THE PSYCHOCULTURAL STUDY OF SOCIALIZATION

Time and Place

Thursday 9-12 (first meeting, Thursday, January 6)
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CLASS URL: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/05W/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
NPI/Psychiatry Dept office: 1001 Westwood Blvd. (SW corner of Weyburn &
Westwood on the second floor -- Rm. 2-208; directions on my email signature
lines; email 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), Ivory Coast; Tanzania (Chagga), Botswana, Namibia,
Liberia, Japan, China, Northern 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. Our course, however, focuses on the role of cultural models of development and parenting shared by a community, and the cultural ecology of communities. 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 relate these cultural models to the ecology and institutions around families and children. We will also discuss policy and interventions for children and families; interventions also are 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. The psychocultural and ecocultural perspective in our class 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. We compare children's developmental pathways with both a local contextual lens and a comparative one.
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, The Afterlife is Where we Come From, Women, Family, and Child Care in India. A World in Transition and several papers and my own research include many direct 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, the New Hope project, and the Head Start study. 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, 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, and the Head Start study is an examination of efforts to enhance pre-literacy skills of children.
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 13) through five (Feb 3) 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 focused on 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.

The content of the email notes are not graded (although referring to specific readings or class lectures and discussions is). 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 experiences. 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 MAILBOX HAS ENOUGH STORAGE SPACE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE TO RECEIVE REPLIES. MAKE THE SUBJECT LINE OF THE EMAIL SOMETHING I CAN EASILY RECOGNIZE AS BEING FROM YOU AND ABOUT THIS CLASS (“MARY JONES M236P NOTES WK 3”, NOT “DOC”).
Paper. You will also write one 10 to 15 page paper, due the 8th MEETING of our class (March 3rd, Thursday) (which is the ninth WEEK of the quarter), 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 10th, 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. The paper itself is then due 3 weeks later, March 3, giving you time to use feedback on the topic.

“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 10th, Thursday, the 10th WEEK of the quarter) or 10th class meeting (March 17th, Thursday, the day before the start of finals week). 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 (before class meetings two through five).
3. A 10 - 15-page paper due in class at the 8th class meeting, March 3rd, which is the NINTH WEEK of the quarter).
4. Presenting a short talk based on your paper, to the class on class 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, comments on the suggested paper topic, 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 (March 24th), 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 (March 3rd), and returned at the beginning of the 9th class meeting (March 10th), 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 10th via email.
Readings

Required texts for all students (in bookstore)


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/05W/anthrom236p-1/
**Background Reading** (on reserve in Young Library):


**Course Outline**

**Meeting 1 of quarter (January 6, 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.


(Look through all the assigned books to get an overview of them, including chapters that might be relevant for each topic of the seminar.)

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**Meeting 2 of quarter (January 13): The Individual and Culture**

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

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

Read Howard & Millard, Chp. 1

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

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Meeting 3 (January 20): 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?


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


Video: "Preschool in Three Cultures"

Read 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 3rd): Threat, fear and war: effects on children


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

A one-page summary of your plans for your paper are due in class next week, Feb. 10th.

Meeting 6 (February 10th): Culture, gender, and development


Video: "Maragoli", with Joseph Ssenyonga


Read Howard & Millard, Chp. 6

A one paragraph summary of your paper outline, including a title for the paper, is due in class today, Feb. 10th. These will be read and returned after the break half way through class today.
Meeting 7 (February 17th): Caretaking and Parenting of Children


Read Howard & Millard, Hunger and Shame, Chp. 7

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THERE IS NO CLASS MEETING ON FEBRUARY 24TH!
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Meeting 8 (March 3rd): 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, Head Start 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.]

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Meeting 9 (March 10th, 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. You can do revisions from now through March 24th.

Meeting 10 (March 17th): 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 24th, Thursday.]