

Can LOPI Explain Cultural Differences In Young Children's Prosocial Helping?: Evidence from Two US communities

Andrew D. Coppens & Barbara Rogoff

University of New Hampshire & UC Santa Cruz



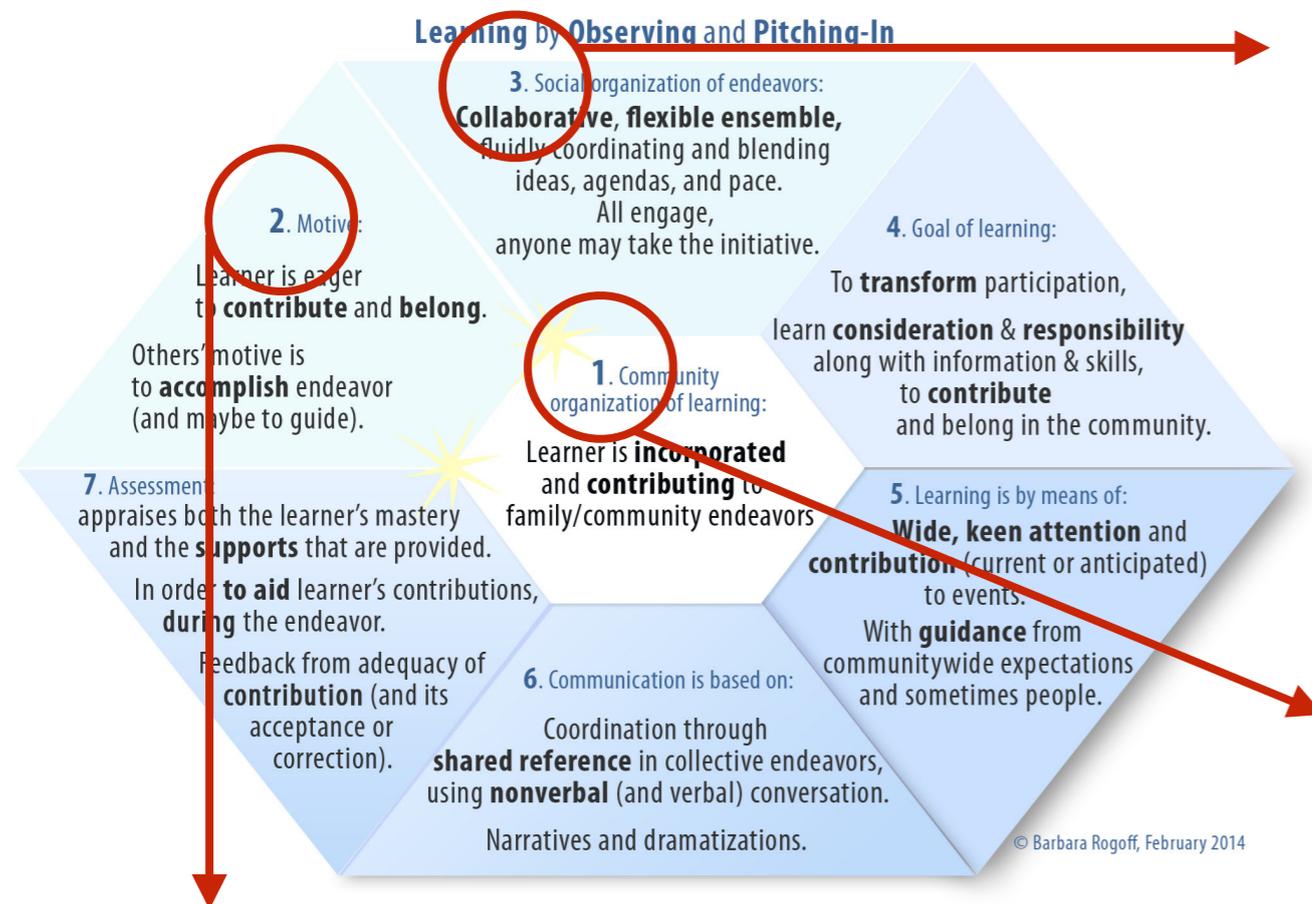
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

Main Take-Aways from Findings

Evidence suggests that children can **develop collaborative initiative**, an impressive, self-regulated, socially competent disposition for learning and contributing collaboratively and responsibly...

If toddlers' early eagerness to take part in family housework accompanies regular **opportunities to contribute in shared work** with others, as in LOPI.

Study's Relations with LOPI



What are the developmental beginnings of children's *collaborative initiative* in LOPI?

How is children's integration in shared work *accomplished* between children and parents?

What happens as toddlers' early eagerness to take part is shaped by differing cultural values and practices?

Research Qs & Methods

What parental socialization practices and cultural values support or impede children's development of collaborative initiative in helping with everyday family work, from age 2 to 7?

