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BRINGING UP GOOD BABIES:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF MORAL APPRENTICESHIP IN SARAGURO

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B.A., B.S.B.A., Drake University, 2002

A Thesis  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
of the University of Lethbridge  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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**MASTER OF ARTS – ANTHROPOLOGY**

Department of Anthropology  
University of Lethbridge  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis is based on an ethnographic investigation of indigenous childrearing theories of the Saraguros of southern Ecuador, with particular emphasis on the effect they believe their childrearing practices to have on infants' and toddlers' moral apprenticeship. To understand this learning process, I focused on children from newborn to age three and their caregivers, using everyday decisions involving babywearing and sleep practices as a window onto the ways apprenticeship is practiced among Saraguros and their particular moral standards. The moral apprenticeship of Saraguro babies is therefore considered as a product of local learning styles, constructions of childhood, and infant care practices, which create cultural self-fulfilling prophecies regarding young children's development and capabilities. Their experiential learning system is being challenged by national children's rights programs, which are informed by universalized visions of proper childhoods, rendering early childhood in Saraguro an interesting site from which to view the process of cultural change.

## Acknowledgements

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The gestation of ideas for this thesis coincided with the expansion of my family, and what a pleasure it is to see what they have developed into today. Many thanks go to my daughter, Mandalay, and to my son, Kiva, for inspiring my research interests, easing my entrance and data collection in the field, and for tolerating what at times must have seemed to be their mother's favoritism towards this other 'baby.' Both their direct participation in my research and our many hours spent apart whilst studying and writing have made this topic and this finished product a truly personal work. I am doubly indebted to my husband, Jason, without whose support I would not have finished the thesis. In addition, I benefited immensely from his contemporaneous research in the field, gaining deeper understandings of Saraguro culture through his data.

Finally, I wish to extend my gratitude to Dr. Heather Rae-Espinoza at California State University-Long Beach and the University of Lethbridge administrative staff who enabled my remote thesis defense, thus sparing my children an extra 5000 kilometers of seat-belted agony on my thesis' behalf.

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**List of Abbreviations**

NGO .....	Non-governmental organization
UNCRC.....	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CNH.....	<i>Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos</i> (Growing With Our Children)
INNFA.....	<i>Instituto Nacional de la Niñez y la Familia</i> (National Child & Family Institute)
CDI .....	<i>Centros de Desarrollo Infantil</i> (Child Development Centers)
FODI.....	<i>Fondo de Desarrollo Infantil</i> (Child Development Fund)
MIES.....	<i>Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social</i> (Ministry of Economic & Social Inclusion)

## Introduction

The front door shuts loudly and the quick footsteps approaching our room grow louder, causing Juanita<sup>1</sup> to flip her long black tresses over her shoulder as she rises from the puzzles we are kneeling over and spins around. As I am now perched facing the toy shelf, I'm uncertain who has entered the room, but I'm really more interested in the soft, warm, ponytail-free place on Juanita's back where I can now rest my cheek, a welcomed arrangement given my drowsiness this morning. Through my half-opened eyes I take in all the activity; with five other children entertaining themselves in the playroom, there's plenty to watch until I fully rouse and feel like joining them.

Juanita makes the brief cheerful remarks she always gives when greeting someone and we bend down again to pick up a puzzle piece. Peering over the top of the *chalina* (shawl used as a sling) I see that the new *suko* – the blonde-haired, fair-skinned boy – has arrived and is clinging to his mother, who is pointing towards us as Juanita reaches out to hand him a puzzle piece. I am jostled slightly as Juanita and I both descend again towards the puzzle on the floor.

Juanita and the *suko*'s mother are talking and I feel warm and cozy in my little cloth recliner. With my ear pressed against Juanita, her voice is muffled and I could almost drown everything else out and fall asleep again... but hey! Where did Susana just go? Suddenly the door opens to the bottom cupboard of the diaper changing table and I spy the four-year-old briefly, until the cupboard door slams shut. Oh, she's opening it again! It seems to be a game. Jaime seems just as interested in this game as I am and is going over to check out her hiding spot. As he bends down to grab the handle, the door suddenly flies open again and hits Jaime in his face, which instantly scrunches up as he begins crying loudly. Juanita's body tenses and she and the *suko*'s mother stop talking. I have to readjust and strain my neck to see after Juanita spins around to observe what has happened. We are sitting within arm's length of Jaime and Susana and watching quietly. Jaime seems to be angry; he is now throwing himself forward and pounding his fist on Susana – one, two, three, now four times. Susana doesn't try to stop him hitting her and doesn't say anything as he does so. I look to Juanita but she is also silent and still as she watches, so I relax a little. Jaime pulls back, slumps down on his bum and howls; a single tear is now rolling down his cheek, while the cheeks of still-silent Susana are a blushing pink.

Juanita straightens her posture sitting up on the back of her heels and I rock slightly in the *chalina* as Juanita speaks enthusiastically, "Jaime, give her a hand and help her. Give her a hand." And, although Susana is a big girl already, at least twice Jaime's age and size, he energetically lunges forward and puts out his hand, which she takes and gets up as Jaime helps her out of the cupboard. Juanita says, "Hugs! Huggies!", and Susana and Jaime hug and join me in watching Juanita extend puzzle pieces to the *suko* again.

-Noah, 17 months old

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<sup>1</sup> All research participants have been given pseudonyms for purposes of confidentiality. Further, I have omitted identifying information and given alternate place names to the communities in which I lived to provide confidentiality for the daycare workers in those villages.

The opening vignette was originally written into my field notes from my own perspective, including observations of one-year-old Noah's reactions to the fight from his vantage point on the daycare employee's back. However, for the purposes of this thesis the incident was rewritten as an imagined account of Noah's experience of the event, introducing an infant-centered focus to the reader and touching on all the major thesis chapter themes. Just as Noah saw me first and foremost as the *suko's* mother, rather than a foreign researcher, it hints to the ways that mothering in the field created a particular identity for me and shaped my research findings. Trying to comprehend the incident via the various sensory data Noah collected while carried in the sling attunes the reader to the peripheral and often non-verbal ways that babies participate in their social worlds, communicate with others, and learn about cultural norms and situationally appropriate reactions. The altercation between Noah's playmates is a moral issue and, as such, speaks to my overarching research question regarding local moral norms and expectations, while revealing the spontaneous and unpredictable way that moral 'lessons' are learned, even for those on the sidelines. Additionally, the event occurred at the crossroads of two learning styles reviewed in the thesis, as Noah's self-motivated informal observational learning was taking place in an institution that was designed for formal educational programming and particular state-designated ideals of child development.

This thesis is based on an ethnographic investigation of indigenous childrearing theories of the Saraguros of southern Ecuador, with particular emphasis on the effect they believe their childrearing practices to have on infants' and toddlers' moral apprenticeship. Moral apprenticeship refers here to the training of, and active learning by, children to become good functioning members of their society. For my research purposes, morality was examined in terms of values, virtues and acceptable behavior – in essence, the idea that some things are good and some are bad. While the instruction of morals is taken to be universal (Wolfenstein 1955: 349), the exact behaviors that are considered virtuous vary according to a group's particular ideologies and goals. This research investigated the particular Saraguro cultural take on how

children come to know what was interpreted as good and bad, proper and improper, right and wrong.

To understand the learning process of these moral standards, I focused on children from newborn to age three and their caregivers, using everyday decisions involving child-carrying and sleep practices as a window onto the ways apprenticeship is practiced among Saraguros and their particular moral standards. The term ‘apprenticeship’ is used throughout the thesis to balance adult-centric views of socialization with an acknowledgment of the active role that children themselves also play in their moral learning, as they are guided in their participation by more experienced members of their community. The moral apprenticeship of Saraguro babies is therefore considered as a product of local learning styles, constructions of childhood, and infant care practices, which create cultural self-fulfilling prophecies regarding young children’s development and capabilities. These local understandings are being challenged by national children’s rights programs, which are informed by global rights discourse and universalized visions of proper childhoods, rendering the early childhood landscape in Saraguro an interesting site from which to view the processes of cultural change and resistance.

### **Field Site Description and Background**

Research was conducted from July to December 2010 in a number of Saraguro villages near the small town of Saraguro in the southern Ecuadorian Andes, approximately a two-hour drive north of the provincial capital, Loja, and three hours south of Cuenca, one of Ecuador’s largest cities.

Cultural lore has it that the Saraguros were originally from present-day Bolivia or Peru near Lake Titicaca, but that they were transported to their current spot by the Incas under their imperial forced labor system. The local dialect of their traditional language, Kichwa (Quichua), is said to reflect this tie, as it is similar to the dialect in Cuzco, which was the seat of the Incan empire. Quichua is no longer widely spoken among the Saraguros; however, cultural revitalization programs have reintroduced Quichua instruction into the otherwise all Spanish-

speaking village schools and offer evening courses for interested adults. Additionally, the community of Lagunas has a bilingual (Spanish/Quichua) school and the community of Ilincho hosts a trilingual (Spanish/Quichua/English) school. The majority of Saraguros are Catholics, though there are also a significant number of Protestants, as well as a small contingent who adhere to recently revived Incan-inspired beliefs.

The population of those who ethnically identify as indigenous Saraguros is divided rather equally between the *sierra* (the Andean highlands) in the province of Loja and more recent settlements in the lower Amazonian altitudes in the province of Zamora Chinchipe. My research concentrated, however, on the Andean Saraguro populations close to the small town of Saraguro itself, which is located along the Pan-American Highway and is the cantonal administrative center.

The 11 parishes in the canton of Saraguro are home to approximately 31,000 inhabitants, of which nearly 89% live in rural areas. The population is rather young, with 55% of the canton's inhabitants under 25 years of age. According to these 2001 census statistics (INEC 2001), 30% of the canton's residents are indigenous. In combination with populations in other cantons and provinces, however, recent estimates by a local NGO and the Interprovincial Federation of Indigenous Saraguros put the total population of indigenous Saraguros between 25,000 and 35,000 (Turismo Saraguro 2007).

Indigenous Saraguro villages, or *comunidades*, span altitudes from 1000 to 3800 meters above sea level, with a traditional economic emphasis on livestock and subsistence agriculture. Corn is a key crop and central component of the local cuisine, as well as beans, potatoes, and other vegetables. Recent introduction of the babaco tree has resulted in a number of families erecting greenhouses to grow this fruit for profit. Cattle-raising has been and continues to be a major source of livelihood for many Saraguros, while guinea pigs and chickens are also commonly raised for food and for profit. Sheep-herding also retains an important role as a source of the wool which is handspun and used in traditional dress.

Family landholdings are often geographically dispersed, such that grazing land on the *cerro* mountaintops might be a two-hour walk from the family home and family agricultural plots may be scattered throughout the village or even lie in various villages. The communities in which I stayed, Llapak and Yumicachi, and those in which further research was conducted, ranged from a five-minute walk to a thirty-minute bus ride from the center of Saraguro town. Most communities have their own school, health post, daycare, and a building like a town hall for community meetings. Other infrastructure was rather inconsistent; for instance, only one of the communities I visited had paved roads, and garbage collection occurred in certain communities and not others. The water systems were cooperatively managed by the communities themselves through *mingas*, or communal work parties. Each family was required to contribute a certain number of *minga* work days per year to avoid paying fines within the community. Most services that one needs can be procured in Saraguro town, which is home to a hospital, public and private medical and dental clinics, a radio station, and opportunities for university-level distance education. Everyday household purchases can be fulfilled at a number of small shops or the daily market, while the Sunday market in Saraguro is a popular event for vendors and consumers from communities all around the town.

Though the indigenous population there is growing, the town of Saraguro has historically been home to non-indigenous residents, referred to as *blancos* (whites) by indigenous Saraguros in the 1960s and 70s (Belote and Belote 1984b), though nowadays they tend to be identified as *mestizos* (mixed racial heritage). The Ecuadorian population's dominant majority would be considered *mestizos*, of mixed indigenous and Spanish ancestry, while the country is also home to a number of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian groups.

Ecuador has been an independent republic for nearly 180 years, yet its much longer relation with colonial power (nearly 300 years) left a number of historical legacies that continue to shape the present. One of the most persistent and overwhelming of these is racial division. "Perhaps the most haunting and daunting of Ecuador's colonial specters is persistent racial

division. At the turn of the millennium, hints of colonial-era apartheid are everywhere” (Lane 2003: 89). The roots of this racial divide come from the Spanish colonizers’ reduction of a multiplicity of Andean ethnic groups into a single generic category, Indian, against which their own superior status as *blancos* (whites) could be defined. Indians were legally, economically, politically, and perhaps most enduringly, socially inferior under colonial rule, an ascription with which they began to self-identify over time. Independence from the Spanish did little to change the economic exploitation and social subjugation of the dominated, as was succinctly noted in indigenous descriptions of the creation of the Republic as “the last day of despotism and the first day of the same” (Field 1991: 41). With power firmly in the hands of conservative *blanco* elites, most reforms throughout the Republic’s history only served to reinforce the oligarchy’s power and bring Ecuador into the membership of ‘modern’ states safe for foreign investment.

The racialized and racist view of ethnicity continued to be used “to mark social rank and reinforce relations of economic exploitation” (Zamosc 1994: 56), with the ‘Indians’ (and blacks) still on the bottom and the elite ‘whites’ still on top. The ever expanding group of people of mixed racial heritage, *mestizos*, were planted somewhere in between the two racial extremes; however, as Lane (2003) and other researchers note, Ecuadorian racial division is not based simply on color but on an array of factors, including ethnicity, class, language, and appearance. Race is also highly contextual and relative, meaning that the same person might be seen in different racial terms based on the company he or she is in, the activity being performed, and one’s geographic location. Moving up the social, political, and economic ladder has traditionally required Ecuador’s minorities to practice *blanqueamiento*, or whitening, of their changeable characteristics like education, religion, language, and dress. In more recent decades, *mestizaje* has been used by politicians to evoke a national Ecuadorian identity by claiming the mixed racial legacy of *mestizo* for all.

Despite this, Saraguros have been quite economically prosperous in comparison to other indigenous Ecuadorian groups. Particularly after Ecuador’s oil boom in the 1970s, many new

labor and educational opportunities opened. Migration to the country's larger cities, as well as to Spain, Italy, and the United States became more common, resulting in a large degree of variation in Saraguros' professions, educational achievements, affluence, and geographical dispersion. As a result transculturation to *mestizo*, or the decision to change ethnic self-identification and membership, has mostly been a phenomenon of the lower socioeconomic strata lacking the ability to fulfill social obligations of gift-giving, rather than a commonly desirable option for the upwardly mobile within indigenous Saraguro society (Belote and Belote 1984b).

Within this interpenetrating racial-ethnic-class divide, indigenous social movements started to gain strength in the 1980s. With the 1986 formation of CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), various indigenous groups united under the common struggles against racial discrimination, lack of land, and no voice in the national discourse. Given teeth by massive popular uprisings, CONAIE has been making its demands heard, enjoying political successes like the Constitutional reworking to acknowledge pluriculturalism in Ecuador and the recognition of an indigenous university (UINPI) in 2004. The victories in land, education, and political rights have carved out the breathing room in which cultural goals may also be pursued. Amongst the backbreaking labor, violence, and disease brought by the Spanish, "mere survival, much less maintenance of cultural vibrancy, was no mean feat" (Lane 2003: 90). One of the main cultural struggles is to regain this vibrancy; to resist cultural homogenization by understanding and defining indigenous identity. Creating a proud new self-identification out of a pejorative ascription, indigenous groups have challenged national stereotypes and have "reinvented what it means to be Indian" (Selverston 1994: 150). Yet the systematic adaptations used to survive ethnocidal policies in the past, and the adaptations to the diverse economic and social opportunities of today, present a myriad of questions on the ethnic markers to be used in defining any specific ethnic identity.

Most Saraguros, regardless of occupation or geographical location, retain a strong pride in their ethnicity, which is based on "a shared history of struggles against ethnic- and class-based exploitation and exclusion, an elaborate fiesta system, and patterns of shared labor



(mingas) at both the community and the family level” (Macas, Belote and Belote 2003: 217).

They have long used their creativity to weave together traditional knowledge with non-indigenous and international sources to adapt to new situations, in order to preserve their autonomy. (Macas, Belote and Belote 2003).

Emigration has not only sown the seeds of change in ideas, it has also marked the physical landscape with large modern-style cement houses that tower over traditional adobe homes. Living in multi-generational households or in nuclear family units, with a wide kin network in close proximity, appeared to be the norm among the Saraguros I worked with. However, a wide variety in household composition and children’s principal caregivers was evident, due in part to continued widespread emigration and a significant number of single mothers.

Despite the intracultural variation among Saraguros based on differing educational achievements, occupational paths, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic levels, this thesis does not explore reasons for intracultural variation in Saraguros’ childrearing practices. The reason I did not do so is twofold: first, investigating variations along all these different lines would require a participant sample size that was much larger than I had time to access during the allotted fieldwork period. Second, upon commencing my fieldwork I did not find enough variation in the aspects I was investigating to warrant expanding my participant pool to chart and explain the differences. That is to say, the heterogeneity I found with regards to my research topics about infants’ sleeping and babywearing practices, general learning approaches, and more specific takes on moral learning seemed to be a result of individual differences rather than any patterns emerging according to class, religious, or other segmented lines. One exception to this is explored in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

### **Theoretical Background: The Nature-Nurture Debate**

An analysis of Saraguro caregivers’ beliefs on how their infants come to embody particular values necessarily finds itself confronting the longstanding nature-nurture debate. As

this dualism has been thoroughly suffused into Western ways of thinking, it has helped to shape Euro-American constructions of the child, assumptions about children's needs and capabilities, and ideals about adult-child relations and roles. As various themes in the subsequent body chapters of the thesis have been so heavily influenced by this debate, it seems prudent to address the nature-nurture divide here.

Popularized by Francis Galton's 1874 book, *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture*, the terms separate innumerable personality traits into two oppositional founts of causation: genetics or the environment (Keller 2010). The debate itself, however, can be traced back at least 2500 years. In Greek antiquity the notions of nature and society were rather interchangeable; it was only in the fifth century B.C. that philosophical debates separated *physis* [nature] and *nomos* [convention] into a legacy of dualism and "...virtually set the theoretical agenda for mainstream Western social thought for all the centuries since" (Sahlins 2008: 37).

Academic attempts to discern how much of any given behavior or phenomenon is attributable to one versus the other continue today (Gottlieb 2000). As the newest entrants into society, infants are often seen as the most "culture-free biological form" (Rogoff 2003:64), within which researchers may find evidence of pure universal nature, untainted by the variation that culture creates. Consequently, it is without irony that developmental psychologists can simultaneously report on infants' innately hardwired moral systems along with their undervalued learning abilities and "rich understanding of objects and people" (Bloom 2010). The implied understanding is that, despite their proven learning abilities, infants have not yet learned any culture. Their actions are still completely ruled by nature and the babies are purely biological products, rather than beings conceived, gestated, born into, and – for the entirety of their postpartum life –learning within a particular cultural milieu. Sahlins counters those who buttress their position in the nature camp with claims of genetic determinism by categorically dismissing whole sciences as "...kinds of ethnocentric evolutionary egoism that view their own bourgeois practices as evidence of universal human nature" (2008: 2). However, his critique also falls on nurture extremists who see human nature and culture as distinct elements that can, in

fact, be separated and opposed, a conception which Sahlins depicts as Western folklore and which other scholars describe as fundamentally flawed (Keller 2010; Rogoff 2003).

The “either/or” attributions to nature and nurture are gradually being replaced by “both/and”, as scholarly recognition grows regarding the ways that both our biological *and* our cultural human heritages work towards producing similarities and differences (Geurts 2003; Hrdy 2009; Lancy 2008; Lewis and Watson Gegeo 2004; Rogoff 2003; Small 1998). However, mere acknowledgement of either nature’s or nurture’s existence still results in scholarly shortsightedness, recapitulating Western bourgeois ideals and preventing alternative interpretations through a sustained focus on this dualism (Weismantel 1995). The complex relationship between biology and culture should instead be recognized as inseparable and mutually constitutive; not merely interacting with or influencing, but actually *comprising*, part of the other. A number of scholars (e.g., Hrdy 2009, Keller 2007, Keller 2010, Lancy 2008; Ridley 2003, Small 1998) are indeed working from the ‘new’ theoretical framework that “human development is biologically cultural” (Rogoff 2003:12).

Sahlins’ related assertion that “...humans evolved biologically under cultural selection” (2008: 104) finds support in evolutionary branches of psychology and anthropology. Biological features, such as an exceptionally large brain relative to body size, and uniquely human characteristics, such as infants’ relatively long periods of development and intensive parenting, are considered to be partly the result of culturally-created social relations (Geary and Flinn 2001).

Those biological features presented challenges particularly relevant to “infants’ culture” and childcare practices. The unique altricial dependence of big-brained human infants results from both bipedal pelvic restrictions on birth-able head size and the placenta’s ability to sustain relatively big-bodied babies (Small 1998). As a result, an exit from the womb must occur close to a year before the human infant reaches the at-birth developmental stage of other precocial mammals, leading some scientists to refer to the first nine (Montagu 1986) to twelve months (Ball 2007; Martin and Martin 1990) after birth as a period of “*extero*gestation.”

Furthermore, the human infant is very slow to mature to self-sufficiency, meaning that each child is rather costly in terms of energy others expend to feed and care for it. Examining the investment of time and resources required for childrearing in foraging societies, evolutionary anthropologists have argued that alloparenting, or caregiving by someone other than the biological mother, was necessary for the survival of the species (Bentley 2009; Hrdy 2009; Kramer 2009). Owing to their physical inability to cling onto a caregiver (as other primates do), infants needed to elicit nurture from mothers or alloparents, whose commitments to caring for the infant were never fail-safe. Sarah Hrdy (2009) illustrates how ‘mind reading’, sharing, empathy, collaboration, and attachment behaviors evolved to gauge potential caregivers’ mental states and interact with them accordingly, thus improving their chances of a welcome reception and caregiving. These prosocial tendencies, Hrdy argues, are unlike what one sees in other primates; they are distinctly human. In environments with high infant mortality, infants who were attuned to approved social behaviors would have advantages in acquiring care, thereby stimulating attachments with mothers and others and contributing to their own survival. Hence, not only physical features but also particular species-wide behaviors may be seen as biologically cultural products.

Despite this evidence of the intermingling of nature and nurture, it is the dualistic oppositional legacy that has been pervasive in Western cultures’ social and moral constructions of the child. As historian Philippe Aries (1962) famously asserted, childhood in the West first emerged as a separate social category in opposition to adults during the sixteenth century. This new social figure featured heavily in philosophical debates of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries about human nature. The “Rousseauian” picture of pure nature corrupted by culture has never succeeded in fully superseding the “Hobbesian” view of the dark side of human nature. Despite the binary constructions of the child as both dangerous amoral animals, and as vulnerable and in need of protection, the former has consistently held more sway in Western thought (Sahlins 2008; Valentine 2004).

However, the philosophical division of nature and culture that spawned this vision of children not only marked a break from its own past; it also forged a different route from the majority of the world. Contemporarily, as well as in the past, most non-Western societies hold views of nature that are not pitted *in opposition to* culture (but see Fajans 1997). Cultures without this dichotomous distinction would not necessarily place the child in an oppositional relation to others just because the child is biologically dependent. Sahlins (2008) summarizes a review of ethnographic literature from Papua New Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Micronesia, Bolivia, Java, Fiji, Timor, and Malaysia, highlighting a broad pattern of constructing the child within, rather than opposed to, culture:

All round the world, other peoples know no such idea of children as innate monsters and no such necessity of domesticating their bestial instincts.... In fact, few societies known to anthropology, besides our own, make the domestication of infants' inherent anti-social dispositions the issue of their socialization.... The more common belief is simply that the infant is not yet a full person – although not because he or she is born an anti-person... [Their] infants are humanity-in-becoming; for us, animality-to-be-overcome. Most peoples surely do not think the child as double, half angel and half beast (101-102).

Anthropologists of childhood have been challenged to recognize the naturalized models of childhood and cultural assumptions that they have traditionally brought with them into the field, structuring their interest and approach to children (Schwartzman 2001c). As Sahlins' brief summary suggests, indigenous interpretations may not even allow an attribution of moral learning to Western oppositional categories of either culture or nature. This highlights the problematic nature of my very research question itself; beholden to cultural trappings, a product of ethnocentric understanding of moral behavior, learning, and childhood. Although the long Spanish colonial presence and widespread practice of Catholic religion there would suggest that these Western categories would not be completely foreign to the Saraguros, one must take care not to pocket their actions or beliefs into binary categories of organizing the world that they themselves may not ascribe to. Mary Weismantel (1995) showed, for instance, how conceptions of family and parenthood in the Ecuadorian Andes challenge the biology-culture dichotomy.

Furthermore, it could be argued that my research question is ethnocentrically pegged to the nature-nurture debate on another level as well. The study of influences on moral behavior is often viewed as important inasmuch as it can help predict or change the future behavior of adults (e.g., Bloom 2010). This highlights the importance of babies as *becomings*, as adults-in-the-making, rather than as *beings* in the here and now. This outcome-based focus is more prevalent in Western society, where the dual construction of the Western child as both Dionysian devil and Apollonian angel results in an ever more segregated and fenced-off childhood (Valentine 2004). Childhood is seen as a time to prepare for life and future participation, rather than to participate in community activities presently (Rogoff 2003:23). Conceptualizing the child itself in outcome-driven terms – as a product that can be altered according to various parenting practices – may be an irrelevant, if not utterly bizarre, premise in societies where children are integrated in mature “adult” community activities and daily life.

Although I, concurring with Rogoff’s viewpoint, approached research from the framework that nature and culture are thoroughly intermixed and inseparable, it is important to acknowledge that other cultural biases regarding the child are not addressed simply by appropriating a position of ‘biological culturalism.’ For instance, the sinister moral judgment of the ‘natural’ child legitimates particular power relations and particular interventions. From the Greeks to the present, this antisocial view of human nature has defined appropriate political systems and justified authority. The assumption of an evil nature that needs to be contained and transformed by a higher authoritarian power has validated the state, government, and the management of unruly childhoods. Within the realm of domestic childrearing practices, it levies upon adults the responsibility to perform corrective action on the child. A hierarchy of wills, power, and control is thus established between socialized adults and unsocialized children and between the regulating state and disorderly households; the former of each pair prevailing over the latter for the benefit of society at large.

