THE PSYCHOCULTURAL STUDY OF SOCIALIZATION

Time and Place

Thursday 9-12 (first meeting, Thursday, January 8)
Haines Hall 310
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CLASS URL: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/04W/anthrom236p-1/
INSTRUCTOR URL: http://cultureandhealth.ucla.edu/tweisner/

Office Hours: Thursday, 12 to 1:00, after class, in Haines Hall 304. (or at my Psychiatry Dept office: 1001 Westwood Blvd. (SW corner of Weyburn & Westwood on the second floor -- Rm. 2-208; call for appointment.)

Goals of this course

Children grow up in a wonderful and remarkable diversity of cultural communities around the world. Every cultural community provides developmental pathways for children. These pathways are shaped by cultural ecology and history, and by the goals of parents, communities, and children themselves. The proposal for consideration in our class is that the cultural pathways in which human development occurs are the single most important influences shaping development and developmental outcomes.

An important goal of the course is to read about how children grow up in a culturally pluralistic world. We will read studies, hear lectures, or see films of childhood and families in cultural communities in these countries: Kenya (several cultural groups), Tanzania (Chagga), Botswana, Namibia, Liberia, Japan, China, India, Brazil, and the United States. Studies in the United States include Mexican immigrants in California, Euro-Americans in California, Native Hawaiians, and working poor children and families in Milwaukee.

The cultural place in which development occurs is not the only influence on children’s development, by any means. A variety of mechanisms of the mind shape and are shaped by culture, and so influence development. These mechanisms include psychodynamic processes, shared memory and learning patterns, cognitive developmental stages, and sensitive periods in development such as those that accompany infant attachment, acquiring language, and processes of self and identity formation. There are also maturational, brain and
neurological foundations of development shared by all infants and children everywhere. The course, however, focuses on the role of cultural models of development and parenting shared by a community. We study how these models of childhood, parenting, and development are represented as schemas and scripts in the mind, and how emotions and sentiments become attached to these schemas. Schemas are associated with developmental goals parents have for children, and we discuss how children acquire these. We will also discuss policy and interventions for children and families as themselves cultural activities in a cultural context.

Understanding human development across cultures requires a wide-ranging set of conceptual tools and multiple methods. It requires a multivariate way of thinking about the world: recognizing that many interacting circumstances shape human development and family life, and that no one discipline or method or theory is likely to capture all these circumstances. A psychocultural and ecocultural perspective discovers both universal features of parenting and development found across cultures, as well as the considerable differences between cultures.

Readings introduce a variety of theoretical approaches to understanding culture and development, including structural-functionalist approaches, ecocultural (cultural-ecological), evolutionary, biosocial, enculturative, feminist, critical theories, and others. Although we consider various theories, the course does emphasize a particular approach: an ecocultural model of development. Ecocultural theory focuses on the influence of family and community adaptation on development. In ecocultural theory, socialization and culture acquisition are viewed as adaptive projects with a goal of creating a culturally meaningful daily routine of family and community life for children and parents. Children experience their cultural world through active participation in family and community routines and activities. This daily routine consists of activity settings and cultural practices. The family routine can be examined for its ecological fit in a particular cultural ecology, its meaningfulness and value for the family, its balancing of competing interests among family and community members, and its predictability and stability for children. Ecological fit, meaning, balancing of interests and conflict, and stability jointly define the sustainability of a family daily routine in a particular cultural place. Ecocultural theory is based on the idea that children's engagement in their everyday routines of life is the single most powerful influence in a child's development, and that children's development is better if children are engaged in sustainable routines.

More sustainable routines, according to this theory, are better for children and should produce more well being in children and in families. Well being in ecocultural theory, consists of engaged participation in cultural activities deemed
desirable by a cultural community, and the psychological experiences produced thereby. This is a universal developmental outcome, explicitly embedded in the cultural community the child develops in, worth considering across cultures. We also distinguish between well being and well becoming. Well becoming refers to what the present circumstances of a child and family may imply about some future developmental outcome (completing high school; caring for elderly parents later in life). Well being is current. Developmental research usually focuses on well becoming - will current practices lead to “better” outcomes later?

The course is organized around consideration of some common human concerns about childhood and development: the tension between the individual and cultural community; trust and safety; fear, threat and aggression; gender development; caretaking and provision of nurturance; schooling and skill acquisition; and change and interventions.

The course focuses on topics of general importance in the social sciences as well, using comparative childhoods as the lens: human nature; the individual and culture; the nature of social order; gender differences; the self and identity; how cultural models motivate action; what constitutes deviance; culture change; and the role of cultural research in intervention and applied work. One of the exciting things about studying culture and development is that so many questions in this field are of general interest.

