Cultural Models of Teaching and Learning

David F. Lancy
Program in Anthropology

September 16, 2009
Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology
Abstract

Among the Western intelligentsia, parenting is synonymous with teaching. We are cajoled into beginning our child’s education in the womb and feel guilty whenever a “teaching moment” is squandered. This paper will argue that this reliance on teaching, generally, and especially on parents as teachers is quite recent historically and localized culturally. The majority of the world’s people follow a laissez faire attitude towards development that relies heavily on children’s natural curiosity and motivation to emulate those who’re more expert. Peers are often seen as the preferred role models and mentors for younger children. The paper will discuss the implication of prevailing folk models for children’s adaptation to modern forms of schooling.
This talk is based on over 6 year’s study of childhood in the historical and ethnographic archives—culminating in a comprehensive survey.

The method is referred to as ethnology. Material is gathered from literally hundreds of archived accounts on a particular topic to establish consistent patterns which are interpreted in light of evolutionary principles.
Folk Model Derived from the Ethnographic and Historical Records

Folk Model Derived from Contemporary Sources
Education in the Womb

The Mozart Effect
Music for Moms & Moms-to-be
Compiled by Don Campbell

BabyPlus
FRENATAL EDUCATION SYSTEM
When learning begins

Your womb... the perfect classroom.
You take prenatal vitamins every day to enrich your child's earliest physical development.
Your child's brain development begins during these prenatal months, too.
Now is the time for BabyPlus, the prenatal education system.
[In Korea] even embryo and fetus are viewed as already independent human beings that could be enlightened by the physical and psychological practices of the parents (Shon, 2002: 140-1).

Talking, reading aloud and singing to the belly…were described to me, and that I observed,…belly talk [in the US] is employed to turn fetuses into people and pregnant women into mothers (Han 2009: 13).
Pregnancy [and childbirth] is considered by the [Sepik people] to be an extremely vulnerable time...when sorcerers will not be able to resist the opportunity to kill [the mother] for some past wrong by shooting enchanted substances into her body to “close” her so that the baby or the placenta will not be able to emerge. [Post-partum]...the mother and the baby are washed, the baby wrapped up, and then both mother and child proceed to the maternity house where they will both remain for...months. Because of the Gapun villagers’ ideas about the heat and pollution surrounding birth, a newborn baby remains in seclusion [for] the first three or four months of its life (Kulick 1992: 93, 97).
Invisible Babies

- Birth Huts
- Seclusion
- Cradleboard
- Manta pouch
- Swaddling
- Silence=well-being

Peru
Swaddling immobilizes the child. Parents can hang the bound infant up on a nail and go about their business, secure in the knowledge that he cannot crawl into the fireplace or fall down a well. A swaddled baby, like a little turtle in its shell, could be looked after by another, only slightly older child without too much fear of injury, since the practice of swaddling made...child care virtually idiot proof (Calvert 1992).

Navajo infant
[In a rural Iranian community, a baby]…happily moving arms and legs in its mother’s lap may be said to be tired and strapped back into a cradle—a happy (*rahat*, at ease) baby is quiet in voice and body (Friedl 1997: 100).

The apparent goal of virtually every [Yucatec Mayan] care routine is to produce a contented, quiet baby…infants are almost never stressed by overstimulation…[mothers] induce long naps in older infants so [they] can attend to household chores…[Spending] long hours in the hammock…children’s ability to explore the environment and interact with others is considerably constrained (Howrigan 1988: 41).

[The Bonerate] baby is handled in a relaxed and supportive manner…but also at times unemotional, almost apathetic…mothers do not establish eye contact with their nursing babies…Toddlers are nursed quickly, without overt emotional expression…(Broch 1990: 31) [Since] 60 percent of all children…die…the major goal…is to keep them alive [not] enculturation (Broch 1990:19).
A Kogi mother does not encourage response and activity, but rather tries to soothe her child to keep him silent and unobtrusive (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1976: 277).

So important was the need to keep babies quiescent, in the late 1800’s babies were given opium to soothe them. It is estimated that around 15,000 infants were killed a year from opium overdoses (Edgerton 1992).

The Javanese feel that a baby is extremely vulnerable, especially to sudden shock which can lead to…his weak psychic defenses fail[ing] and evil spirits (barang alus)…could enter and cause the infant to be ill. All the customs of infant care can be seen as attempts to ward off this danger. The baby is handled in a relaxed, completely supportive, gentle, unemotional way (Geertz 1961:100).

Gaskins (2006) reviews research in anthropology that suggests relatively little verbal or symbolic interaction between mothers and infants. Mothers concerned mainly to insure infant is not distressed.
“Zero to Three”

School Readiness Interactive Tool

Babies are driven to figure out how the world works from day one. This means that babies don’t need organized activities or videos to learn. They don’t need special classes or toys with lots of bells and whistles. What babies and toddlers need is for you and other loving caregivers to spend time with them talking, laughing, playing and cuddling. Young children are learning all the time through play and everyday interactions.

To learn more, visit School Readiness Interactive (SRI), ZERO TO THREE’s new web-based tool. SRI includes: Early learning milestones, videos of young children learning through play, and fun activities for you and your young child.

[Use Tool | Order DVD]

Everyday Ways to Support Early Learning

For ideas on other ways to support your child’s development, take a peek at ZERO TO THREE’s newest one-page handout on how to encourage early learning through everyday moments. Tape it up—we think it’s fridge-worthy. (Spanish version available, see page 2 of link.) [Download Now]

Parenting Dilemmas: To use rewards or not?

Wondering about rewards for good behavior like kissing for...
Gusii mothers are extremely responsive to their infant’s distress signals but quite unresponsive to their non-distress vocalizations (i.e., babbling). [Further that] mothers rarely looked at or spoke to their infants and toddlers, even when they were holding and breast-feeding them…They rarely praised their infants or asked them questions but tended to issue commands and threats in communicating with them (LeVine 2004: 154, 156).
Playing with Babies

In contemporary society, playing with babies is considered critical for “attachment,” without which the infant will suffer emotional harm. And it is also viewed as critical—especially in East Asia—for the rapid development of the child’s cognitive capacity. These ideas have not been widely accepted in other societies.
On Not Playing with Babies

Casual nurturance [where Kpelle] mothers carry their babies on their backs and nurse them frequently but do so without really paying much direct attention to them; they continue working or... socializing (Erchak 1992:50).
Delayed Personhood

[On Vanatinai Island] it is not customary to name a child until a few weeks after birth, and the ritual presentation by the mother’s family of [gifts]…to the father’s kin…does not take place for about six months…these delays assure that naming and…exchanges are only performed for children who are expected to survive (Lepowsky 1985: 79).