I include these critiques of my research question itself and the hidden cultural baggage associated with the nature-nurture divide and ideas of childhood to stress the socially

constructed nature of babies. As a social category, ‘babies’ or ‘infants’ carry different cultural meanings. The Saraguro infant may be an entirely different person, with different capabilities and expectations, than the one that is conjured up with the word ‘infant’ in another culture. That being said, for the ease of writing I have referred to my targeted research group, children from birth to three years of age, as ‘babies’, ‘infants’, and/or ‘toddlers’, though I recognize that these categorizations of childhood derive from Euro-American understandings of infancy.

### **Sleep Practices and Babywearing as Points of Analysis:**

The social construction of babies will likewise influence the infant care practices that are locally used. Child-rearing requires parents to make thousands of everyday decisions, based on both private and public goals, which will influence the development of the child (Boocock and Scott 2005). While infants’ everyday physical needs seem rather basic – bathing, eating, sleeping, eliminating – cultural and intracultural variation produces countless interpretations on how those should be fulfilled. Infant care practices are a result not only of immediate fulfillment of physical requirements, but also by more general understandings of infants’ needs and faculties, cultural beliefs about what the child should become, assumptions about the nature of the child, and theories about how children become functional members of their culture.

Infant care practices also reflect the overriding concerns and goals of parents, which, depending on environmental and socioeconomic conditions, vary from mere physical survival to pedagogical training (Hrdy 2009; Lancy 2008; LeVine 1974; Montgomery 2008; Small 1998). These goals and cultural beliefs structure the ways that caregivers organize a child’s day and activities, creating an additional layer of constraints upon the realms of possibility for a child’s social world (Gaskins 1996; Super et al. 1996). For this study, I elected to use sleep practices and babywearing – activities that ethnographers often mention together in passing (Gottlieb 2004; Chisholm 2008; Tronick et al. 1987; Lancy 2008) and that were frequently connected in the Saraguro context as well – as a window onto that world. The passionate defense of particular sleep practices and the associated moral overtones made them an advantageous point of entry

into Saraguro understandings of morality and proper adult-child relations. Babywearing, on the other hand, was beneficial in understanding learning more generally, to assess the breadth and depth of opportunities, characters, and social settings that Saraguro babies experience and can draw from during the learning process.

### ***Sleep Practices***

As infants and toddlers may spend the majority of their day sleeping, it is at least as important as moments of wakefulness in understanding how and what they learn, not just developmentally, but also in terms of culturally prescribed values. DeLoache and Gottlieb (2000) demonstrate the cultural nature of this biological activity by highlighting the degree of variability in infant sleep practices in seven different societies, such as with whom they sleep and until what age, where, what type of bed, facing which direction, with what objects, and even what temperatures are desirable for the infant. One might easily expand this list by asking whether children are expected to rely on comfort from people or objects, whether they engage in bedtime routines, whether they have relatively fixed or fluid sleep times and durations, whether they are expected to fall asleep with others or alone, whether they need to nap, whether they are expected or allowed to wake in the night. And further, how often might they wake, and are they expected to put themselves back to sleep, or is this the parent's job? Are they allowed to eat or drink when they wake in the night? Do they sleep vertically or horizontally, in the light or in the dark, in quiet or noisy quarters, wrapped up tight or with room to wiggle? The list might seem staggering to childless readers, yet only the tip of the iceberg of alternatives for a new parent.

How parents make those decisions is often unconsciously guided by parental ethnotheories, drawing on both explicitly stated and implicitly uncontested goals and expectations for babies' sleep. At the most fundamental level, sleep practices are driven by the parental desire for the infant's physical survival. From an evolutionary perspective, survival strategies on the part of the baby, to elicit care, and on the part of caregivers to adequately



provide it, gave rise to cultural practices that maximized the infant's physical wellbeing; what Bowlby (1969) termed the "environment of evolutionary adaptedness." The cross-cultural and historical ubiquity of infants co-sleeping with the mother is cited as one such adaptation. As the low fat content in human breast milk necessitates frequent feedings, the infant sleeping in close proximity to the mother seems to be an evolutionary response to meet these needs during night-time hours (Ball 2007). Likewise, the neurologically unfinished, altricial nature of human infants means that they are three or four months old before they can easily regulate their breathing (McKenna and McDade 2005). Anthropologist and sleep researcher James McKenna has demonstrated that co-sleeping physiologically entwines the breathing patterns of the baby and the adult, resulting in lighter sleep and more frequent waking, which is beneficial for babies' breathing practice (Small 1998). Physical contact also has been proven to regularize infants' heart rate and decrease the occurrence of sleep apneas, all of which would suggest that, as a matter of best practice for survival, infants have evolved to expect night-time sociality during their external gestation period (Ball 2007; Hrdy 2009; McKenna and McDade 2005; Small 1998). Extreme environmental conditions may also present special survival challenges and adaptations, such as wrapping and carrying Quechua babies of the Peruvian Andes in the *manta* pouch, which creates a micro-environment where greater warmth and higher humidity make infants' breathing easier than it would be in the thin cold air outside (Tronick, et al. 1994).

However, technological innovations have significantly lowered infant mortality for the relatively well-off in many societies, enabling the development of infant care practices that prioritize cultivation of economic self-sufficiency or pedagogical training rather than merely the infant's physical survival. Ironically, some researchers argue that these innovations, which allow parents to assume infant survival as a given, have resulted in sleep practices that conflict with the infant's best physical and emotional welfare (Hrdy 2009; Small 1998). These practices are driven not only by cultural understandings of what infants' needs and capabilities are, but also by the definition of a 'good' sleep, the use of sleep as a marker of psychological development,

beliefs about who is responsible for particular child outcomes, and the attribution of particular sleep practices to instilling culturally esteemed values.

Strong feelings regarding children's sleep are a reflection of ideological assumptions and the underlying traits that are thought to be fostered by these different practices. For instance, German parents encourage self-reliance by training their children to fall asleep alone and entertain themselves upon waking for the duration of an appointed night-time (LeVine and Norman 2001). Italian parents, by contrast, try to keep the baby awake until everyone goes to bed, to encourage sociality (New and Richman 1996). However, the connection between sleep practices and wider cultural values has been drawn most clearly in the sizable literature on co-sleeping. Cross-cultural studies of hundreds of societies have demonstrated, through the regularity of co-sleeping practices around the world, how unusual it is for infants *not* to sleep with their mothers or others (Ball 2007; Barry and Paxson 1971; Gottlieb 2004; Hewlett and Lamb 2005; Hrdy 2009; Javo 2007; Konner and Super 1987; McKenna and McDade 2005; Morelli, et al. 1992; New and Richman 1996; Rogoff 2003; Small 1998; Wolf, et al. 1996). From historical and evolutionary perspectives as well, co-sleeping has been the norm throughout human history, and mother-infant co-sleeping is as close to a primate universal as it comes (Hrdy 2009).

The prevalence of co-sleeping or solitary sleeping has been most commonly used to characterize and group societies as either individualistic (separate sleepers) or collectivist (co-sleepers). Despite the objections that have been voiced, theories of the self that present uniform and oppositional worlds of the individualistic “West” and sociocentric rest – including all of Latin America, Asia, Africa, Middle East, and the Pacific – are propped up by the characterizations made of solitary sleeping and co-sleeping cultures. Since cultures throughout these geographic regions do not hold identical outlooks, the use of co-sleeping as an indicator of group orientations can be seen to be oversimplified, ignoring intracultural variation, cultural change, and the ways that other practices may offset the sociocentric ‘effect’ of co-sleeping (Wolf et al. 1996; Kusserow 1999).

Therefore, it is hoped that a broader study of sleep practices will help elucidate the local meaning associated with them, rather than merely fitting them into Western-born dichotomies. As Gottlieb, who proposed ‘an ethnography of slumbering babies’, posed the question, “...how do local ideologies concerning babies’ sleep needs interact with local practices? In other words, what cultural sense do such patterns make?” (2000:126). Although sleep location and sleep partners were noted in my research observations, I also examined more of the aforementioned ways that sleep can differ; hence the use of the broad term ‘sleep practices’ throughout the thesis. Of particular interest to me were whether routines or scheduled sleep times were used, whether sleep was prescribed to deal with fussiness, and who regulated or initiated sleep. In addition, I sought to address the lacuna on daytime sleep (for exceptions, cf. Chisholm 1978; Gottlieb 2004; Super, et al. 1996) by examining napping practices.

Moreover, the reason that sleep practices can be such a contentious issue for parents is that they carry inherently moral overtones (Small 1998; Gottlieb 2004). “Sleep practices...reflect values about what it means to be a “good” parent and how the parents are to prepare the child for entry into the family and the community” (Wolf, et al. 1996: 377). Mayan mothers, for instance, consider co-sleeping to be a demonstration of commitment to one’s children and believe parents who make their infants sleep alone to be cruel. Conversely, that same study’s U.S. mothers, who slept separately from their infants, believed it to be psychologically unhealthy to have too close an attachment to one’s children and also viewed co-sleepers as engaging in something physically hazardous (Morelli, et al. 1992). Mothers promoting solitary sleeping often also decry co-sleeping out of sanctity for the marital bed, citing the possibility of infants witnessing sexual acts as morally apprehensible (Small 1998). That infants’ sleep practices are infused with morality, or the judgment of some practices to be good/proper/correct and others to be bad/inappropriate/incorrect, makes them an ideal point of analysis for examining my research question about moral learning.

## ***Babywearing***

The more we think about it, the clearer it becomes: if slings had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent them. So we did (Taylor 2010).

People all around the world use devices to carry or help tend their young; the practice is commonly noted in ethnographic literature (e.g., Bolin 2006; Chisholm 1978; Geurts 2003; Gottlieb 2004; Hewlett and Lamb 2005; Konner 1976; Lancy 2008; Mead 2007 [1935]; Tronick, et al. 1994). Cultural variations on the sling include long cloths, shawls, net bags, scarves, pouches, wraps, blankets with straps, cradleboards, flax backpacks, and large jacket pockets. In Saraguro the long but narrow shawl used to carry babies (generally on the back) is called the *chalina*, which is often covered with the black stole wrap of Saraguro women's traditional outfit during cold weather. Throughout the thesis I use the term babywearing to refer to this practice, to reflect the diverse ways one may carry a young child on one's person, and to distinguish supporting the child with a carrier from carrying the baby in one's arms. This distinction resonates locally in Saraguro as well; the word 'cargar' denotes carrying the baby in the sling, while holding or carrying the baby freestyle in one's arms is signified with the word 'marcar.'

Clearly, baby carriers are by no means a new invention.<sup>2</sup> In fact, some would argue that they are as old as bipedal humans themselves. Returning to an evolutionary perspective, the altricial nature of human infants and their inability to hold onto anyone required caregivers to provide in-arms care, but the energy needed to do so around the clock made mothers' inventions a necessity. Hrdy (2009) showed how the social invention of alloparenting, or caregiving by those who are not the child's parents, helped address this problem. Evolutionary archaeologist Timothy Taylor (2010) proposes that female caregivers also be credited with a technological

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<sup>2</sup> Despite being "an ancient tradition" North American pediatrician Dr. William Sears has apparently trademarked the terms 'babywearing' and 'wear your baby' (Blois 2005:29). Given the use of this practice worldwide and throughout history, as well as the common use of the word 'babywearing' on the internet and in resources of attachment parenting enthusiasts, I have decided not to use another term for the writing of this thesis. I felt that respecting the trademark, honoring the 'invention' or novelty of carrying one's baby, would be akin to celebrating colonial 'discoveries' of foreign lands, and I chose not to bow to this ethnocentric perspective of a globally practiced activity.

invention that was pivotal in the development of the modern human species and the integration of cultural tools like language into our biological legacy. That invention was the sling. To permit for larger brains, the human adaptation was exterogestation, allowing some of the skull's growth and development to take place postpartum.

The sling turns a primate into a marsupial, and its newborn into what is, developmentally, essentially a fetus... The infant, helpless at birth, can remain helpless longer with no great loss.... I am not the first researcher to point out the practical importance of the baby sling, but I am going further in arguing that its genetic reverberation on our emergence was pivotal, changing the algebra of the biologically possible (Taylor 2010).

Much as the womb environment automatically regulated the infant's breathing and heart rate, the sling or carrier has a regulating effect on the infants' own irregular rhythms by putting the baby in contact with the rhythmic breathing, gait, and heartbeat of the caregiver (Sears and Sears 1992). Human touch helps to even out respiratory and heart rates, as well as internal body temperatures (Field 2003). Proximity to the breast encourages smaller, more frequent feedings, which facilitate weight gain and good digestion (Blois 2005). Vestibular stimulation while being carried enhances muscular development and carried babies demonstrate greater visual and auditory awareness (Field 2001; Sears and Sears 1992).

Those research findings of Western doctors and psychologists merely reiterate what many caregivers around the world already know from experience in the laboratory of real life – that babywearing is advantageous for both infants and caregivers. Child-carrying devices provide a practical solution for mothers get back to productive work (Lancy 2008), enabling babies to be kept safe and their needs to be promptly attended to. Mothers often cite the physical closeness of babywearing as important in fostering affective relations and a good attachment with the baby (Anisfeld, et al. 1990; Geurts 2003). The aforementioned biological benefits resulting in a calmer infant also make the baby easy to care for, especially as the caregivers' motion encourages babies to fall and stay asleep. In the Saraguro context, babywearing is often chosen as a method of inducing sleep in young children, which seems to be a rather common

practice in babywearing cultures, per the ethnographic record (e.g., Chisholm 1978; Geurts 2003; Lancy 2008; Gottlieb 2004; Rogoff 1990; Tronick et al. 1994).

Thus, while sleep practices directly tackle some of the moral facets in my research question, the practice of babywearing is a fitting entryway into the learning aspect. The repetitive motions experienced while babywearing tend to have a calming effect on babies (Blois 2005; Field 2003; Sears and Sears 2001); they cry less and are more content (Hunziker and Barr 1986), and as a result, they spend more time in a state of quiet alertness. This behavioral state has been noted as one in which an infant is “best able to interact with his environment. It may be called the optimal state of learning for a baby.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to facilitating this biological state, babywearing affects which learning situations the child is exposed to. Understanding what and how the infant learns necessitates an appraisal of infants’ everyday experiences, of how their day is structured with opportunities for social interaction. Observing while they ride along on older community members who are going about their everyday routines, infants and toddlers participate peripherally in the more mature activities of their cultural communities (Rogoff 2003; Lave and Wenger 1991). Giving infants full visual and sensory access to the caregiver’s activities and viewpoint allows them to learn from what caregivers and those around them say and do, even if these experiences are not intentionally instructional.

Finally, babywearing is an especially expedient practice for analyzing infants because of the ways they communicate and come to know their environments. Traditional Western emphasis on verbal interactions precludes comprehension of infants’ worlds and infants’ agency, an issue which will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Two. While infants are able to verbally communicate their distress by crying, much of their communication and learning is nonverbal. As the first sense to develop (Montagu 1986) and one that cannot be ‘turned off’, touch is the infant’s portal for learning about the physical world and their primary medium for

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<sup>3</sup> From Dr. Sears’ website. Accessed March 12, 2011 at: <http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/fussy-baby/baby-wearing/benefits-babywearing>

demonstrating affection and establishing emotional bonds with others (Field 2003). Kinesthetic forms of communication form a base for interaction between infants and caregivers, with infants' earliest cultural ways of knowing derived from the tactile sensations between them (Geurts 2003; Rogoff 1990). From this perspective, being in contact with the caregiver many hours each day via babywearing is a significant factor in the infant's learning and development. Furthermore, in addition to kinesthetic means, a large part of infants' learning and interaction is based on intuitive 'mind-reading' (Hrdy 2009) and emotional cues (Reddy 2008) as they engage with others. Based on the importance of these realms in infant communication, I would argue that observing and gauging the visceral reactions of others in situations of cultural transgression must form one of the initial bases for infants' moral learning. The sites for this observation-based moral education vary both culturally and individually; but as infants accompany older members of society in their daily lives, the practice of babywearing will have an effect on the frequency and types of situations upon which they can build their moral knowledge.

### **Roadmap for the Thesis**

Upon embarking on this thesis research, I was surprised to find scant work on babies or infancy by cultural anthropologists. Acknowledging that this lacuna might be attributable to certain methodological concerns about meaningful co-constructions with this social group, the first chapter details the ways that I tried to accomplish that. Chapter one also provides a reflexive analysis of the significant ways that mothering in the field impacted my work – in terms of access to research participants, the data I collected, and the interpretations that were made. The benefits and challenges posed by bringing children to the field, particularly when researching the lives of children and their caregivers, must be seen as integral to my identity in the field and the viewpoints I obtained.

In chapter two I turn from my particular research with Saraguro babies to review how children more generally, and babies specifically, have been studied in anthropology. After an

initial phase of concern in its disciplinary beginnings, childhood and adolescence fell out of anthropologists' favor as preferred research topics. It wasn't until the last decade of the twentieth century that childhood and children experienced a notable resurgence of anthropological interest, fueled by increasing legal attention stemming from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). A growing interdisciplinary consortium of child-focused social scientists developed, primarily based in sociology but also owing a healthy dose of credit to anthropologist Sharon Stephens (1995) for portraying children as a key cultural and political concern. In addition to the ebb and flow of anthropological interest in childhood, chapter two reviews current theoretical debates regarding the study of and with children and scrutinizes some of the reasons that children fell off the anthropological radar for many years. Not least of these is the longstanding nature-nurture debate in Western thought, with a resulting construction of the child in anthropologists' home cultures that works to obscure children's contributions to culture and their potential as research participants.

Despite the growing anthropological interest in children, babies continue to be marginal within cultural anthropology, and they pose additional methodological problems compared with older children and youth. However, anthropological understandings of this social category are much needed, for while anthropologists have focused elsewhere, developmental psychologists have made babies one of their favorite topics and written about them extensively. Babies have therefore generally been theorized through the cultural lenses of Western psychologists, who primarily work with white middle-class children, creating a universalized and ethnocentric understanding of babies' development and capabilities. This understanding has, unfortunately, often been exported as the normative and desirable path for *all* babies everywhere, as chapters two, four, and five discuss in more detail with regards to the implementation of early childhood education programs in Saraguro.

Challenging the universalism inherent in these theories and shedding light on the diversity of babies' development and social worlds is certainly a major contribution that anthropology can make. However, studying babies and recognizing them as participatory



cultural actors also illuminates some interesting concerns within anthropology itself, such as how agency is conceived, the partial and co-constructed nature of knowledge, and the ways in which culture is transmitted. Appreciating the often overlooked non-linguistic forms of communication and social engagement, the sleep practices of Saraguro infants are examined to demonstrate the cultural aspects of babies' lives, including the ways they impact their own care, exert influence on others' daily lives, and shape society at large.

In order to fully appreciate the normative path of Saraguro babies' development, it is necessary to investigate learning more generally and the ways that certain practices work together to reinforce a particular style of learning. In chapter three I briefly review the theories that have informed academic thought regarding learning and cognitive development, as well as the framework from which I structured my own research question about Saraguro babies' active role in their moral apprenticeship. I then turn to examine observational learning as a holistic system of interrelated practices, which are evident in the Saraguros' non-interventionist approach to learning.

This embodied approach to learning becomes part of the *habitus* in infancy and is often still practiced in the home, even when parents actively embrace more formal early childhood educational opportunities for their children. My research suggested that the early childhood education development exercises were mostly only practiced during the formal programming; the systematic interrelated support for formal learning had not yet become commonplace in general Saraguro adult-child interactional styles. Chapter four reviews interrelated patterns that commonly appear in societies emphasizing formal learning, introduces the formal educational programs that Saraguro babies and toddlers have access to, and displays the differences between the informal learning support envisioned by the programs and that actually enacted in Saraguro homes. Differing moral visions presented by local, national, and global spheres of influence make infants' needs, rights, and learning methods sites of contestation, cultural change, and the imposition of governmentality.

Chapter five focuses more specifically on moral learning, viewing Saraguro babies' moral apprenticeship as a function of local constructions of the child, their non-interventionist learning style, and cultural beliefs limiting moral culpability of the very young. In accordance with an informal learning system that prioritizes the learner's responsibility for motivation and regulation of the learning process, Saraguro babies are presumed competent to self-regulate their own biological needs, to navigate their surroundings, and to experiment with potentially dangerous situations. Morally infused ideas about children and childrearing shape the spatial Saraguro landscape and the societal relations of particular actors and groups of people, thereby intertwining the discursive societal place and physical spaces of childhood. Experiential learning also extends to the moral domain, yet young children are afforded a rather long period of exemption from moral culpability in comparison with their precocious competence in those other realms. The later age of moral accountability, or the age at which a child "ought to know better," is explained by an historical period of innocence corresponding with a child's First Communion in the Catholic Church, as well as beliefs in external forces that place babies' fussiness and other undesirable behavior out of their control.

Finally, the conclusion offers possibilities for further research with Saraguro babies and their caregivers. Tinged with moral overtones, the children's rights discourse promotes particular adult-child roles and interaction styles that have not traditionally been commonplace among the Saraguros. Whether these are fully integrated in the hopes of brighter economic prospects for future generations or are outright contested in the name of cultural preservation is yet to be seen. However, making reflexive choices regarding these political issues appears to be something that those who have heavily benefitted from the fruits of formal schooling are best positioned to make. As such, they may bear the strongest potential to defend cultural differences that move beyond mere folklore; yet any attempts they make at cultural preservation of traditional learning styles are somewhat paradoxical. The sustained endeavors by indigenous social movements to carve out distinct niches of ethnic identity in Ecuador and potential

conflicts with the children's rights discourse therefore make the care of Saraguro babies an interesting window onto cultural transmission and cultural change.

## Chapter 1

### Methods and Mothering

The previous days' heavy rains and enveloping fog had surrendered to the stark Andean sunlight, finally rendering visible the topography of the area we were to call home for the next half year. The steep cliffs jutting up behind the village dwarfed the groves of eucalyptus trees at their base and separated some residents from their *paramo* grazing lands by a couple hundred vertical meters. Off to the left, hills of various magnitudes punctuated two intersecting valleys, painting a topsy-turvy horizon beyond the small town of Saraguro.

Ximena, the mother in our soon-to-be host family, and her five-year-old daughter pointed out things of note in the tiny community while one-year-old baby Eva took turns being toted by her two eldest siblings, aged 12 and 8. Having waited fretfully on their porch for at least an hour after lunch, we were finally on our way to the government-subsidized daycare at the other end of the village, along with my husband, our two children aged 3 months and 2 years, and a male Canadian colleague of ours. My sense of anxiety about arriving there during what was, for our son and most North American toddlers, the typical naptime, was mounting by the minute. Grateful as I was for Ximena's assistance in trying to secure a daycare spot for our son, I refrained from suggesting we come back another morning to make these arrangements. However, carrying on with our plans undoubtedly conflicted with my own judgment and experience. The ticking time bomb of our overtired toddler threatened to make a display of tantrums the first impression we gave the community to which I was seeking access.

Looking at how my infant daughter was straddled and tied to my hip in a woven wrap, Ximena asked if her legs were okay, as the Saraguros carry their babies with their legs together for at least the first year. She asked if all people carry their babies that way where I come from and I told her that actually not many people carry their babies in North America, preferring to use strollers. Speaking of the convenience afforded by carrying one's child instead, Ximena gestured to the recently harvested maize field we were passing and said, "Yes, you can't climb up the hill with a stroller." Our mobility, however, did not translate to speed. Much to my chagrin,

whenever one of the children stopped to play with something on the road, Ximena paused and waited, without any verbal encouragement to hurry it up or adapt to the faster adult pace. After what seemed an eternity of dawdling in construction sand piles, steering away from the ubiquitous mounds of fresh cow manure, and countless other leisure infringements on the sacred nap schedule, we finally reached the fenced-off cluster of buildings and playground equipment at the end of the road.

To my surprise, our visit didn't seem to be disrupting the naps of any of the daycare children. The older children were seated very calmly in a circle conducting an activity with one of the workers, while another was cleaning in the kitchen, and the third was tending to infants playing in the partitioned baby area. The three *madres comunitarias* ('community mothers') were understandably surprised to see our small entourage, and they congregated to provide us with more information on fees, hours of operation, and required documents, after approving our verbal petition for a daycare spot. The infant sitting on Lucia's hip began to fuss. Without a moment's pause in her description of meals and snack times, Lucia pulled up her top and began breastfeeding him, seemingly uninhibited by her present role as daycare spokeswoman or by the two foreign men in attendance.

Having listened patiently and politely to everything they considered to be important information, my husband spurred me on to ask the most contentious and pressing question. It was, in our consideration, the deal-breaker question – something that would make or break the feasibility of the daycare option and, consequently, the feasibility of conducting our fieldwork.

“And what do you do about nap time?”

Their faces remained blank, as if they weren't quite sure what I meant. I was, after all, just getting acquainted with the local forms of colloquial Spanish, so I tried again.

“Do the children sleep? When do the children sleep? Is there a time when children sleep?”

Shoulders were shrugged, and eyebrows briefly rose, seeming to indicate their inability to give a precise answer about naptime. The cook offered, “They can sleep if they want to.”

Motioning to a closed door in the infants' area, Lucia echoed the statement and said they have cribs back there if our son wants to sleep.

Encouraged, but not wanting to get our hopes up, I prodded, "Do they *have to* sleep?" This question was much easier to answer and immediately three heads were shaking in unison. "No, no, of course not! They can sleep if they want to, but if they don't want to sleep, they don't sleep."

We breathed a sigh of relief. Now it was time to get our very tired toddler home before he deteriorated into an embodiment of the "terrible twos." As he was having a good time playing with all the new toys and had followed another boy's lead to frolic in the sandbox, he didn't take at all kindly to us prying him away. Ximena was undeterred, directing us towards the community health post for our next errand, but our Canadian colleague apologized to the community mothers, excusing our son's screaming and crying by explaining to them that he had not yet rested today.

