

CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS AND IDENTITY FORMATION: A CASE STUDY OF SLOVAK FAMILIES AND THEIR FOREIGN NANNIES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to answer the research question “How do cultural exchanges between foreign nannies and Slovak families influence identity formation and interpersonal experiences within a domestic setting” using qualitative research methods to examine how foreign nannies and Slovak families interact with each other while working together. It looks at how interactions within the culture and the power dynamics of the household hierarchy shape and influence identities. Semi-structured interviews with foreign nannies show how their ideas about themselves and their home countries change, while interviews with Slovak families show their different experiences. The results demonstrate how complex cross-cultural encounters can be, especially when individuals face communication issues or have different backgrounds of cultural norms. Overall, this thesis provides a lot about how identity, power, and cultural exchange work in the case of foreign nannies who work in Slovakia.

INTRODUCTION

During a time of change in the 1960s, a woman following her passions graduated in psychology, got married, and shortly afterward realized that she lived in a society where it was not possible to have it all. Not only did she have duties towards her new-to-become family, but she also had to face the societal expectations, as it happened to most women, to behave as the perfect “family woman” who would take care of her husband, cook, clean every day, and bring many children into this world. The woman in question happens to be Betty Friedan, who, in the face of home restrictions and pervasive stereotypes, dared to challenge the reality she lived in, defying societal expectations and fighting for gender equality. She made her mark during the 1960s by speaking out about gender equality and women's rights in her book 'The feminine mystique,' which later influenced the creation of a feminist movement, empowering women to question their traditional societal roles and pursue greater opportunities.¹. Since then, nuclear families have become less common in many countries as the rates of divorces, same-sex marriages, and people living as single parents have increased. (OECD 2011)

On the one hand, looking ahead to a future where globalization and the spread of cultural diversity through migration are ever more common, the OECD expects that family dynamics will continue to transform drastically until 2030. Mothers will increasingly continue working out of their homes, while young adults will keep focusing on different priorities than marrying and having children. The elderly population keeps rising, and older people often live alone. These dynamics all result in a scenario where outsourcing domestic services becomes more common and often even necessary for many families. (OECD 2011). On the other hand, while

globalization has greatly benefited economic growth and cultural diversity, it has also affected inequality. Women often have no chance to build a financially stable life other than traveling to work abroad and sending money to their family or loved ones they had to leave behind (Fonbuena and Ilagan, 2022).

This thesis analyzes the impact of the cultural interaction between foreign domestic workers - primarily nannies and Slovak families. This thesis uses the term domestic workers because most nannies interviewed in this thesis have to clean and cook while taking care of children. This thesis explores how these foreign nannies influence Slovak families and the cultural diversity shh of their experiences. Besides exploring the motivation of Slovak families to hire foreign workers, this thesis also sheds light on why domestic workers have to seek work abroad.

The central concern of this thesis is to help understand the cultural exchange that takes place through the impact of language exchange, traditions, and their adaptation between foreign nannies and Slovak families in everyday life.

The topic of foreign nannies working in Slovak families' households has yet to be considered worthy of much attention, except for a few papers analyzing the wages of domestic workers in general, where nannies are not prioritized. There need to be more studies in the sector of the cultural interaction of nannies working in Europe. Who hires a full-time foreign nanny? Moreover, how are these nannies seen and treated inside the household? Although women are progressively earning space in the modernized world, studying the relevance of foreign, full-time nannies can be a sensitive topic to pursue, as many women still have the common belief that outsourcing part of the raising of their child makes them bad mothers (Amber M. Epp 2014). On the other hand, many women who do have the chance and the courage to hire a part-time or full-time nanny now have the time to possibly earn better salaries, improve their mental health, and even create strong bonds with their nannies (Fonbuena and Ilagan 2022).

This thesis combines my close experience as a former nanny and now as a person who hires foreign nannies, hoping to present a factual interrelation between foreign nannies and Slovak families. The research question "How do cultural exchanges between foreign nannies and Slovak families influence identity formation and interpersonal experiences within a domestic setting?" is answered in 3 chapters.

In the first chapter of this thesis, the cross-cultural interactions between Slovak families and foreign nannies are analyzed by discussing key theories provided by Bridget Anderson, Joshua Fishman, Stuart Hall, and others, also analyzing the topic of maltreatment and exploitation of domestic workers and its implications (Anderson 2000, Hall 1990, Fishman 1991). The study methodology, research design, and benefits of employing a qualitative approach with interviews are presented in the second chapter. Chapter three provides results and discussion of foreign nannies and Slovak families interviews, highlighting topics about their identity, experiences, and challenges while living abroad. The chapter has been organized by three main themes inspired by the literature review: Identity formation, power dynamics, and cultural exchange.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Each suburban wife struggles with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night- she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question- 'Is this all?'”

— Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*

This thesis analyzes the nuances of intercultural interactions and identity development in the context of Slovak families and their foreign nannies. Discussion around domestic labor, identity, and power acts as the core principle of this study, highlighted by the theories of key authors, including Bridget Anderson, Joshua Fishman, and Stuart Hall (Anderson 2000, Fishman 1991, Hall 1990).

According to Hall, identity is not something that stands still but rather a "production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990, p.p 222, 223). The study provides a structured framework to examine how the roles of foreign nannies' in Slovak households are understood, experienced, and interpreted, allowing us to understand how these perspectives and the roles of domestic workers continue to be shared and maintained. This thesis investigates the complexities of multicultural interaction, language diversity, power, and cultural exposure in the domestic setting. Nevertheless, who precisely is a nanny?

Domestic labor in Europe: An overview

In 2021, an estimated 9.5 million foreign domestic workers across Europe crucially contributed to the daily functioning of families (European Commission 2021). This thesis will

focus on migrants working as domestic workers, examining the complexities, difficulties, and opportunities. It highlights the importance of migrant workers in the domestic work sector, the sexism that comes with this kind of work, and the consequences for the employees and Slovak families. Many of Europe's domestic employees are foreigners; 54.6% of domestic workers in Northern, Southern, and Western Europe are migrants. Their work is essential in keeping families functioning, caring for children and older people, and providing the different forms of assistance that make it possible for people to work and have fulfilling lives (European Commission 2021).

Out of 9.5 million domestic workers in Europe, 90% are women. Migrant women typically take on the role of caretaker and housekeeper, even if it means leaving behind loved ones to pursue economic opportunity. The consequences of this unequal distribution of labor by gender are far-reaching. Low pay, long hours, a lack of legal rights, and social isolation are issues that migrant women in the domestic service industry confront (International Labour Organization, 2015).

The East and West of Europe

When discussing Europe, it is crucial to differentiate the main differences between the East and the West, as many aspects differentiate both sides, such as the economic aspects, cultural behaviors, and different values (Pew Research Center 2018). It is crucial to evaluate these differences when analyzing the aspects of the cultural interaction of foreign nannies working in Europe; doing so allows us to understand cultural aspects which can affect the dynamic of how nannies perceive their work and how they are perceived (Anderson 2000, p.p 97).