Among early Christians naming was often delayed until after the survival of the infant was certain, and it was Christian baptism, not the physical birth itself, that marked the formal entry of the child into the world (Gillis 2003 p. 87).

An Ayoreo child is not considered a complete human being until the time he can walk and talk. This age category is called aiuketio. It provides the root for the word aiuketaotiguei, which means ‘understanding’ or ‘personality’ (Bugos and McCarthy (1984: 510).
Delayed Personhood

- Until they are about six weeks old...[Wari] babies of both sexes are called *arawet*, which translates literally as ‘still being made.’ [or]...*waji*, connoting immaturity. (Green, unripe fruit is *oro-waji*). An infant receives a personal name...at about the time when they begin to emerge from seclusion and interact with the wider community (Conklin and Morgan 1996: 673).

- [Among the Punan Bah] the baby is...hardly considered human [the] child is like an unripe fruit, it must ripen, only then will you know the taste of it (Nicolaisen 1988: 198).

- [Among the East Indian People of Alor] adults say, “He is only a child; he doesn't think yet.” A comparable comment is, “He hasn't a heart yet.” Heart is really the equivalent of “within him,” so that this is a way of saying that the child is still empty, a person without content (DuBois et al 1944: 76).

- A [!Kung] child who is nursing has no awareness of things. Milk, that’s all she knows. Otherwise, she has no sense. Even when she learns to sit, she still doesn’t think about anything because her intelligence hasn’t come to her yet. Where could she be taking her thoughts from? The only thought is nursing (Shostak 1981: 113).
Baby Signs

The World’s Leading Baby Sign Language Program

Join Our Email List!

Start signing with your baby today!
- Learn about the research-proven benefits of the Baby Signs Program.
- Find your local Baby Signs Instructor and take a class.
- Choose from many products that all help to make signing fun and easy.
- Learn about the Baby Signs Child Care Center Certification Program.
- Start your own Baby Signs Home Business.

‘Baby Signs has the most comprehensive line of baby sign language products on the market today.’
“Our oldest (now three) has a vocabulary more than most five-year-olds. Even our pediatrician commented on his vocabulary skills.”

“But all of this is secondary to just being able to meet the needs of our kids. We know if they are hungry, tired, thirsty, or need a diaper change. My son is only twelve months old and he can communicate what he wants and needs and is very patient with me by nodding “yes” or “no” when I am learning to understand his talk.”

“Hurray for Baby Signs! Considering how slowly babies learn even easy words like *ball* and *doggy*, let alone difficult words like *scared* or *elephant*, many months are lost that could be spent having rich and rewarding interactions, both for the child and the parent (Acredolo and Goodwyn 2002).”
No Teaching

- non-human primate learning rarely, if at all, involves active teaching on the part of adults...Even after many years of observing chimpanzee tool use, primatologists either have not observed any evidence of active teaching on the part of chimpanzee mothers or else have seen only rare, anecdotal cases (Ossi-Lupo in-press).

- The idea that this is “my child” or “your child” does not exist [among the Yequana]. Deciding what another person should do, no matter what his age, is outside the Yequana vocabulary of behaviors. There is great interest in what everyone does, but no impulse to influence—let alone coerce—anyone. The child’s will is his motive force (Gray 2009: 507).

- [On Truk Island, there is no] training of children in our sense. (Bollig 1927: 96).

- During this period there is no formal training [among the Mbuti Pygmies], but boys and girls alike learn all there is to be learned by simple emulation and by assisting their parents and elders in various tasks (Turnbull 1965: 179).
No formal instruction is practiced among the [!Kung]...learning...comes from the children’s observation of the more experienced (Marshall 1958: 51).

[Among the reindeer herding Saami of Norway], the child...is not instructed before starting a project, nor does he solicit help (Anderson 1978: 194).

[There] is remarkably little meddling by older [Inuit] people in this learning process. Parents do not presume to teach their children what they can as easily learn on their own (Guemple 1979: 50).

In contrast to American parents, who seem to feel that knowledge is something like medicine—it’s good for the child and must be crammed down his throat even if he does not like it—Rotuman parents acted as if learning were inevitable because the child wants to learn (Howard 1970:37, emphasis added).

Much of the [young Penan’s] expertise will be gained through trial and error experience in play or while actually hunting, not by direct instruction (Puri 2005: 281).
Nyaka [foragers from the Lake Nyassa region of Southern India] parents do not feel the need to ‘socialize’ their children and do not believe that parents’ activities greatly affect their children’s development (Hewlett and Lamb 2005:10). Young people learn their skills from direct experience, in the company of other children or other adults (Bird-David 2005:96).

[Kenyan Gusii] mothers…expect…their infants and toddlers to comply with their wishes…they could be harsh [and] rarely praised their infants or asked them questions but tended to issue commands and threats in communicating with them (LeVine 2004: 156).

If one asks a Chaga [from Tanzania] where he got his knowledge, in nine cases out of ten, the reply is: “From nobody; I taught it myself!” (Raum 1940: 246-7).

[The Chewong of Malaysia] believe that] a child will grow and develop without specific parental interference (Howell 1988: 162).
Accelerated Independence

- Yogi children are prodded and continuously encouraged to accelerate their sensory-motor development (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1976: 277).

- Nso babies may be placed in a bucket or hole in the ground to facilitate sitting (Keller 2007: 120).

- [A Ganda baby’s training begins at three months. It is bundled in a cloth and placed in a hole in the ground to support its spine] for about fifteen minutes a day, until able to sit unsupported (Ainsworth 1967: 321).

- Infants are held under the arms and “walked” until they can locomote or at least stand on their own. “A standing baby…makes less work for the mother” (Keller 2007:124).

- Another common practice is to dandle an infant on one’s lap while the infant pushes off vigorously (Takada 2005). Studies show that the “stepping” reflex is accentuated by such practices and leads, reliably, to the child walking at an earlier age (Zelazo et al 1972).