## **Introduction**

*Someone once said that research is me-search, that we study problems that have personal meaning.* (Field 2003: vii)

Admittedly, I was driven towards researching infant sleep practices and babywearing based on the negative and positive parenting experiences I'd had with each respectively. As the opening vignette illustrates, childrearing practices can be a very stressful and contentious issue, particularly when parents feel that their own morality and judgment or the efficacy of their practices may be called into question based on their children's behavior. The conflicting 'norms' of infant care that we'd encountered while parenting in South Korea, China, northern Europe, North America, and Latin America – and the passionate feelings about the correctness or impropriety of particular practices – compelled me to investigate this further in the Saraguro context. Which role, if any, did parents in this culture feel their practices had on their babies' behavior? How did parents in this culture interpret the verbalizations and gestures of their own

inarticulate young, and what cultural sense did their interpretations make? How did these practices coincide with larger cultural beliefs about childhood, power relations, public space, social inclusion, and morality?

As I delved into new worlds – of Canada, of graduate school, of anthropology, of childhood, and of dichotomous and divisive academic debates like nature/nurture and structure/agency – the questions mounted. I found it hard to believe that babies, whose sponge-like capacity to soak up social norms was immediately evident in our own cross-cultural family ‘laboratory’, were rather marginalized as agentive cultural actors in the anthropological literature. However, the methodological obstacles confronting one who would attempt to co-construct cultural knowledge with infants and inarticulate toddlers soon presented one significant reason why this might be the case. Despite my preparation for fieldwork with a course on methods and an independent study on childhood during which I reconsidered the methods I had laid out in my proposal, my true education in actually ‘doing’ fieldwork with infants came in the field. Fittingly, I learned about conducting infant-centered ethnography in much the same way that Saraguro infants are expected to learn – through trial and error.

In this chapter I will describe in greater detail the methodological results of that process – the “dids,” the “did nots,” and the “should’ve done.” In addition, a presentation of any aspect of my research with Saraguro babies and their caregivers would be acutely incomplete without crediting two babies in particular – my own – with prominently shaping my fieldwork experience. Rather than a simple acknowledgement on a prefatory page of this thesis, the various instrumental roles my children fulfilled are closely examined within the ethnographic framework, as my identity, access to others, and social acceptance as a mother were crucial elements of data collection and interpretation.

### **Ethnographic Methods and Participant Groups**

Fieldwork research was conducted from July to December 2010 in a number of outlying indigenous highland villages surrounding the town of Saraguro in the southern Ecuadorian

Andes. Half a year had been allotted to the fieldwork process to allow for the full benefits of the ethnographic approach. The emphasis of this approach on continued interpersonal relationships with and feedback from local agents can offer a high degree of validity in interpretation of data (O'Reilly 2005), and findings can provide generalizability in terms of theoretical inference (Davies 2008). Therefore, the research period allowed time for the process of gaining access to the community and establishing these vital relationships as well as for the activities whose time consumption can be more precisely defined, such as performing specific observations, conducting interviews, volunteering, and writing field notes. In addition, the process of research itself requires some length in the field, as "both questions and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied" (Spradley 1980: 32). Indeed, my research focus changed in the field both as new data emerged and as certain methodological plans proved culturally impracticable. Unlike the linear patterns of some other social science research, ethnographic research is cyclical (Spradley 1980) or spiraling (O'Reilly 2005), because participant observation, interpretation, background homework, analysis, and research questions feed into and inform each other, allowing the process itself and learning from the participants to guide, redirect, and/or fine tune the research questions.

The initial stages of research were spent largely in general participant observation in and around the village and the families' homes. As culture cannot be observed directly but is rather understood by making inferences (Spradley 1980), the 'cultural language' must be studied first in order to get at the cultural knowledge that people are using to organize, define, and interpret their behavior and underlying meanings (Spradley 1980; O'Reilly 2005). Given that my research aimed to understand the socialization and apprenticeship of Saraguro children, it was all the more fitting that the research process itself followed local norms of progression for social-cultural learning. Children acquire culture by observing other members of society and making inferences about the cultural rules for behavior (Spradley 1980), and this comprehension must precede both imitation and production (Briggs 1986). Indeed, as chapter three discusses at greater length, Saraguro children are expected and encouraged to learn by doing, and this



requires them to have spent some time observing before trying their hand at any given task themselves. Therefore, in the first two months of fieldwork I concentrated less on eliciting explanations of specific child-rearing practices and more on observing native models of cultural and communicative competence (Briggs 1986), becoming familiar with and accepted in the community, and mentally mapping the local webs of family and friendships. This period was instrumental in establishing relationships; that is, in gaining the trust necessary for participants to share their experiences and co-produce interpretations of cultural facts, as well as to allow my presence to become less obtrusive (O'Reilly 2005; Rabinow 2007; Spradley 1980).

The core group of research participants was comprised of families with at least one child aged newborn to three years. Participation in the everyday lives of these families facilitated observations of more research-specific child-rearing practices and opened the lines for interpretations and meaningful discussions of what was observed (Davies 2008). Given that nearly all the participant families sleep together and that babies often go to bed at the same time as the parents, night-time sleep observations were rather difficult to schedule. Nap time sleep observations were easier to access, but they were still more elusive than I had planned on, given the early age at which children in the communities stop napping. Due to the absence of scheduled sleep, many of the naps I did observe did not occur in the homes at all, but rather while the children were out and about with a caregiver. Likewise, as I persevered in my contacts with families, the *laissez-faire* parenting approach to their babies' erratic sleep habits allowed me to add a number of chance night-time observations of non-napping toddlers, who routinely tuckered out before their parents.

Most daytime observation periods lasted from two to four hours, incorporating both nap times and active times. It should be noted that most visitors to Saraguros' homes are visited with and entertained outside on the porch. It was, therefore, not only a methodological challenge to get access to the sleeping quarters of people's homes, but I was also a strange presence for the babies, who often were too excited to sleep during my visit. Throughout these

observations I focused on and logged descriptive data about a number of practices, outlined in

Table 1.

**Table 1. Observation Log**

<b>Babywearing Practices</b>	<b>Sleep Practices</b>	<b>Caregiver-Baby Interactions</b>	<b>Other Routine Care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who carried baby</li> <li>- Ages of carried baby</li> <li>- How, when, and for how long the baby was carried</li> <li>- Activities carried out while babywearing</li> <li>- What the baby observed/did while being carried</li> <li>- Where baby was when <i>not</i> being carried</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When, where, how long, which position, with whom baby slept</li> <li>- Routines (or lack thereof) before baby's naps and bedtimes</li> <li>- Who initiated sleep</li> <li>- Regularity of sleep times and durations</li> <li>- Baby's clothing, food, and drink before and during sleep times</li> <li>- Caregiver assessments of baby's sleep needs</li> <li>- Caregiver expectations for baby's sleep / wake patterns</li> <li>- Methods for getting baby to fall asleep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the baby spoken to directly, introduced to others, included in conversations</li> <li>- Do parents talk to baby? (How) Is baby assumed to be able to communicate?</li> <li>- Does baby "answer" others' questions or is baby spoken <i>about</i></li> <li>- Responses to baby's cries and gestures</li> <li>- Directional positioning of baby (e.g., face-to-face)</li> <li>- (When) Do caregivers direct baby's attention to joint focal points</li> <li>- Who plays with baby and how</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How, what, when, and how often is baby fed</li> <li>- Breast- or bottle-fed</li> <li>- Age at which solids are introduced</li> <li>- At what age and how do mothers wean their baby</li> <li>- How, where, when, and how often does baby bathe</li> <li>- How and at what age does baby start using the potty</li> <li>- Expectations for potty training success and repercussions for failure</li> </ul>

In addition, I noted any instances when children were arguing or fighting, when they were verbally reprimanded or physically disciplined, caregiver comments about their own or other babies' behaviors, babies' behaviors that I personally would typify as bad or naughty behavior and the ways that Saraguro caregivers interpreted those occurrences. As I recorded these practices and comments, I also analyzed variations in practices among the different families to look for patterns of prevalence and to initiate investigation into the reasons for the predominance of certain practices.

Planned home observations were primarily a way to start documenting practices and become acquainted with families. As familiarity with this target group grew, participant-observation was augmented with in-depth interviews of parents and caregivers to obtain their interpretations of my observations and to reveal some of the embedded beliefs that guide their

practices. Families enrolled in the early childhood education program *Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos* (Growing With Our Children) and/or with children in daycare were also asked about their experiences with those organizations, what they perceived the institutional methods to promote, and how those practices compared with their typical household practices. Due to the initial difficulties in arranging sleep observations that were just noted, I began to look for other ways to accomplish this task, utilizing the recalled experiences of willing interview participants whose children were no longer in the 0-3 years age group.

Trends in ethnographic interviewing stress that much of the meaning of verbal utterances rests with indexical content (Briggs 1986). Hence, a large degree of reflexivity on the intersubjective nature of results within an ever-changing and mutually constructed context can produce better interpretive results (Briggs 1986). Therefore, I consistently chose to use an unstructured interview format, due to established ongoing relationships with the interview participants and the likelihood that utterances within the interview itself would contain references to common experiences we had shared and other social facts we had co-constructed prior to that communicative event (Davies 2008).

In order to access a historical perspective of Saraguro child-rearing practices, I interviewed a second participant group comprised of five grandmothers from three different villages. Their narratives about the past gave insights into the stability or dynamism of babywearing, sleep practices, general approaches to learning, historical perceptions of child-rearing, and factors that may have caused practices to change over time.

The third research participant group involved the workers and children at two government-funded village daycare centers. My original plan had been to volunteer at the daycare as a way to contribute to the community at large, which would also serve the practical purpose of enabling observations of institutional child-rearing practices. Upon arrival I learned that a recent hiring for a coveted job opening at the daycare had been the source of community infighting, so the plan to volunteer was abandoned, lest any friction occur on the assumption that my labor was preventing others from securing a paying job. However, our son did attend

the two daycares, and my role as parent to a relatively shy toddler translated to many hours of observation at the village daycares while I helped him transition to a new care environment in a different language. Participant-observation allowed me to understand the range of activities that Saraguro babies were privy to in the daycare setting. The interactions, learning styles, and behaviors that were promoted by daycare practices served as an institutional point of comparison with household childcare practices, and workers' comments about where they got their ideas and practices from gave a sense of the influence that home and institutional practices had on each other. Interviews were conducted with four childcare workers at two daycare centers to explore the values reflected in their encouragement or discouragement of particular behaviors and the degree to which they felt these methods were effective in inculcating moral behavior in young children. The interview format was unstructured, yet I focused our conversations towards specific questions that arose from observation of daycare practices.

Obtaining an institutional perspective on childrearing was also the research aim with my fourth participant group; namely, the manager, field coordinators, and technicians from the local NGO Fundación Kawsay who administered the national early childhood education program *Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos* (CNH). Along with field visits and participant-observation within the organization, unstructured interviews were conducted with the program manager, two coordinators, and one technician. The interviews aimed to understand the workers' assessments of the program's purpose, conceptual understandings of child development and the methods that best facilitated it, why the CNH program was deemed necessary, similarities or differences between local practices and those they promoted, and any obstacles they faced in administering the program.

As volunteering with the daycare had proved too political, I offered my assistance with Fundación Kawsay. Upon explanations from both sides on research interests and the programs they had available, the president of the organization and I decided both of us would be best served by my volunteering for the CNH program. The manager of the program invited me to the weekly planning meetings and to accompany the coordinators on their field visits. The

coordinators spent three days a week touring communities, accompanying one of their assigned technicians each day to assist them in their presentations and provide encouragement and feedback. In total, 1500 children were served by this program each week, with 25 technicians and four coordinators administering home visits to families with children aged 0 to 2 years and group lessons for children aged 3 to 5 years.

The program employees had welcomed my assistance for the “elaboration of materials,” although with no clear vision from the staff on what form this should take, my involvement was completely self-directed. This was a blessing on two levels. First, while a researcher’s mere presence, let alone participation, alters the makeup of any social environment, I was able to create a role for myself that would minimize my influence on the mandates, guiding principles, or administration of the program I was studying. Second, on a practical level, finding a way to contribute while toting and caring for a small infant was difficult. I therefore responded to a desire expressed at a planning workshop for more supplemental didactic resources, worksheets, and activity ideas, as many of the materials they currently worked with were in an Eastern European language that no one in the office understood. Assembling these activity booklets was my contribution, allowing maximum flexibility for my research along with access to program literature.

In addition to the CNH program manuals, I collected text and visual images on posters, promotional and educational materials from CNH, the daycares, and the government institutes sponsoring them. Analysis of these visual documents also considered the audience for whom they were intended, the social context in which they were produced and received, and the cultural meanings they were influenced by and designed to influence (Davies 2008). Both content and semiotic analyses were used to search for repeated themes or images and to understand the representations of parenthood, childhood, and group membership connoted within these media.

Altogether the various groups and methods yielded a rich data set. Participant-observation produced descriptive and experiential data about the particular Saraguro forms of

babywearing, sleep practices, and other child-rearing methods. It also gave insights into how apprenticeship is locally practiced and the child behaviors that are encouraged in both household and institutional settings. Working with the grandparents in the community produced narratives about the past, giving insight into historical views and methods of child-rearing. The interviews produced both factual data on the programs administered and report data on events or activities in the socialization process or historical changes in the community. It also yielded data on feelings, opinions or beliefs about the meanings ascribed to particular child-rearing practices, how certain practices are conceived as part of their ethnic identity, values and behavior held in high esteem, how they get their ideas about which child-rearing practices to use, and the roles that they feel adults play in the moral development of children. While the interview is an intersubjective interaction between individuals, the embeddedness of individuals within their own social and cultural frameworks allows the interview to move beyond purely personal constructions to also provide some level of access to the social reality informing them (Davies 2008).

In the end I was able to interview 17 mothers, 5 fathers, 5 grandmothers, 4 CNH program employees, and 4 daycare employees. I had the opportunity to observe more than 20 children with their home caregivers and 28 children in the daycares, as well as observing a number of different families and technicians on five separate days of CNH home visits. The week before departing the field, I had the opportunity to present a summary of my research findings to a daycare focus group organized specifically for that purpose. I reviewed with them the research questions I investigated, discussed some of the various data, and presented the interpretations I had made or co-constructed with participants. The focus group allowed me to obtain feedback from the research participants on my rudimentary analysis before beginning to write my thesis.

### **Bulldozing Barriers: Identity, Access, and the Ethnographer's Babies**

*Through no immediate act of my own, my status was altered irreversibly and for all time. It is always so, of course. The birth of a child, an extraordinarily small and fragile creature, changes one's own place in the world and that of every member of a family in ways that cannot be completely foreseen – Margaret Mead (cited in Lutkehaus 1995: 197)*

Although young children are by no means universally adored (Lancy 2008), they nonetheless often have an uncanny ability to open doors. Scientifically, babies and young children have enabled the expansion of knowledge regarding bodily growth, brain and cell development, and cognitive functioning. Symbolically, the addition of the first child is what allows parents in some cultures to cross the threshold into social maturity, the status of full adulthood being conferred only by the presence of one's offspring (Montgomery 2008). Figuratively, they may hold the key to unlock the door to their parents' hearts, while in a literal sense, their abilities have embarrassed many a mother in public restroom stalls. However, it is their effect on the metaphorical gates and gatekeepers in fieldwork settings that is the focus here, opening the portals of access for their parents rather effortlessly. In this section I reflexively analyze the way that my family's presence affected my identity in the field, my access to research participants and venues, the data I collected, and the interpretations I was able to co-construct with others.

A researcher's children might be incorporated into the experience in many ways; most analyses of the topic have focused on involving them as primary research subjects. Although I never set out with the explicit purpose of researching my own children, I did find the unsolicited interpretations of their behavior by Saraguro observers to be a rich source of information. When either child was under the weather, I was privy to local appraisals about what was ailing them, beliefs about causes for their illnesses, and recommendations on how to cure them. As my infant daughter grew and passed milestones from two months old to eight months old, I discovered what local caregivers thought to ask about her, revealing their ideas about child development and what they thought was important, normal, or notable. Given the different communication methods of infants and the co-construction of babies' 'messages' by their caregivers (discussed at

length in the next chapter), both of my children frequently collaborated in the research by eliciting these cultural interpretations from Saraguro adults, children, males, females, home caregivers, and institutional workers about what they were ‘saying’ or trying to communicate. Seeing something that is matter out of place (Douglas 1966), such as an unfamiliar or strangely executed childrearing practice, can help elicit people’s ideas on normativity and morality. For example, how does one define what is ‘good’ or ‘correct’ about a ubiquitous practice that one has never questioned or perhaps seen as ‘natural’? The similarities of incorporating my children in this manner with photo elicitation and video elicitation, which are popular methods utilizing technology to initiate conversations on cultural values and develop interpretations in a collaborative model of ethnography (O’Reilly 2005: 165; Davies 2008:135), led me to refer to this method as ‘baby elicitation.’<sup>4</sup> Hence, as my own children did collaborate, albeit indirectly, in the production of research data, and researching one’s offspring is a widely critiqued method of studying children (Corsaro 2005), it may be worthwhile to review the offspring-as-subject strategy, examining its similarities and differences with the baby elicitation strategy.

The offspring-as-subject strategy has been utilized by such notables as Charles Darwin and Jean Piaget, who both drew theories from their own children’s development, documented in baby diaries (Poveda 2009). When psychology as a discipline turned towards positivism and experimental research, documenting one’s own children via diaries persisted mainly in the area of linguistic development. Nonetheless, it was linguistic anthropologists who first criticized using one’s own children as research subjects. Linguistic anthropologists Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) were concerned that research using one’s own or closely related children as subjects likely ensured the case that middle-class white literate children were the subjects. Since they feared that psychologists would therefore take the translation of children’s actions as a given,

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<sup>4</sup> In photo and video elicitation, research participants are asked to either take pictures and videos themselves that express their beliefs, viewpoints, interest, opinions, etc. about a given topic of interest and/or examine photos and videos taken by others as points of discussion for the meanings behind the images and recorded actions. This has been noted to facilitate passionate discussions of deeply held beliefs about children that may otherwise be difficult to elicit (LeVine 2007). For examples of photo and video elicitation, see Keller 2007, Tobin et al 1989, McAllister et al 2005.



without analyzing the cultural framework influencing their behavior, Ochs and Schieffelin encouraged ethnographic approaches that could contextualize children's actions as events infused with cultural meaning.

Adler and Adler (1996) present some of the advantages and challenges emerging from the "parent-as-researcher" strategy, in which the researcher's children, together with their peers, are the primary research group. The parent researcher's "complete membership role" allows interaction with the children in multiple settings of home, school and community (Adler and Adler 1996); however, the investigation of what is – outside the fieldwork setting – part of one's personal life, can be problematic. Role confusion may occur for child participants when the adult oscillates between interacting with them as a researcher versus as a parent, which may force the researcher to forego certain types of participation. For example, one might research youth experimentation with illicit substances or illegal activities, but if the research participants are the friends of his/her children, or even include his/her own children, there is a conflict of research and parental interests. Corsaro (2005) argues that these researchers are therefore unable to cross into the child's world while maintaining a supervisory role as parent. He also highlights an ethical problem of the parent-as-researcher strategy, with parent researchers holding the power to decide between public and private in recording data.

Because of these concerns, researchers generally avoid using their own children as research subjects. Although my children were indeed the white middle-class poster child subjects Ochs and Schieffelin imagined, I was not seeking to explain their actions but rather to understand the cultural interpretations elicited from Saraguros. As my focus centered on the local cultural meanings made by and inherent in particular practices, I believe the baby elicitation strategy would not have drawn the same critique from the linguistic anthropologists.

As Adler and Adler (1996) proposed, I also enjoyed the "complete membership role" as mother in multiple settings: daycare, health clinic, home, communities. Due to the verbal comprehension abilities of the children in the age group I was focusing on, I don't believe much role confusion occurred since they did not understand this distinction between researching and

just being a stranger, foreigner, or family friend. The baby elicitation strategy would not place my own children in a position of role confusion or force me to change my supervisory role, as comments were elicited while we carried out our normal everyday practices. Other babies and young children I observed and interacted with were generally always in the presence of a caregiver. Perhaps due to the fact that I was a foreigner, children did not tend to come to me for “parental” help but rather to the caregiver that was present.

Corsaro’s argument regarding researcher discretion on inclusion of data from the private sphere was also largely irrelevant in my case, due to the fact that the elicitation of Saraguro cultural responses meant that this technique could only be enacted when Saraguro commentators were present and therefore discussion was largely conducted in public about practices performed in public. While it would be possible to exclude something from the data set that a researcher considered too personal, I did not do so.

Of course, there were personal conflicts that developed as a result of my position as mother. As the opening vignette mentioned, in the local babywearing style the baby is placed on the back, with the legs together or even crossed, because many Saraguros believe that the baby’s hips and legs might not develop properly or might become lodged open if one carries babies with their legs apart. It appears that this emerged as the favored position due to women’s common productive activity as herders in an ecological context where the hills they climbed were often not only steep but also slippery. Hence, the babies could not easily be carried on their fronts for purposes of visibility, and the risk of injuring children’s hips would certainly increase if they were straddling the caregiver’s back when she fell to the rear. Perhaps as a researcher, I should have adopted their carrying style, but as a parent, I did what was most familiar and comfortable for both me and my daughter. This forced me to defend my viewpoint, based both on scientific and ethnographic cases, that babies who straddle the mother need not suffer from poor pelvic development. However, had I adopted their model of carrying, I would not have accessed the same depth of knowledge regarding the origins of and beliefs behind their carrying style.

However, including one's offspring as research participants is not the only way that children's presence in the field might contribute to the ethnographic experience. Rather, "what makes ethnographic work peculiar in relation to other methodologies and approaches is...that the full range of personal relationships and processes that 'surround' fieldwork affect the research process, the data that is produced and the type of interpretations that are possible" (Poveda 2009: 4). While other roles influenced by social relationships in the field have been analyzed for their methodological ramifications (cf. Abu-Lughod 1988; Tedlock 1995), Poveda is among the first to provide a similar reflexive awareness regarding three "collateral roles" a researcher's children might play.

The first collateral role that Poveda assigns to researchers' own children is a facilitator of access to other children. In my research this was a more minor role, because the children that came to play with my children were not in the age group on which my research focused. Rather, access to the babies and young children generally tended to be via connections with the caregivers. This role is therefore closely tied with another; namely, children act as bulldozers to consent barriers of adult gatekeepers, by creating positive identities for their parents. Being a daycare mom, for example, provided me with a specific identity and group membership during daily pickups and drop-offs, monthly meetings, and community work parties. Our son's attendance at daycare facilitated observations there, even if this was a practical by-product of our childcare needs, with both parents engaged in fieldwork activities, more than it was a deliberate methodological access strategy. The task of also keeping my infant daughter fed would make field visits logistically unviable were she cared for by anyone else, so she accompanied me everywhere. Toting her along was a practical necessity, yet her presence also endeared me to the staff at Fundación Kawsay and to perfect strangers, as they jockeyed to see, hold, and play with the foreign blue-eyed baby who so closely resembled the dolls sold in their toy shops. My joke that mothers and other caregivers tolerated my presence if it meant that Mandalay was coming to visit was, at least in the initial phases of establishing relationships in the communities, probably more true than not. Mothering in the field produced opportunities to

make contacts with other mothers with babies while simply fulfilling a parental role. For instance, while taking my daughter to the health clinic on injections day, I was able to meet a host of mothers with young children and was privy to their childrearing conversations in the waiting room. In this fieldwork experience my children, via identity and opportunity creation, facilitated access not so much to children as to their adult caregivers, who in turn gave me access to their joint adult-baby interactions.

Finally, the ethnographer's children may play an auxiliary role as research collaborators, by collecting and analyzing data. Poveda (2009) limits the possibilities for this third role to older adolescents, reflecting more general trends in the social sciences to discount linguistically inarticulate children as communicative partners and the tendency to view children's participation in research as valid only if free from any adult influence or structuring (see Chapter 2). However, I would argue that both my children, especially my infant daughter, collaborated frequently in my research, as described earlier in the baby elicitation strategy.

In summary, having children in the field with me was advantageous in many ways. They collaborated in the research by eliciting cultural interpretations, enabled access to adult caregivers and young children, and forged a favorable identity that allowed others in the community to relate to me in particular ways.

### **Analytical and Logistical Hurdles Posed by Researchers' Children**

The support roles that a researcher's own children play are not merely tangential to the ethnographic enterprise. However, neither are the challenges or limitations created by bringing children to the field, which also shape the ethnographic experience in distinct ways. Reflexive self-awareness of the ethnographer's presence in the field can inform analysis of the ways that it affects the social environment and the production of social interactions. Researching with children multiplies this effect, as it is not only one's own presence but also that of the researcher's offspring that creates a particular context, and this awareness must therefore also include the effects one's children create.

The ability to conduct ‘naturalistic’ observations of other children can be hampered by the introduction of the researcher’s children. First, bringing my children with me introduced two potential playmates or potential distractions from what the participant child would be doing were they not there. Although one could learn something from the way the children interacted with each other, one might also argue that the participant child might be interacting in an uncharacteristic way with children manifesting noticeable physical and linguistic differences. Second, jealousy was often incited among the participant babies when their caregivers played with or held my children, which would not occur were I researching alone. Third, the way that caregivers act with regard to their own or to my children may be attributable to their own performances of what they thought I, as a foreign white middle-class mother, or my children as foreign, white, middle-class children, expected.

While the positive effects of identity creation via the researcher’ children have been noted, the potential for those same children to be negative identity creators also exists. If the local parents don’t look favorably on the researcher’s childrearing techniques or if they hold the researcher parent responsible for what they view as very bad behavior on the part of the child, the presence of the researcher’s children could present extra challenges for the researcher to overcome. These childrearing decisions therefore affect local appraisals of the researcher, even if one’s work doesn’t center on children and childhood.

