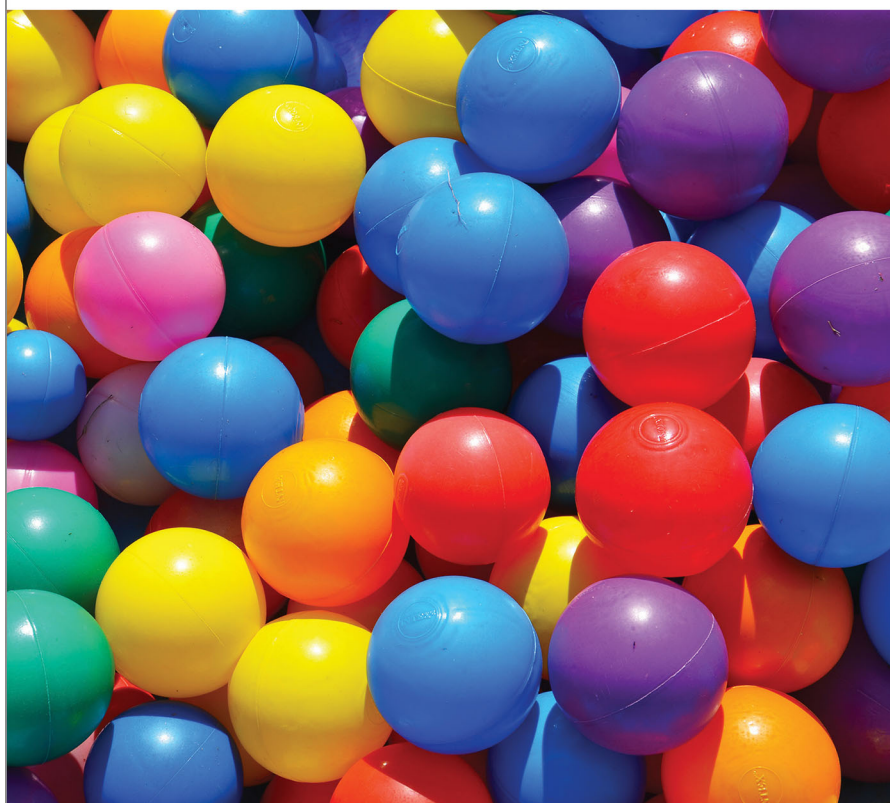


Parents and toddlers: teaching and learning at home



Parents and toddlers: Teaching and learning at home



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Introduction

This course looks at how parents encourage the development of new skills in their children in the informal setting of the home. The use of video observation of small children by psychologists is analysed and some of the key concepts in developmental psychology that explain teaching and learning interactions between parents/caregivers and their children are explained.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of postgraduate study in [Education, Childhood & Youth qualifications](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- discuss how children's early experiences with their parents/caregivers, siblings and peers contribute to the learning of new skills and problem-solving techniques
- understand how parents/caregivers use talk and play in informal teaching and learning exchanges with toddlers and young children to communicate social and cultural practices
- understand key psychological and educational theories and concepts relating to children's social development and mental growth
- appreciate the features of effective teaching used by parents and other adults in informal learning settings such as the home
- appreciate why researchers rely on detailed observation of video-data to develop an understanding of the psychological processes that take place during teaching and learning interactions between young children and their parents/caregivers.

1 Teaching and learning relationships in early childhood

In this course we will look at how children's early experiences with their caregivers and peers contribute to the learning of new skills and problem-solving strategies. We will pay special attention to the way talk is used in teaching and learning exchanges as this is the principal means by which older, more experienced members of a society communicate social and cultural practices, knowledge and collective wisdom to younger apprentice learners.

An interview with Harry Daniels

Read the notes below and then listen to the audio clip attached below. You may find it helpful simply to listen to the interview the first time, and then to listen to it again concentrating and making your own notes on the meanings of the concepts and ideas discussed.

