around the child seemed to react. The child was never treated with disdain or ignored. In fact, it seemed that almost everyone that I saw stopped to talk to the child. I often discussed the topic of Spanish children with the American and British friends that I had in Sevilla and I even found several journal entries that I had written during my stay in Spain concerning observations that I had made about Spanish children. Because it was a topic that I had already given some thought to, I thought that it would be interesting to research the differences between attitudes toward children in the societies of Spain and the United States and the meanings that those differences hold in terms of important values in each culture. The study focused on children under the age of 5 years.

Based on my previous experience observing Spanish children interacting in society and my experience observing children in the United States, I formed the following hypotheses:

1. The importance of independence in the American culture will affect expected behaviors as well as the treatment of children in American society.
2. In both cultures, there will be certain behaviors that are acceptable for children. Both cultures will share some of these behaviors even though the underlying reasons for the behaviors may differ.
3. The importance of a wide social and familial support system will affect the way that people treat children and train children to behave in Spanish culture.

Before formulating my questions that I planned to administer to my informants, I researched the roles of children in American and Spanish culture. It was difficult to find general information about the roles of children, so I focused on researching some specific facts related to the care and attitudes towards children that I felt were relevant to my study. I used this research to help guide my analysis of the data that I collected from my personal research. However, I did find one source that commented in general on the attitude towards children in Spain: Graff's Culture Shock! Spain. Interestingly enough, although my initial observations in the target culture were very similar to the observations found by Graff, the information that I gathered from my informants did not always match those observations. I will discuss my findings from my library research and observations below as I discuss the results from each interview question individually.

After gathering as much information as possible from my library research, I began to observe how children interacted in my own culture. I observed and took notes on reactions to children in restaurants, shopping malls, grocery stores, parks and libraries. I observed for about two hours each week for about four weeks in a row. I also made a search for television shows related to children and made an effort to see at least one American show regarding children each week. After formulating my interview questions, I administered the interviews to 10 American informants. The informants ranged in age from 17 to 80. There was a balanced number of informants who were married and unmarried, with or without children. I chose all of my informants from the middle class, because I knew that all of my Spanish contacts would be from the middle class and I wanted to achieve balance in my research. All of my informants had spent most of their lives living in the southeastern United States. Half of the informants were college educated. After transcribing all of my interviews, I began to examine my results and to look for trends. When I thought I recognized a trend, I went back and looked

at my field notes to see if the information that I was getting from the interviews was matching up with what I had observed.

After making a preliminary analysis of the information I had gathered on the roles of children in my own culture, I began the same process with the target culture. Since I did not have the luxury of actually visiting the target culture for the specific purpose of my research, I had to rely on a mixture of my old travel journals and periodic reports from a friend who was visiting Sevilla. I translated my interview questions into Spanish and began to make contacts with my Spanish informants. My Spanish informants were not deliberately chosen as my American informants were. My informants ranged in age from 28-64, which is a significantly more limited age range than my American informants. As with my American informants, my Spanish informants were middle class and about half were college educated. All had lived their entire lives in southern Spain. My interview template appears below.

### **Interview Template English**

1. Designate the following locations as an “appropriate” or “inappropriate” place to bring a child under the age of 5.

movie theatre  
restaurant  
bar  
concert  
park  
department store  
library  
museum  
party at a friend's house  
sporting event  
dinner at a friend's house  
public bus

2. You are in a supermarket and there is a woman there with a crying baby. What are your thoughts on this situation? What do you think that the mother should do?
3. What do you think is the perfect number of children for someone to have?
4. What is the perfect age for a woman to have children? For a man? Why?
5. Do you think that it is a greater advantage for the family for the mother to work outside of the home or to stay at home with the child(ren)? Why?
6. Is it bad or good to let a baby or toddler get what he/she wants a majority of the time? Why?
7. What would be some reasons why you might leave your baby or small child in the paid care of a stranger?
8. If a baby is crying in the night because he/she wants to be held (not because of pain, hunger or

discomfort), should you pick the baby up or let the baby cry?