For instance, in Saraguro the practice of solitary sleeping for babies was viewed by most as immoral; hence, a foreign parent researcher who was known to put their child to sleep in a separate room could be cast in a negative light. The issue of whether to put a child in daycare or to keep the child at home was often contested on moral grounds as well, alternately citing the child’s need for friends and social opportunities or the child’s need for parental love and tenderness. Hiring a private caregiver to come to the house and care for the child rather than going to daycare also added a class dimension to considerations of one’s childcare arrangements, as to do so was much more expensive and therefore out of reach for lower-class Saraguros. While the potential negative or positive impacts of these issues emerged through my research,

certainly many other factors involving my children and my role as mother went unnoticed. For instance, I realized – perhaps far too late – the Saraguro mother’s primacy of place as family nurse and health promoter. After piecing together a number of comments regarding our children’s lack of headwear and beliefs about illnesses caused by being too cold, I became very self-conscious about the children being seen without hats on. Even though I felt confident from my own cultural and experiential knowledge that my children were fine going hatless, and they indeed resisted wearing them, I was also certain that this would be criticized as a mothering deficiency when they fell ill.

This also demonstrates a point similar to Corsaro’s (2005) and Adler and Adler’s (1996) concerns about conflicts between parental and research interests. A researcher’s own cultural beliefs regarding care and wellbeing may be more inflexible with regards to one’s children than they would be to oneself, thereby forcing the researcher to reject certain aspects of the host culture. About a month after moving in with our first host family, the consistently problematic water supply at the house was even more disconcerting when the taps began sputtering out green and then brown water. Knowing that our hosts refused to use bottled water for the soup but equally convinced by our scientific beliefs that boiling the water would not likely render the brackish water safe for consumption, my husband and I were not all that surprised when we, the Spanish tourists next door, and the entire host family started suffering from intestinal problems. After a week of alternately refusing meals and getting sick again when we did choose to eat with the family, we were all the more hardened in our convictions. I politely accepted the herbal celery infusions that Ximena prepared for us, but we wouldn’t allow our son to drink any of it. When he woke screaming in the night with stomach aches and vomiting, our polite detente was broken. We could no longer accept their almost reverential deference to the unknown mystical ‘epidemic’ or the home remedies; a full-scale boycott of soup and a stock-up on pharmaceuticals was viewed as our parental responsibility to our two-year-old. Had it only been an issue of our grown up selves, their cultural explanations and cures would have been met with a more patient reception.

Finally, bringing children to the field also presents a logistical limitation. To compensate for all the time spent in childcare duties, the researcher may need more time in the field just to get field notes typed, interviews conducted and transcribed, and to allow for children's sick days and doctor's appointments.

In conclusion, bringing my children to the field with me facilitated access, positive identity creation, and spontaneous cultural interpretations of baby behavior. On the other hand, the time I had to devote to fieldwork activities and my cultural flexibility were constrained by my mothering duties. My children added another layer of analysis to social interactions, examining the ways that their presence, in addition to my own, influenced interactional production, and how their behavior or my childrearing practices might shape the way that I was perceived.

Of course, all people inhabit multiple identities, and fieldworkers are no exception. In addition to mother and researcher, I was also variously seen as wife, volunteer, and teacher. My husband's own identity as researcher was often overshadowed by the great amount of time he spent volunteering in the local community tourism office, and men in the community particularly seemed to identify me as "Jason's wife", supporting him while he supported the community tourism project. Wanting to do my part in giving back to the community, but limited by my infant daughter's presence, I found a role for myself as a volunteer at Fundación Kawsay, assembling didactic resources and preschool worksheets from teaching websites. Although I surely gained much more from them than vice versa, many office employees seemed to identify me first and foremost as a volunteer for the organization and secondarily as a researcher. Finally, my past experience as an ESL teacher and some parents' educational ambitions for their children led one of our hosts and two of her relatives to ask me to conduct baby English classes for their three children, aged 10 to 22 months. As word of these classes got around, my identity as a teacher also spread beyond the household and indeed, my instructional capabilities were solicited by others as well.

In summary, going to the field with my own babies helped me access Saraguro babies and their caregivers by creating an identity for myself first and foremost as another caregiver of babies. In the next chapter I turn to look at babies throughout anthropology's disciplinary history, examining potential factors contributing to infants' past omission from Western anthropologists' radar screens, and utilizing examples from Saraguro to show how infant perspectives could make significant contributions to anthropology.



## Chapter 2

### Towards Infant-Centered Ethnography

A few minutes into the English class I was leading for 18-month-old Eduardo and his 10-month-old cousin, Eduardo threw a ball into the home's courtyard and took off out the door in pursuit of it. Eduardo's mother stood up and led him back, trying to focus his attention to me and the song I was singing. Upon being sat back down, Eduardo immediately got up and went over to the stairs. I stopped singing, and suddenly Eduardo looked over his shoulder at me. Grinning, he started bouncing up and down and waving his finger in the air, causing his mother and me to change tune and start singing the 'One Little Finger' song I had previously taught, which we understood Eduardo to be requesting.

#### Introduction

This rather unspectacular event in my field notes might easily be ignored in favor of interviews and conversations with caregivers, but it introduces some of the nonverbal ways that babies routinely communicate and interact with others to express their ideas, and how those gestures are interpreted and acted upon by others. This chapter examines children and childhood in the anthropological record and explores some of the reasons, including a methodological preference for linguistic exchanges, why many gaps exist in the history of anthropological attention to children. Additionally, the social construction of children and babies in anthropologists' home cultures may accompany them to the field and prevent them from seeing children, especially the very young, as worthy research participants or cultural actors.

The last two decades have seen a resurgence of anthropological interest in children and childhoods, which stresses "children's competence as social actors and focus[es] on the way children explain and manage their own lives" (Valentine 2004: 55). How does one elicit these explanations, however, with children so young that they cannot verbally explain and are not physically capable of managing much of their own lives? This is a methodological challenge and yet, as I will argue in this chapter, it is clear that babies not only communicate their 'opinions' but also, by eliciting certain types of care, are capable of exerting influence over their own lives and those around them in meaningful ways. Evidence of infants' agency, along with an

examination of infants' reliance on nonverbal skills to learn and communicate, raises questions about the anthropological endeavor itself and the assumptions that underlie qualitative fieldwork methods. Based on this assessment and the lessons learned through my own trial-and-error attempts, I then offer suggestions for methodological approaches that might facilitate better co-construction of knowledge with babies.

### **The Anthropological (In-)Significance of Childhood**

At the center of discussions about what it is to be human, children and childhoods have featured in anthropological literature since its beginnings; however, the focus on children as an important disciplinary concern was lost for a while. Children and childhood were fundamental topics of interest for one of the discipline's most well-known scholars, Margaret Mead (1928). Along with Mead, Boas and Malinowski helped found a discipline that included children's physical and emotional growth and their role in sociocultural reproduction as important topics for inclusion in the anthropological enterprise. British anthropologists were interested in social institutions and therefore tended to include children inasmuch as they contributed to understandings of kinship and the family. In British anthropology, the child was also the original 'other', the savage, and knowledge of children's stages of development was used to evaluate 'primitive' populations' ranking and progress towards 'civilization' (Montgomery 2008). U.S. anthropologists often granted children a more central role, but they were largely included in order to test theories or investigate other subjects rather than to understand children's own experiences or meaning-making. Children were seen as mere imitators of adult behavior, thereby not meriting research on the children's behavior itself (Schwartzman 2001b). The American anthropological tradition was also much more significantly shaped by the field of psychology (LeVine 2007), which, though treated with suspicion in Britain, has long been interested in issues of the child and childhood (Morss 1988).

While British and U.S. anthropologists diverged in their motivations for writing children into the ethnographic record, certain historical shifts shaping both the public's

perception of children and children's early experiences were shared on both sides of the pond. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children were thrust into the realm of public interest as the child-saving movement fought to ameliorate the lives of children who had fallen prey to exploitative labor conditions or been forced onto orphan trains (LeVine 2007). As child labor and compulsory schooling laws were initiated, children – increasingly portrayed as both innocent and vulnerable – began to be segregated into particular 'appropriate' places.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, science was promoted as the new savior of children, with the application of germ theory and public health measures in North America and Great Britain indeed contributing to lower infant mortality (LeVine 2007; Moss 2006). Universal schooling was now extended into adolescence, which began to cause the protected time and spaces of childhood to lengthen. These fundamental changes in children's lives resulted in childhoods ruled by the twin thrones of medical science and education, or what LeVine (2007) refers to as *pediatric* and *pedagogical* formulations. Child care increasingly began to be seen as a domain that could, and should, be informed and improved upon by science, rather than tradition. Public regard for science and the attention on learning processes encouraged the development of child and educational subfields in psychology.

The development of scientific fervor might be viewed as something of a double-edged sword for anthropologists. Originally, their qualitative research findings attempted to emulate the positivist scientific tradition (e.g., Boas 1912; Malinowski 1927; Mead 1928), yet this positivism was later critiqued and ultimately shunned within the discipline itself (Rabinow 2007) while other harder sciences often viewed anthropological results as invalid for not being positive enough (LeVine 2007; Lutkehaus 1995). Moreover, while anthropologists often drew on psychology's body of developmental knowledge to make sense of their observations of children, their fieldwork data generally contradicted scientific claims of biological determinism or universal developmental trajectories. Hence, although many anthropologists were inspired by Mead's metaphorical world laboratory in which they could learn about childhood from other

cultures, much of the anthropological work about childhood has focused on challenging psychology's developmental theories and assumptions of universality.

Boas, Malinowski, and Mead were among the first to exercise the so-called "anthropological veto" against simplistic Western culture-bound theories of human behavior and human development. They provided evidence of the cultural variation that exists in children's childhoods and introduced the idea that child development was also linked to environmental and social realities, not just biology. As members of the Culture and Personality School of anthropology, Mead, Ruth Benedict (2005 [1946]), Edward Sapir, Cora du Bois (1944), and others utilized children as a platform for understanding adult personality and how children became adults (LeVine 2007). Babies were thought to be blank slates upon which culture and particular childrearing practices would inscribe a particular personality, and this was then extrapolated to grouping similar traits and characterizing whole nations and cultures into particular 'personalities' (Montgomery 2008; Schwartzman 2001a). This approach has been severely critiqued on many levels, though I will focus here on the contributions and inadequacies of the approach with regards to an anthropology of childhood. On a positive note, children were fundamental to their understandings of society and culture more generally – a role which was later marginalized – and Benedict at least was concerned with the interactions and relationships between children and adults. The view of infants as blank slates, however, denied them any agency, any role as cultural actors themselves, or even any interest in their experiences as children in the present. They were only important inasmuch as they contributed to understandings of *adult* life.

From 1950 to the 1980s, children were relatively muted and marginalized within anthropology, though there were certainly notable exceptions. U.S. anthropologists benefited from cross-cultural research projects like the Whiting's famous 'Six Cultures Study of Socialization' (Whiting and Whiting 1975; Whiting 1963). This project introduced naturalistic observations as a useful methodology and emphasized the variation in childrearing brought about by cultural and environmental differences. Their findings challenged the regressive

universalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which reflected a “monocultural perspective of days long past, when psychologists naively saw American children as representatives of a universal humanity and took no account of the rest of the world” (LeVine 2010: 519). Robert LeVine researched one of the six cultures included in the study and his intersecting psychological and anthropological interests in child care and child development have resulted in nearly half a century of contributions to anthropological understandings of children and childhood (e.g., LeVine and Norman 2001; LeVine 1974; LeVine, et al. 1994; LeVine and LeVine 1966; LeVine and New 2008). British anthropologists did not form such cross-disciplinary research efforts with psychology nor did they do much comparative work (Montgomery 2008), yet their anomaly to the marginalization of children in anthropological research, Charlotte Hardman, was arguably the founder of this subfield. Far ahead of her time, Hardman (1973) proposed an anthropology of children, emphasizing that children actively created cultures and zones of autonomy and were interesting to study in their own right, not just as adults-in-the-making. She was also interested in the ways childhoods could differ, for example, based on gender.

These notable figures aside, children remained marginalized within the discipline as a whole. In the 1970s, feminists began critiquing scholarly work for male bias, and the inclusion of women into more multivocal cultural perspectives was gaining importance (Moore 1988; Reiter 1975; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). Perhaps it is understandable that the perspectives of children, who are spoken *for* but can never actually speak themselves in academia, would be excluded until the viewpoints and voices of women scholars, who *were* able to speak in their own defense, became commonplace within scholarly frameworks. Given the tendency of young children to maintain a greater presence in the domestic, private, stereotypically female spheres, it was imperative for these to be regarded as legitimate sites of cultural production and anthropological inquiry for the study of children’s lives to be academically viable. Feminist psychologist Nancy Chodorow (1999) shifted the paradigm for thinking about children from the Freudian father focus to a new matricentric model. However, most feminist movements that

politicized children generally did so not to give children a voice but to highlight the oppression of women as child-rearers (Montgomery 2008).

Perhaps it is notable then that movements in the 70s and 80s in both the U.S. and the U.K. to 'break the silence' regarding child abuse led to a globally significant event that broke the scholarly silence on children as well (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007). Expanding on previous declarations of children's rights by both the League of Nations and the United Nations, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes the protection, provisioning, and participation of children. The first two 'p's have received the lion's share of attention, with child advocacy groups consistently focusing on children's vulnerability and innocence (Hanson and Poretti 2011). Indeed, children have not been consulted in defining their own 'best interests', which serves to reify pre-existing power relations and adult visions of childhood. As Richard Mills (2000: 23) writes:

Young children can be satisfactorily demarcated from adults, thereby allowing those in authority (i.e. adults) to specify what children need. In this respect, the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child is interesting for what it reveals, not particularly of children's so-called 'needs', but of the attitudes of its authors and of the context out of which it came...['N]eeds' could be seen merely as shorthand for indicating authors' beliefs about childhood requirements.

This is far from the only critique of the UNCRC; anthropologists point to many facets of the document as being ethnocentrically informed, even down to its definitions of who a child is. The UNCRC promotes a universal model of childhood based on Western ideals of children as autonomous, rights-bearing individuals who are simultaneously innocent and vulnerable and in need of adult protection, creating a particular vision for children's proper places and activities (Montgomery 2008). Sharon Stephens (1995) played a crucial role in bringing childhood back into the anthropological limelight, problematizing the political construct of childhood set out in the UNCRC and critically examining ideas of children's "cultural identity" and the children's rights discourse advanced therein. Nonetheless, the UNCRC has also been a major catalyst in the encouragement of child-centered perspectives and children's participation in research. In the last few decades the field has broadened considerably, with new research areas emerging in

children's cultures, including their work (Hecht 1998), play (Lancy 1996), language socialization (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984), the lives of street children (Cisneros and Neumann 2009; Ennew 2005), and peer interactions (Corsaro and Eder 1990; James 1993); as well as their relationships with schools (Tobin, et al. 1989) and the greater community and world, via technology (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Valentine and Holloway 2001), consumer culture (Chin 2001), and child/youth assemblies (Ennew 1995).

Rather than viewing children as not-yet adults, child-centered anthropologists stress the importance of understanding children in the present, as beings who exert influence over their own and others' lives and shape the world around them. The renaissance of childhood in anthropology sprang not only from UNCRC-generated child rights discourse but also from multidisciplinary child-focused scholarship that began shifting eyes from the overemphasized structural constraints and developmentalist child-as-passive-socialization-object or ages and stages approaches to the other side of the dualistic spectrum: children as social actors who exercise agency. The shift towards child-centered anthropology has emphasized the category of childhood as culturally constructed and dynamic, changing over time, and as a social construction rather than a biological one, leading many researchers to write in the plural as they speak of multiple and fragmented childhoods. Coinciding with larger post-colonial questioning about representation and the limits of structural models of society, childhood scholars also changed emphasis from childrearing and socializing practices to the perspectives of children themselves on these practices and other aspects of their own lives (Montgomery 2008).

These alternative views were made commonplace within current childhood academic circles by a few prominent European sociologists and anthropologists. Jens Qvortrup has been researching child welfare and conducting cross-cultural comparative studies of children since the 1970s, and he significantly advanced theories of childhood in the 1990s (e.g., Qvortrup 1994; Qvortrup, et al. 2009). A trio of British scholars – Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout – also churned out a number of works on childhood throughout the 1980s and 90s, providing both theoretical frameworks and methodological considerations for including children's voices and

perspectives. As like-minded social scientists from a range of disciplines also embraced the theoretical starting point of child as agentive social actor, this 'new sociology of childhood' soon widened, emerging at a moment of heightened focus on children. This scholarly multidisciplinary approach to understanding the social category of childhoods and the child as an active meaning-maker has been termed the 'new social studies of childhood' (James, et al. 1998). In anthropology, Sharon Stephens (1995) has often been viewed as the key figure in the renaissance of interest in childhood, with Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993) and Carolyn Sargent (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998) also raising the profile of childhood as an important research topic.

### **Current Theoretical Debates and the Future of Childhood in Anthropology**

Socialization theory tended to see children in outcome-driven terms; incompetent and incomplete in the present but valuable in terms of what they would eventually *become* as adults (Holloway and Valentine 2000). Child-centered approaches, in contrast, seek to understand the child's experience of *being* a child and appreciate children as active participants in the shaping of their social worlds. These alternate models of childhood and approaches to children then also loop back to how adults are seen. Many social scientists of childhood, having accepted the theory that children are indeed social actors as a given starting point, are now moving on to critique this "point of analytical embarkation" (Prout 2000: 16). Scholars are still trying to search for innovative ways of including children as participants in research (James 2007), yet divisions are emerging based on the degree of prioritization of children's voices. Some methodological debates center on creating truly multi-perspective views of culture and society by balancing children's voices with adults', rather than privileging the child's voice over all others (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007), while others seem to be marking methods or perspectives that are not purely by or from children as somehow tainted. In criticizing socialization research because it focuses on the child as future adult 'becomings' (Schwartzman 2001c), scholars who overemphasize children as 'beings' miss the point that they are also 'becoming' certain types of children through



the socialization process, which feeds into their immediate and forthcoming childhood experiences as well. In the case of infants and toddlers, it is especially important to include these 'becoming' experiences, as babies are often viewed as 'not yet children', even more than they are as 'not yet adults'.

In line with late 20<sup>th</sup> century disciplinary concerns about agency for anyone, theoretical debates also passionately critique the privileging of children as social actors, stressing the severe constraints that global and local political forces, social structure, and socialization place on children's agency (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007; Ennew 2011; Montgomery 2008; Schwartzman 2001c). However, in my reading of James, Jenks, and Prout's social actor theory, the child is never constructed as purely actor, purely agent. Rather, attention to these aspects has been exaggerated simply because they had so long gone missing. "[A]gency is a concept that we have embraced in part as a reaction to studies that proceeded from models of children and childhood with more structural and chronological substrates" (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007: 242). Regardless of theoretical shifts in academia, policymakers, educators, and the general public still operate according to the much more well-publicized developmentalist theories claiming universal validity, which place children as 'becomings' along a linear progression towards the end-state of adulthood (LeVine 2007).

Other theoretical debates center on the singularity or plurality of childhood, with social constructivists (e.g., James, Prout) arguing for multiple and differentiated childhoods, while social structuralists (e.g., Qvortrup) propose childhood as a universal social category. Agency is likewise debated as a form of individual meaning-making (James 1993) or a collectively negotiated attribute (Corsaro 2005), and feminist and Marxist scholars (Alanen and Mayall 2001) propose that childhood must be understood as a marginalized group (Honig 2011). Recently, the 'newness' of the 'new social studies of childhood' has also been challenged as a rehashing of old dualisms rather than a genuine paradigm shift (Ryan 2008).

However, in order to create more multivocal nuanced understandings of the messy social reality of children's lives, dualisms must be acknowledged as overly simplistic. As

anthropologists of childhood seek out indigenous models of understanding children's roles and relationships, they must assess the culturally specific ways that particular children inhabit both poles of dichotomous spectrums: being/becoming, active/passive, structure/agency, social actor/object of socialization, developing capabilities/already competent, child views/adult views (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007; Mills 2000; Montgomery 2008). Part of this blending of external influences with children's perspectives includes understanding how children receive, resist, or negotiate socialization and training (LeVine 2003; Schwartzman 2001a). Children might be seen to simultaneously occupy three different worlds, which anthropologists must make evident: those that "they create for themselves (e.g., play, peer groups, games), worlds others create for them (e.g., schools, hospitals), and worlds in concert with others (e.g., families, marketplaces, neighborhoods)" (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007: 245).

Research in early childhood is well-posed to do much of this blending, because to research babies necessitates working with caregivers and understanding the children at the intersection of many of these oppositional viewpoints. As such, childhood is both a result of ongoing anthropological concerns about personhood, agency, and structure, as well as a potentially powerful site for continuing and advancing such interests, as the next section addresses in greater detail.

### **Why Study Children?**

Despite, or perhaps because of, the aforementioned debates about the 'new' social studies of childhood, children are increasingly being studied from multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches. Anthropologists can make significant contributions to such efforts by advancing views of childhood that are not bound to Western, educated, middle-class assumptions. Just as in the discipline's early days, the "anthropological veto" is still important today to rein in claims of universality. Despite the dynamism of childhood as a social category and the fact that Western conceptions of childhood themselves have dramatically changed in the last 50 years, contemporary Euro-American culture-bound notions of normalcy regarding what 'child',

'childhood', and 'development' are (or should be) have been reified and exported, marking all that do not fit within those definitions as deficient, abnormal, immoral, or wrong. Anthropologists must continue to challenge those notions by examining 'other' childhoods and demonstrating that there is no such thing as the universal child or a universally ideal childhood.

While anthropology can make such contributions to other disciplinary understandings of children, children can also make significant contributions to the discipline of anthropology. On the most superficial level, it should be obvious that neglecting the viewpoints of such an enormous demographic category would render any understanding or analysis of a particular culture or society incomplete. Parallels have been drawn between the development of childhood studies and women's studies (Gottlieb 2000; Hirschfeld 2002). Integrating children's own reported experiences is significant not only in that it creates a more complete, "more multivocal, multiperspective view of culture and society" (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007: 242), but also because many wider social issues cannot be properly understood without taking children into account and completely reconfiguring the ethnographic gaze (Hirschfeld 2002; Montgomery 2008).

One such issue that sits at the heart of cultural anthropology is that of social and cultural reproduction, as well as cultural continuity and change. As the physical reproductions of their progenitors, children are obvious subjects of interest in this regard. Parents and cultural communities help these new generations learn what are culturally valued and socially acceptable models of behavior. While acknowledging that cultural learning is a life-long process, Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002) argues that anthropologists should be interested in children because of their belief that culture is learned, the lion's share of which is done by children. As children appropriate, contest, or negotiate the socially approved models of different life stages, they also shape and change cultural norms (Montgomery 2008).

Likewise political, economic, social and environmental forces affect cultural continuity and change, and scholars in the cultural politics of childhood argue that any meaningful analysis of these forces must include children (Montgomery 2008; Toren 2007). Montgomery (2008:

234) contends that social changes brought about by political upheaval, globalization, economic development, and the spread of education and human rights are oftentimes most apparent by looking at children's lives and contestations of childhood.

Thus, studying children not only sheds light on traditional anthropological concerns, such as kinship and social organization (Toren 2007); children and childhoods are also sites of examining issues like global and local economic policies, education, and human rights. Children, in many ways, are central to political struggles as well, as Sharon Stephens noted:

As representatives of the contested future and subjects of cultural policies, children stand at the crossroads of divergent cultural projects. Their minds and bodies are at stake in debates about the transmission of fundamental cultural values in the schools. The very nature of their senses, language, social networks, worldviews, and material futures are at stake in debates about ethnic purity, national identity, minority self-expression and self-rule" (Stephens 1995:23).

Examining children, particularly babies, requires one to ask, 'What is a child?' In so doing, anthropological understandings of personhood and the nature of the individual are re-examined. Attempting to swaddle 'the child' in definitions also forces one to analyze "issues of age, agency, development, roles, and responsibilities—not to mention those of essentializing and generalizing" (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007: 245), as well as to scrutinize methodological assumptions regarding communication and selection of research participants.

As explicated later in this chapter, research with babies in particular raises many methodological questions. Early childhood is still very under-researched in anthropology as well as in the broader social studies of childhood (Gottlieb 2000; Hirschfeld 2002; Honig 2011), though childhood scholars have recently been citing the necessity and usefulness of more research with young children (Honig 2011; Kelle 2010). Given the continued debates about dualisms like structure/agency, socialization/social actor theories, and the antagonism between developmental psychology and social sciences (Burman 2008; LeVine 2007), early childhood is ideal to contribute to understanding the complexity of social life. As babies rapidly grow and change, they must necessarily be seen as developing bodies, even as their lives are worthwhile in the present. In addition, due to their state of neurological and physiological underdevelopment

at birth, infants cannot exist on their own; there is always a baby and *someone* (Hrdy 2009: 111). As such, babies must necessarily be understood as part of their social environment – as beings themselves but also intimately tied to caregivers, whose structuring of the babies’ activities and whose acts of socialization greatly shape the degree of babies’ agency and the forms which that can take. Gottlieb (2000) also cites the nature-nurture debate as a specific big picture issue to which anthropological research with infants can contribute, positing that cross-cultural comparisons of infants can help us understand the upper and lower age limits of cultural variation within biological and social development.

### **Why Did Anthropologists Lose Interest in Children?**

With the wealth of contributions that research with children can yield, it is important to understand why children have not been paid more attention in the past and why infants continue to be marginalized in present anthropological research. Building on the Enlightenment philosophers’ contemplation of the savage and the ‘civilizing’ role of education, children and childhood have been centrally significant in the study of *anthropos* and, consequently, in the founding of anthropology as an intellectual enterprise. As noted in the history of childhood within anthropology, children’s portrayal as savages and their assumed linear progression from savagery to civilization were utilized in racial depictions of foreign peoples as ‘primitives’ somewhere along the evolutionary path to the desired end state as contemporary Europeans. As the racism inherent in these analogies became more apparent and less politically correct, it is proposed that the guilt generated by these former associations steered anthropologists away from further investigations of children (Hirschfeld 2002). Hirschfeld aptly discerns that this, in and of itself, is an insufficient explanation for the avoidance of childhood research, since the embarrassingly faulty logic tying children to foreign populations did not deter anthropologists from continuing to research the latter:

Like Sartre's (1948) anti-Semite, who, as a result of a disagreeable encounter with a Jewish tailor, despised Jews but not tailors, anthropologists uncomfortable with their predecessor's awkward comparisons of children's and

primitive thought did not end up abandoning the study of native populations, only children” (Hirschfeld 2002: 613).