An interview with Professor Harry Daniels (MP3, 4.4 MB)

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Interview with Professor Harry Daniels](#)

In the interview Martin Woodhead asks Professor Harry Daniels to comment on why it is that Vygotsky's ideas have become so attractive in the world of education. His main questions are:

- (a) What is it about Vygotsky's ideas that make them so attractive to education?
- (b) What is it about Vygotsky's ideas that are distinctive?
- (c) Why does Vygotsky emphasise the role of language in development?
- (d) Can Vygotsky's theory be applied to understanding teaching and learning in classroom contexts as well as to understanding simple dyadic interaction?

In the interview Daniels introduces and defines the following key Vygotskian concepts:

- mediation;
- psychological tools and cultural artefacts;
- the zone of proximal development (ZPD);
- appropriation;
- scaffolding.

Try to familiarise yourself with Daniels' definitions of these concepts.

2 Cognitive socialisation and 'good tuition'

2.1 Introduction

During his interview, Daniels expressed the opinion that Vygotsky's theory is attractive because it:

Promotes the view that effective parenting, instruction and education *lead* development. Preparing, or socialising, children for the future, therefore, becomes a highly meaningful (and often politically charged) activity, as does deciding which types of experiences will best foster the acquisition of skills and competencies of particular value to a society.

(Professor Harry Daniels)

Simply providing children with appropriate experiences, however, is not sufficient. Children also need guidance and instruction. In early childhood, joint involvement episodes (JIEs) provide informal teaching and learning contexts in which mutual co-operation between adult and child can lead to mental growth. This is what we mean when we talk about *cognitive socialisation*. Of course not all experiences are good experiences and this has led psychologists such as Schaffer (1996), Wood and Middleton (1975) and O'Connell and Bretherton (1984) to ask the question 'What are the distinctive features of effective tuition?'

Reading 1

Read the section on cognitive socialisation from *Social Development* by H. Rudolph Schaffer, attached below, where Schaffer provides a brief introduction to this topic. The important things to note for now are Schaffer's definitions of the characteristic features of *contingent interaction* and *joint involvement episodes* (JIEs).

[Cognitive Socialization extract from Social Development \(PDF, 6 pages, 1.1 MB\)](#)

Schaffer defines 'effective tuition' as teaching which elicits performance from the child at a developmentally advanced level. He argues that effective tuition obeys the *contingent-shift rule*. Effective tutors gradually transfer responsibility for tackling the task in hand from the adult to the child as he or she begins to master more and more complex aspects of the task or problem. As you have seen Vygotsky described this process of gradual transfer from adult to child as *internalization*. Daniels describes it as *appropriation*. Although Schaffer focuses on adult-child tuition, these concepts are relevant to all those situations where a tutor, or more knowledgeable person, is responsible for passing on some knowledge or skill to a less experienced person.

In the video activity below you will look at two short video extracts of JIEs which nicely illustrate what Schaffer and Wood mean by contingent interaction.

Lego with Mum

For this activity you will be watching Video 1: 'Joe's day', a section of video which illustrates some fairly typical teaching and learning interactions which might occur during a day in the life of a pre-school child. In Video 1 Joe's mother, Megan, is helping him to build a car using a commercially produced Lego construction pack. The pack is new; Joe has not used it before.

Before you watch the video read the notes below and the specific instructions that follow. You will need the video transcript which is attached below the video.

This activity is designed to do two things: first, it illustrates the concepts you have been reading about so far; second, it asks you to use a simple coding scheme to categorise Joe's mother's behaviour in the JIE.

From the research he has carried out observing similar JIEs in more formal experimental settings, Wood has identified five 'levels of control' which adults typically use to structure such activities for their child. These are shown in [Table 1](#).

Wood showed that when children are having difficulty with a task adults increase their level of control from one through to five. Conversely where it is clear that a child is able to manage parts of the task for him or herself, adults decrease the level of control or support offered. The extent to which adults adjust their level of control to the competence shown by the child is what Wood calls *contingency*.