The social economics of the East and West presents significant differences; while the social inequality is higher in the West, the East presents a higher poverty level (Syndicate European

Trade Union 2017). Workers in the Northwest of Europe receive a better salary than the East because of their transparent wage-setting systems: “Workers in northwest Europe are better paid because there is a fairer and more transparent system for setting wages, involving trade unions and negotiations with employers. That is a key ingredient of the prosperity and industrial success of Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and the Nordic countries.” (Ibid) Because of the economic factor, the West presented growth in industrialization faster than the East; such growth demanded higher labor, opening the floor for employment for migration (Hankiss 2023)

The cultural norm is another significant difference that influences how foreigners perceive their experience in Europe. More people in the East considered religion as part of their cultural norm, so the East side of Europe can be considered more traditional and less open towards migration (Malik 2015). This, combined with the economic differences between the West and East, can present a difference in the number of foreigners working in parts of East European countries and the salary offered.

Cultural Interactions and Identity Formation

Au-pair? Babysitter? Nanny? The difference between these terms can be confusing. However, it is crucial to understand the nuance of each role if we are to understand the dynamics explained later in this chapter.

'Au-pair' originated from "at pair," which translates to 'equal to,' about the equal exchange of services between two parties. Nowadays, an au-pair refers to a foreigner who travels to live in with a host family, often to work while studying the language abroad. They typically earn a lower income but have their accommodation and food covered in exchange. To be enrolled in

an au pair program, there is an age limit from 18 to 26 years old, and the program tends to last from 6 months to one year. Unlike au-pairs, babysitters have no age restrictions and do not depend on nationality - they can be nationals or foreigners who watch over children for a short period, ranging from a couple of hours per day per week or just casual care (Durin 2015). Nannies can be of any age and are usually responsible for cleaning the house, doing laundry, shopping, and cooking. They can have any extra duties as agreed with the family, such as driving children to school or taking them on vacations with or without their parents present. In theory, nannies work full time 40h to 60h per week, but in reality, many nannies work 12h to 15h hours per day, and it is also common (but not a must) for the nanny to live with the host family (Amber M. Epp 2014, Indeed 2023).

In a society that is constantly becoming more globalized, the interaction between different cultures is gradually growing and becoming part of our everyday life (European Commission 2021). Becoming a full-time caregiver as a foreigner makes these cultural exchanges even more predominant and intense. Relationships between full-time foreign nannies and European families give the floor to everyday interaction, where nannies, who often have very different norms, values, and communication skills, have to both live and constantly communicate with the parents and children. (Amber M. Epp 2014, Daniel 2006)

To understand the cross-cultural differences between foreign nannies and Slovak families, we first need to classify which elements of culture represent the topics to be covered in this thesis.

Religion, cuisine, what we eat, how we eat it, our language, how we express our language, how we live and perceive relationships, art, music, etc., are all parts of culture, and they are all different everywhere in the world. Culture is defined into five categories: symbols, language, norms, values, and artifacts (Schein 2012, p.p 311-315). For the aim of this thesis, we will examine predominantly language, norms, and values. Interestingly, language, norms, and

values are strongly connected when we speak - we communicate not only words that come out of our mouths but also our understanding, needs, and beliefs. This communication through language can be similar within individuals of the same group. Within groups, individuals can associate themselves while sharing something in common. For instance, a family member and friends can share the same circle of interaction, language, and tastes, which attaches them to the section of ingroups. Ingroups can share the same language, same traditions, same religion, or any aspect that is shared between individuals or groups (Tajfel 1974, p.p 65-93)

Joshua Fishman offers an interesting perspective on the connection between language and ethnicity. According to him, language is an essential measurement of ethnic identity and is strongly connected to power dynamics, such as the dynamics within the household a nanny might work in (Fishman 1991, p.p 115-119). In the context of Fishman's theory, the language barriers between foreign nannies and Slovak families can represent their cultural differences, increasing the feeling of difference between them and creating a hierarchy. For instance, a study investigated domestic worker recruitment in Brussels, and the results showed that people prefer domestic workers who speak their language or a shared language over those who do not. Even after addressing language preferences, the study indicated ethnicity-based bias, further supporting Fisherman's theory (ibid). Nannies who travel to Europe and speak their mother language and maybe English at a medium level cannot speak fluently and communicate successfully with their host families, which may put nannies in a disadvantaged position. On the other hand, if a European family makes an effort or shows an interest in learning the nanny's mother language, it can be interpreted as recognition and respect for the nanny's culture, which can balance out the power dynamics (Anderson 2000, p.p 115-119)

When the family hires a foreign nanny to teach their children to speak a foreign language, the primary language the nanny speaks to the child in the household is most likely the nanny's mother language. This role of communication between the nanny and the child does not only

provide access to a new form of communication in the household but also an intense exchange of cultural traditions, such as in situations when the nanny cooks a traditional meal from her home country for the family, sings traditional songs to the children or teaches new ways to play. These kinds of behaviors expose the family to a deep cultural interaction (Amber M. Epp 2014). Similarly, the nanny being surrounded by a group of people who do not share their language and customs, where norms, cuisine, language, and even the weather are different, exposes them to an environment where they must negotiate and redefine their cultural identity. Therefore, both nannies and families can live in an environment that provides a redefinition of their own identity, as one's own identity is a construction shaped by societal experiences where the interaction with other individuals and the environment they live in constantly transforms and renegotiate norms once held. For Hall, our identity is not something we learn once but rather a constant negotiation of our thoughts, beliefs, and experiences, creating the opportunity for constant change (Hall 1990, p.p 222-223).

However, as Bridget Anderson notes, the relationship between foreign domestic workers and families is not always open to the mutuality of culture exchange; sadly, thousands of women suffer maltreatment and exploitation from the families they work for. What role does nationality play in deciding how well they should be treated? According to Anderson, the challenges of everyday life experienced by foreign domestic workers directly influence their overall well-being inside and outside their work. Besides the language challenges discussed above, a lack of familiarity with the local language among domestic workers can strongly affect the quality of communication with their host family, causing misunderstandings, nannies' vulnerability, and insecurity. Another critical factor presented by the author is that a foreign domestic worker, most of the time, need to live in places where the cultural and social norm highly differs from their cultural background, causing them to feel isolated from their former social groups, but also the country they work in and the family they work with, which can affect their well-being

and mental health as well (Anderson 2000, p.p 249-253). Thus, the language and cultural norms differences impact the nannies' integration into the new country, making them feel lonely and less willing to interact with others. Going back to how nannies' nationality affects how they are treated, many employers may take advantage of this vulnerability in foreign employees. Employers may see these traces as a signal of weakness and exploit them by making them work for long hours, many times with no free days, offering an unfair salary, or even mistreating them emotionally by screaming at them (Redfern 2021)

Power Dynamics and Exploitation

The maltreatment and exploitation of migrant domestic workers in the context of foreign nannies working for European families is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed. While nannies provide opportunities for a family to live a healthier lifestyle while receiving extra help with caring for the children and maintaining the house, many nannies still need to work for families that provide a secure and fair work environment (Amber M. Epp 2014, Anderson 2000). This chapter aims to investigate the problems of domestic worker exploitation and mistreatment, emphasizing foreign nannies hired by Slovak families. The thesis aims to shed light on the challenges experienced by domestic workers and the consequences for their health through reviewing research studies and first-hand testimonies.