Readings emphasize contrasts and similarities between how the rest of the world conceives and manages human development, and how various North American cultures do so. We always consider the meaning of comparative and cross-cultural studies for our own life and contemporary culture. The readings each week include such comparative material. All of the readings and films refer to North American families and socialization practices as a contrast to studies of other cultural communities. Preschool in Three Cultures, Child Care and Culture, and several papers and my own research include comparisons with North American communities. I will also present material on my research with the Abaluyia of Kenya, Native Hawaiians, the Family Lifestyles Project (FLS), the CHILD Project, and the New Hope project. The FLS is a longitudinal study of conventional and nonconventional families and children from California, the CHILD project is a longitudinal study of family adaptation among families with children with developmental delays in Los Angeles, and the New Hope project is an ethnographic and survey study of economically poor families who participated in a program to assist parents in finding employment.
Class Format and schedule

The class is a structured seminar. I will lecture and organize class discussions in varied ways, and provide opportunities for email feedback.

Class requirements:

Email notes. Before class meetings two (Jan 15) through five (Feb 12) only, email me one or two pages of notes and comments about the readings, class discussion, and how this course relates to your personal experiences, and professional and intellectual interests. These notes are your opportunity to get personal feedback from me on the readings, lectures or class discussions. What is puzzling to you about the course or the readings, surprising and exciting, contradicts or fits with what you have learned in other courses, makes you angry, happy or uneasy, fits or does not fit with your personal experience, influences what you might study or might be useful in your professional plans and related research? What would you like emphasized more (or less) in class discussions or lectures? How does this course fit with what you are learning or have learned in other courses in your own department or elsewhere? What ideas are you thinking of for your paper? No question is too “obvious” for you to ask: what does “culture” mean? Why aren’t all the readings about current problems facing children and families? What about globalization and the media and effects on children? Can I do my paper on play? Whatever is engaging you about the class lectures, discussion, and readings can be what you write to me about in your email.

These email notes are not graded. It does not matter if they are right or wrong in specific content (although referring to specific content from readings or class lectures and discussions would be a good idea). It is your chance to think broadly, clarify confusions before you get too deep into the quarter, to think aloud about the readings, and relate the class readings, lectures, and discussion to your overall professional goals and personal life experience. I will reply to your notes by the following week’s class.

NOTE: BE SURE THAT THE EMAIL ADDRESS YOU USE TO SEND ME YOUR NOTES IS ALSO YOUR RETURN ADDRESS. IF IT IS NOT YOUR RETURN ADDRESS – INDICATE WHAT ADDRESS YOU WANT YOUR COMMENTS RETURNED TO. BE SURE THAT YOUR RETURN ADDRESS HAS ENOUGH STORAGE SPACE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE TO RECEIVE REPLIES. MAKE THE SUBJECT LINE OF THE EMAIL SOMETHING I CAN EASILY Recognize (“MARY JONES NOTES WK 3”, NOT “NOTES”).
Paper. You will also write one 10 to 15 page paper, due the 8th MEETING of our class (Feb 26th), in class. Your paper must use the course readings extensively, including the empirical data and relevant theories presented in the readings and in class. The paper of course can also make use of other materials and bring in your other interests. I will hand out a list of what the paper should include several weeks before the due date. The paper can also relate to your own research and professional interests in whatever field you are in. A goal for our class papers is to take your own interests and apply a cross-cultural point of view to the topic(s) you decide to focus on for your paper.

By the 6th meeting of the quarter, February 12th, you should turn in a proposed topic, proposed paper title, and one summary paragraph describing the paper you are thinking of writing. I will read all these at the class break that same day, and give you an idea if the topic is OK. You can still revise and change the paper topics thereafter, but this is a way to get some early feedback. You can also email me about your thoughts about the paper, or meet during office hours.

“One-minute papers”. At the beginning or end of some classes, we will write short paragraphs about what we anticipate for the class that day at the beginning, and/or what were the key points from that class at the end. These are not tests. They help focus class discussion and give us some shared questions for class.

Class Participation. All students are expected to attend the seminar regularly and to have completed the readings in advance of the discussion. All students are also expected to have something to say each week: e.g., a simple factual or historical question about one of the readings, a point which reveals a methodological bias or assumption, a critique of one or more of the readings, a strong point of an article or book which merits our admiration, a clarification which will help everyone to understand the readings better, a question about the proposed universal parental concern that is the focus for that week, or other topics. If everyone comes thus prepared, you will learn from each other as well as from the readings and from me.

Class presentation. You will also prepare a 10 – 15 minute oral presentation of your paper to the class on either the 9th class meeting (March 4th, Thursday) or 10th class meeting (March 11th, Thursday). These short talks are models for presenting a paper at a professional meeting – and to a friendly and sympathetic group at that.
Course Requirements summary

1. Active, informed seminar participation, and full attendance (NOTE: the class is from 9 AM to 11:50 AM; please be in class at 9).
2. Your weekly conversational notes about the class, submitted via email before the day of class (for class meetings two through five).
3. A 10-15-page paper due in class at the 8th class meeting, February 26.
4. Presenting a short talk based on your paper, to the class on meeting 9 or 10.

Grading

The paper is 66% of your final grade. The other course requirements comprise the remaining 34%.

All students receive feedback in the form of comments on the weekly emails and feedback on the final paper. In addition, students have the option of not knowing the actual letter grade they might have during the course or on the paper. Many students actually find it somewhat liberating (and only mildly anxiety inducing) to just focus on the actual feedback given during the course, and the course content, rather than on a letter grade. Of course, you can find out about your letter grade at any time -- it is entirely up to you, and there is no stigma either way.