Watch the video all the way though first to familiarise yourself with it, then watch it again with the transcript. Use Wood's 'levels of control' to mark on the transcript Joe's mother's contributions to the JIE. Use the abbreviations GVP, SVP, IM, PFA and Dem (as shown in [Table 1](#)) to do this. Pause the video occasionally to allow yourself time to mark up the transcript.

Video content is not available in this format.

LEGO WITH MUM

Table 1 Wood's levels of control

Code	Levels	Example
GVP	1 General verbal prompts	'Now you make something'
SVI	2 Specific verbal instructions	'Get four blocks'
IM	3 Indicates materials	Points to blocks needed
PFA	4 Prepares for assembly	Orients blocks so that they can be fitted together
Dem	5 Demonstrates	Assembles blocks for child

(Adapted from Wood, in *Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*, p. 163)

When I carried out this activity the first time I wasn't really sure what I would find. I noted first that Joe does not find this task easy. He keeps asking how he should fit particular blocks together and needs help to make the blocks stay in place. This being the case one would expect quite a high level of control from his mother, and this is exactly what I found (I hope that you found it too). Megan mostly helps him build the car by pointing out specific pieces (IM) or preparing them for assembly (PFA) and at times she demonstrates how the

pieces fit together (Dem). She uses a couple of specific verbal prompts (SVP) but no general verbal prompts (GVP).

Lego with Brother

Watch Video 2 below in which Joe and his brother, Owen, are again building a Lego model. Megan, their mother, is also present and has asked Owen to help Joe build the model.

This activity asks you to do two things. First, use Wood's 'level's of control' (see [Table 1](#)) to analyse Owen's attempts to help Joe with the model. Use the transcript of the interaction again to assist your analysis. Second, look at how Megan, Owen and Joe use the Lego instruction sheet and diagram to help them make the model. What differences do you notice here in the ways in which Joe and Owen use the instructions?

Lego with brother

Video content is not available in this format.

[LEGO WITH BROTHER](#)

2.2 Levels of control

Vygotsky claimed that co-operation *with a more able peer* could also create a zone of proximal development (ZPD) within which a less experienced child can learn and develop. Owen clearly has had more experience in manipulating the small Lego pieces than Joe. Also he understands that the instruction diagram tells him in which order the pieces fit together. You will have noted, however, that most of Owen's interactions with Joe are in the form of specific verbal prompts (SVPs) and instructions (e.g. 'Joe, find four wheels', 'Joe, can you give Owen the engine please?'). SVPs are classified as the second lowest level in Wood's scheme.

It is clear from Video 1, however, that Joe needs much higher levels of support than this. In this episode Megan supports Joe by preparing bits of Lego so that Joe can fit them together, and by holding the model still for him. She does not simply *tell* him how to fit the pieces together or issue verbal instructions as Owen does. If Owen were an adult, the support he offers Joe would not be described as 'contingent', according to Schaffer's and Wood's definition. Owen's instructions are not at an appropriate level for Joe given this particular task.

Vygotsky's claim about more able peers has led psychologists to compare differences between children and adults in terms of the nature of the assistance they offer in JIEs when their partner is younger, or less experienced, than themselves. You should note that although Owen does most of the construction work himself and rarely encourages active participation from Joe (even when specifically prompted to do so by his mother), Owen would probably claim that he *is* helping Joe as he is *showing* Joe how to put the model together. Owen, however, is a less experienced teacher than his mother and his own interest in making the model clearly conflicts with his attempts to involve Joe in the activity.

2.3 Use of instructions and diagrams

If you now compare Video 1 with Video 2 it is apparent that in Video 2 both Owen and his mother, Megan, are helping Joe learn an important lesson of a very different kind (without consciously attempting to do so). They are implicitly instructing Joe that diagrams have purpose and meaning in the context of building Lego models.