- However, this emphasis on accelerated motor development in many East African societies can be contrasted with a complete indifference towards speech development (Harkness and Super 1991:227).
Caretakers

A study of caretaking arrangements in 186 traditional societies revealed that in early childhood, care was principally the responsibility of the mother in only about one quarter of the societies for which information was available. In the others, children and/or other adults were responsible for the child’s care for half or more of the time; three quarters of the alternate caregivers were children (Barry and Paxson 1971).
Teaching Kin Terms, Polite Speech & Etiquette

- Instruction in Tikopia in matters of etiquette and decorum... begins... almost before the child can fully understand what is required of it” (Firth 1970: 79)

- [Inuit] babies are drilled daily on... terms for relatives (Guemple 1979:43).

- The Rotuman child is instructed in kin relations: “…go outside and play with Fatiaki, he is your sasigi.” or “You must show respect to Samuela, he is your o’fa” (Howard 1970: 37).

- [Hopi provide] deliberate instruction in kinship and community obligations (Eggan 1956: 351).

- From an early age, [Beng] children are taught the words for all of their relatives. Everyone must be addressed properly and greeted... to demonstrate village solidarity (Gottlieb 2000: 83).
Toddler Rejection

- With the arrival of the next sibling, dénanola (infancy) is over. Now, play begins and membership in a social group of peers is taken to be critical to nyinandirangho, the forgetting of the breast to which the toddler has had free access for nearly two years or more. A [Mandinka] mother [says] “Now she must turn to play ” (Whittemore 1989: 92)

- As they begin to become more and more children rather than babies, and begin to be a bit irritating and willful because they are ‘thinking for themselves,’ [Tahitians] begin to find children less amusing. Instead of being the center of the household stage, the child…becomes annoying (Levy 1973: 454).

- Little children in Haouch El Harimi crowd in the doorways and peek in through windows of a social gathering until they are chased off (Williams 1968: 37).
Toddler Rejection

- Weaning is done when the baby is about one year old or somewhat less...for babies, who cry, shriek, and kick in order to gain access to the breast...frighten him with threats: "If you continue nursing, the snakes will come. If you go on nursing, the toad will eat you." The next step is the most effective one: the mother rubs her nipples with pepper or lemon (Du Bois 1941: 114)

- Weaning from the back often occurs at the same time as weaning from the breast...Temper tantrums in which the child would sit down and scream his head off, hurl dirt and stones at his mother...are short lived...The mother impatiently screams back at him to stop crying, and siblings simply leave him behind to keep up with his own pace or drag him along forcibly and uncomfortably, with threats of punishment if he refuses to cooperate..."Come here, hurry!" scream older siblings or mother when he fails to keep in step with them on walks. For about three months the child's bleary eyes, tear-streaked face, and woebegone expression are unquestionable evidences of the most unhappy interval of his childhood (Maretzki et al 1963: 477).
Exercising Autonomy

Belize-playing in tree

Laos-climber

Liberia-roaming toddlers
Spontaneous Play with Peers

Liberia
At The Periphery

➢ Another important way in which Tongan children show respect is by remaining on the periphery of adult activities (Morton 1996: 90).

➢ Lepcha childhood is a time of obscurity, of being unimportant; children are not taken notice of and their tastes are little consulted (Gorer 1967: 314).

➢ In a Mayan community...children are taught to avoid challenging an adult with a display of greater knowledge by telling them something (Rogoff 1990: 60).

➢ [Fijian] children of any age should be obedient, quiet and undemanding in the presence of adults (Toren 1988: 240).

➢ [Hawaiian] children are expected to function in a separate sphere that only overlaps that of adults at the peripheries (Gallimore et al 1974: 119).

➢ [Ulithi elders disapprove] of anything indicative of forwardness (Lessa 1966: 99)
Even at a young age FulBe [Cameroons] children have internalized cultural models to some extent and are eager, through practice, to minimize the discrepancy between the idealized model and their actual competency (Moritz 2008:110).
[In numerous studies of children’s social learning in Mexican village settings, by the authors]…an expert’s intent to instruct was not necessary for these children to learn through observation, though repeated opportunities to observe and interest in learning the activities…(even if discouraged), were essential…conversation and questions between children and adults usually occur for the sake of sharing necessary information, and adults rarely focus conversation on child-related topics in order to engage children in talk. Talk supports and is integral to the endeavor at hand rather than becoming the focus of a lesson.

The expectation that learners will avoid asking questions may also be based on a respect for the ongoing endeavor, avoiding interrupting and constraining the expert’s activity. Questioning by children may signal immature self-centeredness and rudeness (rather than signaling curiosity or valued inquisitiveness) (Paradise and Rogoff 2009: 117-118, 121).
Make-Believe Play

Liberia
Learning Through Object Play

- The social role play of [Guatemalan village] girls most frequently involves the mundane daily routine work of their mothers (Nerlove and Roberts et al 1974: 275).

- [A Yanomamö boy] at age five plays with a small bow and a reed-like arrow that his father or brother has made for him (Peters 1998: 90).

- [Sudanese village children] play a game in which they act out the social and work activities associated with agriculture by manipulating natural materials on miniature “fields” dug in the dirt (Katz 1986: 47).

- During the play the boys begin to try to build their own traps. They also like to build models of bigger traps, such as spear-traps. Model-building is quite prominent among the plays of Kammu boys, and they often build tiny models of houses and barns and of the tools used in actual work. The grown-ups also like to fabricate models for the children to play with (Tayanin and Lindell 1991: 15).
Learning Through Object Play

- [A young Conambo girl] plays with clay, making coils, pinch pots, and miniature animals while her mother builds coils into vessels (Bowser and Patton 2008: 110).

- At around eight to ten years old [Dioula boys destined to be weavers] start building play looms on the ground and making very narrow bands with threads saved or given to them (Tanon 1994: 34).

- Play is a very important means of acquiring skills, which [Penan] parents encourage by making smaller-sized weapons, such as spears and blowpipes, for children to practice with (Puri 2005: 282).