Maltreatment and exploitation of domestic workers can worsen when their vulnerability is intensified by entirely depending on the host family. Nannies traveling to Europe to work often depend on their host families to receive their visa documents and a place to live, which often causes them to fear losing their jobs and feel abandoned in the new country (Anderson 2000, p.p 166-167). A study from 2010 showed that a majority of migrant domestic workers in Europe are from Latin America and Asia (Helma Lutz 2010, p.p 419-430). In 2022, more than 30

percent of European asylum applicants were from the Philippines. In the same report, three primary professions were represented by non-EU citizens: Cleaners and helpers on the top, representing 11.4%, followed by 7.3% of personal services workers and 5.5% of personal care workers. Latin Americans were represented mainly by 5.7% Venezuelans and 4.8% Colombians (European Commission 2022). This thesis focuses on the domestic workers from the Philippines and countries in Latin America, mainly Venezuela and Colombia.

Latinos and Filipinos: The significance of nationality in the workplace

Kimberlé Crenshaw-1991 talks about how social categories such as race, gender, and class interact to create unique experiences of privilege or disadvantage, which she names 'intersectionality theory.' When applied to domestic work, this theory demonstrates that domestic workers' well-being is deeply determined by their occupation and intersecting identities and social situations (Crenshaw 1991). While Latinos and Filipinos contribute significantly to the economic sphere of domestic workers, their nationality affects how they are treated. While both groups suffer from exploitation and maltreatment, Filipinos tend to suffer more from their relationship with the families they work for. To understand how and why this difference occurs, we must focus on the cultural traces of Latinos and Filipinos and compare them to the relationship with European families (Lebrun, 2023).

Filipinos and Latinos have some cultural similarities, such as their cuisine. Both have strong Spanish influence from colonialism, strong family ties, religious preferences, and a warm and hospitable tendency (Erazo 2014). However, key cultural differences drastically influence how they are treated in the work environment. Firstly, the language relevance is different - a report shows that when asking Europeans aged from 15 to 30 years old which language they would

like to learn, the major answer was Spanish (European Commission 2018) in comparison to Filipinos who speak Filipino/Tagalog, which is not a predominant interest for Europeans.

As discussed above, language is an essential aspect of cultural exchange with European families, and it affects the power dynamics and feelings of identity within the household. Nannies from Latin America can teach Spanish to children and, often, parents alike, which balances the power dynamics. The nannies immerse themselves in the family's culture in their household. However, they also immerse the household into their culture via language, creating an environment of mutuality where families can perceive nannies equally. Tajfel's social identity theory suggests that individuals want to achieve a positive vision of themselves by connecting to other groups to create a sense of belonging. In this way, individuals categorize themselves and others into different social groups based on various factors, such as shared characteristics, interests, or affiliations. By establishing similarities, individuals build a stronger sense of identity and develop positive attitudes toward the people they connect with. Therefore, when nannies can share their mother tongue within their work environment, the connection between the nanny and the family strengthens while fostering a sense of belonging (Tajfel 1974).

The cultural hierarchy dynamic is another aspect that influences the negative work dynamic between Filipinos and Europeans. From an early age, Filipinos are taught about the importance of social hierarchy, determined by age and social status. The concepts of *kapwa* and *hiya* shape Filipinos' social relationships. "Kapwa" refers to the sense of shared identity or togetherness between people, regardless of their social status; it represents the importance of unity, empathy, and respect toward others. On the other hand, "Hiya" is a complex theory that translates to 'shame' or 'embarrassment' but in a more profound way. It represents a sense of personal honor, politeness, and a fear of being socially disgraced. The motivation to avoid "hiya" often encourages Filipinos to act with generosity and hospitality and focus on avoiding shame or

embarrassment to themselves or others (Scroope 2017). Opposingly, according to Laferté, Europe's social experiences and identities are no longer shaped by individual states but by Europe as a whole. He suggests that the open border within Europe increases the shared social experience, redefining the cultural and social hierarchy (Laferté 2020), indicating that when Filipinos as nannies interact with their host families, they tend to overly show respect and behave according to the norms of hierarchy that they learned since they were children. However, Europeans are not able to properly acknowledge its meaning. This adherence to hierarchy is therefore understood as submission, creating a lack of equality in the workspace, leading to a gap in their relationship. For Latinos, the question of social hierarchy behavior resembles the European one to a larger extent. Culturally, Latinos tend to build deep relationships and friendships across different social categories and ages (Talento 2015).

European households that hire a full-time nanny can show a preference for the nanny's personality, mainly based on the desired relationship they expect to build with them. When a family primarily requires cleaning services and prefers to avoid fostering a deep personal connection with their employee, Filipino nannies often become the preferred choice, mainly if language is not decisive. This preference results from the European perception that Filipino nannies or housekeepers are submissive and tend to maintain the established routines of the household while creating a sense of being 'invisible.' Their ability to perform their tasks efficiently without disrupting the family's day-to-day life is highly appreciated by some families. (Fonbuena and Ilagan 2022) (Dhel Nazario, Damicog and Panaligan 2019) In contrast, Latin American domestic workers are frequently chosen by European families who want to establish a relationship through language, particularly Spanish. These families are not attempting to avoid interaction as they do with Filipino nannies. Instead, they promote an open dialogue and space to build a deep connection (Durin 2015, p.p 156-169).

Salaries and workload

The workload and compensation of domestic workers in the context of foreign nannies working in Europe are strongly influenced by European families' cultural perceptions. Many societies, including those in Europe, believe domestic labor is less valuable and significant than other careers. This perception is frequently influenced by deeply established gender stereotypes and expectations that associate domestic work with the obligations of women. As a result, the labor of nannies, who are primarily women, can become underestimated and under-compensated (Carrillo 2014, p.p 225-239).

Besides the perceptions of career and gender stereotypes, nationality plays a considerable role in European domestic work. Given numerous economic and political factors, Filipinos and Latinos very often live in challenging work conditions with low salaries in their respective home countries, which often influences them to seek employment abroad in order to have better work conditions and economic stability, many times complemented by the will to support their family members whom they leave behind. In the Philippines, women leave their husbands, children, and loved ones to pursue working abroad to support them financially. In these scenarios, women often leave other family members in charge of raising their children, resulting in these mothers rarely seeing their children in person (Scroope 2017).

In Latin America, leaving children behind to work abroad does not happen as often as in Filipino culture – Latinos often travel abroad to have higher education (Brux and Fry 2010). Based on the scenarios and cultural norms discussed above, Slovak families often offer salaries based on their perception of what is offered in the nannies' home country rather than a salary typical for Europeans. In addition to believing that Filipino nannies are more submissive or willing to accept lower wages, this can lead to disparities in compensation compared to nannies of other nationalities. For instance, foreign nannies can work illegally full-time and receive a salary as

low as 600 EUR per month while cohabitating with the family or other domestic workers (Redfern 2021, Fonbuena and Ilagan 2022). That said, it is essential to highlight that these beliefs and expectations differ among European families and are not universal. Some families may emphasize reasonable remuneration based on the nanny's qualifications and previous experience over their nationality. Additionally, families may consider many other factors that can impact a nanny's salary, such as their experience, education, and language abilities.

Although many foreign domestic workers live in horrifying conditions, other domestic workers can also live under extremely luxurious conditions (CNN 2021). These nannies are frequently highly qualified, experienced, and trained in various skills. Other nannies are often hired by wealthy families ready to spend extra resources on their children's best interests (Bahney 2019). These nannies usually work in luxurious residences and often travel with their host families on holidays or business trips, where they frequently work long hours and must have flexible schedules to fit the demands of the family. However, they are highly recompensated, earning up to 200 thousand EUR annually. They may also receive luxurious gifts from families, including Cartier jewelry, iPhones, paid holidays, and even driving Tesla or Porsche cars (Fenton 2022, Sharma 2023).