Another possibility, which may help explain the gap in interest between the early anthropological writing on children and the resurgence of interest in the 1980s, is presented by feminist scholarly approaches, noting the male bias in ‘acceptable’ research topics that restricted focus to more formal organizations and public spheres of life (Hirschfeld 2002; Lutkehaus 1995; Tedlock 1995). Under this argument children suffered exclusion by association, as they were assumed to be tied to domestic life and women, who were also systematically excluded from the realms of worthy anthropological inquiry (James and Prout 1990). Lutkehaus (1995:201) contends that these academic biases against ‘feminine’ subject matter can be seen in the reactions to Margaret Mead’s work.

[W]e have seen how the criticisms of Mead’s writing by male anthropologists such as Worsley contain a latent denigration of, if not an outright aversion to, the female topics Mead chose to focus on – subjects such as childhood, adolescence, marriage, and the family. These topics traditionally have not been held in high repute by the male-dominated field of social anthropology and thus were devalued as unworthy of serious scientific and anthropological concern.

The tie to women is only one of many reasons that Gottlieb (2000) proposes for the even greater dearth of research with infants. She suggests that parent anthropologists, while acknowledging babies’ less-than-passive nature, often have little time for fieldwork or to tread new topical paths. Meanwhile, childless anthropologists simply don’t realize the myriad concerns and potential variation in infants’ lives, due to their inexperience caring for infants and the inability to remember their own infancy. Anthropologists may also shy away from babies since they tend to cry, spit up, urinate, or otherwise drip and leak from multiple orifices. Their lives might seem limited to these messy and unsophisticated physiological activities of eating, sleeping, crying, and eliminating, leading anthropologists to view them as quite boring in the sense of cultural production. Furthermore, infants often need help in carrying out these tasks, and their dependence seems to preclude any agency and to rule them out as promising research participants. “They seem so much at the mercy of others that there does not appear to be any of

that push-and-pull between two individuals, or between individual and society at large, that makes for such interesting scholarly consideration” (Gottlieb 2000:124).

Hirschfeld (2002) believes anthropologists’ assessments of children of all ages as ‘boring,’ culturally incompetent adults-in-the-making to be an inadequate explanation for the lacuna of research with children. Rather, he contends that this void exists because adults overemphasize their own roles in children’s learning and fail to recognize and appreciate children’s contributions to creating both their own and adult culture. While these latter arguments are convincing, I believe that Hirschfeld misses the connection between those assumptions about child/adult roles and the assessments of children as ‘boring’ and culturally incompetent. It is precisely the pervasiveness of the nature-nurture divide in Western philosophical thought and the social sciences which has formulated both the oppositional divisions between adults and children – competence versus incompetence, active creators versus passive recipients of culture, teachers versus students – and the conceptions of the roles and potential contributions of each. Gottlieb (2000), on the other hand, alludes to the way that two thousand years of opposing nature with nurture has affected Western standards of rationality and has privileged verbal communications, thus relegating babies to the “pre-cultural” sphere. I argue that this opposition of nature and culture has been central to the formation of most unconscious assumptions held by Western anthropologists about babies, which cause them to overlook infants in the field.

I am certainly not the first to suggest that the marginalization of infants in anthropology has less to do with any of the babies’ own concrete characteristics than with the social construction of the child in anthropologists’ home cultures. While those constructions are certainly not homogenous in ‘the West’ or even in one particular country (Kusserow 1999a; Kusserow 1999b), legacies of Greek philosophical thought – such as the nature-nurture divide, the Enlightenment era debates about children as innately good or bad, and the corresponding role of society and education vis-à-vis the child – provided a common foundation upon which various Western cultures built. Certain similarities were thereby forged in those cultures’

conceptualizations of childhood, once it emerged as a separate social category in the sixteenth century (Aries 1962). Due to infants' need for care by others during a slow and lengthy maturation to self-sufficiency, they occupy the position of 'nature' in the oppositional divide with culture. This reliance on others for physical needs fulfillment has been translated into an assumption of complete dependence, passivity, and incompetence of infants. Their inability to verbally contest these assumptions of ineptitude has simply reinforced views of them as non-agents.

Childhood is viewed as a linear progression through developmental stages, with children – and by extension, babies even more so – seen as “less than” adults, as the ‘becomings’ of adults. Children are still assessed by linear progress today, using the chronological ages and “natural” stages of development offered by Arnold Gesell’s early 20<sup>th</sup> century positivist observation dome experiments.<sup>5</sup> The resulting “developmental milestones” are still endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (Ryan 2008) and promoted by doctors and baby books alike to the general public. While much academic criticism has mounted over linear progress and Piagetian views of development, the Western mainstream view of childhood remains heavily influenced by his theories about children’s competence (Valentine 2004). Despite anthropology’s aim to examine behavior as it relates to culturally specific webs of meaning, the conceptualization of children as incompetent causes adults, including those in academia, to ignore children’s own experiences (Waksler 1986).

Anthropology’s faint image of children reflects a more general tendency in American social science to view childhood as a way-station on the path to the “complete, recognizable, and ...most significantly, desirable” state of adulthood (Jenks 1996: 9)... The underlying image is that children, *especially the very young*, are radically distinct from and unequal to the adults around them (Hirschfeld 2002: 614, emphasis added).

Due to this construction of infants, North American and British adult-centric cultures are relatively dismissive of babies – demanding adult control over infants and prioritizing adult

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<sup>5</sup> These experiments were conducted within a specially built dome meant to remove environmental and contextual biases that might influence the baby’s reactions to presented stimuli. The reactions were observed “objectively” by scientists outside the dome looking in and were thought to offer proof of ‘natural’ developmental stages based on their absence of bias.



needs. Parents there may adore their young; the intense focus on their priceless cherubs has led one scholar to describe these 'child-centered' societies as "neontocracies" (Lancy 2008).

However, those same children are deemed useless (Zelizer 1994) as they contribute little to the economic functioning of the household. Indeed their assumed incompetence leads to a false autonomy in which responsibility does not accompany the myriad inconsequential decisions they are encouraged to make. Even their choices are thus artificially created by adults, reflecting the general tendency toward adult intervention. Longstanding debates on the nature of the child have resulted in the child's simultaneous construal as both Dionysian devil and Apollonian angel, and over time these dual constructions have been thoroughly woven into Anglo-American cultural views of childhood.

The radically opposite constructions nonetheless produce the same effect: a need for adult control over the child, either for the innocent child's protection from evil society or for rational society's protection from the amoral and unsocialized child (Scraton 1997; Valentine 2004). Adult-child power relations are thus legitimated by the opposition of nature and culture in Western thought. The contributions and agency of very young children may be less than obvious in these cultures, since the imperative for control gears childrearing towards practices that simplify adults' lives (Weiss 1977) often at the expense of the child's desires. Conveniently, pediatricians and scientific child "experts" reinforce many practices that prioritize adult needs by claiming they are in the child's best interests. Hence, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, parents in New Zealand and the U.K. eagerly took up the rigorously scheduled and minimally doting child care prescriptions of Truby King, whose application of scientific formulas would allow parents to train children, much as another kind of animal (Mills 2000). Objectifying children went even further with radical behaviorist B.F. Skinner (Ryan 2008), who extolled operant conditioning with his own daughter to change her "annoying habit" of early waking and create a more convenient schedule for the parents (Skinner 1945).

While parents today may abhor the likening of their children's education to the training of animals, their parental intervention and control over babies, for the end result of parental

convenience, continues to be promoted. This advice from the Children's Hospital in Denver in 2006 is representative of common pediatric advice to parents regarding the avoidance of sleep "problems."

Parents want their children to go to bed without resistance and to sleep through the night. They look forward to a time when they can again have 7 or 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep... Good sleep habits may not develop, however, unless you have a plan. Consider the following guidelines if you want to teach your baby that night-time is a special time for sleeping, that her crib is where she stays at night, and that she can put herself back to sleep. It is far easier to prevent sleep problems before 6 months of age than it is to treat them later.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that the "problems" do not seem to be about negative physiological consequences for the baby than about inconvenience for the parents, and that these inconveniences can only be avoided if parents intervene and exert control. This emphasis on parental control and parental needs or convenience does not seem to leave much place for babies' voices or exertion of agency even in their own lives, let alone that of others and the society at large.

I suggest that this dismissiveness towards babies in Anglo-American anthropologists' home cultures is one of the primary causes for the scholarly neglect of infants. Just as historians trained to look for written records may refrain from using folk tales, oral histories, or creation stories as serious, reliable, or trustworthy historical sources, anthropologists have been trained to co-construct knowledge only with those they see as cultural actors. Even if the anthropologist is conducting research in a different cultural environment where roles, relationships and capabilities are defined by a different set of rules, the unconscious assumptions about babies brought into the field renders them invisible as potential research participants.

However, this dismissive attitude does not fully account for the differential between scant anthropological research with infants and toddlers as opposed to an ever-expanding interest school-age children and youth. Additionally, one must question why psychologists, who are grounded in the same Western philosophical traditions, have produced a veritable canon of research on infants, and with good reason. From a wider view of human culture, infancy has

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<sup>6</sup> Written by Barton D Schmitt MD, author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books. Accessed on February 16, 2011 at: <http://www.thechildrenshospital.org/conditions/sleep/prevent.aspx>

been described as “the phase during which a child is acquiring all that makes him most distinctively human” (Hrdy 2009:84, quoting John Bowlby). Certainly the evidence exists that infants are significantly influenced from a very early age by their environments (LeVine 2007), and the limited anthropological work on infants to date has shown that the greater share of adult’s daily decisions often revolve around their babies (Weisner and Gallimore 1977). When one considers that young children manage to learn cultural rules for behavior that are not straightforward but rather “debated, highly contested, and under moral and political challenge and exception” (Hirschfeld 2002: 616), their agency, active intelligence, and participation in the acquisition of culture should be recognized for what it is –a significant and extremely underrated talent.

These characteristics of infants’ cultural immersion and influence would seem to validate their inclusion as anthropological research participants. The difference in interest between the two age groups and the two disciplines must therefore be at least partially attributable to the divergent methodological approaches required to produce data. Psychologists, for instance, don’t necessarily care about participants’ agency, autonomous spheres of activity, or influence over cultural production when conducting experimental research. Furthermore, the unconsciously held premise necessitating adult control over children is not challenged by the experimental setting, with adult scholars designing, structuring, and managing the child’s production of data. In contrast to these controlled experiments, cultural anthropologists rely on participant-observation, interviews, and qualitative contextualizing for their data collection. Any casual observer could cite the inability of infants to engage in interviews with the researching anthropologist; hence, it is not surprising that the renaissance of research with children has focused on verbally proficient (or, at the very least, verbally comprehensible) school-age children and adolescents.

Nonetheless, as has been argued in this section, infants are indeed cultural actors, engaging in rapid learning of complex cultural rules, exerting influence on others, and shaping culture in the process. The deeper underlying conceptual understandings and methodological

assumptions that inhibit the co-construction of cultural knowledge with infants, thereby contributing to their absence from anthropological research endeavors, must therefore be interrogated.

### **Psychology as a Springboard for Anthropological Research on Infancy**

In the growing body of anthropological research on childhood, the ethnographic gaze often affixes to school-age children and youth with whom the researcher can engage in verbal dialogue. Infant studies in which qualitative research methods are employed to arrive at meaningful subject-researcher co-constructions have not been common. Given the relative lack of theoretical frameworks for research with infants in cultural anthropology, I turned to what does exist to help make sense of the data, which is evolutionary anthropology and psychology.

In North America, anthropology has been intricately bound to psychology since its disciplinary beginnings. Psychology was deemed to be important work and anthropologists used psychological theories both to inform their own research questions and to disprove the universal claims they proffered (LeVine 2007; Montgomery 2008).

Anthropologists are at least partly dependent on developmental knowledge from other disciplines in their assumptions about how children experience their environments—including the environmental features to which they are sensitive and their age-related concepts for understanding—and they have often turned to psychology and psychiatry for guidance in making these assumptions plausible (LeVine 2007: 249).

Research with children – especially rapidly changing and developing babies – forces cultural anthropologists to consider their participants' biological capabilities, as well as the sociocultural contexts that influence those capabilities and shape their social worlds more generally. Hence, a certain level of détente in an otherwise antagonistic relationship (Burman 2008; LeVine 2007) with developmental psychology may be necessary, utilizing the findings of psychologists who operate from 'biologically cultural' frameworks that view development inherently tied to the social contexts in which it occurs.

As this approach has been a minority one in the history of psychology, with “the child-centered focus of developmental psychology remain[ing] Western liberal individualism writ large” (Burman 2008: 49), the aversion of cultural anthropologists to utilizing psychological data and approaches is certainly understandable. The critiques of psychology have been perhaps most thoroughly laid out by Nikolas Rose (1989; 1996; 1999), following on Foucault (1977; 1988; 1991), who reviews how the individual self has been ‘made up’ (Hacking 1986) and naturalized by the ‘psy’ disciplines. Psychology propagates conceptions of humanity as “unified, fixed, interiorized, and individualized” (Rose 1996: 9) rather than a heterogeneous mix of genders, ages, classes, and races that are historically specific and culturally constrained. Anthropologists, such as Geertz (1979), provided the cultural critique for naturalizing Western conceptions of the self, while philosophers (Taylor 1989) provided evidence of temporal specificity of modern notions of the self, and feminist theorists (Grosz 1994) argued that the self was not a unified subject. Psychology has also been an integral component in governmentality, the expert voice that provides the means through which particular ends are reached. “In practices for the government of conduct...authorities abound whose powers are based on their professional training and their possession of esoteric ways of understanding and acting upon conduct grounded in codes of knowledge and claims to special wisdom” (Rose 1996: 12). This rise of experts has indeed created childrearing conflicts in Saraguro between indigenous models and those endorsed by national programs, as is discussed in greater length in chapters 4 and 5.

However, with full acknowledgement of these various sociological and anthropological arguments against psychology, I have found ‘biological culturalism’ and certain psychological frameworks useful in approaching my research questions. Having worked extensively with infants, psychologists’ large corpus of research findings is extremely worthwhile to examine, since it is their assumptions about children that have informed the development literature and therefore what doctors and scholars, as well as parents and the general public, “know” about infants. These beliefs about the nature and capabilities of infants have likely also shaped the (dis)interest of anthropologists in studying babies, particularly regarding anthropologists’

ability to see infants as cultural agents. As development theories get exported, they shape interactions with babies in many parts of the globe and influence the kind of care they receive, as is discussed later in this chapter with regards to Ecuador and the Saraguros.

Moreover, the debates surrounding theory of mind seem like a useful way to approach anthropological research with infants, as they reveal certain underlying assumptions about infants and allow some questions about our own discipline to be answered in the process. Have babies perhaps been avoided as an anthropological research participant pool because they have fallen victim to the naturalizing that psychology promotes? That is, have anthropologists perhaps come to see babies as relatively universal ‘biobundles’ (Gottlieb 2000)? If babies are seen to have minds and hold knowledge, interacting with others socially and working to influence their own lives and those of others, perhaps they are more likely to be viewed as a social category that is culturally and socially constructed just like any other group.

As the mind cannot be directly observed with the Aristotelian senses, its existence is discussed in theoretical terms. Theory of mind revolves around the idea that one has a mind in which mentalistic constructs are created, and that one understands others have the same, thereby facilitating the attribution of mental states, attitudes, and thoughts to others (Bower 1993). Theory of mind has created its own slew of debates as to whether children understand particular mentalistic constructs defined by adults at certain ages (Gopnik, et al. 1999), which will not be reviewed here. Rather, I present this theory of mind as a way of introducing the idea that infants may have evolutionarily adapted to hone the skill of knowing minds and that they begin learning about others from their first moments of life, engaged in social interaction and participation. Using this approach therefore allows anthropologists to understand infants by straddling – and thereby undermining the existence of – the gap between evolutionary/biological and sociocultural perspectives.

## Evolutionary Perspectives of Infant Agency

The agentic ability of infants to contribute to the ways they are cared for should not be surprising to anyone examining humans from an evolutionary perspective. In fact, were infants indeed incapable of crossing the cognitive barriers posed by development theories like theory of mind, the human species likely would not have survived. Human babies would not necessarily be cared for, and they could not by their own powers ensure that they would be taken along wherever the mother went or be fed whenever hunger struck. Hence, the need for agency begins at birth. Hrdy (2009) holds newborns responsible and capable to engage the mother in a nurturing relationship. “Stimulating and conditioning its mother, making sure that she becomes addicted to nurturing, is actually a mammalian baby’s first critical, if unconscious, mission” (Hrdy 2009: 41). Natural selection would encourage babies to develop and employ resource acquisition strategies to obtain what they need, like olfactory sensitivity to the mother, bodily positioning, latching onto the breast, and crying or otherwise signaling whereabouts or distress (Hrdy 2009; Tronick, et al. 1987).

Due to their long slow process of maturing to self-sufficiency, human babies also needed to be able to communicate with and elicit alloparental care – that is, care from non-maternal caregivers – to be able to survive. As Hrdy (2009) argues, it was this need for alloparental care which gave rise to what makes us uniquely human – our collaborative and sharing nature that allows us to work together with others. Engaging others in the pursuit of care developed into prosocial tendencies such as “responsiveness to others’ mental states” (Hrdy 2009:29), which has also been called empathy or ‘mind reading’.

Empathic inference is everyday mind reading... a form of complex psychological inference in which observation, memory, knowledge, and reasoning are combined to yield insights into the thoughts and feelings of others.... Empathically accurate perceivers are those who are consistently good at “reading” other people’s thoughts and feelings (Ickes 1997: 2).

The complexity of this is debatable; babies may simply be using perceptions of social affordances and behavioral aspects that require no psychological inference. At any rate, the survival and

population increase of the species would suggest that babies rate highly on their responsiveness to others.

That we have formerly failed to see this evolutionary view necessitating agency and communication by infants is a result of cultural and legal constructions, wherein certain persons (infants) are viewed as incompetent, passive, and in need of control. It is also a result of anthropology's tacit acceptance that agency necessitates intention, which is tied to linguistic mental constructs that infants are theoretically incapable of having. Per developmental theories, agency also requires an intellectual acceptance of conceptual tools to cross cognitive dichotomy barriers like body/mind, unaware/aware, behavior/thought, and infants are also thought to be cognitively deficient to take this conceptual step. The insights of recent evolutionary theory regarding infants' capabilities, both to assess others' mental states and to socially participate in order to elicit certain kinds of care from others, allow cultural anthropologists to revisit the idea of agency and to extend the concept beyond language-based conceptions. This opens up a whole new world of social interaction to consider – that of the infant.

Ostensibly, the language barrier is a significant contributor to the lacuna of anthropological research with this age group; however, as the previous section argued, the general view of infants as passive non-agents also plays a significant role in their exclusion. As shaping the culture and the lives of others generally assumes some form of communication to express one's ideas, infant agency and infant communication work hand-in-hand and will therefore frequently overlap in both theory and analysis. Nonetheless, I will first review the communication techniques that infants use to exercise that agency and to learn about the world around them more generally before broaching the ways that infants interact agentively with others as they elicit particular kinds of care, thus effecting change in their own lives while shaping the lives of caregivers and culture at large in the process. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the changes in conceptual assumptions and methodological approaches that anthropologists might embrace in order to include the lives of infants in their understandings of culture and society.



## The Nonverbal Language Barrier

It is not so much that children don't know how to talk: they try out many languages until they find one their parents can understand. – *attributed to Jean Piaget (Bourdieu and Nice 1977: 166)*

The richness of anthropologists' ethnographic data comes from being able to understand and interpret communications within their cultural context. The co-construction of cultural knowledge with research participants generally necessitates the anthropologist to learn another, if not multiple, languages. Indeed, most doctoral programs in anthropology incorporate language exams as prerequisites to the commencement of fieldwork, to ensure a certain level of language proficiency. With all the focus on language skills, one might be fooled into believing that communication is reducible to learning vocabulary lists and verb conjugations. However, regardless of one's language fluency, much of the message and much of the knowledge that is taken from communicative exchanges is taken from something other than the mere words spoken. Paralinguistic features such as tone of voice, the accent placed upon certain words, the perceived mood of the speaker or emotions attached to their statements are all assessed, assisted by the nonverbal markers of facial expressions, eye contact, posture, hand gestures, and the like. Albert Mehrabian's (1971) oft-quoted study on verbal and nonverbal understandings demonstrated that up to 93% of the meaning derived from messages about feelings and attitudes came from the way the words were said and from facial expressions. Taken together, this verbal and nonverbal communication package allows one to find the meaning that accompanies or even contradicts the spoken words.

The ability to glean meaning from more than the objective conceptual definitions of words in communicative interaction might be described as 'mind-reading' (Hrdy 2009) or 'empathic inference' (Ickes 1997), and they form an enormous part of our understanding. Hrdy (2009) examines the similarities between humans and apes in initial abilities to recognize faces and register some meaning attached to their expressions, yet she notes differences between the species in the persistence and continual refinement of these abilities by humans alone.

Intonation, the timing of others' responses, and social referencing are some of the paralinguistic tools used by infants to glean information and meaning from social interactions (Rogoff 2003). Social referencing allows babies to assess courses of action or otherwise get clarity about some situational unknown by using the expressions and reactions of others as a gauge. While animals also use social referencing or environment scanning to predict their future actions, human infants go further, seeking to interpret caregivers' actions to understand their perspectives. Abandoning the primacy of the mother-infant dyad, Hrdy shows how infants evaluate the intentions and learn from social interactions with a wider pool of participants. By 6 months of age, infants are able to discern between those who are more or less likely to provide them assistance, and within the first year they demonstrate interest in how others think or feel about them (Hrdy 2009).

Hrdy roots the development of this interpretive capability in the evolutionary advantages to be had by infants who were attuned to approved social behaviors. Such infants would be more successful in eliciting care from mothers and others, whose commitments to caring for the infant were never fail-safe. Continuous monitoring of maternal responsiveness through eye contact, babbling, and 'mind reading' thereby fulfilled the needs of attachment-seeking human infants who were not assured of care as continuous-care-and-contact apes may have been. Thus, arguing that the human species would have died out if infants had *not* excelled at developing empathic accuracy, Hrdy would likely agree that this 'mind-reading' is the first language that humans master, becoming pupils of it from their first moments in the world. Research with non-linguistic infants thus requires crossing a different language barrier; or perhaps it is more accurate to say *not* crossing a language barrier. Rather, the adult researcher must further hone her original 'mother tongue', the language which she uses in all the linguistic interchanges as well.

Reddy (2008) argues that infants must necessarily understand that people have minds that attach meanings to objects, actions, and events and must share these meanings with older children and adults in order for them to learn and use language. That is to say, infants cannot

learn to communicate with words, which represent and signify something else, without first understanding and holding shared meanings of the “something else.” And what of infants’ attempts not just to understand but to be understood by others? To be considered communication, one might question whether infants’ actions and utterances are indeed interactional attempts or whether they are just haphazard movements and vocalizations. The importance placed on intentionality and conscious forethought in infant communication may be overstated, since “for the most part, adult communication may also take place in a deliberate fashion that is neither accidental nor at the top of consciousness” (Rogoff 1990:76). However, assuming that the child does *not* attempt to meaningfully communicate creates an explanatory problem of how they later *do* have a communicative function (Rogoff 1990). This problem is avoided by assuming that the infant, as a social being, *does* communicate in order to engage, participate, and share meaning with others; it is then merely a question of growing communicative competence, rather than mysteriously jumping a gap from incompetence to competence, or from the physical/ behaviorist to the mental/cognitive world.

An examination of infant communication and learning techniques would suggest that the language of ‘mind-reading’ and the language of ‘body-reading’ are closely related. While infants are able to verbally communicate their distress by crying, much of their communication and learning is nonverbal. Auditory and visual forms of communication have primarily monopolized the attention of development researchers, to the exclusion of significant bodily ways of knowing the world and communicating with caregivers. “Research on communication focuses too exclusively on verbal and face-to-face interactions, with insufficient attention to the information that children and caregivers pick up from each others’ movements, smells, and timing of actions and speech during shared activities” (Rogoff 2003: 209). As the first sense to develop (Montagu 1986) and one that cannot be ‘turned off’, touch is the infant’s portal for learning about the physical world and the primary medium for demonstrating affection and establishing emotional bonds with others (Field 2003). Kinesthetic forms of communication create a base for interaction between infants and caregivers, with infants’ earliest cultural ways

of knowing derived from the tactile sensations between them (Geurts 2003; Rogoff 1990). In this sense, babywearing might be seen as an extremely important site of communication and learning for infants.

In addition to kinesthetic means, a large part of infants' learning and interaction is based on emotional cues and emotional engagement (Dunn 1998; Reddy 2008; Rogoff 2003; Trevarthen 1998). For instance, babies can pick up on parental apprehension and anxiety when they are brought in for a painful injection (Rogoff 2003), and they engage their own and others' sense of joy by joking and teasing (Reddy 2008). Research has shown that children in their first year of life can be seen to react to the sadness or distress of other crying children and work to comfort them by stroking or hugging (Bråten 1996), which my own observations at the daycare centers in Saraguro corroborate. Infants look for expressions of feelings, intentions, and emotions to understand others' minds and to coordinate their own actions accordingly (Trevarthen 1998). Adding another 'language' of proficiency to their interconnected skill set, infants assemble meanings by marrying together the information they gather from the three: emotion-reading (how does this situation make others feel), body-reading (what gestures, movements, and sounds are others making), and mind-reading (what do those bodily and emotive expressions tell me about what they think). As my primary research question focused on the moral learning of babies, it is interesting to consider how the caregivers' tension, body movements, anxiety, stress, anger, laughter, volume, pitch, and intonation of voice might give moral meaning to the infant. These non-linguistic cues may be accompanied by words such as, "No!" or "Don't do that" or "That hurts" or "That's naughty", but considering that pre-linguistic children do not understand the words' significance, their first moral lessons are actually learned by the communicative accompaniments to the verbal admonitions.