In Video 1 Megan does not draw his attention to the instruction diagram at all, although she herself glances at it from time to time. At the end of the video, when Joe asks 'What we making?', she refers him to a picture on the box. In Video 2, by contrast, the instructions occupy the centre of the table and both Owen and Megan refer to them constantly. Joe also begins to study the diagram. Look at the following exchange between the two boys. The following sequence takes place:

- Joe looks at the instructions.
- Joe says, 'And then there's a engine.'
- Owen says, 'Not yet, not yet Joe ... Joe we don't need it yet', and carries on making the model.
- Owen looks at the instructions.
- Owen says, 'Joe, can you give Owen the engine please?'

Joe was right – Owen needed the 'engine' next.

There are a number of ways in which you could interpret this exchange – watch the video and study it for yourself. Is it coincidence, or is Joe using the instruction diagram to suggest to Owen what to do next?

Joe may simply have been imitating the way Owen and his mother use the diagram; nevertheless, he has understood that it has meaning and purpose in this particular context. We draw attention to the diagram because it illustrates another feature of the socio-cultural approach – the emphasis given to the way *cultural tools* enhance children's learning. Knowing how to interpret, or 'read', diagrammatic instructions is a vital skill in a technological society, one which Joe is being introduced to at the age of four. A Vygotskian would say that he is beginning to learn how to use a particular cultural (and symbolic) tool, and that in this particular context Joe is signalling his elementary understanding of how to use diagrams. In Vygotsky's terms his competence in using diagrams and completing Lego puzzles without support can be described in terms of ZPD.

The next reading provides a synopsis of the concept of ZPD.

Reading 2

Read the extract from Chapter 2 of *Dialogue and the Development of Children's Thinking* by Mercer and Littleton (2007).

Please click on the link below to view synopsis (PDF, 3 pages, 0.08 MB)

[Synopsis](#)

The development of children's thinking is characterised by Tharp and Gallimore as one of *guided reinvention*. Using the example of language acquisition, they point out that children are typically not *taught* in any formal sense to use and understand their first language: it is not a matter of cultural transmission by direct instruction. But equally clearly children do not *invent* language use for themselves, or develop it spontaneously. They develop it in

and through interactions (more or less structured as the case may be) with those around them. Tharp and Gallimore offer guided reinvention as a general model for cognitive development. Using the concept of scaffolding they argue that guided reinvention and individual self-supported *competence* in any field may come about only after successful *performance* has been established by assisted learning in the child's ZPD. The adult's role as teacher is to guide and assist the learner's performance through successive stages of the ZPD.

Tharp and Gallimore characterise the ZPD not as a single *growing point* for an individual but as a multitude of *growing edges* which relate to all areas of developing competence. Growing edges are not simply a quality of the child; they are an expression of his or her various activities and social relationships. For example, discovering and practising how diagrams are used in the company of his mother and brother is just one of Joe's growing edges. When you study the final episode of 'Joe's day' you will begin to appreciate just how many of these growing edges he experiences during his interactions with members of his family in any one day.

The video episodes from Joe's day also illustrate an issue which Tharp and Gallimore touch upon when they talk about *ontogenesis* and *microgenesis* (*Learning Relationship in the Classroom*, p. 102). We could see the whole history of development in the child (ontogenesis) as a single, age-related process, going from Tharp and Gallimore's 'stage 1' (where assistance is provided by more capable others) through 'stage 2' (where assistance is provided by the self) to eventual 'internalisation' in 'stage 3'. In some ways this seems to fit the facts: infants and younger children are heavily dependent on others for help; around four to six years of age they engage in a great deal of 'talking to themselves' out loud, which diminishes as they become more self-sufficient learners during the school years. This would be to take Vygotsky's story at the ontogenetic level, relating it to development across the lifespan.