Critical analysis of the literature

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the influence of the interactions between foreign domestic workers and European families, focusing on relationship dynamics, challenges, and routines lived by them.

A new pattern of hiring domestic workers is growing in Europe (European Commission 2021), linked to some factors identified in the literature review below. The first influence is globalization and poverty - many women from Asia and Latin America make the difficult

decision to leave behind their family, friends, and children to seek any available work in Europe, aiming to have a better economic situation and send money back home to loved ones (Anderson 2000, p.p 91, Redfern 2021) In the case of Latin America, women have the motivation to travel to Europe seeking to study and progressively establish a career (Durin 2015). In a comparison between the motivations behind Filipinos and Latinos to leave their family and children behind to seek employment in Europe, we can find a discrepancy, and some data shows the life and challenges lived by Filipinos working as domestic workers in Europe. However, not much information can be found on Latinos living in Europe. This gap is likely related to historical, economic, and social reasons. For instance, Latinos do not seek jobs abroad to work as domestic workers as often as Filipinos. However, Latinos seek work in the United States, living in situations very similar to those mentioned from the perspective of Filipinos (Carrillo 2014). Historically, Filipinos have stronger ties with Europe, given colonialism, creating a sense of familiarity and connection (Mulder 2013). In contrast, Latinos are influenced by their geographical proximity to the United States, making it relatively more accessible and cheaper to travel there (Gallegos and Ferdman 2007).

Language is another factor. Filipinos are known in Europe for being fluent in English, facilitating connection and work in Europe (Mulder 2013). On the other hand, while the primary language in the United States is English, many people speak Spanish, facilitating the conditions for Latinos (Gallegos and Ferdman 2007). Even though globalization and internet access make it possible for people to seek work anywhere in the world, the influence of the communities created historically makes the transition of work more accessible for Latinos and Filipinos to travel to places where they may have access to their ingroup and experience social norms similar to their home (Reyes 2014, p.p 115-119, Fishman 1991).

The third factor is the growing number of single parenting and women working in Europe. Many women no longer have the desire to stay at home raising children and doing domestic

work while men financially sustain the household (European Commission 2021, OECD 2011). Women are becoming more financially independent, widening their space in several fields. Married or not, for women and families alike, it has often become necessary to outsource everything related to domestic work, including taking care of children, as it is no longer a priority to do it themselves (Amber M. Epp 2014). In this sense, it is fascinating to reflect on the idea that while some women hire domestic workers to help them with everyday tasks they no longer have the time for, others leave their families to work abroad as a way to sustain their family, resulting in a scenario where women, for different reasons, they are increasingly occupying an essential position in the workforce all around the world. There is a potential for future studies to investigate this subject matter of exchanging the core societal role of childcare between mothers from different world regions from the perspective of anthropology.

When shedding light on European families, the literature review shows that having help around the house in some European countries has been a long-standing practice deeply rooted in cultural norms and expectations. Having a housekeeper or a nanny could be seen as a symbol of social status or a way to keep up a certain level of comfort (Amber M. Epp 2014). Furthermore, with the increasing interest in learning foreign languages, some families look for domestic workers that can offer the opportunity to practice a new language in their family, many times being open to exchanging other cultural norms such as communication styles and culinary habits, which can enrich a European person with a broader view of the world (Druckman 1994, p.p 43-68, Murphy 2013). However, the cultural differences between the family and the nanny can influence the mistreatment and exploration of the foreign domestic worker. There are many ways that European families can take advantage of foreign domestic workers, possibly being caused by power dynamics, as mentioned by Fisherman, where the disadvantage and lack of connection between the two parties cause a hierarchy (Fishman 1991, 43-68), economic instability, and a lack of legal rights (Anderson 2000, p.p 47). Some families may take

advantage of their domestic workers by paying them much less than the minimum wage, making them work long hours without breaks or breaks, or offering unfair working circumstances. Also, employers can withhold pay or take away passports, which makes people dependent and limits their freedom of movement (Fonbuena and Ilagan 2022, Redfern 2021).

Anderson addresses these issues while discussing the analysis of power dynamics in that it does not fully consider the more significant social, economic, and political factors that add to the exploitation of foreign domestic workers. While Anderson supports the idea of power differences between employers and employees, he does not fully explore the influence of other influential factors, such as gender and race (Anderson 2000, p.p 249-253). Thus, he does not mention or discuss the insights on the equal societal classes that Gilles has discussed (Laferté 2020).

Although the theories and insights brought by scholars and mentioned in this thesis explain some key elements of the dynamics that happen in the topical context of this thesis, there is a great gap in the studies analyzing the actual impact of foreign domestic workers in Europe, and examinations of the intersection with cultural identity. These studies will often offer insights into North American experiences with foreign domestic workers, which can differ when compared to the European ones, as many factors about their norms are different (Brux and Fry 2010, Durin 2015, Moors 2003), the approaches are entirely theoretical and disconnected from the particular situation of foreign domestic workers (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Hall 1990, Anderson 2000) The aim is to connect these topics to understand how the work of foreign nannies working with Slovak families is experienced and interpreted by them. By examining this viewpoint, the objective is to contribute to understanding their interaction through the lens of nationalism.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN - EMPLOYING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

In order to answer the research question, "How do cultural exchanges between foreign nannies and Slovak families influence identity formation and interpersonal experiences within a domestic setting?"

This dissertation was based on my constant contact with foreign nannies and Slovak families now living in Slovakia, Czechia, France, and Spain. Although the main research method is done by using semi-structured interviews, part of this study may have been influenced by my former experience as a foreign nanny working for a European family and my close interactions from this experience. Although it did not include the 'observation method' in this study, I did have the privilege to meet and observe nannies during their time working at various social events, which gave me important insights into their relationship on a deeper level. It has been a rich experience to observe so many families and nannies working together while they did not know they were being observed, as in this way, they could work as they do in everyday life. In this regard, the subjective experiences of everyday life, social situations, and personal interviews are the methodological fundamentals of my thesis.

As a former nanny, I have established a safe and trusting relationship with other foreign nannies while guiding our interviews, as we had in common both being foreigners and having the experience of working with Slovak families. This way, interviews were done on a deeper and more sincere level, which gave me a chance to relate to and understand the nannies being interviewed. On the other hand, I currently work in a nanny agency, which puts me in a different position – the position of an employer, providing the experience of families hiring foreign nannies. Moreover, interviewing both nannies and families can provide an understanding of how the cross-culture between nannies and families affects both sides in terms of identity,

language exposure, and feeling of belonging. Before we go into how the data interacts with the theories, it is essential to understand how I collected my information. I used a structured set of questions that helped me spot patterns. In the next chapter, I will explain how I set up the research, gathered data, used methods, and all the potential limitations.

Research puzzle and sub-questions

As mentioned in the introduction, the research puzzle of this dissertation is the following:

- “How do cultural exchanges between foreign nannies and Slovak families influence identity formation and interpersonal experiences within a domestic setting?”

The research puzzle is divided into three sub-questions, each aiming to answer a portion of the research question. The first sub-question focuses on identity formation and on how culture influences individual values:

- I. How do interactions between foreign nannies and Slovak families foster the process of identity formation in them?