- Touareg boys, who will eventually learn to herd camel, first care for a young goat that they treat like a playmate (Spittler 1998: 343).
Learning Through Play

If practice or some form of training is necessary for the optimal development of skilled behavior, then we must ask...why practice play? Consider the alternatives. Practice outside of the play context might be extremely dangerous. If a young animal...had to learn to hunt by hunting, it would starve. If it had to learn mothering by practicing on it's own offspring, it would have a poor reproduction record... Furthermore, in all these "for real" contexts, arousal is liable to be very high, and...learning does not progress very well under conditions of high arousal...[however] learning does not occur very well when arousal is too low, and most drill-type practice is boring. Similarly, teaching is...inefficient because it requires an investment by a second party, the teacher. Thus, while selection favors learning over instinct in many cases, it is unlikely to favor teaching or pure practice as educational media (Lancy 1980a: 482, emphasis added).
Parent-Managed Play
Mediated Play
Parent-Child Make-Believe

- Parents...provide many toys and physical space for pretending, and to fill in as play partners...They also increasingly capitalize upon children’s interests and skills to lead them into other, culturally appropriate interactions...a mother suggested that she and her bored, tantruming preschooler “have a parade.” ...preschool-aged European American children generally are highly active and assertive play partners capable of elaborating complex, imaginative scenarios. (Gaskins, Haight, and Lancy 2007: 181)

- The mother linked the current play activity to a past event they experienced together, a visit to a children’s museum. She reminded the child of what they usually do at the museum, and made suggestions for a pretend play in the current context as well. Later in the play she asked the child, “What does Mommy do when I put mail in the mailbox that the postman needs to pick up? Remember?” By reminding her son to put the red flag up on the pretend mailbox, she used the play as a context to teach her child about the world...middle-class parents’ use of guided participation to create a zone of proximal development during play with their preschool-aged child. [Authors] found that the majority of parents’ teaching in pretend play consisted of sharing conceptual knowledge about the world.” (Vandermaas-Peeler, et al 2009: 93-5)
The third phase begins when the younger child achieves active mastery of language between his-her 19th and 18th month. It can now talk to the elder sibling and thereby create new qualities of interaction…our material demonstrate[s] different interaction strategies of parents to establish contact between children. [But then] the behavior of the parents changes strikingly. They seem no longer to consider it a major obligation to mediate between the children. Rather they leave it more and more to the children (Schütze et al 1986:136).
An Ayoreo forager child is not considered a complete human being [until attaining]... *aiuketaotiguei*, which means ‘understanding’ or ‘personality’ (Bugos and McCarthy 1984: 510).

The Punan Bah (SE Asia) see little point in any systematic teaching of small children, due to the belief that only from the age of about five when their souls stay put, will children have the ability to reason (Nicolaisen 1988: 205).

Taira children pilfer from gardens, have temper tantrums, and attack each other physically, but very little enforcement takes place. ‘They are only children; we can't expect them to know any better’ say adults (Maretzki 1963: 481).

Torkotala Hindus [of India think that children are] unknowing of moral expectations and thus not responsible for living within them (Davis 1983: 88).

Typical Bonerate children are defined as being bodoh (stupid)—that is, they have no wisdom or knowledge of social norms and values. By implication they are not responsible for their misdeeds and behavior, and you cannot demand much from them (Broch 1990:15).
Getting “Sense”

The child before he is five or six is said to be *durung djawa*, which literally means “not yet Javanese….not yet civilized, not yet able to control emotions in an adult manner, not yet able to speak with the proper respectful circumlocutions.” He is also said to be *durung ngerti*, “does not yet understand,” and therefore it is thought that there is no point in forcing him to be what he not nor punishing him (Geertz 1961:105).

[For Fulani pastoralists] It is when children begin to develop haYYillo (social sense) that adults in turn change their expectations and behavior (Riesman 1992: 130).

[Children on a Micronesian Atoll are said to have] “social intelligence” (*repiy*) (Lutz 1988: 94)...As children first approach the age of six, they are first considered socially intelligent...capable of learning some adult economic tasks (Lutz 1988: 108).

•Kipsigis children aren’t expected to demonstrate *ng’omnotet* (intelligence) until the age of about six  (Harkness & Super 1985: 223).
Teaching Moments

Romania

"Do you have any picture books that could help a child understand test reform?"
Dinner table conversations offer rich opportunities for extended discourse…shared cultural norm that…every member of the family should contribute to the conversation…talk…at mealtimes provides rich information to children about the meanings of words…[We] showed that mealtime was a more richly supportive context for the use of rare words in informative contexts than toy play or even book reading (Snow and Beals 2006: 63-5).
Four-year-old Graeme spies his mother at the kitchen counter beginning to make a cake. He walks to the table opposite the counter, grabs hold of a chair, carries it to the counter, sets it next to his mother, and steps onto the chair. He asks, “What are we making?” Then he takes hold of the bowl and a wooden spoon and eyes the ingredients. Meanwhile his mother, who had previously arranged the ingredients, the utensils, and the recipe on the counter, has started to measure the flour. *This interaction is typical of the types of social situations young children experience everyday throughout the world.* A child and a more experienced partner work together to accomplish a practical, meaningful goal—in this case, making a cake (Gauvain 2001:3)

The adult slows down the activity, as when she provides the child with adequate time to add the ingredients to the bowl—something she would ordinarily do much more quickly. She also modifies certain aspects of the task to support the child’s participation. For example, measuring the ingredients proceeds more carefully and overtly than when she works alone...she may coordinate her actions with those of the child to support his participation in activities that are still too difficult for him to do on his own...As an adult and child work together, they learn about each other’s needs, how to help and support one another, and how to enjoy each other’s company...The child may receive instruction from the mother as she tells him what to do in order to help. *Such didactic instruction is a mainstay of adult-child interaction* (Gauvain 2001:4) *emphasis added*

Account of a Marquesan woman describing the harvesting of coconuts and preparation of copra with her husband. They work together efficiently and quickly to get a lot done. However, when their children accompany them, the work takes much longer. The parents spend a lot of time saying, “Do this, do that” and get mad at the children, who fool around and chatter the whole time. Parents don’t want to supervise and teach children, they want them to grow up so they can figure it out themselves. The socialization process is geared toward producing ‘enana motua’ which means ‘mature adults’ (Martini and Kirkpatrick 1992: 205).
African American Folk Model

He [her grandson] gotta learn to know 'bout dis world, can't nobody tell 'im. Now just how crazy is dat? White folks uh hear dey kids say sump'n, dey say it back to 'em, dey aks 'em 'gain 'n 'gain 'bout things...He just gotta be kéen, keep his eyes open...Gotta watch hisself by watchin' other folks. Ain't no use me tellin' 'im: "learn dis, learn dat"... He just gotta léarn...he see one thing one place one time, he know how it go, see sump'n like it again, maybe it be de same, maybe it won't. He hafta try it out (Heath 1983: 84).
Read, Sing and Talk: By talking to children in full sentences from the moment they are born, you help them build a basis for language and dialogue. This stimulates their minds and helps them develop verbal skills.