Equally though, at the 'microgenetic' level we could take the view that these three stages apply to learning at whatever age it occurs. For example, when we encounter a new learning situation as adults our learning experiences can be described in the same terms. Looked at from this point of view, age may in fact make rather little difference to the process and what is at issue may be the level of one's expertise in relation to the particular problem. The difference between adults and children lies with the fact that adults have access to more sophisticated tools and strategies to aid them through the learning process.

When we looked at Joe's attempts to build the Lego model we were attempting to establish, at a microgenetic level, various teaching and learning processes taking place in relation to a particular problem. Tharp and Gallimore seem to suggest that while there is an overall ontogenetic development which follows the course they outline in their description of the four stages of the ZPD, this outline will apply equally well to microgenetic learning processes at any point in the lifespan (or indeed at any point in a child's day). So, for a simple skill Joe may be at stage 4, but for a more complex skill he will be at stage 1.

Activity 1

Consider the plausibility of Tharp and Gallimore's suggestion in relation to your own experience. Reflect on some of your adult learning experiences, particularly any that involve new skills, such as learning to drive a car or using a computer. How well does

an account in terms of a ZPD, or more specifically in terms of Tharp and Gallimore's stages, fit with your recollection of your learning experience?

At the end of their article Tharp and Gallimore draw a contrast between two types of interaction: parents with children in the home, and teachers with children in the school. This alerts us to the very different circumstances in which teaching and learning are carried out. Schools are institutions specifically contrived to achieve learning, but on the face of it some features of the classroom setting seem ill-suited to the kind of teaching and learning processes we have been looking at with younger children. What do we know of the similarities and differences between these two settings, and to what extent can the same theoretical approach deal with both? These are two of the issues addressed in the next reading.

3 The nature of effective instruction

3.1 Introduction

Reading 3

Read Chapter 9 of *Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*, 'Aspects of teaching and learning', by David Wood, attached below. In this reading Wood addresses three main issues. First is the concept of *ground rules*. Consider what Wood means by this, and how useful it is for comparing different contexts of teaching and learning. Next, pay attention to Wood's arguments concerning levels of control and contingency in relation to teacher competence. These ideas should be easier to understand now that you have applied them in analysing Videos 1 and 2 of 'Joe's day'. What experimental evidence is there to support Wood's claims for the importance of contingency? Finally Wood offers a critique of teachers' questioning strategies, and suggests how these might be improved.

[Aspects of teaching and learning \(PDF, 21 pages, 0.4 MB\)](#)

The main question Wood addresses in Reading 3 is, 'What is the nature of effective instruction?' Towards the beginning of the reading he makes a distinction between 'spontaneous' teaching and learning interactions at home, and 'contrived' encounters in schools and psychological experiments. The two types of encounter make different demands on adults and children, and each follows its own set of distinctive ground rules. Like Donaldson (1978) Wood argues that children initially find school learning difficult for two reasons. The first is that the ground rules and discourses of the classroom are very different from those to which children are accustomed outside school. The second is that the forms of instruction teachers use are very different from those used by parents. Taking Vygotsky's theory as his conceptual framework, and using examples from his own experimental work on teaching and learning interactions between mothers and their pre-school children, Wood identifies key features of effective, contingent teaching and learning encounters.

Drawing on the work of Tizard and Hughes (1984) he claims that contingent instruction is more likely to take place in family contexts. Parents have privileged access to their children's particular learning needs and histories. This knowledge provides the conditions for the establishment of shared meanings, or *intersubjectivities*, which, Wood suggests, are the bedrock of contingent instruction.

Wood next analyses the ways in which teachers use questions. He offers reasons as to why traditional styles of questioning are not particularly effective in eliciting 'high cognitive' responses from children – 'The more they question, the less children say' (p. 172) – and suggests a set of guidelines for the effective use of questioning based on the features of contingent interaction. If, after you have studied Wood's critique of classroom teaching you feel that he has been somewhat unfair on teachers, you should note that at the end of his chapter he comments as follows:

If we find ourselves dissatisfied with the interactions that take place in such institutions [schools], measured against what we take to be the optimum contexts for learning [the home], then we must question not simply the teacher's 'skills' but the form of the institution within which we expect these to be deployed.

(Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood, p. 175)

Reading 4

Read Chapter 10 of *Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*, 'Adult-child interaction, joint problem solving and the structure of co-operation', by Mariette Hoogsteder, Robert Maier and Ed Elbers, attached below.

[Adult-child interaction, joint problem solving and the structure of cooperation \(PDF, 18 pages, 0.4 MB\)](#)

Hoogsteder et al. argue that research in the post-Vygotskian tradition has emphasised the uni-directional transmission of skills and knowledge from adult to learner during the course of asymmetrical interactions. The metaphor of *scaffolding* conveys an image of the child's learning being propped up by an omniscient adult who invariably directs and controls the interaction. The contribution of the child has been ignored. Hoogsteder et al. argue that allocation of a passive role to the child oversimplifies the nature of teaching and learning interactions.

They describe teaching and learning interactions as 'exercises in collectivity' which involve both child *and* adult in processes of negotiation, disagreement, the exchange and sharing of information, judgement and decision making and evaluation of one another's contributions. For example a child may decide to ignore an adult's instructions if they do not fit in with his or her goal. Similarly, an adult may ignore a child's contribution if it does not conform to the agenda the adult wishes to set. In this manner, children not only learn about the task in hand, they also learn about *the nature of co-operation* and how to participate in *problem solving as a joint enterprise*.

Hoogsteder et al. criticise the scaffolding metaphor on the grounds that it suggests a universal format for teaching and learning interactions. In support of their argument that 'Every culture provides adults and children with a repertoire of interaction formats or patterns', they draw on experimental observations of three- to five-year-old children solving various construction tasks with a parent or caregiver. These observations showed that Dutch parents and children use three distinctly different modes of interaction: the playful mode; the economic and efficient mode and the didactic mode.

Video 3: Cooking with Dad

Now watch Video 3 – the final episode in 'Joe's day'. Using the criteria defined by Hoogsteder et al. for distinguishing and classifying modes of interaction (p. 181) see if you can arrive at a description of the predominant mode operating between Joe and his father.

As you did in the earlier video activities you should watch the whole episode through once to familiarise yourself with what is going on before you attempt to analyse it. Use the transcript supplied to help you with your analysis. Draw a line across the transcript

every time you judge that the mode of interaction changes, and make a note of which mode is represented by these segments of the transcript.

Cooking with dad

Video content is not available in this format.

[COOKING WITH DAD](#)

Hoogstedder et al. seem to suggest that while they identified three distinct patterns of interaction, any one parent and child pair characteristically use only one of these modes. In Video 3, however, you can observe all three patterns. The probable reason why Hoogstedder et al. observed only one pattern of interaction per adult/child pair lies in the way their study was designed. They observed children and caregivers in a single interactional context, solving construction tasks. Had they varied the contexts to include different types of task, or studied some of the more naturally occurring interactions which take place in families (such as joint cooking episodes), they might have reached a different conclusion.

3.2 Guided participation – a cultural perspective

So far, we've looked at some of the key concepts of a socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning, and explored various ways of analysing the interaction sequences on the video. While scaffolding and the ZPD, levels of control and contingency have provided a powerful framework for research in this area, Hoogstedder et al. draw attention to the possibility that the styles of interaction reported from empirical research, and illustrated in the video, reflect particular cultural practices in the specific contexts studied. So laboratory studies (as described by David Wood, *Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*, pp. 157–77) that specifically ask parents to help their children complete a puzzle encourage those parents to engage in certain kinds of dyadic, goal-oriented exchange. In home settings (as studied by Hoogstedder et al.) where the goals and timescale of the interaction are less constrained, mothers and their children are observed to engage in more negotiation and to use a wider repertoire of interactive styles according to their purposes. Even within the relatively restricted contexts filmed for the video, you can see Joe engaging in qualitatively different levels of involvement in the activity and using different communication modes according to who he is with and what he is doing.