The second sub-question focuses on interpersonal experiences. While the first question explores the angle of personal identity, this question focuses on the external relationship between nannies and families:

How do these exchanges of culture influence the interpersonal experiences of foreign nannies and European families, and what are the mechanisms through which these experiences are perceived, negotiated, and managed within the household?

While the first question explores the angle of personal identity, this question focuses on how conflicts, communication, and social norms influence the cultural exchange between nannies and the families they work in:

- II. How do cultural exchanges affect the internal attitudes of foreign nannies and Slovak families, and how are these experiences perceived and managed in the household?

Lastly, the third question focuses on the impact of the domestic setting on their views of each other's nationality:

- III. How does the domestic setting, as a unique context for these cultural exchanges, affect or reshape the cultural impressions, identity, and relationships of both the nannies and the families?

These questions acknowledge that a home is a personal, intimate place where daily routines, habits, and lifestyle choices play a role. Cultural interactions between the nanny and the family may be more intense or profound (Moors 2003). The third sub-question examines how nannies and families interpret each other's cultures. A nanny, for example, may introduce certain customs, foods, or languages into the home, which can influence how the family perceives her culture and vice versa (Tajfel 1974, p.p 55-63). "Identity" relates to how each individual perceives. Interactions between the nanny and the family may have an impact on this. For instance, a child may begin to adapt parts of the nanny's culture into their personality (Hall 1990). Finally, "relationships" relates to the nanny's and family members' interactions. The home environment could influence this in a variety of ways. For example, spending much time together in the household may strengthen ties between a nanny and a family or highlight cultural differences that generate misunderstandings (Anderson 2000, p.p 249-253).

Research Design

Having a foreign nanny in a family in Europe helps foster inclusivity and cultural diversity, and having a foreign nanny in a family in Europe can help foster inclusiveness and cultural variety, suggesting that foreign nannies can aid in exposing the kids and their families to various cultures, languages, and viewpoints in order to foster their appreciation of diversity and comprehension of it. Foreign nannies may also introduce their cultural customs and values to the family, which could enhance and extend their exposure to different cultures. The hypothesis contends that foreign nannies can significantly promote inclusion and cross-cultural dialogue among Slovak families.

Table of participants:

Group 1 Nannies	Gender	Age Range	Continent	Nationality of the family they work for	Live in/ Live out	Speak their native language in the household
Sofia	Female	40-50	Latin America	Slovak	Live out	Yes
Adriana	Female	20-30	Asia	Slovak	Live in	No
Laura	Female	20-30	Asia	Slovak	Live in	No
Luciana	Female	30-40	Latin America	Slovak	Live out	Yes
Olivia	Female	20-30	Latin America	Slovak	Live out	Yes

Evelyn	Female	20-30	Latin America	Slovak	Live in	Yes
Isabella	Female	20-30	Asia	Slovak	Live in	No
Emma	Female	30-40	Asia	Slovak	Live out	No
Stella	Female	20-30	Asia	Slovak	Live out	No
Natalia	Female	20-30	Latin America	Slovak	Live out	Yes

Group 2 Families	Nationality	Their nanny speaks a foreign language in the household	Continent of their nanny	Single Parent
Family 1	Slovak	Yes	Latin America	No
Family 2	Slovak	Yes	Latin America	No
Family 3	Slovak	Yes	Latin America	No
Family 4	Slovak	No	Asia	No
Family 5	Slovak	No	Asia	No

In order to successfully answer the research questions and investigate the complexity of the interaction between foreign workers and European families, it is crucial to find the proper methodology. Semi-structured interviews, as suggested by DiCiccoBloom and Crabtree (2006), offer a balance between systematic questioning with the opportunity for free exploration. This approach allows us to fully explore and understand the complex and unique aspects of personal interactions and how identities are formed, which are both very personal and nuanced areas. It

minimizes the possibility of cultural bias or misinterpretation while ensuring an overview of essential subjects and allowing participants to express their ideas and experiences on their terms (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree n.d.). Alongside the semi-structured interviews, it is crucial to combine the analysis and findings of previous studies on the topic; doing so allows us to understand and interpret the results of the findings (Creswell 2013).

The first point was to understand how foreign nannies and Slovak families changed their views or understanding of their cultural identity while interacting. At this level, I interviewed nannies and families separately, in which some families also presented an insight into changes perceived by their children. In doing so, I aimed to examine the level at which nannies felt like part of their identity changed, given the experience they lived while working with a European family, and also understand if the family has been influenced in changing or questioning some of their norms after interacting with the nanny. In order to gather the data, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a small group of ten foreign nannies and five Slovak families. Unfortunately, I did not successfully gather more interviews with families as I first planned; families were less available to share their experiences than nannies. Besides, I have also conducted several informal conversations with nannies before and after the interview, sharing other aspects of life as a foreigner in Europe. The individuals I have interviewed have been selected by region, as mentioned in the reports above (ref here). Most foreign domestic workers in Europe are foreigners from Asia and Latin America, specifying Filipinos, Venezuelans, and Colombians (in this order) (ref here). All families interviewed are from Slovakia; because of the scope of this research, as I mentioned before, not many families were available and willing to participate; besides, the ones that were available preferred an in-person approach in an informal way over a coffee and not recorded. Given this situation, it was only possible to realize interviews close to my current location, Slovakia.

The interviews were organized through framework analysis; qualitative research is a structured method for analyzing and interpreting data. In order to organize and analyzing the semi-structured interviews involves identifying and categorizing themes from the research mentioned in the literature review to create and organize questions for a better understanding of this research topic. In this case, the themes of the framework have been categorized into three sections. The first theme analyses the identity formation of nannies and families while working together; it considers the role played by each part in the domestic setting and how they perceive their identity while interacting with one another. The second theme entails the examination of cultural impressions and relationships; different from the first theme, this theme analyses how the experience lived in the household by Slovak families and foreign nannies shapes their perception of other people. For instance, how the family having a good experience with a foreign nanny shapes their perception of foreigners and vice versa. The third theme analyzes the power dynamics within the domestic setting; this part is analyzed with the information provided by the level of the perceived connection from foreign nannies towards their host family, language roles, and employment conditions.

I have briefly explained some concepts mentioned in this thesis, such as identity and social norms, for a better understanding of the questions during the interview, as not all participants have the context and understanding of such terms.

Some key questions are listed below; the complete list is annexed to the appendix at the end of this thesis.

Questions for foreign domestic workers working with Slovak families:

Question	Justification
How did you perceive yourself before and after you started working for the family	This question subtly asks how people's identities change over time and how working in a European home might have affected these changes. It corresponds with the 'Identity Formation' theme (Lebrun, 2023; Tajfel, 1974)
Can you think of any changes you have noticed in how you think or behave since you began working for the family?	This question examines how the nannies' actions and thoughts changed, which gives us information about how their identities changed. It corresponds to the 'identity formation' theme. (Lebrun, 2023; Tajfel, 1974) It corresponds to the 'identity formation' theme.
How would you describe your relationship with the family? Is it more formal and distant, or close and personal?	The connection between European families and their nannies can differ based on culture and individual choice ((Anderson, 2000), 2019, CARMELA FONBUENA, 2022, Durin, 2015). This question is connected to the 'power dynamic' theme.
Have you noticed any cultural aspects you have shared with the family you work for? Language, customs, culinary?	This question allows us to understand if the nanny has the chance to share part of her culture with the family and understand the hierarchy line (Anderson 2000) (Hall 1990). It is connected to the 'power dynamics' theme
What are the biggest challenges you have experienced in terms of cultural differences, and how have you managed them?	This question aims to find out what kinds of cultural problems nannies face and how they deal with them (Durin, 2015; Laferté, 2020). This question corresponds to the 'cultural exchange' theme.
How would you describe your compensation in relation to your workload? Do you believe your nationality has an impact on your compensation?	The salary of domestic workers can be affected by their nationality or cultural perceptions (CARMELA FONBUENA, 2022; Redfern, 2022). This question refers to the 'power dynamics' theme