Walks: Take a walk with your child and count how many houses you have passed. You can also encourage a conversation by asking him or her what color things are in your surrounding environment. Point out signs and the letters you see.

Sorting Laundry: Your child can help you sort laundry by colors. Have him or her say the color out loud and help him or her differentiate between dark and light.

Cooking: Have your child help with cooking by getting ingredients for you. You can ask him or her to give you a certain amount of something like potatoes. This will not only help encourage his or her verbal skills, but will help develop his or her math skills too.
British Folk Models

British government published an extensive curriculum for parents:

Parents are encouraged to experiment with everyday objects, or to ask questions about them. For instance, the leaflet on light and sound contains a section on mirrors: parents are asked to ‘go around the house with your child’ comparing different mirrors; to ‘talk to your child’ about where else they see mirrors; and to ‘explain’ that reflections in mirrors are reversed…the leaflet contains instructions about how to make a kaleidoscope with your child…Several other leaflets contain recipes for Victorian or Roman food… (p 25). Reaction from a parent criticizing the Roman cooking lesson: ‘…sweet wine cakes, you know, I’d never say to Peter, ‘Ooh, you’re learning about Romans, let’s go in the kitchen and make some cakes.’ That just wouldn’t happen. You know, the practical side of it, we just wouldn’t do it. Playing games and making cakes and all that sort of thing-no” (Buckingham and Scanlon 2003: 183).
Unwelcome Precocity

- When it came time for [Trukese maiden] Rachel to learn to make [a] basket…her father took her over to his mother’s house in order to have her teach Rachel this skill [but she] …was indignant that they should be teaching Rachel so much when she was so young. When her father insisted that his mother make a basket she did so; but she did it rapidly and refused to answer Rachel’s questions (Gladwin and Sarason 1953: 414).

- Young [Telefol]woman, recalling how she learned to loop as a child, told of how she had once tried to carry on with an unfinished bilum [string bag] that her mother had left in the rafters of the house before leaving to work in the garden. She had been carefully watching the way her mother’s hands moved as she looped the bilum. But on trying it out herself, the result was a disaster. When her mother returned, it took her hours to undo the mess [and] she was angry (MacKenzie 1991: 102).
Unwelcome Precocity

Active involvement in the household economy may actually be discouraged. Clumsy children might waste precious food if allowed to participate in grain processing (Bock and Johnson 2004: 15); they must be prevented from messing up planted rows in the garden (Polak 2003: 126); rambunctious boys threaten to scare off the prey during a hunt (Matthiasson 1979: 74) or fish during a fishing expedition (Broch 1990: 85) and; the aspiring fisher can’t be entrusted with costly, hard-to-replace bone fish-hooks (Johannes 1981: 88). Although we see the belief that learning during early childhood should be child-initiated, attempts by the child to solicit instruction or recognition from adults will likely be rebuffed (Lancy 1996: 149-53; Edwards 2005: 91; Morton 1996: 90; Reichard 1934: 38). The child may still not be considered sufficiently mature to benefit from guidance (Lancy and Grove, in press, a)
Accepting Responsibility

Yemen

Ghana

Peru
Often the very first chore assigned to children is to send them on errands. Kpelle informants extoll the virtues of child messengers…[they] were always welcome in other people’s homes and aroused no suspicions. A well-behaved, polite child earns the attention of potential foster parents and praise for its family’s socialization efforts. Delivering messages and presents (and bringing back gossip!) segues easily into marketing. The ‘errand’ curriculum incorporates many ‘grades’ from carrying messages (at age 5) to marketing produce, hard bargaining and making change for customers—by age 11 (Lancy 2008: 238).
An older [Baining] child in the seven to nine range is said to *ka (ki) tit mas* (he [she] goes fully), meaning that he or she goes for water, firewood, gathering…in the bush (Fajans 1997: 87).

A [Giriama] girl, from about 8 years until…puberty, is *muhoho wa kubunda*, a child who pounds maize; a boy of this age is a *muhoho murisa*, a child who herds (Wenger 1989: 98).

...among the *Tchokwe*, children are identified through the roles they assume… *tchitutas* are girls and boys around the age of five to seven, whose role is to fetch water and tobacco for the elders and take messages to neighbors. *Kambumbu* are children (especially girls), seven to thirteen years of age, who participate actively in household chores and help parents in the field or with fishing and hunting (Honawana 2006: 41-42).
Chore Curriculum: Farming

Among the Bamana in Mali, four-year-old Bafin has already grasped the meaning of sowing and is able to perform the various movements...he is entrusted with an old hoe as well as with some seeds so that he can gain some practice in this activity. However...he has to be allocated a certain part of the field where he neither gets in the way of the others nor spoils the rows they have already sown. Also, the others have to keep an eye on his attempts and point out his mistakes to him from time to time. As a rule, his rows have to be re-sown. At harvest, three-year-old Daole...begins to pluck beans from the tendrils. After he has filled the lid with a handful of beans, his interest fades. He carelessly leaves the lid with the beans lying on the ground and goes looking for some other occupation. Five-year-old Sumaèla...looks out for a corner not yet harvested and picks as many beans as will fill his calabash. He keeps on doing this for more than one and a half hours. Eleven-year-old Fase has been busy harvesting beans...since morning. He works as fast as...his father and grown-up brother...and only takes a rest when they [do]. Fase is a fully competent...with regard to harvesting beans. He even takes on the role of supervising his younger brothers and checks their performance from time to time. (Polak 2003).
Chore Curriculum: Praise