9. You are on a boat and four people fall overboard: a young man, an elderly woman, a 2 year old boy and a pregnant woman. You can only save one of them. Who would it be? Why?

10. Would you ever correct a friend's misbehaving child? A stranger's?

2. Rank these qualities as most important to least important for a child to have:

independent  
well-behaved  
intelligent  
respectful  
friendly

Demographic information:

Age-

Sex-

Place of residence/ number of years in this country-

ethnic origin-

Number of children-

Marital status-

## Results

The first question that I asked my informants included a list of locations. The informant was to decide whether each location was an appropriate or inappropriate place to bring a child under the age of 5 years. The locations included the movies, a restaurant, a bar, a concert, a park, a department store, a library, a party at the house of a friend, a sporting event, a dinner at a friend's house and a public bus.

Of the United States informants, 70% felt that it was inappropriate to bring a child to a movie theater. The remaining 30% all felt that a movie theater was appropriate only if the child is quiet or if the movie is specifically made for children. During my observations, I did see a newborn brought to a movie theater. The baby was quiet and did not disturb the viewers, but I noted that several people gave disapproving looks to the parents. Of Spanish informants, only 40% thought that the cinema was an inappropriate place for a child. However, when I was a student in Sevilla, I attended movies almost weekly and never once saw a child brought into the theater during a movie that was not specifically made for children.

For the second location, restaurants, 100% of informants from the United States found

restaurants to be a perfectly acceptable place to bring a child under the age of 5. However, in each of my restaurant observations, there were children under the age of 5 being met with disapproving glances and one instance of a server complaining to another server about families bringing small children into the restaurant. It should be noted, however, that for each disapproving glance, there was at least one person that smiled or commented on how cute the children were. For Spanish informants, about 40% found a restaurant to be an inappropriate place to bring a child under the age of 5 and when I was visiting Spain, I do remember seeing far fewer children in restaurants than I would normally see in the United States. My theory is that this may be because dinners in European restaurants are often very long affairs that revolve around conversation and in the United States, we tend to rush in, eat, pay the check and leave as quickly as possible. A small child might interrupt the adult conversation or become bored with sitting in a restaurant for hours on end, so this might be why it is seen as less acceptable to bring a child to a Spanish restaurant. I believe that the difference here between Spanish and American reactions to a child in a restaurant setting goes back to Kraemer's Postulates of Mainstream American Values on page 130 of Seelye's book Teaching Culture. Kraemer says that in American culture, "Perception of interpersonal encounters primarily in terms of their immediate utility, and downgrading of the social significance of such encounters" is common. Americans simply want to get the job done- they are not focusing on social interaction. People of Hispanic cultures tend to want to slow down and enjoy the moment at hand and utilize every opportunity to strengthen social bonds (Ortuño 453). This explains the long dinners that a young child simply may not be able to tolerate. My library research, however, did not really stack up to what my informants were telling me. In Graff's observation, she states "Spaniards quite happily accept the presence of tiny babies and small children in restaurants, irrespective of the time of day or night. When you take your family to a restaurant, don't be surprised if the waiter whisks your little darling

off into the kitchen to be admired by the rest of the staff "(30).

The third location was a bar. 100% of Americans thought that a bar was an inappropriate place for a child. This probably has to do with how our society views consumption of alcohol and also how our laws are set up. It is perfectly reasonable that a bar would be an inappropriate place for a child if our laws dictate that no person under 21 years of age is allowed to enter a bar. Of Spaniards, 70% felt that a bar was an inappropriate place for a child. Although the majority of my informants found bringing a child to a bar inappropriate, I *repeatedly* saw children in bars with their parents during my time abroad, often past midnight. It is interesting that, in my experience, it is more common to see children in bars than in restaurants. Perhaps this is because it is more acceptable for a child to get up and walk around in a bar and because noise levels are generally higher in a bar than a restaurant.