Question for European families who hired a foreign worker:

Question	Justification
How important is the nanny's nationality in your decision to hire them?	According to the sources (Helma Lutz, 2010, European Commission, 2022, and Lebrun, 2023), the nationality of nannies can influence how they are treated. It is connected to the 'power dynamics' theme.
Can you talk about how your family's routine has changed since you hired a foreign nanny?	This question examines changes in how a family works, which gives us an idea of how the identities of individuals may be changing in the family. It fits with the 'Identity Formation' idea. (Lutz, 2011; Lebrun, 2023)
Have your views or perceptions about the nanny's home country or culture changed since she began working for you?	This question explores how cultural exchanges in the family affect how they see the world. It fits with the idea of "cultural exchanges" theme (Lutz, 2011; Durin, 2015)
Can you talk about any new habits, practices, or ways of thinking that your family has adopted since you hired a foreign nanny?	This question examines how the nanny's culture might affect the family's new habits or ways of doing things and how the family's identity might change. It fits in with the idea of the "identity formation." theme (Lutz, 2011; Lebrun, 2023)
How have your kids reacted to having a nanny from another country?	This question aims at the way a foreign nanny impacts children's identity. It fits with the 'Identity Formation' theme. (Lutz, 2011; Lebrun, 2023)
How do you figure out how much to pay your nanny? Do you believe you would hire a national while offering the same salary?	This question will help clarify how families make decisions about compensation. It is related to the 'power dynamics' theme.

Ethical considerations

Primarily, social research entails interacting directly with interviewee participants, demanding attention to ethical norms, especially when addressing sensitive issues such as interactions of their work and identity. Boeije outlines the pillars of ethical and social research that are key for avoiding 'unnecessary harm to the participants in this study, which includes informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants (Boeije 2009). All the interview participants

were presented with the goals of this study before I carried out the previously planned semi-structured questions. All the interviews were conducted individually and outside of the household of the family and place of work of nannies. I ensured that none of the participants worked for each other or had any direct relation. I carried out the interview in person and via video calls and asked all participants for permission to record our session. It was made clear that the interview would be used in the research anonymously and that all the information shared during the interview would not be spread for any other meaning other than used in this research. All the nannies had no problems with recording the interview, while all the families were not okay with the recording, which, consequently, I could only take notes. Families demonstrated a fear of breaching their privacy. The reason for this fear is that Slovakia is a small country where it is easy to be recognized, and its citizen are used to maintaining a high level of privacy (Miltgen and Dominique 2015). In contrast, foreign nannies come from large countries where this fear is not at the core of their social norms. Since this thesis addresses a sensitive topic, and to protect the identity of all participants, any information about their names, cities, and other details about the structure of the families' nannies' work have been anonymized.

Limitations

This research has been limited in several ways. The first limitation is the selection bias; the study has only a small number of participants from specific areas, which does not represent the full population of foreign nannies working for Slovak families or Slovak families that hired foreign nannies. This study would express better results if the selection of participants for the interview were represented by multiple nationality groups rather than the four nationalities represented in this thesis: Slovakia, Colombia, the Philippines, and Venezuela. In addition, the sample group could have presented different results if I had access to a more significant number of participants, particularly from the European family's part.

Another limiting factor is my personal bias; as a former nanny and a person currently employing nannies for Slovak families, my perspective and notions about the experience of nannies and families could influence the themes in which this study has been shaped. Not being directly connected to nannies and families could have offered me an unbiased perspective to interpret the study. Furthermore, it could unintentionally have a conflict of interest; given that my personal experiences with nannies and Slovak families were positive, I may expect or influence the results to reflect my own experiences.

My current position running a nanny agency may also influence participants' answers; before every interview, I have presented myself, and candidates may have shaped their answers to what they expected to be the right or wrong answers. In order to avoid this issue, I have absented my emotions to every answer, so they wouldn't shape their perspective when telling me their stories. However, there is the possibility that it has been a limitation anyway. Participants could also be influenced by the fear of consequences related to the fact that I may or may not know the families they work for; as I mentioned before, Slovakia is a small country, and it is very common for people to know or recognize each other. Thinking of this, I have not asked the names of the families they work for nor asked families for the name of their nannies.

CHAPTER 3: THE EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN NANNIES: IDENTITY, EXPERIENCES, AND CHALLENGES

In order to examine "How do cultural exchanges between foreign nannies and Slovak families influence identity formation and interpersonal experiences within a domestic setting," we need to shed light on the individual scenario of each foreign nanny and each European family, their interaction and the influence they have on each other while sharing space within the household almost every day. Interacting daily may intensify these experiences of the complex interchange of cultures, customs, and norms.

To fully grasp these experiences, the research question has been divided into three sub-questions. The first sub-question examines how identities develop and how these interactions and experiences can change both the nannies' and the families' ideas about themselves and their identities by asking "how the interactions between foreign nannies and Slovak families foster the process of identity formation in the individuals involved in the domestic environment?" The second sub-question explores the levels of interaction between them, analyzing the communication, shared norms, and their general experience together within the household, for which the question is "How do cultural exchanges affect the interpersonal experiences of foreign nannies and Slovak families, and how are these experiences perceived and managed in the household?". And the third sub-question asks, "How does the domestic setting, as a unique context for these cultural exchanges, affect or reshape the cultural impressions, identity, and relationships of both the nannies and the families?" Focusing on how their interaction influences their view on each other's nationality.

In order to answer these questions, I use semi-structured interviews combined with the theoretical analysis of the literature review.

Foreign nannies

Identity Formation

After the interview with all ten foreign nannies participating in the semi-structured interview, there were similarities and differences in the experiences of foreign nannies across the three themes. Most answers were controversial when they were asked about their self-perception before and after living in Europe. The majority have mentioned their perception of their home country rather than their self-perception. While they point out positive aspects of living in Europe, they also mention how their views about their home have changed since they moved to Europe. Seven nannies stated that they feel lonely and miss their family and friends, but five would not like to go back if they could; they mentioned that they would appreciate it if their family could live in Europe with them. Two nannies would go back if their financial situation would allow them to, and one nanny mentioned it does not matter where she is as far as she has her family and a good financial situation. When asked about their perceptions of the continent before traveling to Europe, all participants mentioned that they had a positive association with it related to success and economic stability:

"Before I came here, I only saw it in movies, and I dreamed that I could come and work and study, and now I am here (smiles). You can see a safe place; kids play outside." (Sophia)

"I always wanted to travel all over the world since I was a kid; in my country, being in Europe is fancy, but when you come here and work and live a normal life, you see it is different, is not bad; I love living here, I also have better money working here, but is a very different place."(Olivia)

Four nannies have mentioned that since working with Slovak families, they have changed their idea of how children should be raised, mentioning that children in Europe have a better quality

of life. "I come from a big family; here, people are worried about how the kids are eating, they eat lots of fruits and vegetables, and they always go outside' one said. Other nannies mentioned how European parents are more worried and aware about their children's education and that they are more patient and allow children to develop their brains in a better way than when compared to their country.