Participants were 32 mothers

20 with a 2-3-year-old; 12 with a 6-7-year-old

in each of **two communities**

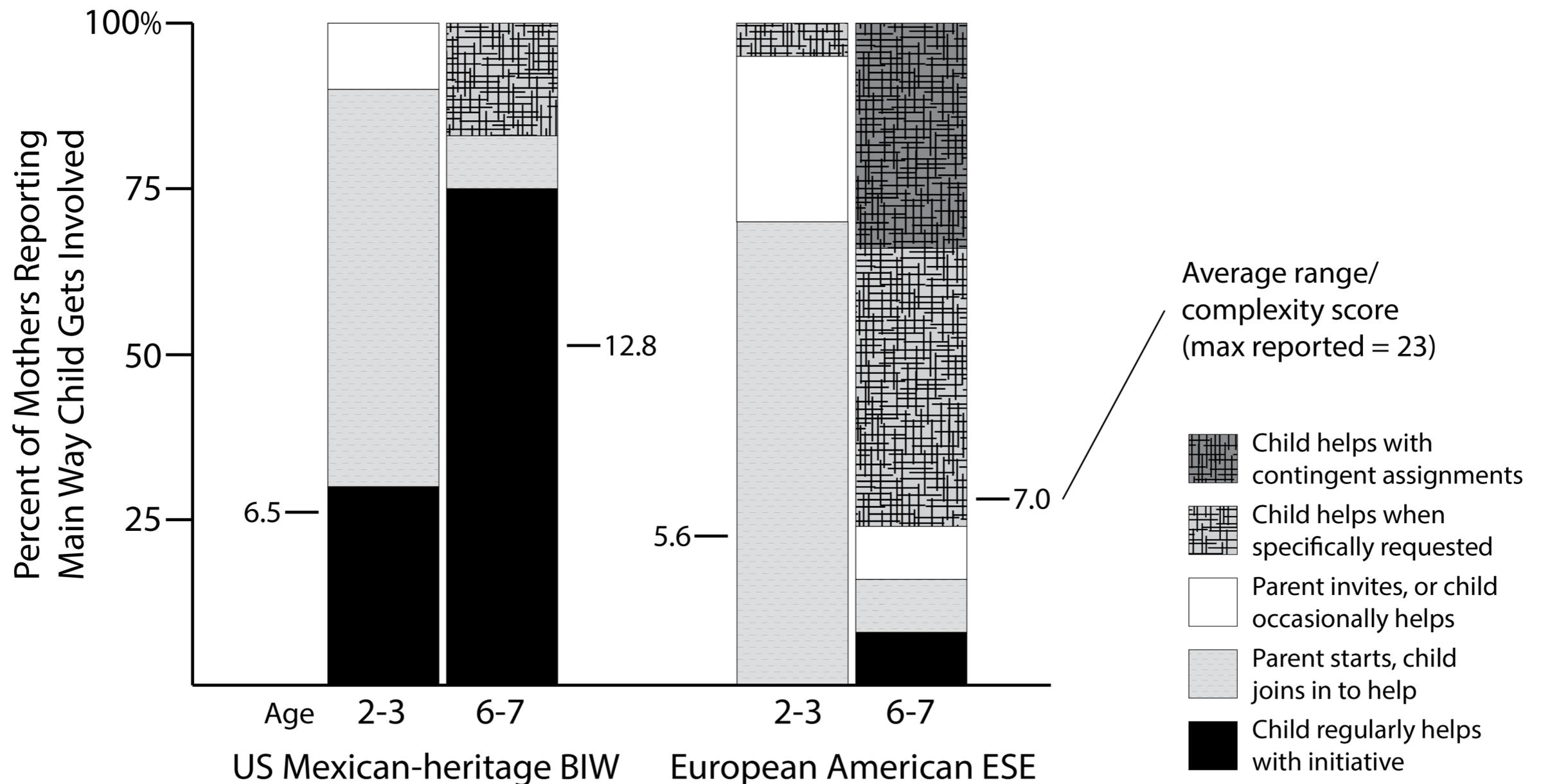
US Mexican-heritage BIW (Background in Indigenous Ways)

European American ESE (Extensive Schooling Experience)

Mothers took part in one 45- to 60-minute semi-structured **interview** about children's involvement in family household work, conducted in the family home or a nearby public park.

Differing Cultural Patterns in Toddlers' and Children's Help

Family Household Work



Learning to LOPI

In the **US Mexican-heritage BIW** community, both toddlers' and older children's help was predominantly voluntary.

At ages 2-3 and 6-7, mothers **welcomed children's involvement** in household work.