Video 4: People in Joe's day

Watch Videos 1, 2 and 4. Compare Joe with Mum, with Owen and with Hannah and note the different styles of interaction he employs.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Lego with Mum](#)

Video content is not available in this format.

[Lego with Brother](#)

Building a tower

Video content is not available in this format.

[Building a tower](#)

Following up this idea, examine the proposal that the general skill of knowing how to act collaboratively in a teaching-learning exchange is a cultural universal, but that specific forms of that exchange may be context specific. Consider the implication of this proposal for research, in terms of the extent to which there may be dangers in generalising from interactive styles observed in particular contexts, or in particular cultural settings. This applies as much to your own project work as to the larger scale studies included in the module.

One researcher who has been particularly sensitive to these issues is Barbara Rogoff. While the research carried out by her team has been strongly influenced by ideas about the ZPD and scaffolding, they have been critical of the narrow framework of assumptions about education, teaching and learning within which Vygotskian ideas have been developed:

Ironically, the sociohistorical school's formulation of the relation between individual, social, and cultural processes is not only its strength but its weakness. Despite the theory's emphasis on context and society, it nonetheless maintained assumptions regarding the contexts and societal approaches that are most valuable. Vygotsky focused on the sort of language and analysis that characterize academic learning, consistent with the agenda of his nation at the time ...

(Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood, p. 228)

Rogoff (1990) has proposed the concept of 'guided participation' as a more inclusive framework for examining the way children are initiated into cognitive and social skills. It is more inclusive in two respects: it acknowledges variations not only in communicative styles and role relationships between learners and teachers but also in the purposes of learning and goals of development:

The developmental endpoint that has traditionally anchored cognitive developmental theories – skill in academic activities such as formal operational reasoning and scientific, mathematical, and literate practices – is one valuable goal of development, but one that is tied to its contexts and culture, as is any other goal or endpoint of development valued by a community.

Each community's valued skills constitute the local goals of development ... In the final analysis, it is not possible to determine whether the goals or practices of one society are more adaptive than those of another, as judgments of adaptation cannot be separated from values.

(Rogoff, 1990, p. 12)

In the next reading Rogoff et al. refer to the initial findings from a major cross-cultural study in Guatemala, India, Turkey and the USA (data reported as a monograph, Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü and Mosier, 1993). The main focus of the reading is a comparison of just two early childhood contexts – parents and children in Mayan communities (Guatemala)

and in Salt Lake City (USA). Towards the end of the reading Rogoff et al. offer two brief, contrasting case studies of mothers with their 20-month-olds, playing with a nesting doll (like a Russian doll).

Reading 5 and video

Read Chapter 13 of *Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*, 'Toddlers' guided participation with their caregivers in cultural activity', by Barbara Rogoff, Christine Mosier, Jayanthi Mistry and Artin Göncü, attached below.

When you reach the relevant sections of the reading, look at Video 5, 'An interview with Professor Barbara Rogoff'. Using video sequences of parents and children she collected for this study, Professor Rogoff draws our attention to differences between the interactional, and instructional styles of American and Mayan mothers.

[Toddlers' guided participation with their caregivers in cultural activity \(PDF, 25 pages, 0.7 MB\)](#)

Video content is not available in this format.

[An interview with Professor Barbara Rogoff](#)

Rogoff et al. argue that the process of guided participation is universal, but that there are important cultural variations related to the goals of development and the nature of involvement between children and adults. They highlight the contrasting experiences of developing skills and competencies in the two developmental niches (Mayan and Salt Lake City communities), drawing particular attention to the extent to which children observe and participate in ongoing adult activities, the extent to which adults adopt didactic and playful modes, and the use of language.