The fourth location was a concert. 80% of American informants thought that a concert was inappropriate. These were the same results that I got from my Spanish informants. One American informant explained that a concert was an inappropriate place for a child because concerts generally expose participants to heavy amounts of cigarette smoke. In my experience, heavy amounts of cigarette smoke are present in many locations in Spain including bus stops, restaurants and even airports- all places where young children might be present. Spaniards remarked that concerts might be too loud for a young child. Although the results to this question were similar, the reasons behind the results are different.

100% of Americans and 100% of Spaniards found the park as a perfectly acceptable place to bring a child. Interviewees from both pools mentioned that loud noises were acceptable in a park and that children could be allowed to play freely in that environment.

The sixth location was a department store. 100% of the American informants viewed department stores as acceptable places to bring a child under the age of 5. However, 70% of Spaniards found it inappropriate to bring a child into a department store. When I completed

my observations here in the United States, it was extremely common to see mothers with children in strollers in the department stores. Often times, there were two or more mothers shopping together with children. There were no disapproving looks when these mothers brought children into the stores as there was in the restaurant setting. Even when a child was loud or began to cry, the children seemed to be accepted in the department store setting. In Spain, I never noticed very many children shopping with parents in department stores. However, in my experience, department stores in Spain tend to be more quiet than department stores in the United States, so acceptable noise levels may be a factor.

100% of American informants found the library to be an acceptable place for children. Only 80% of Spanish informants thought the library to be acceptable. Many American libraries have story hours specifically for children, and this was commented on in more than one interview. Spanish informants commented that young children might disturb students who are attempting to study in the library.

I got similar results from Spanish and American informants on whether or not it is acceptable to bring a child under the age of 5 to a party at the house of a friend. 50% of both groups found it acceptable. There were comments from both groups stating that if the child was invited, then it is proper to bring the child.

10% of Spaniards and 30% of Americans found it unacceptable to bring a child to a sporting event. The majority of informants from both groups found that it was acceptable to bring a child to a sporting event. Again, acceptable noise levels were commented upon in the interviews. Children can be allowed to move about and be as loud as they wish at a sporting event.

Similar to the question about a party at a friend's house, the question about dinner at the house of a friend yielded identical results.

100% of Spanish informants and American informants found it acceptable to bring a

child onto a public bus.

In general, the factors that seemed to influence the responses to each of the locations were acceptable levels of noise for those locations and whether or not the presence of children hindered the social interaction of the adults in each setting.

For my second question, informants were given a situation to respond to. The situation is that a mother is shopping for groceries in the supermarket and she has a crying infant. What should the mother do? None of the American informants thought that the woman should have to leave the supermarket. 30% did say, however, that the woman should try and hurry to get out of the supermarket as quickly as possible. 70% thought that the woman should try and comfort the baby, but that if it did not work not to worry too much. One of my informants said, "It's a supermarket. Everyone has to buy groceries and it's not like you have to be quiet in a supermarket. It's no big deal." Another informant said, "I don't know...I guess she should try to give the baby a bottle or take it and change its diaper or something. But nobody is going to get angry about a crying baby in a supermarket." 20% of the Spanish informants thought that the baby should be taken out of the supermarket until calm. 60% thought that every effort should be made to make the child be quiet, but that the child need not be taken from the supermarket. 20% thought that nothing should be done and that the mother should just continue her shopping. One informant replied, "cuando se canse se callará". In both cultures, few people seemed to think that it was a huge problem for a baby to be crying in a supermarket, but it was less acceptable to Spaniards than Americans. I think that the reason that it is more acceptable to have a loud child in an American supermarket than a Spanish supermarket is that our supermarkets tend to be larger establishments that are seldom very crowded. The sound of a crying baby simply does not fill up the supermarket like it might in a smaller space. I think that the underlying idea that acceptable behavior for a child is for the child to be quiet is present in both cultures, but the places where louder noise levels are

acceptable vary, which supports my second hypothesis.