Adults may play a motivating role. A child’s initial attempts at doing useful work, like gardening, may attract a parent’s attention: “Praise is probably the most effective spur to industry, and I was constantly hearing zeal rewarded with approval” (Hogbin 1970: 148). The aspirant gardener may be assigned part of a garden plot (Hogbin 1970: 139; Whiting 1941: 47) as their very own! Kaoka “…men may also allocate plots to their sons and speak of the growing yams as their own harvest.” (Hogbin 1969: 39) From the Sepik area of PNG we learn that: “Children’s initial efforts at subsistence work are recognized by giving them food. Such recognition is extended by enthusiastic praise and by calling other people’s attention to a child’s effort” (Barlow 2001: 86). Bengali children may be “…praised if they bring home crabs, snails, fish, or even a large tal fruit as a surprise” (Rohner and Chaki-Sircar 1988: 33). Hopi girls who’ve learned to grind corn with a nice smooth rhythm are “shown off” to visitors (Hough 1915: 63).
Chore Curriculum: Herding

Niger

Ladakh
Learning Crafts

In the high Andes, weaving is very much a part of the village curriculum: Children are not taught to spin or weave. Rather, they observe family members who have mastered these crafts and imitate them directly (Bolin 2006: 99).
Chore/Crafts Curricula

- Cattle (Raum 1940; Read 1960)
- Camels (Spittler 1998)
- Hunting (Hill and Hurtado 1996; Peters 1998)
- Fishing (Johannes 1981)
- Gardening (Whiting 1941; Polak 2003)
- Farming (Kramer 2005)
- Household Economy (Friedl 1992)
- Reef collecting (Bird, R. and Bird 2002)
- Weaving (Dilley 1989; Tanon 1994)
- Pottery (Wallaert-Pêtre 2001; Bowser and Patton 2008)
- Canoe making (Wilbert 1976)
- Blacksmithing (Lancy 1980b; McNaughton 1988).
Among Kewa horticulturalists, children are competent gardeners by 9 (Lancy 1983: 121-122).

Mer Island children are “fairly proficient” reef foragers by 6 (Bird and Bird 2002: 262).

In Tibet, mixed herds tended by 6-7 year-olds (Gielen 1993: 426).

10 year old Aka pygmies have mastered some 50 foraging skills (Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza 1986: 930).

Once Martu children systematically begin to hunt for goanna lizards, they are already well practiced…the youngest hunters can be nearly as efficient as the older children (Bird and Bird 2005: 142).
Ache forest dwellers can recognize a *kuere* or signs of human or animal trails by age 8 (Hill and Hurtado 1996: 223).

[Zapotec-Mexico-children's excellent command of ethnobotany is described as] everyday knowledge acquired without apparent effort at an early age by virtually everyone in town (Hunn 2002:610).

[Inuit ] children produce a large percentage of their own food supply by gathering shellfish (Zeller 1987: 545).

Hadza children not only start foraging at 4, they quickly develop competence in fruit and tuber acquisition and processing (Blurton-Jones and Marlowe 2002)
In another study of planting among the Bamana—this time sorghum—Polak (ND) shows that, in a complex sequence of component skills, an adult intervenes only when the learners get hung up on the most difficult sub-maneuver. This sort of limited, strategic instruction is most commonly seen during the craft apprenticeship such as practised by the master blacksmith with his apprentice (McNaughton 1988). Among the Warao, where canoe-making is the *sine qua non* of survival, and boys expect to be mentored by their fathers “…there in not much verbal instruction…but the father does correct the hand of his son and does teach him how to overcome the pain in his wrist from working with the adze” (Wilbert 1976: 323).
Coercive Teaching

- Corporal punishment of children is common... It occurs as a frequent or typical technique of discipline in societies in all major regions of the world [or]... about 40 percent of the sample societies (Ember and Ember 2005: 609).

- The number of punishments that a Kwoma receives from other persons increases markedly in childhood... beaten and scolded by his parents and other persons... they order him to do household chores (Whiting 1941: 56).

- Dusun parents regularly use fear of the supernatural as a means of insuring that children conform to expected behavior. Parents tell children folktales with themes of violence (inflicted on) a child because of some error in his behavior (Williams 1969: 114).

- [a Sebei girl] is taught to do exactly as her mother does... If the mother finds the work improperly done, she... abuses the girl... saying: "I hope that you have stomach pains and dysentery." Mothers are concerned that their daughters learn proper housekeeping so that their husbands will not beat them... and so it will not be said that they failed to learn proper behavior from their mother Goldschmidt (1976: 259).
Coercive Teaching

- [Children in Punan Bah village on Sarawak are threatened] with evil spirits and with \textit{penjamun}, i.e. persons who practice human sacrifice and therefore come to abduct children…attempts to frighten children are sometimes so successful that the children scream with fear, but this will only make the adults laugh. For children should be afraid they claim, or they will never take advice nor pay respect to their elders (Nicolaisen(1988: 205)

- [As recently as 19th century England, children] were taken on visits to the gibbet to inspect rotting corpses hanging there, while being told moral stories (deMause 1974: 14). [They were whipped by their parents] on returning home to make them remember what they had seen (Bloom-Feshbach 1981: 88).

- [Freeman tallies the frequency and severity of child beating on Samoa, where they] believe in the unique efficacy of pain as a means of instruction…severe discipline…is visited on children from an early age (Freeman 1983: 206, 209-10).

- The Rwala Bedu (Syria) utilize an arsenal of physical punishments ranging from spanking with a stick (small children) to slashing with a saber or dagger (older children). They hold that the rod of discipline leads to paradise (Musil 1928: 256).
Coercive Teaching

[Navajo] Children are told that if they misbehave the big gray Yeibichai will carry them off and eat them... And in children's autobiographies there is evidence that these threats are effective: “The first time I saw the Yeibichai I was scared. I thought they eat the children, and I cried.” (Leighton and Kluckhohn 1948: 51-52).

[Bena-Bena] ... boys and girls are threatened "in fun" with axes and knives and they run crying in terror (Langness 1981: 16).

This emphasis on scare tactics and corporal punishment to control the child's behavior probably accounts, in part, for the paucity of evidence for children learning directly from adults. This assertion arises from one of the earliest conclusions about the way humans learn (Yerkes and Dodson 1908). This 100-year-old notion is described as: “animals seem to learn more when they are in a state of moderate arousal than when they are in states of either low arousal or high arousal (an inverted-U-shaped learning curve)” (Byrnes 2001:86). In other words, the high arousal associated with scaring or punishing children does not—in spite of folk wisdom to the contrary—create ideal conditions for learning.
Restricted Access to Knowledge

- On Pohnpei (Micronesia), one does not freely dispense what one knows. Only those judged respectful, intelligent and patient will be deemed worthy of the responsibility to carry knowledge to the next generation (Falgout 1992: 37).