Their main conclusions from the larger study (Rogoff et al., 1993) are that in contexts where children participate in adults' social and work activities, children showed intrinsic motivation to identify with adult activity, and learned mainly through observation and modelling of skills. The caregiver's role was to support their activity. By contrast, in communities in which children are generally segregated from adult work activities, caregivers took more responsibility for managing children's activities and encouraging their motivation. In these communities Rogoff observed adults engaging in more explicit instruction, with more verbal communication as well as more playful activity:

In communities where they are segregated from adult activities, children's learning may be organized by adults' teaching of lessons and provision of motivational management out of the context of adult practice; in communities in which children are integrated in adult settings, learning can occur through active observation and participation by the children with responsive assistance from caregivers.

(Rogoff et al., 1993, p. 151)

3.3 Applying the concept of guided participation

Before leaving Rogoff's work, we'd like to look a little more closely at the analytic framework she calls guided participation. In Reading 5 Rogoff et al. summarise two broad features, as described below.

3.3.1 Making connections between the known and the new

Rogoff builds on the concept of intersubjectivity to emphasise the shared history, communicative strategies and purposes in a learning relationship that facilitate joint focus and effective collaboration. Laboratory studies of teaching, learning and problem solving are often based on a task or skill that is quite new to participants. In everyday life, such complete novelty is rare. Encountering a new situation, one of the first things that teachers and learners try to do is to make sense of it in terms of their past experiences. Rogoff has summarised this feature as follows:

For very young children, the bridging role of adults involves assisting children in understanding how to act in new situations by provision of emotional cues regarding the nature of the situation, non-verbal models of how to behave, verbal and non-verbal interpretations of behaviour and events, and verbal labels to classify objects and events. All of these adult activities are coupled with young children's efforts (intentional or not) to pick up information about the nature of situations and their caregivers.

(Rogoff, 1990)

As we saw in Reading 5 (*Cultural Worlds of Early Childhood*, pp. 230–31) Rogoff et al. illustrate social referencing as an example of non-verbal bridging. Once children become verbally competent, most bridging at home and especially in classrooms is by verbal referencing.

3.3.2 Collaborative structuring (sometimes called 'structuring situations and transferring responsibility')

Rogoff et al. argue that parents and other caregivers are active in *structuring* children's environment according to their perceived goals for development. There are several levels of structure. At a macro level is the overall timetable of the child's day (the balance of time for play, tasks, feeding, washing, resting, etc.), the opportunities for participation in specific cultural activities and the extent to which these activities are separated/integrated. At a micro level is the way specific tasks and activities are adapted to the perceived capacities of the child, broken down into manageable elements through interactions that enable the child to achieve a goal or complete a task. As children become more competent so responsibility may be transferred from teacher to learner. The distinctive feature of Rogoff's framework is acknowledgement that adult and child roles are variable according to contexts and goals as well as children's status and role. In some contexts they may be ascribed by tradition or by the status differential between teacher and taught. In other contexts, especially in 'child-centred' informal settings, they may be subject to continuous renegotiation.

Activity 2: Analysing cooking with Dad

Try applying the concepts of guided participation to the video sequence of Joe cooking with his father Philip (Video 3). Look for both verbal and non-verbal examples of the following:

Building bridges

Philip says: 'Do you remember, we have to cream it ...'

Joe says 'You need a driver [mixer].'

Structuring at a macro level

Look at the way Philip organises the ingredients and utensils, brings elements of the task in and out of Joe's immediate view, sequences the task into a series of stages, and introduces each in turn.

Structuring at a micro level

Look at the way Philip 'reduces the degrees of freedom' so that Joe can participate at each stage, by asking him to do a specific action and even by taking hold of his hand. Wood's levels of control could also be applied here. But how far is Joe learning through *observing* his father and how far through being *instructed* in each element of the cake-making process?

Transferring responsibility

When Philip invites Joe to do something, and where he does not: 'There, you have a go.'

Where Joe makes a bid to be given responsibility, or asks for more help: 'I can't how to do it.'

Conclusion

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