For the third question, I asked my informants what the ideal number of children is for a family to have. The results were actually very similar. American informants gave the average number of 2 and Spaniards gave an average of 2.5. At first glance, there does not seem to be very much difference between the Spanish and American responses, but the comments from the interviews showed a fundamental difference. In interview after interview, Americans would give their ideal number of children and then qualify it with, “or whatever the family can afford”. Another informant stated, “They should have as many children as they can afford to educate”. Another informant said, “Well, ideally 2 or 3, but it really depends on finances”. According to Hsu, progress is an important value in American culture (Seelye 129). It might follow that having more children than one can comfortably support while maintaining the family's financial status would be the opposite of progress. While a few Spanish informants also mentioned finances as a factor in the ideal number of children, most of the comments that I received from them had more to do with time than with money. Several informants mentioned that it depended on whether or not the parents had the time to spend with more than one child. Other informants commented that “niños necesitan hermanos”. The emphasis that the Spanish culture places on family seems to influence the results. In the book How Nations Serve Young Children by Patricia P. Olmstead and David P. Weikart, there is information on how much time Spanish parents spend with their children. 78% of Spanish mothers spend upwards of 2 full hours per day actively playing with their children. 47% of Spanish fathers spend upwards of 2 full hours actively playing with each child (314). The results from this question support my third hypothesis.

For the fourth question, the ideal age of a man and woman to begin having children was in question. Americans gave an average of 25 while Spaniards gave an average of 30. Americans stated reasons for their ideal age such as “it gives you time to live a full, single life

before having children” and “it gives you time to finish your degree and begin your career”. Kraemer's postulates state that, in American culture, the definition of a person depends on his or her work and achievements (Seelye 131 ). It follows that an American, in order to be considered successful, would be expected to have a degree and at least the beginnings of a career under his belt before adding a child. Adding a child before having a firmly established career and income might be seen as the opposite of progress. Complete independence should be achieved before adding a dependent. These results support my first hypothesis. Spaniards often commented that 30 was not necessarily an ideal age, but rather the norm. One informant said, “Cuando tengan una casa y dinero para sobrevivir, lo que en España acaba pasando (si tienes suerte) a los 30. Sin embargo, creo que la edad ideal probablemente sea a los 24 o así ya que se es más joven y se tiene más energía.” Perhaps the later age of having children in Spain is dictated by necessity. According to the CIA website, the unemployment rate in Spain is about 10.4% as opposed to the United States rate of 5.5%.

The fifth interview question had to do with whether or not a mother should work or stay at home with the children. Interestingly, about half of the American informants corrected my question during the interview, stating that a father could also stay at home with the children. This goes along with Hsu's 6<sup>th</sup> postulate and Kraemer's 2<sup>nd</sup> postulate- that American culture believes that all humans are equal and that men and women are equal (seeyle 130-131). 10% of American informants reported that they believe that the mother should absolutely stay at home with the children. 10% also believed that the mother should absolutely work. 80% believed that, if and only if the family was financially able, that the mother should stay home. Of that 80%, most informants believed that the woman should stay at home only until the children are in preschool. One informant said, “I think that the mother should only stay at home until the child is old enough to go to preschool at around age 3 or so. Children need

interaction with other children and time away from the parents so that they can become independent.” Another stated, “After the children are old enough to go to preschool, the mother should go back to work so that they can afford to support creative outlets and classes for the children”. Yet another informant stated, “There is no point in the mother staying home once the kids are in school. I mean, it seems kind of lazy”. The values that drive this response seem to be a combination of independence, work ethic and the idea of financial progress. Of Spaniards, 10% thought that the mother should absolutely work because “asi tendrán mejor nivel económico”. 60% thought that the mother should absolutely stay at home with the children and 30% thought that the mother should stay home if it is financially possible for the family. None of the Spaniards reminded me that the father could stay home with the children and none of the Spaniards mentioned that the mother should go to work once the children begin school. This may be because, in some schools in Spain, there is often a break so that the children can come home for lunch. Therefore, it may be just as important for the mother to be at home during the day after the children begin school as it is beforehand. The Spanish emphasis on family may also be a factor.