Likewise, as communication is a two-way street, others may be involved in co-construction of knowledge, 'listening' to how babies 'speak' these languages and interpreting the verbal utterances and nonverbal acts of infants. "Infants' caregivers find information – cues to guide their caregiving and interaction – in the timing and nature of babies' vocalizations,

varying cries, postural and gaze cues, facial expressions, hand and foot movements, and body tension” (Rogoff 1990: 76). While knowing when to change a diaper or offer a feed may be cued by babies’ verbal and nonverbal acts in many societies, the idea that this is ‘communication’ is also culturally variable. In many societies, caregivers do not believe that infants are trying to communicate with them and they may even believe that young children are incapable of knowing anything for a number of years after birth. Mexicano adults, for example, may use motherese and other kinds of “baby talk” to hold infants’ attention, so that the baby will be better able to observe and learn, but they believe that the infant must have a good deal of this observation under his belt before he can begin communicating in return (Briggs 1986). The !Kung San caregivers took pride in anticipating their infants’ needs before they started crying. Yet crying itself, though seen as a normal part of infancy, was viewed less as a communication than it was something that babies did because they had not yet developed any sense (Eaton, et al. 1988).

Alma Gottlieb (2000) posited that anthropologists might ignore infants because they do not feel proficient in interpreting their communications, whether in a foreign cultural context or their own. Yet, from an anthropological perspective, what matters in terms of cultural understanding is not the degree of “truth” or accuracy in the foreign anthropologist’s interpretation of what the infant is trying to communicate. Rather, it is important to discern what the members of the baby’s surrounding cultural network believe the “truth” of his or her communication to be. Their interpretations of the baby’s communicative attempts will shape the baby’s understanding of the meaning of particular gestures, sounds, etcetera, as well as the continued use of those actions or a search for alternative ways of getting his or her misunderstood message across. While it is *de rigueur* to acknowledge the co-construction of anthropological data, working with infants adds an extra layer of mediation to the interpretive process. This tripartite construction of cultural knowledge will be discussed in greater detail towards the end of this chapter, as I reflect on potentially useful methodological approaches for anthropologists researching infants. For them to undertake such research, however,

anthropologists must first see infants as active cultural participants, an easily justifiable position if infants are understood to hold agency.

### **Little Agents**

British and North American anthropologists' home culture assumptions of infant incompetency have relegated infants to exist outside the constrained pool of worthwhile anthropological subjects, seen as products of socialization but rarely as cultural actors in their own right. The bias towards verbal communication and linguistic expression of cognitive formulations, such as intentionality, likewise work to rule out infants as agency holders. But if one closely examines what babies do and how others react to their actions, they can clearly be seen to exhibit agency, particularly if one allows for the proxy mode of agency provided by social cognitive theory. Examining early childhood implodes the term 'agency' because of all the different and oftentimes contradictory meanings associated with it, as well as its inherent assumptions regarding intention, cognitive development, mind-body separation, and linguistic communication of thoughts, which work to define who can and cannot hold agency. Before going any further then, the definitions of 'agency' I am working with and the theoretical framework in which my argument is situated must be clarified.

Agency is purposefully acting to produce a desired effect or change of state. Bandura (2001) adds that the exercise of agency may result in consequences that differ quite significantly from what was intended without nullifying agency as the *capacity* to act intentionally. He lists intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflectiveness as the key features of agency, which mean that an agent must be aware of the desired change, conscious of both constraints and opportunities in choosing a course of action, and able to execute the plan and evaluate the efficacy of the plan once performed. When the plan is laid out in this logical step-by-step basis, it may seem like a tall cognitive order for an infant to fill. Many psychologists would likely say that infants cannot actually fulfill these components of agency, per their theoretical understandings of cognitive development, and proof to the contrary that does not fit within the

theory is generally redefined as something else and dismissed (Reddy and Morris 2004). When developmental and cultural psychologist Vasudevi Reddy (2008) argued that babies demonstrate an awareness of others' minds, of their intentions and expectations, and that they respond accordingly, it was met with resistance. Reddy (2008) claims that the evidence she presented was only partially accepted and the babies were belittled by qualifying their capabilities with the prefix 'quasi' or 'pseudo'; as in, babies might have a *quasi*-awareness or a *pseudo*-theory of mind. However, theories are only useful inasmuch as they can explain actions and events. If it walks, talks, and looks like a duck, why call it a *quasi*-duck or a *pseudo*-duck? If one's participation in such actions and events does not fit the theory, is it not perhaps the theory that is faulty rather than the participant? Indeed, Reddy points to the bluefin tuna and the bumblebee, whose respective swim speed and flying capabilities were theoretically impossible. Yet they were not pronounced *pseudo*-swimmers and *quasi*-fliers; the animals are, in fact, capable of those actions. The theories simply didn't take into account that their existence is intimately connected to their environments; it is only viewing them as individual organisms isolated from a synergetic context which creates these physical 'impossibilities.'

Likewise, much of the theoretical work regarding infants' capabilities has been informed by psychology, which, as noted previously, tends to evaluate human beings in terms of the self – as individual organisms. Yet infants, like adults, are immersed in social worlds, and their development cannot be understood in isolation from their engagement with others (Morss 1988; Reddy and Morris 2004).

We become persons in the midst of complex social relationships and interpersonal power dynamics as well as in the midst of continuous historical and cultural change.... These self-processes, including those of sensory attention and orientation, require effort or agency and intentionality, some kind of engagement with the process of life" (Geurts 2003:107).

Much of the theoretical trouble with seeing infants as cognitively or developmentally capable of possessing agency lies in the failure to acknowledge this social engagement.

In the first place, psychological theorizing on agency and its key features has almost exclusively focused upon the individual's direct exercise of influence. Yet as anthropologists and

sociologists would argue, people are not isolated organisms. Culture and social structure work to constrain the possibilities of individuals, whose intersectional positions in the social system share certain characteristics and limitations with others in the same social categories.

Understanding infants' capabilities as dependent upon social engagement is especially important in assessing their capacity to hold agency, by which I mean that babies, as a social category, are *able* to understand their own desires and purposefully enact change or otherwise intentionally work to influence others to enact change on their behalf.

Yet viewing babies as a social group sharing certain characteristics, rather than as individuals, still renders agency problematic if the individuals comprising that social group are characterized as deficient of the physical or intellectual capabilities necessary to exert influence within their structural constraints. A major difficulty in viewing infants' agency involves faulty theoretical predictions of cognitive development, which disallow infants' capacity for intentional thought, evaluation of circumstances, and self-reflective choice of actions to meet the goal. The context-independent 'isolated organism' way of thinking is challenged not only by the Foucauldian-informed approaches of sociologists and anthropologists, but also by psychologists who root biological and cognitive development in sociocultural factors. The human infant's capabilities are developed through engagement, participation, interaction and immersion in a particular social environment (Ball 2007; Hewlett and Lamb 2005; LeVine, et al. 2008; Lewis and Watson Gegeo 2004; McGillicuddy-De Lisi and Subramanian 1996; Morss 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Reddy and Morris 2004; Reddy 2008; Rogoff 1990; Rogoff 2003; Super and Harkness 1980).

The false dichotomy of biology and society has led developmental psychologists to conclude that infants develop "from' the biological 'to' the social. An alternative view...is that development does not *become* social: it is social from the start" (Morss 1988:326). Shotter (1974) contends that this social communication is the chief determinant for development, since language and conceptual understandings derive from it. Furthermore, research has challenged the assumed social passivity of infants, showing that even newborns are very actively engaged in



complex social interactions with adults, that they can recognize the links between their own actions and contextual factors, and that they learn about social situations as well as physical characteristics of objects (Morss 1988). Through social engagement and participation, the infant does not need conceptual models to cross barriers from non-awareness to awareness of other's minds (Reddy 2008) nor from observation to internalization of social rules and norms (Rogoff 1990).

Reddy and Morris (2004) demonstrate that the actions of infants and toddlers pose a direct challenge to theory of mind, which attempts to explain away their actions as mere behavior and not as a mental awareness. Thus infants are brushed aside, they argue, because to acknowledge them as mentally cognizant of other minds upsets the underlying theoretical foundation of mind-body separation that requires intellectual mediation to cross. As infants are not believed to be conceptual thinkers, they should not be able to cross this barrier and therefore cannot have theory of mind, or so the argument goes.

Most important to seeing infants as agents is their demonstration of the socially-acquired capabilities of intention and self-reflectiveness. The problem with cognitive approaches to intentionality is the reliance on mentalistic constructs, which forces one to assess the presence or absence of intentions based on linguistically-formulated mental plans (Morss 1988; Reddy 2008). Reddy argues, however, that intention does not solely reside in some private individual sphere of mind that is distinctly separated from action; rather, intention can be *in* the action itself, as well as negotiated between individuals. The 'proof' of intention then does not have to be sought in verbal expressions of mental plans. In addition, infants' eye and body movements as they play along in games such as peek-a-boo evidence an anticipation of particular outcomes, which would suggest not only that they have intent in their own actions but can understand that others do as well. Morss rightly ties the research on babies' intention with objects together with social interactions, since some of the 'objects' in infants' environments are people. "[T]he infant's activity in the interpersonal situation is just as meaningful and systematic as is

interaction with objects. If intentionality is present in object-interaction then it is certainly present in person-interaction” (Morss 1988:329).

When the outcomes of actions do not coincide with the anticipated results, agents will reflect on this mismatch and adjust. Bandura (2001:10) defines this feature of agency as ‘self-reflectiveness,’ or “judg[ing] the correctness of their predictive and operative thinking against the outcomes of their actions, the effects that other people's actions produce, what others believe, deductions from established knowledge and what necessarily follows from it.” So how does one get the belief that what they do matters, that their actions will cause effects and create reactions by others? Infants come to believe this through experience. One could perhaps argue that babies do indeed lack these beliefs when they enter the world, but newborns learn causality from at least their first extrauterine moments, as they begin to experience a new physical environment breathing on their own, suckling from the breast for their nutrition, and experiencing the temperature and moisture changes of air. Early evidence of learning about results of others’ actions is seen in the ways that even newborns come to relate certain postures, places, or holding positions to the act of feeding and will accordingly begin searching for the breast (Morss 1988).

Likewise, the infant will adjust his or her communication or action strategy if the anticipated outcome does not result. Beyond the non-linguistic verbal expressions like crying, grunting, and cooing, much of infant communication is kinesthetic, emotional, and gestural (Geurts 2003; Reddy 2008; Rogoff 1990). An infant has knowledge of her bodily state and knows she’s hungry without specifically thinking, ‘I’m hungry’ in the adult, language-centered fashion. Rather, the inseparability of mind and body allow for a pre-linguistic bodily state of knowing. Furthermore, rather than fitting the infant’s communication into adult ways of thinking about what adults envision the infant might wish to express if they had language, the infant may simply understand its world and the objects and people in it by the capabilities they afford. Hence, the hungry baby might not be trying to access ‘the breast’, but rather trying to access the nourishment, warmth, or comfort that it affords.

However, given a desire for nourishment, the infant will actively work to shape her care, expressing herself in different ways to express that she is hungry and wants to be fed. The infant as agent is perhaps most evident in social situations where the baby is positioned or carried close to the mother's exposed breast and takes it upon himself to nurse as needed, thus directly changing his situation through his own action (Small 1998). That many infants around the world are not given this access but must first vocalize or otherwise indicate their intention does not change the fact that they actively work to shape their care. For adults as well as children, "many of the things they seek are achievable only through socially interdependent effort. Hence, they have to work in coordination with others to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own" (Bandura 2001: 13).

Social cognitive theory offers a mode of human agency that is therefore very useful in analyzing infants: proxy agency. Utilizing social influence and social relationships, someone else is enlisted to attain the desired outcomes on one's behalf. Proxy agency is not only the domain of voiceless infants to "circumvent physical constraints" (Bandura 2001: 22); it is commonly used by adults in realms of life they do not have direct control over or for which they do not have the resources, energy, expertise, or time to directly act in. It is the basis for the spousal 'honey-do' list as well as the foundation of representative democratic government. Hence, we can examine infant agency from the socially mediated perspective of how they use their influence to get others to do things at their behest, as well as viewing more direct forms of agency.

Returning to the example of the baby seeking nourishment, proxy agency enables a feeding even when the baby cannot directly change his or her state due to restricted access to the breast. At the onset of hunger, a baby carried close to the mother may first gesture, pat the breast, start rooting, and mouth her fist, while making little grunts or other noises that the mother has likely come to recognize as her baby's signs of hunger. If the mother is not forthcoming in her response or the baby is physically separated from the mother and needs to get her attention, she will likely start to cry to communicate. Is this not an understanding of one's needs and intentionally communicating to change one's state, self-reflectively assessing the

efficacy of verbal and non-verbal expressions as they fail or succeed in eliciting a particular desired response? Though some would contend that self-reflectiveness only develops over time as cognizance of the links between one's own actions and others' reactions grows, I would argue that infants begin learning about cause and effect from their first moments outside the womb, as they are suddenly exposed to a new world in which they experience hunger, temperature and light fluctuations, as well as the need to breathe on their own. The rapid learning that infants acquire about their environment and the ways their needs get met, either through their own efforts or by others' interventions, is likely paralleled by rapid learning about courses of action that work or do not work to elicit responses.

### **Ethnographic Fieldwork Examples of Infant Agency**

An evolutionary approach suggests that infant agency is a necessary human cultural adaptation, indicating how inextricable culture and biology are and rendering old dichotomies limited and problematic. The social environment in which one participates, however, will affect the opportunities for exercising agency, which leads to some interesting possibilities for cross-cultural comparative work, examining variations and similarities in the forms and levels of infant agency. The anthropological perspective can then place these variable practices within the larger webs of meaning that shape any particular practice to make sense in a given culture.

The preceding sections have demonstrated that the term 'agency' can be applied more broadly than structural approaches, which might prioritize efforts that are collective and that alter power relations or cause political change. So far, the hypothetical and evolutionary examples I have presented approach infant agency primarily from an agent-centered perspective; that is, infants exert influence to elicit their own care. However, infants' agency can also be demonstrated on an interpersonal plane. As they intentionally engage in the processes of negotiation between individuals, infants influence other individuals and institutional actions and thereby also shape culture more broadly.

While it may be possible to observe the elicitation of particular forms of care in many cultures, it may be harder to recognize these latter forms of infant agency in cultural settings where infants are constructed in a way that necessitates high levels of adult intervention and control. I presented earlier the argument that North American and British anthropologists are adult-centric, failing to see infants as capable of understanding their own best interests. Additionally the primacy of adults is reinforced by constructions of the child as both vulnerable and in need of correction. Even a sleeping newborn baby is constructed in these binary opposites; its vulnerability requires government approval of crib mattresses for safety, yet the Dionysian is lurking underneath, threatening to manipulate parents into ‘spoiling’ it by holding and cuddling too much or responding too quickly to its cries.

Particularly where babies’ sleep preferences create inconveniences for North American and British parents do we see a prioritizing of adults’ needs. Although some parents quote ‘experts’ advice that children need to sleep alone to develop independence and self-sufficiency or the developmental need for “good” sleep, in two-parent households most parents themselves reject their own advice that people sleep better alone and climb into the marital bed together.

Western social ‘folk’ assumptions about what constituted healthy infant sleep were made, often based on moral justifications reflecting recent cultural ideas about how and where babies should sleep (relative to parents) in order to protect the husband–wife relationship and to produce psychologically healthy ‘independent’ children. It became accepted that an infant sleeping alone was a ‘moral good’... That is, if it was ‘good’ for babies to sleep alone, it seemed a small step to concluding that ‘good babies’ did so! The ‘good baby’ descriptor is now practically synonymous with a baby’s ability to ‘sleep through the night’ alone (McKenna and MacDade 2005: 136).

This spatial separation in the home is contemporarily mirrored in greater Euro-American society. Much literature has been written on the increasingly diminishing space of Western childhood (den Besten 2011; Gill 2007; Olwig and Gulløv 2003; Valentine 1996; Valentine 2004; Valentine and Holloway 2001), with infants and children now requiring special safe play zones supervised, if not directed, by adults. Children outside the segregated zones of childhood may be seen as potentially dangerous as well, as they disrupt the moral order with their inability to completely comply with the strictures of proper adult behavior. The implicit

Western assumption that public space belongs to adults and the separation of space into adult and child zones within the home seem to go hand-in-hand.

To summarize, the demand for adult control over infants and young children, the prioritization of adult over child needs in many infant care practices, and the spatial separation of babies into appropriate places for infancy away from the world of adults might obscure infants' influence on the culture at large in Euro-American contexts. However, infants' aptitude in constructing culture is more evident in societies with less parental intervention in children's actions, where babies are welcome in more public settings, and their autonomy over their own body is respected. Findings from my research among the Saraguros help demonstrate infant and toddler agency in a broader sense. To contrast with the mainstream North American and British views of childhood that were just presented, the Saraguros afford a greater respect for children's autonomy, which creates a larger space for children – even babies – to make their will known and observe that 'push-and-pull' between infants and others in society.

Unlike the Western moral imperative of intervening to protect the vulnerable child, a marker of 'good' or 'proper' parenting in Saraguro is "letting the children learn." Parenting and caregiving practices reinforce the idea that the infant and young child must learn experientially by limiting caregiver interventions. The preference for a non-interventionist learning style has historical and economic roots, and this topic will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapter. Autonomy and independent decision-making have traditionally been encouraged to facilitate Saraguro children's incorporation into the herding lifestyle.

Although nowadays more Saraguro children are integrated into authoritarian school structures than into the herding profession, this has not completely eroded the cultivation of these characteristics through childrearing practices. Children may decide where they would like to sleep or even to live, for example, in the case where sibling rivalry creates an impetus for a child to prefer staying with grandparents. Indeed I had set out with the intention to research sleep practices, and I found that this was a realm where infant and toddler agency shone through most brightly. After an unsuccessful search for daycares in Canada that did not enforce a nap

schedule or quiet time policy, the absence of napping Saraguro children at the village daycares surprised me. Yet this was not an anomaly; I searched high and low for parents who actually imposed a naptime or bedtime, with no results found. Both fathers and mothers lamented that their babies or toddlers were the last ones to go to sleep at night and the first ones up, and they were consequently required to adhere to this sleep schedule too, since to do otherwise would make the baby cry.

Parents and other caregivers routinely ‘translate’ or ‘interpret’ babies’ gestures, vocalizations, and cries to mean particular things; hence, these utterances and body movements are taken as a form of communication about needs, preferences, desires, and dislikes. As in my own culture, cries were taken seriously as a form of communication, an expression of the child’s will. Unlike in my own culture, the will of the Saraguro child was much more closely heeded in matters of self-regulating its own biological needs or when it came into conflict with adult preferences and adult convenience. Mothers may nurse their babies or carry them everywhere on their backs until nearly 3 years of age because ‘the baby didn’t want to stop’, or ‘he doesn’t want to walk’. Mothers remarked that it was sometimes bothersome that their babies and toddlers would nurse 3-4 times in the night, but “that’s how babies are.” Another commonly interpreted expression of will was noncompliance. Whether it was getting a child to socialize with a guest, share a toy, or play with another child, noncompliance on the part of the child was quickly met with a chuckle and a statement of ‘*no quiere*’ – she doesn’t want to – by the adult, and the attempt was dropped. Hence, it can be seen that Saraguro babies not only shape their own care, such as in sleep arrangements, but a respect for their autonomy also allows Saraguro babies’ contestations and negotiations of practices and socialization to shape the daily (and nightly) life of adults and their greater social network.

The autonomy afforded to children also allows them a greater spatial field for agentive action. Although young Saraguro children may attend daycare and are thus segregated part of the day from adult activities, they are not restricted to particular child-appropriate spaces more generally. As they navigate public spaces, like parks and plazas, or accompany parents on

errands or to work, babies and small children are often not given any more or less attention than other adults. While infants and toddlers are often humored if they take something from a shop by giving them a candy when they return the pilfered goods, children get on with their playing and adults get on with their talking or other activities without overly focusing on each other. Babies are also more portable to public spaces because they are welcomed to breastfeed everywhere in public. Whereas this right exists in Canada, the exercise of this right often causes controversy<sup>7</sup>, and the protected right is notably the adult woman's right to feed her baby, not the infant's right to nurse. In contrast the Ecuadorian national code has stated it is the child's right to nurse, which reinforces a practice that is already common among the Saraguros.

Yet parts of the Ecuadorian legal code are also challenged by the Saraguros, and I argue that it is here that infant agency can even be seen to affect indigenous movements and political contestations. To that end, this section considers Ecuadorian childcare in the age of "the rights of childhood," where manuals and administrative policies lay out 'correct' napping procedures and sleep location based on *mestizo* sensibilities.

### **The Rights of Childhood and Saraguro Contestations**

After ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and amidst a large wave of emigration that created huge variety in household compositions and child care arrangements, Ecuador drafted a new constitution in 1998. Among the laws governing the land was a lengthy Code of Childhood and Adolescence, whose provisions for the rights of childhood in Ecuador have resulted in a number of early childhood education programs, child health initiatives, and projects focusing on protection of the rights of infancy. A major emphasis in these rights is the right to education, including educating the parents to help the child's development. The local NGO (Fundación Kawsay) that administered the rights of infancy

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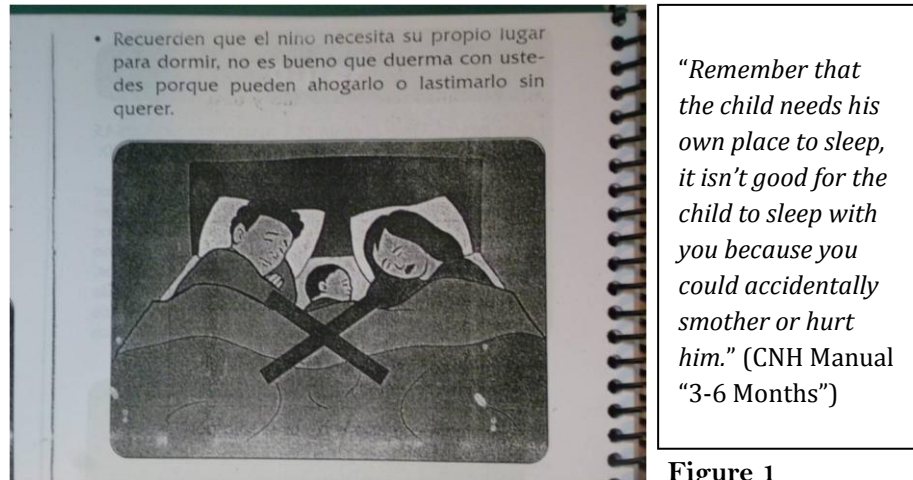
<sup>7</sup> Mothers and babies are often asked to leave stores, restaurants, and other privately owned enterprises if they refuse to stop breastfeeding, often at the behest of another patron who is bothered by the act. See the following article for a recent example of this and the subsequent 'nurse-in' response by breastfeeding activists:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2011/01/19/nurse-in-montreal.html>



program around Saraguro was also specifically focused on education projects, including the training of daycare workers and the workers in an early childhood education program called *Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos* (Growing With Our Children), which I will hereafter abbreviate as 'CNH'.

In the name of child wellbeing, two political projects compete in the Saraguro countryside. One is by the Ecuadorian government to promote early childhood education for all. This program is administered in both rural and urban areas, to *mestizos* and indigenous groups alike, and the CNH manual puts a positive spin on the diversity brought about by different cultures, ethnicities, genders, races, and religions. Despite the lip service paid to multicultural diversity, a nationwide program for optimal child development largely precludes multicultural diversity, as it necessitates the adoption of *one* particular view of childhood, children, and the proper thing for them to become. The other project is that of politically active Saraguros, to resist easy incorporation of 'national' cultural elements that conflict with indigenous ways of doing things. Both have a stake in how children, even young infants and toddlers, fulfill their biological needs.

Indigenous employees at Fundación Kawsay often found it quite difficult to apply the rights of infancy when the laws or program conflicted with the indigenous way of raising children and of their ways of learning. For instance, the CNH manual propagates crib sleeping from birth onwards, emphasizing the danger to babies of co-sleeping (see Fig. 1 below). However, in all but two of the families I visited, Saraguro babies and toddlers slept in the same bed with the parents.



**Figure 1**

Additionally, the National Institute for the Child and Family (INNFA) that oversees the daycares asserts that napping is necessary for optimal child health, and paperwork documenting each child's daily nap times is required. However, this does not resonate with local napping practices, which are not regulated by parents, not scheduled, and not viewed as a predictable activity. Furthermore, most of the indigenous children observed in the village daycares had stopped napping altogether around 18 months, preferring to remain active during the day and go to bed quite early.

As the afternoon siesta nap is more common among the *mestizo* population, some Saraguros felt that this institution of naps for the child's wellbeing merely reflected *mestizo* ways rather than the indigenous Saraguro reality. Indeed, Saraguro activists in the local NGO had been successful in advocating change in the daycare napping policy in the villages closest to Saraguro town. However, a fall 2010 tour by Fundación Kawsay's Rights of Infancy program staff to some of the more remote Saraguro communities found daycare workers still trying – quite unsuccessfully – to adhere to INNFA rules and force children to take naps. Children squirmed on mattresses at the feet of the daycare workers, who expressed their uncertainty to the NGO worker about how to get the children to fall asleep against their will.

Saraguro babies and toddlers have a part to play maintaining traditional sleep practices in the face of alternative government program mandates, as they cry to communicate

their displeasure with being separated from the parents at night or resist attempts to make them nap at scheduled times at daycare. As these are the same practices that their adult counterparts have taken up as small points of indigenous resistance to government visions of child rights and needs by urging indigenous daycare workers to ignore written policies and follow local norms, it can be argued that babies' ability to influence culture can even be seen in acts that carry political consequences. In a cultural environment that views them as competent to make decisions about the fulfillment of their biological needs, the communicative abilities of the infants are allowed to strongly influence their adult proxy agents' actions in eliciting the care they desire. Voicing or demonstrating their opinions on preferred sleep locations and napping practices, babies are resisting the erasure and replacement of indigenous childrearing patterns with politically correct childrearing practices promoted by national and global interventions.

This resistance might be seen as an example of how infants, as social actors, "can provide a unique perspective on the social world about matters that concern them as children" (James 2007: 261). The fact that, by mere resistance, they are not presenting a particularly sophisticated perspective is, of course, tied to certain limitations posed by their still-developing understandings of their social worlds and their still-developing bodies and minds. It might be more useful, however, to consider this fairly unsophisticated perspective not as a developmental shortcoming but rather a reflection of what concerns infants and affects their quality of life. Learning how to listen to infants requires trying to understand their points of view, to peel back the layers of learning that we, as adults, have accumulated over the years and see what aspects of their everyday lives truly matter to infants, as new but rapidly learning entrants to society.