- Family ritual and religious formulae [on Tikopia] are secret property, jealously conserved (Firth 1970: 77).

- In Kpelle society secrecy separates elders from youth. It supports the elders’ political and economic control of the youth (Murphy 1980:193).

- Much like their indigenous practices, writing is also viewed [by the Mende] as a mode of access to other secret domains of knowledge whose meanings are dangerous to those without legitimate social and ritual qualifications. This means that writing skills as well as the semantic content of the writing can be withheld or divulged strategically in order to gain power or dependants (Bledsoe and Robey 1986: 204).
“Bush” School

Ethiopia

Malawi
“Bush” School

- [Baktamin initiation] rites are...not for idly chatting about...the whole rite would appear to be lodged in one person’s safekeeping, hedged by fearful taboos, represented by secret thoughts and a few cryptic concrete symbols...The leader of Mafomnang has the personal responsibility to recreate it (Barth 1987: 25).

- A major focus of male initiation is to enhance men’s hegemony over women. One tool is the use of "secrets," including sacred terms, rituals, locations and, objects such as masks. These "secrets" are denied to women on pain of death (Lancy 1996: 99 ). For the Arapesh [Sepik region, PNG]...initiation ceremonies [include] an ordeal followed by the novices being shown the secret paraphernalia...flutes, frims, paintings, statues, bullroarers (Tuzin 1980: 26).
“Bush” School

- It is clear that the major concern of the *chinamwali* [Chewa girl’s initiation] is reproduction…they dance around various clay figures, including a python…that is thought to be in control of fertility of the land and human being (Yoshida 2006: 234).

- For the Bemba of Zimbabwe, the girls' initiation process, *chisungu*, is replete with sexual imagery. They sing a song about setting fish traps and...pretend to catch each others fingers in the leaf traps..."The fish has many children and so will the girl" is sung (Richards 1956: 65).
Bush School: Education or Indoctrination?

- *Chisungu,* “…rites representing hoeing, sowing, cooking, gathering firewood…but, instruction, in the European sense, was quite unnecessary in such subjects (Richards 1956: 161).

- As [Hopi Indian] Talyesva, who was so badly beaten during his initiation that he was scarred for life, says “I thought of the flogging and the initiation as an important turning point in my life, and I felt ready at last to listen to my elders and to live right.” (Simmons 1942: 87).

- We may ask why initiates put up with all this pain, shame and ridicule…The answer lies in the fact that initiation rituals are very effective at indoctrination, at changing one’s identity (Lancy 1975: 376).
Apprenticeship

In Tanon’s thorough study of the Dioula (Ivory Coast) weaving apprenticeship, what is striking is the severe restriction imposed on what the apprentice can and cannot assay. The novice weaver is constrained to advance his skill in "baby steps" to reduce the likelihood of mistakes that an expert would need to rectify...the apprentice at 8 is preparing bobbins, a few years later he's weaving plain white bands on a loom an expert has set up for him. A year or two later finds him weaving patterned blankets of larger and larger dimensions until, perhaps at 18, (Lancy 2008: 255) the “…apprentice will learn to set up his first warp under the close scrutiny of his master” (Tanon 1994: 26).
Apprenticeship

- [Among the Tukolor of Senegal] Some fathers prefer that another weaver should train their sons after they have acquired some basic skills since they feel that they will not exert enough discipline in training (Dilley 1989: 188). The notion that parents may not be stern enough to function as their child’s teacher is common in the literature (Goody 2006: 254).

- [In the Dii-Cameroon-potter’s apprenticeship] punishments (spanking, forced eating of clay) are used to ensure that rules are respected, and verbal humiliations are very common…Good behavior is rarely noticed, but errors are always pointed out in pubic (Wallaert 2008: 190-1).

- [In the training of master minaret builders in Yemen]. Curses and derogatory remarks—as opposed to explanation—were the most common form of communication from “teacher” to “learner” (Marchand 2001: 144).
Apprenticeship

- [The Hausa weaving apprenticeship] is very rigid and conservative. The apprentice is not expected to innovate, alter, change or improve upon anything. He is to copy the master's techniques...exactly (Defenbaugh 1989: 73).

- When a [Japanese] apprentice presumes to ask the master a question, he will be asked why he has not been watching the potter at work, or the answer would be obvious (Singleton 1989:26).

- [In the Bella pottery apprenticeship] learning is not a particularly visible process. One is seldom confronted with situations where knowledge is explicitly transmitted from a teacher to an apprentice (Gosselain 2008: 158).

- [Tukolor apprentice weavers are] asked to wind bobbins for each weaver as needed…other duties are to undo and prepare hanks for rewinding, fetch water for the other weavers, and perform any other menial tasks that are required (Dilley 1989:187).
Apprenticeship

One study carefully documents the apprenticeship in which Mende (Sierra Leone) children attempt to become a Muslim wise man or (*karamoko*). The “Master” does everything possible to prolong the apprenticeship—during which novices are virtual slaves. Children are held back, learning to read and write very gradually, and fed small morsels of the Qur’an and various and sundry rituals and formulae. This insures their continued servitude and their inability to compete with the “Master.”

*Karamokos* may know the meaning of the texts] but don’t’ teach with meaning…[they] don’t want to teach the children quickly so that they will learn and understand. If they do teach the meaning, they [the students] will leave their karamokos without working for them for many years. The karamokos feel the Arabic learners are their slaves, so if they should teach them with meaning and dispatch them, they will no longer have people to perform their domestic work (Bledsoe and Robey 1986: 216).
Examples of TEACHING

- Kwara'ae adults use a very explicit “training” regimen with toddlers. Caregivers support an infant's role as conversational partner through triadic...repeating routines...telling the child what to say, line by line...Encoded in repeating routines is information on kin terms and relationships and on polite ways of conversing...important goal[s] for conversation in a society where enenoanga (delicacy) and aroaroanga (peacefulness) are key values...for maintaining harmony in the extended family and descent group...[the child is led through]repeating routines until at about age 5 years [they] have gained mastery over adult interactional forms (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1989: 62).