For the sixth question, informants were asked whether it was good or bad for a young child to get what he wants most of the time. Of Americans, 30% thought that it was good for a child to get what he wants a majority of the time. Comments ranged from “Why not? They are only little once” to “It’s very good for a baby to get what he wants. It establishes security and trust. After the age of 1 or 2, however, good judgment must be exercised on the part of the parent”. Gary Cross comments in his book The Cute and the Cool, that by bestowing goods upon our children, American parents find “expressions of their growing empathy for the emotional and social complexity of their offspring and respect for their autonomy” (202). 70% thought that it was a bad thing to let a child get his way most of the time. Over and over, I heard “they need to learn that they can’t have everything”. I heard that same refrain from

Spaniards. “Es malo porque hay que educarlos bien y enseñarles que no se puede tener lo que se quiera siempre”. Another said, “No, porque es una mala costumbre. Si con cinco años se acostumbra a eso, cuando tenga 10...¡ja ja!”. Another said, “Es malo porque hay que darles lo necesario y solo de vez en cuando darles algun capricho”. Several simply stated, “Es malo porque se malcrían”. Based on my interviews, Spanish and American informants seemed to have similar views on letting a small child gett his way with the exception of that 30% of Americans. My research on Spanish children, however, did not stack up to what my interviews were telling me. In Culture Shock! Spain, Marie Louise Graff begins page 29 with “Spanish children have always been treated like little princes and princesses...They are obviously loved and pampered, even overindulged sometimes.” In my experience with Spanish babies, it always seemed that the parents and everyone around the child made every effort to make the child happy. Perhaps this is a case of “do as I say and not as I do”.

For the 7th question, informants were asked to give a reason why they might leave a child with a non-family member. 60% of American informants said because of work, 30% said to have a night out, 10% said only in the case of an emergency. Of Spanish informants, 20% thought that work was an acceptable reason to leave a child in the paid care of a non-family member and the remaining 80% found it unacceptable except for in the case of an absolute emergency. For example, one contact said that the only reason would be “tener que salir de casa a causa de una urgencia y no poder contar con los abuelos para quedarse con el niño”. The obvious reason for the difference in attitudes between American and Spaniard informants on the topic of non-familial childcare would be difference between the American nuclear family and the Spanish close-knit extended family (Ortuño 452). In a culture where it is acceptable to be dependent on a familial support system, it might be construed as almost a slap in the face to hire outside help for the care of a child instead of soliciting help from a family member or a close family friend. Americans, however might be more likely to feel

somehow inadequate for having to rely on family for help instead of demonstrating our independence by using our own resources. This relates to both my first and third hypotheses. Another factor is the availability of safe and reliable childcare. In the United States, childcare facilities exist which are licensed by the state and or an accreditation program and must comply to certain guidelines such as adequate child to caretaker ratio and a safe, hygienic environment. Many of these childcare centers receive access to public funding (Shelov 430). There do exist childcare centers in Spain for children under the age of 6 (school age), but there are no governing organizations that make sure conditions are acceptable. In How Nations Serve Young Children, Olmstead remarks “There are not many worthwhile programs...and those that do exist are expensive. Thus, many parents have trouble finding a young children's educational center that really inspires their confidence and that they can afford. It is clear that the state needs to become more involved to improve program quality and availability, especially in programs for children under age 4” (318).

For question 8, I asked informants a “what if” question: If you were on a boat and a pregnant woman, a young man, an old woman, and a 2 year old boy fall into the water and you can only save one person, who would it be? 100% of American informants said that they would save the pregnant women, because they would be saving 2 lives instead of one. 100% of Spanish informants said that they would save the 2 year old boy. I feel that this is related to something that I noted during my observation process. In my American observations, pregnant women were treated wonderfully in restaurants and stores- people opened doors for them, offered to carry their bags and pulled out chairs for them at the table. However, a woman in a department store pushing one child in a stroller while holding a newborn in a sling and trying to manage to get in and out of a door with shopping bags was ignored by passers by. Similarly, I saw no offers of help with shopping bags for women trying to manage to juggle small children and bags of groceries. Although this is not the insight that I expected to gain

from examining the responses to this question, it is interesting nonetheless. Several Spaniards informants explained their choice of the 2 year old boy by saying that all of the other individuals who had fallen into the water could probably swim whereas the 2 year old could probably not, which is a logical thought process. American informants appeared to give no thought to who could most likely swim, but instead reacted emotionally to the pregnant woman. Pregnancy is valued in our society, perhaps more than the babies themselves.