Claiming, in this case, that infants have full political agency would likely meet strong resistance, based on the premise that the babies are not *conscious* of the world of politics nor *intentionally* trying to embroil themselves in it. Yet many protests, riots, and other political uprisings could likewise be construed as resistance to undesirable policies without a clear idea of whether their actions will indeed bring about change or how change is effectively brought about through existing channels in the political process. They are simply resisting the way they are

being governed and are pressing for a policy change. Saraguro infants' consciousness of what they like and dislike and their intention of resisting do not seem to be diminished just because they don't understand that they are resisting something called a 'policy', even if it is only through the 'reading' of their acts of resistance by caregivers and other community adults that the political consequences materialize.

The addition of an infant to any family initiates changes in other family members' actions and daily life; hence, infant agency is hardly unique to the Saraguros. However, in contrast with North American and northern European cultures' emphasis on control, the less interventionist Saraguro approach towards children allows one to hear the infant's "voice" in matters and observe the influence they have on others in their culture. Saraguro babies demonstrate that infants and toddlers can indeed exercise agency, in the elicitation of their own care, in the structure of their caregivers' work routines and sleep schedules, and in acts that trigger others' political resistance to issues that interfere with patterns of indigenous life.

### **The Full Pursuit of Partial Understanding**

In the preceding sections I have argued that, when their cultural milieu's interpretation, expectations, and construction of children allow for it, infants can be seen to communicate and to exercise agency. As exceptionally rapid learners of culture, babies should be of great interest to anthropologists, especially to understand the processes of internalization and cultural reproduction, as well as to bridge traditional dualist gaps between body and mind, socialization and social actor, agency and structure. Anthropologists can learn a great deal about babies' lives through observation and participation with them, but to do so they must move out of the methodological comfort zone of linguistic interactions and embrace some ethnographically unorthodox communication techniques.

Anthropologists may initially feel out of sorts with this kind of communication; there is no grammar manual or vocabulary list to learn the 'languages' of mind-reading, body-reading, and emotion-reading. However, as biological anthropologists argue, all humans have these

capabilities, so it is simply a matter of mobilizing and trusting them as valid ways of knowing. Just as one who is blindfolded has greater awareness of auditory and olfactory stimuli than when he or she sees, perhaps muting the linguistic conversations may allow anthropologists to refine their non-linguistic 'language' skills.

This might be criticized as being overly subjective and interpretive, yet the subjective nature of "observer" has been noted ever since the discipline's positivist beginnings (Lutkehaus 1995). All anthropological attempts at knowing provide, at best, only partial understanding (Gottlieb 2000).

Anthropology is an interpretive science...Both the anthropologist and his informants live in a culturally mediated world, caught up in 'webs of signification' they themselves have spun. This is the ground of anthropology; there is no privileged position, no absolute perspective (Rabinow 2007:151).

In and of itself then, infants' lack of spoken language should not pose any more significant an obstacle in acquiring data nor provide any less understanding than work with verbally proficient participants. Assuming that one cannot truly understand another unless they are able to interview or at least speak to each other ignores the reality of infants' worlds. It is not a case of them simply not talking to the researcher; they don't talk at all yet, or talk very poorly, so their world itself is one of participation and shared meaning-making that cannot be reducible to particular strings of syllables and word order. Interviews themselves can be ambiguous, with differences in context, meta-communication, and participants' assessments of the event resulting in different data production and interpretations. As with these methodological hurdles that interviews pose, overcoming the challenge of research with babies also begins by "learning how to ask" (Briggs 1986:125).

Learning how to ask and how to listen without the tool of verbal language is, of course, the challenge for research with babies. Anthropology professors have been said to specialize in helping their students *unlearn*, to rid themselves of preconceived culturally-biased notions about how the world works. Infants most certainly pose the necessity for anthropologists to extend this unlearning to methodological approaches. Abandoning the staid interview, anthropologists

working with infants may have to rely on holding, carrying, feeding, playing, washing, and other bodily ways of communicating, and indeed be taught the locally appropriate ways of doing so, to aid in their understandings of what infants know from their specific cultural contexts. However, this might certainly be uncomfortable for some anthropologists. North Americans and Britons are among the least tactile people on earth (Field 2003), with “no-touch” policies and fear of sexual harassment charges drummed into them from early childhood.

In fieldwork video clips by cross-cultural psychologist Heidi Keller, who was testing babies’ attachment and interactions with strangers, her German research assistant approached the Cameroonian babies, shaking their hands and speaking with them face-to-face using very little body contact. She was only doing what seemed normal to her, bound by her own cultural notions of personal space and propriety of touch, but to the families involved her approach was culturally quite strange. In the end, Keller hired a local woman to assist, who simply picked the babies up, without any introductions or the pretense of obtaining some tacit consent to do so. She was able to interact with the babies more ‘naturally’ – that is, how Cameroonian babies expected to be interacted with based on their previous cultural experience<sup>8</sup>.

As this example highlights, knowing the infant’s world requires an understanding of the cultural norms that a baby experiences. Therefore, in addition to direct interaction with the babies, co-construction of knowledge with infants requires the inclusion of and mediation by local caregivers and other older children or adults. It is this third party mediation that should let anthropologists who feel outside their comfort zones in the nonverbal communicative sphere breathe a sigh of relief. To avoid interaction and interpretations being made only through the anthropologist’s cultural lens, it is important to hear what caregivers and others in the baby’s cultural community say about whether or not the baby is trying to communicate and how their communicative attempts are translated. Based on cross-cultural studies, linguistic experts say that infants can make the sounds of every language at six months of age, but by their first

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<sup>8</sup> Video clips and a narrative recap of the incident were presented by Dr. Keller in her keynote presentation entitled, “The Cultures of Everyday Life: Multiples Facets of Autonomy” at the Society for Cross-Cultural Research Conference in Charleston, SC on February 17, 2011.

birthday they have already started to filter out those that are superfluous to the language(s) used by those around them (Kuhl, et al. 2006). Might one suggest that infants also slowly filter out all forms of non-verbal communication that don't get results? That they are therefore culturally groomed to adopt the communicative gestures and techniques that generate interaction with them? It is the surrounding social network's interpretations of the infant's behavior which will shape both the baby's future forms of communication and his or her expectations of others.

### **Methodological Suggestions for Future Infant Research**

Given the resurgence of interest in childhood within anthropology and the somewhat commonly accepted orthodoxy of children as social actors, it has become commonplace for anthropologists working with children to harness their participation, using children's voices in order to demonstrate their perspectives. Though infants have largely been missing from this choir of new voices, Allison James' critique about being too focused on children's points of view is still relevant for further infant research:

However, childhood research is not simply about making children's own voices heard in this very literal sense by presenting children's perspectives. It is also about exploring the nature of the "voice" with which children are attributed, how that voice both shapes and reflects the ways in which childhood is understood, and therefore the discourses within which children find themselves within any society (James 2007: 266).

Acknowledging that adults and children hold different standpoints does not need to be an obstacle to giving voice to children (Mayall 2000). Rather, the inclusion of both standpoints serves to demonstrate the complexity of social worlds, the structure that is imposed on infants by caregivers as well as the ways they try to actively influence their world. Nonetheless, obtaining older children's or adult caregivers' viewpoints about infants is probably more straightforward from a methodological perspective, so I will concentrate this discussion on ways of understanding infants' perspectives.

I must note that, although I consider my fieldwork to have been a tremendous learning experience in this regard, much of the methodological insights I gathered on infant research

were indeed only in hindsight. I did spend a great deal of time observing infants and toddlers, in daycares, home settings, as well as in public and with my English “pupils.” At times they were interacting or under the direct gaze of relatives, siblings, or other caregivers, other times alone.

The following is a list I used in the field to record babies’ verbalizations and gestures:

**Table 2. Logging Babies’ Interactions**

Utterances	Movements	Eyes	Others’ Reactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cry</li> <li>• Fuss</li> <li>• Groan</li> <li>• Coo</li> <li>• Gurgle</li> <li>• Laugh</li> <li>• Babble</li> <li>• Words</li> <li>• Try to talk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick</li> <li>• Wave arms</li> <li>• Grab</li> <li>• Smile</li> <li>• Frown</li> <li>• Arch</li> <li>• Grimace</li> <li>• Crawl</li> <li>• Reach</li> <li>• Walk</li> <li>• Run</li> <li>• Jump</li> <li>• Fall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eye contact</li> <li>• Blank stares</li> <li>• Drowsy</li> <li>• Sleeping</li> <li>• Where are they looking</li> <li>• What are they looking at – following object, person, scanning?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is reacting?</li> <li>• What is the reaction?</li> <li>• Verbal or non-verbal reactions?</li> <li>• Any verbal explanations given by caregiver?</li> <li>• (What) do they talk to the baby?</li> </ul>

To note all these things would likely require observation periods specifically designated just for this in-depth recording. I did not do systematic note-taking of these communications, but rather used them impressionistically to contextualize what might be viewed as the communication act. However, this would be a very helpful way of analyzing what does or doesn’t count as communication from a certain cultural perspective as well as the variety of techniques employed. It would also present possibilities for better scrutiny of the interactions between babies and others, and using the same markers for systematic naturalistic observations on a ‘longitudinal’ basis would yield interesting results about the learning process. I say ‘longitudinal’ because even a 6-month period is quite lengthy relative to the baby’s life when one starts conducting multiple observations with a 3-month old baby.

Alma Gottlieb (2004) followed two particular Beng babies day in and day out to get an idea about the ‘routine’ and extraordinary in their daily lives, the people and places they come into contact with, and to better understand and know their actions and reactions to these different events, people, and places. This likely takes some time to build trust and familiarity



with the family and others in the social network that the anthropologist will frequently be following as well, but it would be well worth it to take up Gottlieb's method and even expand the pool of babies.

Of course, there is also the need to gain the trust of the babies themselves. Poor little Nadia, the 18-month old daughter of the lady who cleaned our second host family's house, burst into tears when I sat on the step next to her and tried to join her in playing with the pebbles. Luckily this was an exception rather than a rule, but regardless of whether the child trusts the researcher, it is also useful to mix some participant-observation with more discrete observation of the child, as he or she will obviously be affected by the researcher's presence. If the child would otherwise be playing alone, being there as an observer creates a potential playmate and distraction that the child would otherwise not have. Likewise, the caregivers may be more inclined to leave the child alone knowing that the researcher is there than they would otherwise, so an inaccurate picture is drawn of how the caregiver and child might interact in the researcher's absence.

While not everyone will enter the field with a baby as I did, baby elicitation can still be utilized to elicit caregiver interpretations. Whether the researcher is a parent or not, he or she must learn how it is that local parents communicate with their children and what meanings those communications hold for them. Volunteering to help carry, hold, clothe, bathe, feed babies, and so forth will not only likely be appreciated by the caregivers but will help the researcher know the baby through kinesthetic and somatic means. At the same time, caregivers are likely to show or instruct foreign researchers in the 'right' way of doing those things, or to question what they see as strange or alternative methods. Hence, the researcher is privy to information from both sets of participants, the babies and the caregivers.

In addition, there is much to be said for utilizing other technology, such as photo or video elicitation, to initiate conversations about children and child care. This would have been especially useful in my research to explain common sleep techniques with infants. I realized halfway through my fieldwork that I had overlooked and failed to mention in my explanations of

how children get trained to sleep through the night that 'training' quite often necessitated letting the babies cry. Yet when I mentioned this, the horror expressed by caregivers led to my eventual understandings of Saraguro constructions of children as equally autonomous persons. Certain practices elicit much more visceral reactions and spontaneous explanations when they are seen or experienced in that way.

Finally, the methodological unorthodoxy might also sometimes extend into the supernatural. Yoruba cultural beliefs in spirit children (Montgomery 2008), for instance, mean that anthropologists might have to examine beliefs about a Yoruba baby's ancestors to understand the baby's life. Beng babies are believed to be born with capabilities of understanding all languages and it is the ignorance of the parents that is the obstacle. The help of diviners is often employed to translate for the babies, and Gottlieb (2004) therefore utilized diviners as sources of information on Beng babies' lives as well. In Saraguro, shamanic rituals are commonly used to cure infants' irritability, as I discuss in more detail in chapter five. Regrettably, I inquired too late about attending such a ritual myself, so it is important to maintain one's awareness in the field of alternative venues of communication and learning. Indeed, paying attention to differences in ways of learning can yield a tremendous amount of cultural insight, a topic which the next two chapters explore in greater detail.

### Chapter 3

#### Ways of Knowing: Children in the Chalina

Kiva [my son] was clinging to the folds of my skirt when we arrived at the daycare this morning. The teacher suggested they all go outside and play and Kiva was eventually lured onto the swing, so I paced the play yard while he got warmed up to stay for the day. The sun was shining in the way that it only can do at high altitude, so brightly that already at 8:40 a.m. I could only make out the baby cow in the surrounding field through a squint. Finding a shady refuge under a patio overhang, I happened upon the best lesson I've witnessed here on how to use the *chalina* shawl. The little girl, about 3 years old, bent forward at a 90 degree angle wrapping a doll on her back in traditional sling style. She laid the doll up on her upper back, reached her arms straight out behind her, and stretched out the bright red woolen fabric, moving her arms ever higher up behind her to pull the *chalina* up over her back and, hopefully, her doll. The tiny stationary baby had been jostled around in the process and now lay sideways right on the back of her neck, so the little girl re-positioned her on her back and started the process over again. After 3 or 4 patient attempts, the little babywearer had everything positioned just right, her baby secured under the *chalina*, and she stood up straight, pulling the fabric taut, and started playing at something else with baby on her back.

#### Introduction

How is it that children learn? The last chapter touched on many of the non-linguistic ways that infants both communicate and learn, emphasizing that it is through participation and shared meaning-making that babies come to understand the world. As they engage in emotional and kinesthetic communication with others and read the minds behind the gestures and vocalizations that they observe, they also learn certain cultural norms of interaction. Social participation by infants thus helps to explain how certain practices become embodied, since the learning and practice of them begins at an age which adults and even older children cannot remember anything about. Part of the cultural repertoire that they learn and participate in involves modes of learning themselves.

This chapter reviews theoretical models of learning and cognitive development, as well as the apprenticeship model used to frame my research question, before addressing the ways that learning varies culturally, due in part to the often unconsciously held ethnotheories regarding children and learning. These ethnotheories create a particular 'culture of learning', or a *developmental niche* (Super and Harkness 1986), which supports the way that children learn in any

given culture. In this and the following chapter, I examine broader patterns of informal learning and formal education and, more specifically, babies' involvement with each of these learning styles in the Saraguro context. I argue that the surrounding cultures of learning that support these two different styles in Saraguro represent opposing underlying beliefs regarding child and adult roles, responsibilities, and capabilities, which limit the effectiveness of practices when they are 'cherry-picked' from the opposing culture of learning, as can happen when development theories are exported.

### **Development Models, Apprenticeship, and Ethnotheories of Learning**

#### *Theories of Learning: Cognitive Development and Language Acquisition*

[W]hat we see in the crib is the greatest mind that has ever existed, the most powerful learning machine in the universe (Gopnik, et al. 1999: 1).

While perhaps not phrased in such a way before, children's learning abilities have certainly been sufficiently impressive to lead numerous researchers to examine how this machine works.

Cognitive, emotional, and social development have, in the past, been looked at as distinct zones, and theories were often formulated in experimental laboratory tests devoid of any social context in which these actions would naturally occur. The controlled settings were designed supposedly to limit bias, to be free of external – including cultural – influences, which would therefore reveal the innate, universal, and biologically determined learning mechanisms of infants and children. The results were summarized in linear models whereby children naturally progressed from one stage to the next. The most famous such cognitive theorist is, of course, Jean Piaget, though others also promoted development by stages in intellectual (Arnold Gesell), emotional (Erik Erikson), and moral (Lawrence Kohlberg) domains.

Based on these theories, standardized tests were devised that could rank a given person's level of development along the trajectory. However, conducting these tests on different cultural populations produced wide variations in demonstrated cognitive abilities during everyday situations and their cognitive abilities per the standardized test results. The theories

and standardized tests were proven to reflect a bias towards literate persons familiar with Western forms of formal schooling, and the “self-centered definitions of intelligence” (Rogoff 2003:20) in such tests allowed for only one conceptualization of development and its goals. Both the subject and researcher pools for most experiments have been comprised of white middle-class Europeans and Americans, and it is their cultural norms which have been ‘naturalized’, universalized, and exported in broader theories of cognitive development, education, and learning.

Schieffelin and Ochs (1984) note that language acquisition theories were also largely formulated based on a solitary sociocultural description; what they term the “white middle-class developmental story.” In this story, adults and older children engage in *en face* simplified talk with babies, generally in dyadic conversations, with linguistic interactions that are child-focused and adult-structured, where children’s un- or barely intelligible vocalizations are routinely ‘interpreted’ by adults, and where adults act as children’s conversation partners. Their research with the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea demonstrates that the aforementioned interaction style is only one of many possible repertoires in the world and should not be understood to be the norm from which children everywhere learn, language or otherwise.

### *Cultural Variation in Learning*

Communicative practices are, of course, just one of many facets where the “great cultural range of adaptive paths in childhood learning” (Munroe and Gauvain 2009: 51) can be seen. Learning varies culturally by the type of activities allowed, the setting, and the characters involved. In contrast to the hallowed mother-child dyad in the West, many toddlers and children spend the majority of their day solely in the company of other children, roaming as a self-regulating pack in what might be seen to be potentially dangerous locales (Martini 1994; Maynard and Tovote 2010). Adults in such societies do not view themselves as appropriate conversation partners or playmates for the children, and even young toddlers must therefore find ways to align themselves with the group, rather than to accentuate their own individuality.

Cross-cultural comparisons present diverse expectations for the rate of learning, such as when developmental ‘milestones’ should be passed or competence in suitable behavior should be achieved. In some cultures, such as with the Mayans of Guatemala (Morelli, et al. 1992), infants are accorded a special social status based on the premise that they are incapable of understanding and behaving socially, thereby exempting them from culturally appropriate behavior (Montgomery 2008). Others view the child as needing to want to follow rules voluntarily before its elders will bother with actively teaching (Rogoff 2003). The end objectives of learning and the markers of intelligence may differ as well. For example, social competence and moral elements such as helpfulness and hard work are infused into concepts of intelligence in Japan (Tobin, et al. 1998) as well as many African societies (Harkness, et al. 2009).

With such variety, it should be self-evident that no singular model of learning and development could encompass all people. Infancy has been the last stronghold of biological determinists like Steven Pinker and Paul Bloom. The long-held assumption that babies were free from culture still flourishes in Bloom’s experiment-driven research on infant morality (Bloom 2010), as his findings regarding the innateness of human morality can only be derived if one presupposes that the infants he tested were indeed pure “biobundles” (Gottlieb 2000). Yet a notable theoretical shift has been occurring, even among developmental psychologists, wherein learning is increasingly appraised as being intimately shaped by the socio-cultural context.<sup>9</sup> From their first moments of life, babies’ cognitive development is inherently inseparable from culture, as infants advance their understanding within a particularly structured social environment from a particular set of social actors.

The question then becomes not just how do children learn, but how do children learn within their cultures? Socialization theory suggests that children internalize the cultural values that they observe exhibited around them. Yet this has been criticized for its lack of explanatory

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<sup>9</sup> The names of this growing corpus of scholars (such as Hewlett and Lamb 2005; Lewis and Watson-Gegeo 2004; Morelli et al 1992; Tronick et al 1987; Reddy 2008; Rogoff 1990, 2003; Paradise and Rogoff 2009; Super et al 1996) are littered throughout the pages of this thesis, given developmental psychologists’ primary interest in infants and anthropologists’ paucity of the same, as the previous chapter noted.

power; in other words, how does the process of internalization actually occur? How does something general and external become individual and internal? This inadequacy parallels the mind-body gap, and both of these obstacles happily can be avoided by working from a starting point of participation (Rogoff 2003; Reddy 2008). Putting participation in social relationships at the core of learning also crosses the artificial divides between cognitive, emotional and social development. In the last chapter I presented ways that infants communicate and engage with others, growing in communicative competence with increasing experience and practice. Understanding the nuances of contested and negotiated situations, especially when it comes to the moral realm, can likely only come about experientially (Rydström 2003). As infants are carried with their caregivers during their daily routine interactions, as Saraguro babies often are, or introduced to particular material environments, different opportunities for learning arise. It is this structuring and arranging of babies' social worlds that has the greatest influence on learning, allowing them to observe, and participate from certain activities and people and not others (Rogoff 2003).

#### *Apprenticeship and Guided Participation*

Children are also active in their learning, such that this process should not be viewed solely in traditional socialization models where children are the empty receptacles into which knowledge and culture are poured. A trio of U.S. developmental psychologists points to the rational and scientific ways that babies learn about everyday problems, in addition to emotional cues and mind-reading. "Children are not blank tablets or unbridled appetites or even intuitive seers. They consider evidence, draw conclusions, do experiments, solve problems, and search for the truth" (Gopnik et al. 1999:13). While this scientific approach is perhaps not a self-conscious one, it does certainly require the babies' active participation.

Theoretical frameworks proposed by Lev Vygotsky and Barbara Rogoff incorporate the active role of the child into their approaches, focusing on learning as a participatory process. Vygotsky (1978) stressed the fusion of individual, social, cultural and historical entities as they

intersect at the point of activity, arguing that individual internalization of wider social elements can only happen through participation (Rogoff, et al. 1998). Within the “zone of proximal development” the child is actively involved in learning something that would be impossible to understand or accomplish without guidance by an older, more experienced member of the community. This partner acts as a bridge between the known and unknown, oftentimes via social intellectual tools like literacy or number systems, or via cultural institutions such as schools or community work parties.

The popularization of Vygotsky’s work was a much-needed step towards the appreciation of cultural differences in development. However, his work suffered from the same bias towards literacy and academic discourse that the aforementioned developmental psychologists demonstrated, and Vygotsky’s collaborative research (e.g., Luria 1976) exhibits value judgments regarding the superiority of such societal contexts. Recognizing that school-like communicative interaction styles are only valuable if school attendance and excellence are culturally held developmental goals, Rogoff (1990, 2003) offers an integrated participatory model of cognitive development that is more in tune with anthropology’s appreciation of cultural diversity and systemic views of local meaning-making.

The cultural variation draws attention to the importance of community goals and practices in the arrangements of children’s activities and their engagements with others, to asymmetries in the responsibility of children for learning from the activities in which they participate and observe, and to the tacit and routine nature of children’s guided participation in the shared activities of daily life. (Rogoff 1990:66)

Expanding on Vygotsky’s ideas, Rogoff proposes the concepts of *guided participation* and *apprenticeship in thinking*, which emphasize the cultural variety of developmental goals and resulting pathways of learning, and children’s active role in learning, tacit communication, and everyday routine participation.

Guided participation is not a particular method, but rather an intersubjective process between children and more experienced older children and adults that goes beyond explicitly instructional or socially desired learning. It also includes tacit instructional situations, verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as social institutions, cultural tools and distal learning



arrangements that are not specifically designed for learning purposes. Children understand how to act in novel situations by referring to previous situations they have participated in and the information they have picked up by observing, reading emotional and kinesthetic cues, and processing others' actions and interpretations of events. The particular skills and meanings that children glean from guided participation hinge on the social structuring of learning opportunities, which reflect cultural definitions of development, the skill's applicability to community goals, and the esteemed methods for progressing towards these goals.

Rogoff (1990, 1998) argues that infants' active participation in shared cultural endeavors makes all their learning in social interaction individual at the same time that it is interpersonal. Thus the requirement for a distinct internalization process is eliminated in favor of appropriation, which allows the meanings a child assembles from interactions to change as he or she builds upon subsequent experiences. The apprenticeship metaphor (Mills 2000; Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2007; Rogoff 1990; Rogoff 2003) incorporates the active participation of the learner with the training and socialization efforts of the so-called teachers, demonstrating the bidirectional dynamic nature of the process. While I elected to use the term 'apprenticeship' in my thesis as a more concise way to refer to this intersubjective and interactional process of infants' moral learning, I do so with some caveats.

First, one might assume from the terminology that both an apprentice and a master are engaged in an intentional, or at the very least – conscious, act of learning and teaching, though this intentionality and even consciousness may be lacking across everyday situations in many cultures. For instance, neither the marital couple in the heat of an argument, nor the child privy to it, may intend for the child to pick up on some harsh vocabulary, yet lo and behold, children often seem to repeat such things with amazing accuracy and understand the contexts for which they are reserved. Rogoff does, in fact, repeatedly stress the tacit nature of learning in her models, and I use 'apprenticeship' for its inherent acknowledgement of children's agency in learning while recognizing that the term might not do justice to all the tacit and unintentional learning opportunities I am including under its domain.

The second point of departure is the ethnographic record's ability to refute narrow interpretations of apprenticeship and guided participation. Rogoff (1990) herself admits that most research on guided participation to date has also been conducted on rather homogenous Euro-American middle-class populations, limiting the interpretation of children's social worlds. She nonetheless includes some "organizing features of adult-child interaction" (2003:205) that clearly reflect the assumptions and working models of those populations as characteristic of the way in which guided participation works. For instance, she assumes some kind of complicity from the adults or older partners, even in situations not explicitly designed for their instruction, while they may actually be actively working to prevent children's learning in some circumstances. In explaining the learning of non-essential craft production, David Lancy (2008) writes: "That is, while "scaffolding" and other forms of facilitation of the child's fledgling attempts to learn are considered a critical test of the competence of modern Euroamerican parents (Rogoff 1990), in other societies, parents may actively erect barriers to keep children away from inappropriate knowledge or skill acquisition" (169). Of course, showing children where they may and may not go may also be construed as guided learning. Lancy seems to be making the point, however, that parents are not always eager to facilitate children's independence by structuring and guiding them in the development of new skills.