- Moral education is, of course, at the core of a [Kogi] priest's training. Since childhood, a common method of transmitting a set of simple moral values consists in the telling and retelling of the “counsels,” ...These tales are a mixture of myth, familial story, and recital, and often refer to specific interpersonal relations within the family setting (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1976: 283).
Examples of TEACHING

The time-consuming educational procedures employed by the Guarenos reflect their perceptions of the complexity and delicate balance of the natural ecosystem of the Orinoco delta, and of the range of locally available natural resources. The diversity of the natural biota of Guara is enormous, and there are numerous microenvironments affording distinct food resources. The techniques used to utilize and conserve renewable natural resources...are therefore varied and elaborate, and are translated into a comprehensive curriculum aimed at equipping children with the skills needed to manipulate the island’s diverse resource assemblage...The need for such elaborate training to ensure that one’s sons are capable not only of supporting themselves but also of caring for aged parents (Ruddle and Chesterfield 1979: 396).
Examples of TEACHING

The Ituri people themselves have a normative model that parents should transmit [food taboos] to their offspring of the same gender...when a child reaches about seven years of age ("when the child begins to have some sense"), the same gender parent begins to opportunistically present the child with samples of a particular food item, with instruction that this item cannot be eaten. Often, some rationale is also provided, such as: "My parent did not eat this food; neither can you. It is our tareta [restriction]." The parent repeats these instructions, with or without the benefit of an example of the food item, while impressing on the child the necessity of continued transmission ("This is our tareta; you must not let your child eat this food or it will become sick"). The child remembers these avoidances throughout life, and at the appropriate point in his/her own children's lives goes through the same instructional process with them. Thus, each individual should avoid those foods that his/her same-gender parent told him/her not to eat; this parent was in turn taught by his/her own parent (Aunger 2000: 453).
Examples of TEACHING

Formal instruction begins on land. It demands that great masses of factual information be committed to memory. This information is detailed, specific, and potentially of life-or-death importance. It is taught by a senior navigator to one or several students...they sit together in the canoe house, perhaps making little diagrams with pebbles on the mats which cover the sandy floor. The pebbles usually represent stars, but they are also used to illustrate islands and how the islands “move” as they pass the canoe on one side or the other... There [is] much magic and esoteric knowledge...known only by the privileged few...navigational skills were and still are valuable property...taught...for a stiff price (Gladwin 1970: 128–129).
Why Teaching?

I have argued that the vast majority of what one needs to learn to become a competent adult in the typical village setting is readily accessible or *transparent*—teaching is not implicated (Lancy 2008:236).

The cases where teaching emerges are those where the process is truly *opaque* (Gergely and Csibra 2006: 246) such as the kin system and associated behavioral and linguistic protocols (Kwara'ae), religious esoterica (Kogi), food taboos (Ituri) and the science and lore of long-distance navigation (Puluwat). And, as the Guara example indicates, teaching should occur where survival depends on the acquisition of great quantities of information (Lancy 1989:17).
In theorizing about the practice of education in the classroom (or any other setting, for that matter), we must take into account the *folk pedagogical theories* that those engaged in teaching and learning already have, because any innovations will have to compete with, replace, or otherwise modify the folk theories that *already* guide [behavior] (Olson and Bruner 1996: 10-11).

Defining [Warm Springs] Indian children as inattentive is partly due to cultural differences in signaling attention. It is also partly due to the fact that Indian children really do pay less attention to the teacher and more to their peers. And finally, it is also due to the fact that the type of attention Indians devote to their peers is culturally different from that of Anglos students (Phillips 1983: 103-4).
School attendance in the village tracks these varying views on children's readiness for various kinds of assignment. Parents may send toddlers to school because they are of no use at home. Or, they may keep 6-7 year olds at home because they don’t have sense yet. And they’ll pull 8 year olds out of school, especially girls, because they’re now mature enough to be put to work.
When Folk Models Collide

- It is not uncommon for [an Inuit] mother in an isolated settlement to send her child to school and then go to bed herself, having been up all night visiting with friends and relatives. She is often loathe to make sure that her child goes to bed early, because *she does not want to impose her will on his or her own decisions* (Matthiasson 1979: 77)

- Most of the [Navajo] school leavers were at least six grade levels behind the national average. Many Indian youth explained they simply did not read anything outside school [Parents did not intervene to ameliorate the problem because] for Navajo, early autonomy and *non-interference with their children* was desirable, whereas adult supervision over children and adolescents was a strong value among the Anglo (Dehyle 1992: 36, 39, emphasis added).

- Individual autonomy is respected…because it is inappropriate to go against other people’s self-determination, even if they themselves do not understand how to act in a responsible interdependent way…Mayan mothers were much less likely than middle-class European American mothers to try to overrule toddler’s wishes by insisting on their own way…Middle-class European American mothers more often tried to supersede the children’s will, trying to force the children to follow the mother’s agenda (Rogoff 2003:203).
When Folk Models Collide

The proposal to extend compulsory education was met with angry protests from [Thai village] parents who could not afford to keep their children economically inactive for another three years. They were losing labour needed for their own land as well as giving money to the schools to educate their children. In one school in the North, children were asked to come back at weekends to plant vegetables (Montgomery 2001: 67).
When Folk Models Collide

The present study demonstrates a gender bias in [rural Tswana] school attendance that is related to the labor requirements of households. As families rely more heavily on agriculture, girls are less likely to attend school, because the payoff to parents would be higher if a girl stayed home and contributed to household productivity. As families rely more heavily on herding, boys are less likely and girls are more likely to attend school (Bock 2002: 218).
When Folk Models Collide

The Touaregs refuse to send their children to school even though attendance is compulsory. Some even go so far as to purchase potions from the shaman to make them appear stupid. Others claim that only poor parents without the means to employ children in herding or fruit harvesting send them to school (Spittler 1998:16).

Ecuador
Conclusion

There is, currently in scientific discourse and policy-making, an enormous emphasis on parents as teachers and on the parent-child relationship as that of a teacher-pupil. This view is without historical or cross-cultural precedent and may be due, in large part, to the fact that the opinion setters are “marketing” their own unique pedagogy. While this model of pedagogy has obvious utility, given the nature of future employment demands for efficient processors of information in a “knowledge economy,” we must beware of turning nurture into nature.


References


Bollig, P. Laurentius (1927) Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln. Munster i.w.: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchwandlung.


References


References


References


References


References


References


References


Read, Margaret (1960) *Children of Their Fathers: Growing up Among the Ngoni of Nyasaland*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.


References


References


References