For the eighth question, informants were asked what one should do if their baby is crying in the night and the crying is not due to hunger nor discomfort. Should they pick the baby up or allow the baby to continue crying? Of American informants, 40% said not to pick the baby up, but to make sure that everything was all right to avoid spoiling the baby. One informant said, "Well, you want the baby to learn that it has to go to sleep on its own. You don't want it to be dependent on you to get it to sleep for forever." 40% said that they thought letting the baby cry would be the right thing to do, but that they just could not do that with their own children. 20% said to pick the baby up to establish trust. I thought it was interesting that even though the second 40% did not practice letting the baby cry, they still valued the independence of the child enough to say that they thought it would be the right thing to do. This relates to my first hypothesis. This is a behavior obviously driven by the American culture's valuing of independence. For Spaniards, I found that 80% felt that the baby should be picked up and comforted and 20% felt that the baby should be left to cry. When I asked why they felt the baby needed to be picked up, several responded that a crying baby would disturb the neighbors. One informant said, "Consolarlo para que se duerma y no moleste a los vecinos". Since it is very common in Spain, especially in the larger cities like Sevilla, to own apartments instead of separate houses like in the United States, it makes sense that a crying baby would disturb the sleep of the neighbors. Because of the importance that the Spanish give to maintaining a social support system, one would not want to irritate or make

the neighbors angry by allowing a baby to cry.

For the tenth question, I asked the participants whether or not they would ever correct a misbehaving child of a friend or of a stranger. Of Americans, 50% of informants said that they would correct the misbehaving child of a friend, but not of a stranger, unless the stranger's child was doing something that could be dangerous. One informant stated, "If the child belonged to a close friend, it would not be a problem. If the child belonged to a stranger, then it would be none of my business what the child was doing if it was not endangering anyone." 30% said that they would correct a child only if the child was visiting his/her home. 10% would correct any misbehaving child and 10% would never correct another person's child. Of Spaniards, 60% said that they might correct a child, but that they would always be careful not to make the parents angry. I received comments like, "En caso de que no estuviera comportando bien le diría algo pero siempre sin molestar a los padres" and "si esta haciendo algo malo si que le diría algo, pero intentaría que el padre no se enfade". 20% would correct a child of a friend, but not of a stranger and 10% would correct any child. One informant stated, "Si, cuando los padres no están haciendo nada y que su comportamiento me esta molestando personalmente". 10% would never correct any child. One informant stated, "No le diría nada para que no se enfaden los padres". The results from American and Spanish informants were similar. I do think that there is a difference in underlying reasons, however. The American respondents seemed to be concerned with respecting the other person's privacy and the Spanish respondents seemed to be concerned with offending the parent. Hsu's second postulate states, "The privacy of the individual is the individual's inalienable right. Intrusion into it by others is permitted only by invitation" (Seelye 128). The 50% of Americans who would correct a friend's child, but not a stranger likely sense an implied invitation to "intrude" in the case of a friend. The 30% who would correct a child if the child were visiting his or her home likely feel that their own privacy is being intruded upon and

that is why they feel free in correcting that child. The 10% who will not correct any child not their own likely do not feel that it is any of their business whether it is a friend's child or a stranger's child. The Spanish informants seem to feel the need not to anger the parents of the child, even if they feel that the child needs correction. They do not want to obstruct the flow of the social system by doing something that might cause hard feelings.