Power dynamic

In the theme of area dynamic, the focus was to understand how nannies perceived their relationship towards the family, if they felt included in the dynamics of the household, and if they considered their compensation fair.

Seven nannies are considered to have a close relationship with their host family, for which all 7 shared their language with the members of the house, including the children. All seven of them cooked the families meals from their home country and meals that the family taught them. These nannies also mentioned having a very close relationship with the children:

"I believe that when we are every day interacting with the family and giving so much love for their kid, in some moment, we become part of the family; I think it's very important to have a good relationship between nanny and family so we can work together and raise their kid the best way possible. about my relationship with them, I truly see them as close friends or family; I'm even teaching my boss Spanish also so we can talk more freely and have inside jokes. I join them on vacations. We already traveled to some countries that, include Iceland, the USA, Morocco, and Spain.." (Luciana)

"I have a wonderful family, and the kids are so nice; they accepted me from the first moment; there is a feeling among all of us; we share parties, games, trips, learning, and we all eat

together. Sometimes I cook for them; they love it, and sometimes they cook for me. I don't have the happiness of living with them, but if they offer it to me, I would gladly accept it."

Three nannies were considered to have a more distant relationship, one shared the language with the family, also teaching their language to the kids, but she felt dispensable:

"hm...I like them, but I can't say we are super close. I wake up, come to work, do my thing, 'tu tu' and go back. We do not talk like friends about the food, I cook for them, but my boss likes very different things than I do, so she does not like it, then I cooked what she asked me to. But it is not a bad relationship...We are not close." (Emma)

The other two mentioned that they do not have any close relationship with their bosses:

"No, you know, I think they don't like me. They almost don't talk to me; they sometimes scream when I don't do something like they want me to do. My first family (mentioning their former bosses) said that it was not fair that I should go back to working for them, but they could only pay me less money, but they loved me." (Stella)

"I don't see them a lot, the kids are nice, but they are bigger, and I take them to places sometimes, but we don't talk a lot." (Laura)

When asked about their salary, two nannies considered receiving a fair salary for their work, and eight were unsatisfied with their compensation.

"I am very grateful for my work, and I receive a better salary than in my country, but the family I work for has a lot of money; they spend more money on shoes than on employees, for me, is not fair."

Other said:

"They can pay me more money, everyone knows it because they can, but I know if I ask more, they will find another person."

Cultural exchange

In the theme of cultural exchange, nannies could answer questions, share their perspectives on cultural challenges they have gone through, and explain how they managed them. All nannies had stories to share, and some of the stories repeated themselves. These stories were related to cultural norms and communication styles; for most of them, people are 'colder' in Europe.

Participants have mentioned issues that are connected to factors such as miscommunication, language barriers, and behavioral differences.

"Everything, every day, is adaptation. I imagined that I came here and had to clean their house, but when I opened the cabinet, I did not know any of the products; everything was in Slovak (laughs). And everyone is so polite, is a good morning, good afternoon, good night, in my country, we just open the window and scream at each other (laughs)." (Luciana)

"For me, the biggest difference is that they want to walk a lot; the kid I take care of is a baby still, and when it is snowing or raining, they still want me to go outside on the trolley to make the baby sleep." (Emma)

"My bosses call me when I have to come to work, and then when they don't need me, they tell me to go rest. But they didn't say, 'Go rest, see you tomorrow' They asked me to go, and that they would call me back a bit later, and then later came, and they did not call me back, so I thought they did not need me. The other day when I came to work, they asked me why I did not come back yesterday after resting, and I told them it was because they did not call me back, and they said I needed to be more proactive. It was like this for weeks; now I just rest for 1h and go back to work until I finish." (Stella)

Slovak families

Identity formation

In the theme of identity formation, five Slovak families were asked about how their family's routine has changed since they hired a foreign nanny. Families 1, 2, and 3, who have Latin American, have opened the discussion by mentioning the topic of speaking a foreign language to their children. All three families hired a nanny from Latin America primarily because of the language.

"[nanny's name] is the best; she is part of our family. Our kids love her; we love her, and even my mother loves her. She helps us a lot...She is speaking to the children in Spanish, and the kids are like sponges; they are learning very fast. Us, not so much (laughs). We learned the basics of 'Hola' and 'Gracias' but not more than that." I then asked if the nanny cooks for them, to which they answered: "Yes, she made for us this for the first time like a chicken soup which was very good, and she also makes the best rice." (Family 1)

Family four and five have nannies from the Philippines. Both of their answer was vaguer, family four mentioned that their nanny helps with the cleaning, and this gives them more time to stay with their kid or go out with friends for an event or dinner. Family number five only mentioned that the nanny helps to maintain the house clean.

Power dynamics

When I asked the families about nationality's importance when choosing a nanny, all of the families mentioned it was very important. One of the families have mentioned that since they needed someone with a specific language, the nationality was very important:

"We knew from the beginning that we wanted the baby to learn another language, and I always loved Spanish, so it was very important to have someone from a native-speaking country."
(Family 3)

Another family mentioned that they had two specific nationalities in mind, Ukraine and the Philippines. When I asked the reason, they explained that some countries have a culture of cleaning better, such as in the Philippines, and they are not so 'expressive' as Slovaks:

"We want to come home and be clean. It is very hard to find a Slovak woman who will clean everything as we like... We thought about hiring from Ukraine because there are many people here who need a job, but we met [nanny's name] first; she was referred by a friend of ours."
(Family 4)

When they were asked about the salaries they offer, all of them believe they could hire a national nanny for the same amount they offer to their foreign nannies.

When I asked about how do they decide how much they will offer to the nanny, three families said that they based their decision on what was being offered by others or online. The other two families based their decision according to how much the average salary is in Slovakia and what they believe a fair salary would be.

Cultural exchange

While nannies had a lot to say about their cross-cultural differences with the family, families had less to say about their challenges while working with their foreign nannies. Three families that hired a Spanish speaker nanny mentioned that the language was an issue at the beginning of their work together, as the nannies' English was very basic. Two families said that there were

no difficulties adapting to their nanny. However, even though all families have mentioned having no difficulties in cross-cultural interaction with their nannies, four families said that they had to repeat themselves often at the beginning of their work with the nannies. But they did not consider repeating their requests a cultural difference; they associated it with a lack of experience on the nanny's part:

“ Uh, no, it was normal for us; now she is gaining more experience, and she is adapting better to our routines; whenever there is something I want her to do differently, I just tell her, and she changes it, but it is like this with everyone.” (Family 5)

Results and discussion

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative research combining semi-structured interviews of Slovak families and foreign nannies and the analysis of a literature review to synthesize key themes to frame the topic covered about the cross-cultural influence between Slovak families and foreign nannies. The following subsections provide an overview of the combined results.