“If the mother understands the importance in the child wanting to learn... One can do things in parts, and a mom can say 'OK, we're going to circle the cake with a butter knife so we're sure that the cake unsticks from the pan. You do this part. Put a cutting board on top.' And just doing that part, the child is helping. The child doesn't necessarily need to do it all one hundred percent, but that they're included in the activity.”

“Well, at first I brought her along and little by little she was watching how I sometimes add the soap, you know? Or, adding the clothes. And it's there that she gets motivated. She sees and wants to do it.... She gets motivated to help.”

90% of US Mexican-heritage BIW mothers with a 2-3-year-old and 92% with a 6-7-year-old reported practices that **involve children collaboratively** in shared work.

US Mexican-heritage BIW parents and children contributed together, with parents emphasizing the **child's autonomy** by not obligating children's involvement.

“If kids want to help out then that means that they are interested in doing new things or trying to be there to be of support. But I don't think it's something that they are obligated to do. My mom would always tell us to go at our own pace, not to try to jump steps in life... I don't want her to feel like she has to do things if she doesn't feel like she needs to do them. So I tell her that if she feels, we all have this feeling of 'oh I should help out.' So, I do tell her that if she really feels that she needs to do it, she should do it. Like the other day someone dropped something at the store and she went and picked it up for them, so I told her, 'If you feel like you need to go do it, do it. Help out.'”

Learning Divided, Contractual Work

At age 2-3, 60% of **European American ESE** mothers ***avoided children's involvement*** in family housework or gave unproductive 'mock work' as a distraction. 30% obliged children's help with assignments and contingencies.

"I usually do major cleaning after the kids have gone to bed, because they're not in the way. Plus, I would rather spend my kids' awake time being a mom and playing, and not cleaning."

"[When he was a baby] I had more of this vision of him being more involved with everything. Now, the reality is that sometimes... it is just kind of easier if he plays and I do something."

I've multiple times, if the kids want to help me cook and I'm cooking, I will give them the same ingredients in a separate bowl and just let them make a huge mess. I don't care. And I actually do the [cooking]."

If we say it's cleanup time and they're not getting going on it then we'll set a timer and say, 'OK, you have five minutes to do cleanup.' We try to make it a little more fun... But, you know, if it comes to that, [as if speaking to her child] 'That's the consequence.' ... Just sort of a natural, like, 'Whoops, these got left out and that was your job and so now they're getting put away now. You can get them back tomorrow night after you do your cleanup.' You know, 'If you do your cleanup and everything tomorrow night.'

At age 6-7, 50% of **European American ESE** mothers **controlled children's involvement** in family housework with assignments and contingencies. Just 17% of mothers in this community involved 6-7-year-olds collaboratively; 33% avoided their involvement altogether.

Conclusions: LOPI Practices

Children's ***integration*** in everyday family activities that offer opportunities to share work and collaborate may be a key support for children's prosocial development.

US Mexican-heritage BIW mothers were collaborative partners with children in family household work:

- Guiding children in learning to take part and pitch in
- Supporting children's autonomy, avoiding approaches that divide tasks into distinct roles and responsibilities

Conclusions: LOPI Values

Common in the *US Mexican-heritage BIW community*:

Young children were ***assumed to be interested and capable*** of contributing in everyday work.

“Sometimes [my child] takes the mop and he gets to mopping. I know he’s not cleaning... but he is cleaning, he is helping. Or, he puts the toys away in their place even though he doesn’t arrange them as he should, but he’s helping.”

Many US Mexican-heritage EIP mothers reported children’s participation in work at home as helping (e.g., *“When I’m in the kitchen and my child comes in to help me...”*), which was seldom the case for European American ESE mothers.

Mothers emphasized children’s integration and supported early prosocial learning and motivation.

Conclusions: (non)LOPI Values

Common in the *European American ESE community*:

Young children were **assumed to be reluctant or incapable of helping** with work.

Interviewer: *“Is it important for children to help without being asked?”*

European American ESE mother: *“Not at this age. That would be miraculous. It has happened, and I was like, ‘Oh my gosh! You cleaned that up, that’s amazing!’... At 3, I’m not really expecting it. Don’t they have like an immature prefrontal cortex or something, and they cannot plan ahead. I don’t know.”*

This related to parents avoiding children getting involved, potentially undermining toddlers’ early eagerness to take part and share work with others.

Extending LOPI Patterns

Regarding **Facet 1**, findings emphasize children being physically present as well as psychologically integrated, sharing goals and purposes with others.

Regarding **Facet 2**, toddlers' early eagerness to help quickly becomes part of a complex, multiparty effort to include the child in shared, ongoing endeavors.

Findings suggest that children's *collaborative initiative* in LOPI is an ongoing developmental accomplishment that stems from parents' and children's early collaborative, mutual, and voluntary efforts in everyday family work (**Facet 3**).