The paper is graded on the mastery system. The principle of the mastery system is that students should receive rapid and specific feedback on their strengths and weaknesses in a paper, and be able to use this feedback to redo and improve their work. Students can then benefit from feedback by re-doing the work, showing improvement, and thereby getting a higher grade. There is no risk for revising a paper and resubmitting; no one receives a lower grade after revising a paper. The paper can be redone and resubmitted up to and including the last day of finals week, and you can revise more than once. Other details will be discussed in class. You will receive a sheet listing features I look for in the papers before the paper is due. Since the paper is due at the end of the 8th class meeting (February 26th), and returned at the beginning of the 9th class meeting (March 4th), you have 3 weeks to revise and resubmit the paper before the quarter is over, if you choose to. I will try and return overall comments on each paper to you prior to March 4th via email.
Readings

Required texts for all students (in book store)


NOTE – ARRIVAL OF THIS BOOK MAY BE DELAYED.

The books should be purchased. Bring the books to class; quote from them in your notes, in class, and in your paper; mark them up; go from reading the text to joint discussion with peers and in class, and then back to the text. Ask me questions about the readings in the weekly notes. The books are also on reserve in the Young Library Graduate Reserve Room. For students needing to do some background reading, either in human development or in psychological anthropology, some references to general texts and readers are included with this course outline, and are on reserve in the Young Library.

I will also hand out some articles in class, usually 1-2 weeks before they are to be discussed in class. If you have to miss a class, ask a fellow student to get you a copy of these articles!

Internet site
The class has a website and the course syllabus is posted there:
http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/04W/anthrom236p-1/
**Background Reading** (on reserve in Young Library):


Course Outline

Meeting 1 of quarter (January 8, Thursday): The Study of Socialization Across Cultures

Fundamental questions in socialization studies; what is "good" and "bad" socialization?; ethics and values regarding this topic; what is the anthropological approach to the study of childhood – a brief history; the ecocultural model in the study of socialization; the significance of these questions for the comparative study of humankind and for core questions in the social sciences generally; organization and outline of the course; comparisons of this course to other possible approaches.


Meeting 2 of quarter (January 15): The Individual and Culture

Ecocultural pathways for children and individual agency in development. Ethnotheories of human development.

Film: !Nyae..[on the !Kung/San, or Ju/'hoansi; Patricia Draper, anthropological advisor]


Howard & Millard, Chp. 1
1-2 page comments are due on my email a day or more before class (tweisner@ucla.edu).
**Meeting 3 (January 22): Trust, intimacy and attachment across cultures**

Culture, trust and “attachment”. What is the cultural problem for which different modes of attachment and security are solutions? How did it evolve? What cultural meanings and varieties of attachments and contexts are found around the world?


LeVine, et al. *Child care and culture*, pp. 50-52, and chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 in Part III.

1-2 page comments are due on my email a day or more before class  
(tweisner@ucla.edu)

**Meeting 4 (January 29th): Culture, Education, and Schools.**


Video: "Preschool in Three Cultures"

Read & complete, Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, *Preschool in Three Cultures*.


1-2 page comments are due on my email a day or more before class  
(tweisner@ucla.edu)
Meeting 5 (February 5th): Threat, fear and war: effects on children


Carol R. Ember, & Melvin Ember. 1994. War, socialization, and interpersonal violence. Journal of Conflict Resolution 38 (4), December. (handed out in class)


1-2 page comments are due on my email a day or more before class (tweisner@ucla.edu)

A one-page summary of your plans for your paper are due in class next week!

Meeting 6 (February 12th): Culture, gender, and development


Video: "Maragoli", with Joseph Ssenyonga


Howard & Millard, Chp. 6

A one page summary of your paper outline, including a title for the paper, is due in class today, Feb. 12th on paper. These will be read and returned after the break half way through class today.

(No more weekly email after this week, unless you have specific queries about the paper or course, or need to catch up on earlier emails you missed.)
Meeting 7 (February 19th): Caretaking and Parenting of Children


Meeting 8 (February 26th): Culture, Policy, & Intervention for Children and Families

How should cultural research inform intervention? Ethics and the research role revisited. What do we mean by policy-relevance? Who are the audiences and consumers of such research? Examples from the New Hope and Child projects.

Complete Howard & Millard, Hunger and Shame.


[Your paper is due in class today, and comments will be returned before or in class next week.]

Meeting 9 (March 4th, Thursday): Culture and human development:
Discussion of papers
About half of the class will briefly (about 15 minutes each) summarize their papers during the seminar. We will discuss and expand on each of your paper topics in class discussion.

Papers are returned in class today.

**Meeting 10 (March 11th): Culture and human development: Discussion of papers**

The other half of the class will briefly (about 15 minutes each) summarize their papers during the seminar. We will discuss and expand on each of your paper topics in class discussion.

[**Any rewrites/revisions of your papers can be turned in any time up to the end of finals week, by March 25th, Thursday.**]