- ***Identity formation***

In the interviews with foreign nannies working in Slovakia, I asked about how they developed their cultural identities, self-perceptions, and how they adapted to Slovakia, for which all nannies had important insights. When I asked how they perceived themselves before and after moving to Slovakia, most nannies were more talked more about how they perceived their home country than how they perceived themselves. Even though some have mentioned how they liked some aspects of their life in Slovakia, they mostly talked about how their opinions of their home country had changed since they moved to Slovakia. The data showing that nannies focused on their views of their homes supports the arguments of Stewart Hall on the constant

change of an individual's identity and how the experiences and the relations they go through shape the perceptions of themselves and the world (Hall 1990). When discussing the nannies' perspectives about Europe before their arrival, all nannies indicated an optimistic viewpoint associated with success and financial stability. However, their perception changed once they arrived in Slovakia, where they experienced the hard work of full-time nannies. Although their views have shifted, some nannies expressed that they would not like to return to their home country if they had the chance to do so. On the other hand, families did not have much to say about their perspective of the nannies' nationalities before or after working with them.

When discussing identity formation, families were more focused on talking about the nannies' services than actually self-perception. They focused on the good aspects of working with a foreign nanny, such as cooking well, cleaning well, and the nanny being friendly, rather than how they perceive others since they work with a foreign nanny or how their family routine has changed. Most families discussed how they had more free time after hiring a nanny and how they would learn a new language.

- *Power dynamics*

It has been already discussed how the compensations In the East and West may differ (Syndicate European Trade Union 2017). Here we will discuss how important proper compensation is for nannies and how it can influence the power dynamics of the household. Power dynamics theme aimed to understand how nannies considered their relationships with the Slovak families, their participation in family dynamics such as speaking a foreign language and how included they felt, their satisfaction with salary, and the families' methods to set a proper compensation according to them.

Seven nannies commented about developing a close relationship with their host families; however, not all spoke their native language inside the household. They commented on their connection with the children they cared for and how they felt included in the household. This data is consistent with Stewart Hall's contribution to the study of identity and power dynamics, highlighting the value of solid bonds and understanding across different cultures (Hall 1990). It also emphasizes the study of Amber and Sunaina about outsourcing parenthood (Amber M. Epp 2014). However, three nannies mentioned their feelings about being treated poorly by their employers; although some may like the family they work for, they feel distant from them. All these nannies are from the Philippines, which may connect to the fact that they cannot share their language with the host family, as not many Slovaks are interested in learning catalog, but also about their cultural norms of respecting and maintaining a formal relationship towards their employer (Mulder 2013).

Is important to note that while the salaries differ when comparing the East and West of Europe, the cost of living differs as well. Nannies who were interviewed mentioned to receive a compensation ranging from 1200 EUR to 1500 EUR. If the same salary offer would be made in the West part of Europe, this could be considered to be a low salary, however, in Slovakia is more than the average salary, which according to data from 2022, the average (not minimum) Slovak salary was 1,333 EUR per month (Trading Economics 2023).

- *Cultural exchanges*

The cultural exchange theme focused on cross-cultural interaction through communication styles and behavioral norms. The data shows that all nannies have faced differences in cultural norms when working with Slovak families, including differences in formality, and very different cultural styles, which caused misunderstandings and affected their interaction at some point. All nannies generalized their interaction with their host family as being the cultural norm

for Europeans. For instance, one nanny from Philippines have mentioned that she does not feel connected to the family she works for, but that she knows that this is not the Slovak culture because she has worked with a different Slovak family before, and she connected well with them. Similarly, nannies generalize their life in Slovakia as the “European culture.”

All the foreign nannies interviewed for this thesis shared interesting stories regarding their cross-cultural experiences with Slovak families. While nannies and Slovak families expected some aspects to be different, such as the food they are used to, the language, and the main traditions, others were a surprise. All the nannies had difficulties adapting to the communication norm practiced by their host families. For them, Slovak families had a “colder” approach when communicating. Even for nannies with a strong bond with their host families, it was challenging to adapt to some norms; six nannies mentioned that Slovaks expect them to walk a lot with the children every day, even when it is snowing. The practice of walking with a kid in the snow is very uncommon; natives from warmer regions, such as the Philippines and countries in Latin America, have the understanding that being out in the cold, especially for children, can make an individual sick (Sigelman 2012). Nonetheless, nannies coped with such differences by adapting themselves to the families.

The families did not interpret the challenges in communication with their nannies as a cultural difference; they interpreted it as a lack of experience, which indicates that, for them, a more experienced nanny would not have the same issues. These results contrast foreign nannies and Slovak families' views of cross-cultural interaction, where nannies need to adapt to their host families rather than the family adjusting to the nannies' routines. Such imbalance affects the hierarchy and the relationship dynamic of nannies and their employers, which is highlighted by the argument of Bridget Anderson about how foreign workers are responsible for both physical and emotional care in the household. Thus, nannies are emotionally controlled because their employment is tied to their visa status, meaning that if they lose their work, their visa status is

threatened. This fear is even worse when the nannies live in the same household as the family because, besides the threat of losing their visa, they could lose their home, which causes a sense of disconnection and fear. When the nanny has more independency living in a separate household or having visa documentation that is not attached to the nanny, the hierarchy in the household can be more balanced (Anderson 2000).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the cross-cultural interactions between foreign nannies working in Slovakia and Slovak families who hired a foreign nanny using qualitative research combined with semi-structured interviews and a literature review.

The thesis focuses on the cultural interactions between foreign nannies working for Slovak families and those who hire foreign nannies. The aim is to analyze the complexity of this cross-cultural interaction between foreign nannies and the families they work for while dividing it into relevant themes, according to the literature review, such as identity formation, power dynamics, and cultural exchanges. The goal was to present a comprehensive understanding of both foreign nannies' and host families' experiences working with one another while analyzing how their identities are shaped through this process.

This thesis uses qualitative techniques, such as semi-structured interviews with foreign nannies and host families, and a thorough review of relevant literature. The interviews reveal significant details regarding how foreign nannies perceive themselves, their home countries, and their experiences in Slovakia. The interviews with Slovak families have not presented significant results; most families did not want to follow up with the interview, either because of time or because they did not find the interview relevant. However, the five families who agreed to be interviewed showed opposite results when compared with foreign nannies.

The theme of identity formation has shown valuable insights from nannies working with Slovak families. Regarding cultural identity development, nannies focused more on changes in their perceptions of their home country than themselves. Before their arrival, the nannies positively perceived Europe as a place of success and financial stability. However, this emotion

has adapted to the complex nature of their full-time nanny employment in Slovakia, making their perception less idealistic. Some nannies expressed concerns about returning to their home country because of the poor financial stability offered there. On the other hand, rather than focusing on their perceptions or changes in family routines, families were more concerned with the work that the foreign nannies provided, such as their cooking and cleaning skills.

The hierarchy between nannies and Slovak families was investigated in the theme of power dynamics, including their relationship dynamics, inclusion and usage of a common language, and salary satisfaction. Despite nannies not always expressing their native language, seven nannies described developing close relationships with their host families. They highlighted their connection with the children they cared for and their sense of belonging in the household. Moreover, three nannies reported dissatisfaction with their employers. These experiences may have been influenced by the fact that their Slovak employer did not show interest in sharing cultural aspects of their work routine, such as learning the nannies' language.

Cultural exchanges looked at how foreign nannies and Slovak families interact and which challenges they face in the process, given that they come from different cultural norms. It showed that foreign nannies and Slovak families have different ways of communicating with each other. Nannies found it hard to adjust to what they thought was a "colder" way of communicating with Slovak families. Families claimed that communication issues were not caused by cultural differences but by a lack of experience, indicating that their perspectives on cross-cultural interactions are not equal, shifting the value of their interaction. The hierarchy between families and nannies is affected by the nanny's living situation, visa status, and salary.

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