For the last question, I asked informants to rank in order of importance the following qualities of children: friendly, respectful, intelligent, independent and well-behaved. For Americans, the average order of these qualities went respectful, independent, intelligent, friendly and well-behaved. Friendly and well-behaved were very close in coming in at last place. For the Spanish informants, the average order was friendly, well-behaved, respectful, intelligent and independent. Interestingly, 100% of Spanish respondents put independent dead last. For this question, Spanish and American results were vastly different. Friendly came in first for the Spanish and almost last for Americans. I think that this has to do with the importance of the social support system in the Spanish culture and the importance that independence plays in the American culture. It is noted Ortuño's text that interdependence in Hispanic cultures is desirable (454) and in Kraemer's postulates that independence is desirable in American culture (Seelye 130). For this reason, friendliness is a very important quality for a Spanish child to have so that he or she can cooperatively interact within an interdependent society. For Americans, friendliness came very low on the list. This may be because friendliness is probably less important in a society that expects people to solve problems and function in a completely individual and independent manner. Well-behaved was the second most important characteristic for Spaniards and it came in dead last for Americans. The reasons for this, I believe, are the same as the reasons that friendliness showed up at the top of the Spanish list and near the bottom of the American list. It should be noted that more research needs to be done to determine what "well-behaved" might mean to

each culture, although we have determined that both cultures appreciate a quiet child.

Respectful came up first on the list of important characteristics for American children and third for the Spanish. I believe that, to the American, respectful behavior implies honoring an individual's privacy and individualism. Since privacy and individualism are both valued in American society, it makes sense that respect would top the list. Again, it should be noted that more research should be done to define what respectful behavior might be in the Spanish culture. Independence was the second most important characteristic for Americans, but the Spanish ranked it dead last. I think that it came in last for the Spanish, because if interdependence is desirable in Spanish culture, then it follows that independence is not an important characteristic to have in that culture. Intelligence was ranked third by Americans and fourth by Spaniards, which tells me that intelligence is regarded as important by both cultures, but perhaps not as important as other traits. Intelligence was the only trait that I included in the list that could not necessarily be cultivated by environment. Americans obviously think that one can go farther in our society by being respectful and independent than by just being intelligent and the Spanish believe that being friendly, well-behaved and respectful are more important traits to help children function in society than intelligence.

I feel that the hypotheses that I formulated at the beginning of the project were correct. My first hypothesis having to do with the importance of independence affecting attitudes and expectations of children in America was exemplified through the answers to several of my interview questions. In fact, the exact word "independent" was spoken by several interviewees. The responses that I discussed previously to question numbers 4, 5, 8 and 11 especially proved that the importance of independence is a driving force behind the treatment of children in the United States.

My second hypothesis, which stated that both cultures would share some expected behaviors for children but might have differing underlying reasons for those expectations was

also true based on my project results. I got similar results for questions 1, 3, 5, 8 and 10, but upon analyzing my results, I concluded that different values and norms were driving those results.

For my third hypothesis, I stated that the importance of a wide social and familial support system would affect the way that people treat children and train children to behave in Spanish culture. The results that I previously discussed to questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11 all confirmed this hypothesis.

### **Limitations**

If I were to continue this project, I would go back and interview more Americans and Spaniards with more specific interview questions to see if my hypotheses were on track. I would revisit the target country and interview a larger, more diverse pool of informants. After completing the interviewing process, I would begin more observations to see if the interview responses matched up to what could be observed in the culture. I would then revise my conclusions.

The results of this ethnographic study could be used in the classroom with a thematic unit on family or childhood. It should be noted that a very small sample size was used for interviews and that only informants from very specific areas of the United States and Spain were used for the project. Although my demographic information for my American informants was quite balanced, my Spanish informants were not quite as diverse due to circumstances that could not be avoided. For definite conclusions to be drawn from this study, the sample size should be much larger and much more diverse. Also, face to face interviews were not possible for the Spanish informants, and much more information can be absorbed through observation of body language than just through conversation alone. The topic of the study could be expanded to include issues such as discipline and education of children.

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