As a result, I am utilizing the terms apprenticeship, participation, and the structuring of children's environments in a rather broad sense to include the cultural institutions, intellectual tools, and local constructions of the child that shape the realms of cultural possibility for children's participation. Even in activities that are not designed for their learning, where children are truly peripheral participants (Lave and Wenger 1991), they are nonetheless able to process novel information that they would not be able to access without the opportunities for this participation. Likewise, the structuring of their environments can be as general as the broad level of social inclusion that children experience, since the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their presence in particular situations and places structures the breadth and types of social opportunities they have to learn from. Employing these broader understandings of structure and

participation, I utilized the concept of apprenticeship to understand the learning of local morals and cultural values of right and wrong, acknowledging the Saraguro infant's role in the learning process.

Paying special attention to Saraguro infant care practices and any influence that these were thought to have, I examined Saraguro babies' acquisition of moral norms from a cultural developmental perspective. Rather than merely looking at biological development, a cultural examination of infants' capacities acknowledges the abilities of babies being tied to cultural self-fulfilling prophecies.

In the main, these assumptions derive not from evidence of what children are capable of doing, but from what they are enabled to do in any given environment...It is not that children in these contrasting environments have intrinsically different capacities; rather, it is that the expectations from and experiences of children inform their levels of competence. Denying children opportunities for taking responsibility serves to diminish the opportunity to develop the capacities for doing so, and the subsequent lack of capacity is then used to justify the original failure to allow children greater responsibility (Lansdown 2006: 140).

The encouragement or discouragement of particular actions and the structuring of babies' activities are therefore intimately tied to broad cultural interpretations of those around them regarding infants' needs, capabilities, and goals for development.

### *Ethnotheories*

These often unconsciously held interpretations have been termed 'parental ethnotheories' by the anthropologist-developmental psychologist duo, Sara Harkness and Charles Super (e.g., Harkness and Super 1996a; Harkness, et al. 2009; Super and Harkness 1980). Ethnotheories about children and learning are the taken-for-granted cultural models implicitly held by a community regarding what children should become and how they become that way (Goodnow 1996). The desired ends of learning guide expectations for proper or normative ways of acquiring knowledge and skills. Super and Harkness (2009) argue that all cultures are informed by ethnotheories regarding the ways that children's biological dependency should be handled, though the substance of those ethnotheories is far from universal. Cultural

variations in beliefs about children's capabilities, their innate characteristics, what must be taught, what can be picked up on their own, who should teach, and when this should commence result in multiple paths of development and learning. These beliefs in turn form the basis for ideas about how to structure children's environments and the extent of children's inclusion in cultural institutions, as the previous chapter discussed in regards to Saraguro babies. All of these influence the setting, characters, relationships and types of learning activities children engage in.

As the site for much of this cultural production and reproduction is in routine everyday activities (Ortner 1984), practice theory provides a useful way to understand infants' embodied appropriation of the culturally available path of development and adults' instantiation of cultural beliefs about children's learning (Goodnow 1996; Rydstrom 2003; Schwartzman 2001b). From infancy, children are learning how to learn, per a particular cultural viewpoint. As babies participate in particular practices and learn to utilize cultural tools and navigate cultural institutions they are learning how to learn. The embodiment of cultural practices in infancy makes enormous sense given that infants' communication and participation often occurs kinesthetically. So it is that the "practical mastering of particular situations is... learned by the body, first and foremost through practice, and it does not therefore inevitably rise to the level of language or consciousness" (Rydstrom 2003: 28).

The sense that these embodied approaches to learning makes is reinforced on multiple levels within any given culture, since the different developmental goals, methods, tools, institutions, and learning environments all fit together within a particular historical and social context. Sometimes called the *developmental niche* (Super and Harkness 1986, 2002), the unique set of factors combine to make the learning of a specific cultural outlook both systemic and systematic.

The developmental niche framework makes evident the kind of systematic regularity that culture provides – environmental organization that emphasizes repeatedly or with singular salience the culture's core "messages"...it is through such cultural thematicity that the environment works its most profound influences on development. This quality of "contemporary redundancy" is important for the acquisition of skills and competencies, as

it offers multiple opportunities for learning the same thing, whether that “thing” is reading, sibling caretaking, or the communication of emotions. (Harkness, et al. 2009: 76)

As I will discuss in chapter four, the integrated and reinforcing nature of a cultural system means that practices from one culture of learning, or developmental niche, cannot easily be cherry-picked and inserted into another without changing other system elements as well. For instance, changes in work, the prevalence of formal schooling, and migration are connected to changes in parent-child relations, caregiving arrangements, and models of interaction between caregivers and children. Innovative practices develop by synthesizing historical traditions, current circumstances, and other communities’ ways of living, providing creative models of child-rearing that allow continuity with the whole system of values in a community. This is not necessarily a straightforward process, however, particularly when the practices necessitate rather large shifts in underlying values that often never rise to the point of reflexive articulation. In the Saraguro context early childhood education programs brought these issues to the fore, as formal education and informal ways of learning alternately clashed against, capitulated to, and compromised with each other.

### **Informal Learning**

#### *Multilayered Support of Observational Learning*

While children everywhere acquire some of their knowledge and skills by observation, certain cultures rely on the observational learning technique more heavily than others and consequently enable more opportunities for utilizing it (Gaskins and Paradise 2010). Though formal education may be utilized in conjunction with more informal learning techniques in home and community settings, I argue that ethnotheories about children and about learning lead to preferential treatment of one or the other, in terms of the multiple layers of coherent and systemic support. Across cultures where observational and experiential forms of learning are valued as a primary learning strategy, patterns can often be seen in communication styles, opportunities for community participation, responsibility for organizing learning, methods for

increasing competence, and adult-child roles. These multiple patterns are actually interdependent practices that comprise one integrated system of observational learning, and as such, they should be looked at holistically rather than as separate factors (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). In this section I will discuss this proposed system in light of the Saraguros' unique developmental niche, illustrating their non-interventionist, observational, and experiential approach to learning with particular attention to babies' opportunities for tacit learning in routine everyday situations. This learning approach resonates with particular cultural values bred by distinctive historical and economic contextual factors, as well as the Saraguro social construction of childhood.

Informal learning by observation is extensively noted throughout the ethnographic record (e.g., Belote and Belote 1984a; Bolin 2006; Fortes 1970 [1938]; Gaskins 1996; Gopnik, et al. 1999; Gulløv 2003; Lancy 2008), but it has often been regarded as a passive learning process when compared with formal schooling. The passivity of observational learning has been refuted by detailing how the learner mobilizes his or her own motivations to take initiative to direct his or her attention to what is happening and processes that information, either replicating what was learned or building on it.

Children's keen observation and participation imply more than simple, casual presence. Their presence is characterized by an openness that indicates active cognitive, social, and emotional participation in what is being learned, and an awareness of the relevance of many aspects of ongoing events, even when they are otherwise engaged (Paradise and Rogoff 2009: 111).

The overarching pattern that facilitates observational learning is a high degree of children's inclusion in mature community activities of work and socializing (Fortes 1970 [1938]; Gaskins 1996; Gaskins and Paradise 2010; Lancy 2008; Rogoff 2003). Mandatory formal schooling is often associated with the social and spatial segregation of children (Lancy 2008; LeVine 2007; Maynard and Tovote 2010; Rogoff 2003; Valentine 2004). Children who attend school may still be largely included in mature community activities, which often happens when the family's economic activity is home-based (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Yet children might also be

segregated before they reach the age of formal schooling based on cultural ethnotheories defining the best environments for young children (Martini 1994).

When children are not segregated from the adult world but rather participate by observation in all aspects from infancy, most learning takes place in a naturally occurring context of skill/task/knowledge production, observing someone who is completing the activity for its own sake rather than demonstrating solely for the learner's sake (Bolin 2006; Gaskins and Paradise 2010; Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Learning is therefore more concretely grounded and processed via multiple senses rather than acquired abstractly in a contrived instructional setting.

As the situations to be observed and learned from are not explicitly designed for instruction, it is the observer who must harness an intrinsic motivation for learning and then shoulder the responsibility for organizing the learning process (Gaskins and Paradise 2010; Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Much of the learning takes place by focusing one's visual attention on what is happening, though other senses are also employed, as well as emotion, which is often a crucial component of moral lessons (Harkness, et al. 2009; Tobin, et al. 1998). The "fusing of emotional and intellectual domains" (Harkness and Super 1996a) during observational learning was noted by a Pueblo student, whose understanding of school learning and community learning as truly separate processes was poignantly summarized in the remark, "With school, basically all you have to do is try. You don't have to feel it in your heart" (Super and Harkness 1980: 106). The purpose of the observational lesson is self-evident, and the desire to learn it comes from the child (Schwartzman 2001b). No energy is wasted by the observed person in forcing the child to direct or sustain attention to particular focal points, nor by the observer in figuring out the task-related goal (Wood 1998), the appropriate discourse to use, or which experiential framework to hang abstract bits of information onto (Bolin 2006). This is child-directed learning in its truest form, with the child self-regulating his or her involvement by deciding what to pay attention to, for how long, and how to apply it.

Child-directed should not, however, be confused with being child-centered. In most societies relying heavily on observational learning the children fit themselves to the adult way of

life, rather than vice versa (Fortes 1970 [1938]). Since the children take the onus of learning upon themselves and are culturally viewed as competent to do so without “adult manipulation” (Scribner and Cole 1973: 282), adults do not center their own activities or conversation according to what they think could be potential pedagogical moments for the children. This creates an interaction style between adults and children that is markedly different from so-called “child-centered” societies. First, the verbal communication present during observational learning is often more concise and directive, coordinated with demonstrations of the task at hand, rather than merely relying on lengthy verbal explanations. “Talk is not used in a way that attempts to *substitute* for involvement in a productive activity, but rather *in the service* of carrying out that activity” (Paradise and Rogoff 2009: 118 ).

The necessity of talk as a substitution for participation is noted in more child-centered Euro-American societies. There are some fundamental beliefs regarding who and how things are learned that lie beneath the presence of talk with babies in these societies; first, that the infant is *able* to learn, perhaps even beginning in utero (Keller 2007), and second, that teaching is an effective way of facilitating the child’s learning (Peshkin 1997). In contrast, many cultures believe that children learn best on their own or from other children without adult intervention (Briggs 1999; Mead 1970; Peshkin 1997), and that infants are ‘senseless’ or otherwise unable to learn anything for quite some time after birth (Fortes 1970 [1938]; Fung 1999). The almost exclusive reliance on verbal communication for learning in Western school settings is thought to result from the overarching pattern mentioned previously: the degree of social and spatial inclusion of children in the productive activities of their communities. As Western formal education systems largely separate children from those activities, verbal re-constructions of real situations must be relied upon to contextualize learning processes (Paradise and Rogoff 2009). Additionally, it has been hypothesized that a greater reliance on verbal communication begins long before school, as the spatial segregation of infants from their caretakers (in different beds and/or rooms for all their sleeping hours and limited body contact during waking hours) necessitates a distal form of communication (Rogoff, et al. 1998). This viewpoint would likely be



supported by evolutionary anthropologists as well, who have posited that language itself developed as a result of human babies' and mothers' needs to communicate with each other when separated (Hrdy 2009). At any rate, infants in those child-centered societies are often played and conversed with by their adult caregivers and older toddlers are often "quizzed" by parents with known-answer questions to facilitate their learning.

By contrast, when children are socially included in the productive activities of more mature community members, there is no need for verbal substitution. Communicative interactions generally consist of multiple parties rather than dyads, with the child responsible for his or her own learning by listening in, observing, and – where culturally appropriate – asking questions or trying out activities (Fortes 1970 [1938]). In the learning process children exercise general dispersed attention rather than narrowly focused attention and align themselves to adults' activities rather than being the focus themselves. Children are not generally thought to be appropriate conversation partners (Lancy 2008), and adults do not ask children questions to which they already know the answers. Adults spend little time in direct instruction, and when they do explicitly teach it is often by demonstration rather than verbally (Gaskins and Paradise 2010; Paradise and Rogoff 2009).

As Paradise and Rogoff (2009) note, this group of patterns seems to emerge in societies who emphasize observation as a primary learning strategy because the practices are interdependent. Thus, social participation in mature community activities, embedded learning, self-motivated and self-regulated learning, and a lack of child-centeredness in the structuring of adult conversation and adult-child interactions should be seen as facets of a more integrated, holistic system that facilitates observational learning in a coordinated way.

### *Observing Observation*

Observational learning is of particular interest to me due to my core research concern with moral learning. Social conduct and moral rules are often hard to explicate and highly circumstantial, thus one must be exposed to demonstrations by more experienced members of

the community to understand the nuances and proper navigation of specific events. Rydstrom (2003) illustrates this exact point in her ethnography about the moral training of northern Vietnamese girls, who are introduced to numerous situations that must be negotiated differently as they accompany older women of the community.

Observing children's learning by observation, however, is a methodological challenge for researchers, since learning is integrated into everyday routine interactions. The temporal and spatial possibilities for observing such informal learning are almost limitless, yet, at the same time, nearly invisible. It may be difficult to know when certain bits and bobbles of information are being noted, processed, and stored as building blocks for future activity. Children may be learning from situations in which no one is explicitly trying to teach or instruct and the children themselves are not explicitly trying to learn.

Gaskins and Paradise (2010) highlight the continual nature of learning possibilities when one recognizes that not all attention is the same; rather, they distinguish a wide-angled and distributed attention called 'open attention' as a commonly employed skill set encouraged in societies that prioritize learning by observation. While children in societies with extensive schooling also demonstrate open attention in the learning of their mother tongue (Gopnik, et al. 1999; Nisbett 2004), it appears that Western forms of schooling train pupils to channel both attention and thought itself in particular ways (Paradise and Rogoff 2009; Stairs 1991). Western academic settings encourage short, narrowly-focused, sequential bouts of concentration, which are difficult to sustain for long periods of time. Open attention can be concentrated or general, but once cultivated as a way of observing, it seems to always be turned on, so to speak. It is a stand-alone method of learning as well as a technique that is coordinated with other learning strategies like direct demonstration, activity-based work, narratives, or evaluations of their performance (Gaskins and Paradise 2010). As the onus for organizing the learning process falls on the observer, and babies – especially in their pre-linguistic days – will not likely be alerting others of their intention or desire to learn or be giving a step-by-step verbal commentary on the process, it can be difficult to see this type of learning.

For my research purposes, I was interested less in locating specific instances of learning or in attempting to track or measure it, but rather in the cultural beliefs that Saraguros held about children's learning that constituted their own developmental niche. Therefore, I found it more useful to note the kinds of social situations that Saraguro babies were privy to and could potentially learn from in their day-to-day lives. The participatory opportunities babies have at their disposal are primary factors in the path their learning takes (Rogoff, et al. 1998), with the degree of babies' social and spatial inclusion in community life an important structural consideration.

For these reasons, babywearing offered a particularly good window onto Saraguro babies' observational learning. As many of the participants in the age group I was researching were not yet very mobile, the *chalina* sling used in the local babywearing style was a practical cultural tool as well as a significant site of informal learning. Babywearing allowed the Saraguro young to take on the role of legitimate peripheral participants (Lave and Wenger 1991), involved in largely all the same situations as the adults who cared for them. They were therefore exposed to a number of productive activities, such as buying and selling in the markets and stores, herding, planting, wedding, harvesting, spinning yarn, knitting, beading jewelry, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, carpentry, foraging, feeding and slaughtering animals, collecting eggs, milking cows, cutting wood, and accompanying parents who worked in service-oriented positions on house calls or to their offices. Infants also had a rich social life as they were included in fiestas, churches, town meetings, weddings, office parties, *mingas* (communal work parties), and visits to extended family. Other scholars have also noted how babywearing grants babies wide exposure to community practices, allowing for broad social inclusion and participation (Chisholm 1978; Rogoff 1990; Rogoff 2003; Whiting and Edwards 1988).

### **Letting Children Learn in Saraguro**

Observational learning continues to be relied upon in the Saraguro context, where the active role of the observer was accentuated by a cultural emphasis on hard work and trial-and-

error attempts to increase one's competence. The great variety of activities and social scenarios that babies were able to witness from the *chalina* was a good introductory stage for their apprenticeship. Furthermore, children are encouraged from a young age to learn experientially, by trial and error, in order to increase their levels of competence and eventually become independent. In this section I will present an overview of this non-interventionist learning system in Saraguro, peppered with examples from the field, and will further examine the integration of this learning approach with influential historical and economic factors. Finally, I return to the aforementioned holistic system seen in societies who place a large emphasis on observational learning and present fieldwork scenarios that demonstrate each of the five interdependent points in Saraguro.

Saraguro infants and toddlers have traditionally been taken care of, cuddled, and played with, but they have not been trained through a formal pedagogy, since the assumption that babies are competent to observe and learn on their own results in parents doing little overt 'teaching.' The responsibility for learning new skills was assumed to lie with the children themselves, as they observed older children or adults who were proficient in a given task and became motivated to imitate what they saw. Learning opportunities are afforded by giving children responsibilities (see below) and freedom to explore their environments.

Our children, like [my son] Noah, have a lot of liberty. They need liberty, not too much, but they need liberty so that they can learn, so that they don't just become robots that eat and sleep on cue. – Juanita, mother of one

When it comes to attaining new developmental skills like crawling and walking, or learning new skills and how to use tools, children need to get their hands dirty – and often their knees scraped – to explore and learn undirected. From a young age, children are encouraged to learn adult activities by *doing*, and caregivers reinforce experiential learning by minding their own business while children are attempting to learn.

Parents shouldn't intervene unless it is really serious; they shouldn't get in the way of the children learning. – Flor, mother of three

The non-interventionist stance towards babies' learning is practiced by caregivers of all ages, as older children are also encouraged to adopt this approach with younger siblings.

At dinnertime, one-year-old Eva was crawling around the table and attempting to walk with her eight-year-old brother Simón. Simón would stand a few steps away and say, "Párate, párate, párate!" to encourage her to stop crawling and stand up. Then she would walk towards him and fall into his arms giggling. Ximena chastised Simón him, "Leave her be, Simón! Don't help her too much or she won't learn." Field notes, July 28, 2010

One Saraguro father who recently returned from working in the United States illustrated the self-fulfilling prophecies created by the two cultures' divergent beliefs about intervention and children's capabilities.

"My co-worker in the U.S. has a three-year-old son who still wears diapers! Can you believe that? Diapers!" (I felt a bit embarrassed telling him that our 35-month-old son still routinely wore diapers to bed and on all our bus trips, so I didn't.) "They just don't teach them to tell the parents when they have to go. I taught my son when he was a year and a half old. Of course they [the U.S. toddlers] could [do it] too, but the parents don't teach the children to notify them." – Marco, father of two

Marco also remarked on the role of overprotection in creating differences in children's competence with potentially dangerous items like building materials and tools, pointing to all the product warnings and emphasis on safety in the U.S., even on everyday items like plastic bags.

Every child here has access to plastic bags and I have never seen one kid put the bag over his head. Why do they need a written warning about that? Trying is how kids learn. Kids in the U.S. can't do a lot of things that Saraguro children routinely do because adults don't let them learn.

Marco's example hints at an underlying contrast between Saraguro and U.S. social constructions of the child and the resultant responsibilities of adults vis-à-vis the child. A Western emphasis on the child as vulnerable and in need of protection necessitates adult intervention; whereas in Saraguro, the construction of the child as a being whose competence is only limited by inexperience necessitates adult *non*-intervention. In both cases, the adult role becomes a moral issue, a marker of 'good' or 'proper' parenting, but in Saraguro overprotection in the form of parental intervention, even for safety's sake, is generally regarded as a negative thing.

If the child is crawling and falls over or hits something and the parent immediately rushes over pick them up, then the child doesn't learn. The world isn't all rose-colored, and they have to learn by making mistakes, 'golpeando se aprende' ("in hitting, one learns"). – Grandmother caregiver of 19-month-old

You have to let the children learn by themselves; staying out of danger is something that is better for children to learn for themselves, so that they learn to take care of themselves. For example, if you tell the baby/child not to do something because they will get hurt, and they continue to try to do it, I just let them do it, and when they fall or hurt themselves doing it, they learn, and they won't do it again....It is worse for the parents to be over-protective, because in that way the children never learn anything. If a child is going to fall, they need to fall and learn from it, the parents can't be getting in the way all the time. – Village nurse, mother of 4

Among the Saraguros it is believed that children reach higher levels of competency and learn to become independent by violating norms, suffering consequences, and making mistakes.

We don't intervene too much. They [the daycare workers] try to let the children figure it out, not to tell them what to do, to figure out themselves what is right and wrong and the consequences for their actions. – mother of child at village daycare

It should be noted, however, that even in societies who highly value learning by observation, intervention is often still noted in two spheres: teaching children to "fit in" to moral and social norms, and teaching children to contribute to the household (Peshkin 1997).

Anthropologists who have done fieldwork in Saraguro have likewise mentioned that parents restrict their interventions to instances of a child hurting another child or to enforce a child's performance of chores (Belote and Belote 1984a). However, even in these instances of physical fighting, the quality and timing of Saraguro adults' intervention often differed from my U.S.-informed expectations. For instance, when children were hitting each other at daycare, one child was merely picked up and moved to a different location and given something to play with; I never witnessed yelling, severe scolding, "time outs" or physical punishment of the perpetrator. One day we picked our son up from daycare with a deep bite on his arm. After some probing, we discovered that the biter had been provoked by our son throwing toys at him. Although other daycare parents and the workers wanted to put a halt to the biting, especially when he went on to become a repeat offender, there was also a recognition that this consequence of my son's actions was a normal part of the learning process. One mother's statement, "Better that he

comes home with a bite on his arm and learns not to throw things at other children,” was repeated in similar terms by others that I told about the incident.

The other area in which the Belotes noted a greater tendency to intervene was the fulfillment of household contributions. The age group that I was focused on, 0 to 3-year-olds, was not yet held accountable for much, though the seeds for the blossoming of their future contributions were certainly being planted. Even Saraguro babies participate in the fulfillment of mature productive tasks, initially as observers but gradually increasing their physical participation and proficiency in tasks through trial and error. Outside of the contemporary West, where child labor is something from which children need to be protected, most children engage in work as part of their learning on the pathway to adulthood, and job-related knowledge may be picked up in a relatively short amount of time without any formal teaching by adults (Lancy 2008). This “chore curriculum” (Sterponi 2010) is noted in one grandmother’s historical narrative about her own childhood and that of her children.

“Children should just try to do it and see what works, and then try something different if it needs improvement. My younger brother was 6 years younger than me, and I was expected to take care of him completely. I changed and washed his diapers, washed his clothes, prepared his *colada* [a grain-thickened beverage] and his food, helped put him to sleep, dressed him, had to go out in the fields and pick the *zapallo* [a local squash] and peel the potatoes to prepare his food, cook for him, everything.” I asked how she learned to do all of those things. “Just trying. When my mother first told me to peel potatoes, I didn’t know how to do it, and I cut my fingers, but then the next day I did it a little better and the next a little better still, etcetera. That’s how it was; you just tried to learn from your mistakes.

My children had to start doing chores at age 4, make their own beds – even though we had employees at home to help clean the house, the children were always expected to make their own beds and look after their own things – and wash their clothes starting at 4 or 5. Of course they didn’t do a very good job of it and I would have to redo all their work, but if they don’t start trying to do it then they will never learn. I told them that they should try to do it better the next time and slowly, slowly they learn how to do those things. With cooking I would give them simple things to cook, like rice, not anything fried, because they could hurt themselves, but by 10 or 11 my girls all could cook the rice at least. They learned how to do it without burning themselves by practicing.” – Amelia, grandmother of eight

As Amelia reveals, there is a tolerant understanding for the imperfect results that young children's trial and error attempts will produce. The important thing was for children to try, and to keep trying new things until they improved and got a task right.

In Saraguro being a hard worker is one defining component of morality (Belote and Belote 1984a), and young children can begin to mark themselves as such with their household contributions. This has created a point of conflict between Saraguro practice and current Ecuadorian laws regarding the rights of childhood. Within the legal code's fuzzy definitions of abuse, the young Saraguro child's chores and contributions to the household may be seen as both immoral and illegal, which is contested by Saraguros.

For example, going to collect wood on the mountain, *mestizos* say is '*maltrato*' [abuse] –to us *indígenas* this is not abuse. Physical abuse, physically hitting the children – that is *maltrato*, but doing chores is part of learning. They need to learn to be part of the family unit. Part of the learning is not to see these things – gathering firewood, raising guinea pigs, gathering the grasses for them, pasturing the sheep, cooking – as an obligation, but rather for them to learn to be motivated themselves to contribute to the family. They learn that it is for the welfare of the family, not for capitalism, for gaining more and more and more. These activities are part of their tradition, part of who they are. We could get eggs at the shop, two steps away from our house, but raising the chickens ourselves is part of tradition too. The children grow up with these animals and they watch and start of their own volition and curiosity to want to help, by feeding them, gathering eggs. They see the parents doing it and want to do it too. – Liliana, mother of three

The historical tradition of children contributing to the household is closely linked to the non-interventionist learning approach, an approach also documented by anthropologists Linda and Jim Belote in the 1960s. They linked the lack of intervention in childrearing practices to children's traditional work as herders, during which they would need to be responsible and independent decision-makers. Oftentimes a Saraguro family's landholdings were, and still are, noncontiguous parcels, some even spread widely between different altitudinal and climatic zones. Due to this dispersion of household productive activities, a micro-level exemplar of a typical Andean organizational pattern described as 'vertical archipelagoes' (Murra 1985), children herding the cows or sheep in the pastureland may be many hours' walk away from the family home. Some of the parents I talked with told of the small temporary shelters up in the



mountaintop *paramo* pasture where they slept overnight when bad weather or distance prevented them from returning home. Children were net contributors to the family welfare and efficient use of scattered resources required workers able to make decisions independently. This was engendered by granting autonomy and responsibility (Belote and Belote 1984a).

It has been proposed that a relation exists between social organization, beliefs about children, and environments. “Variations in beliefs about children across cultural groups exist to the extent that ecologies and social systems vary. ...the culture....creates particular types of experiences that then lead to beliefs about the nature of the child and development” (McGillicuddy-De Lisi and Subramanian 1996: 146). Ethnographic fieldwork among llama herders in Peru and reindeer herders in Norway suggests that similar economic activities and environmental constraints may engender similar approaches to learning as experienced by the Saraguros. Among the Chillihuani of the Peruvian Andes and the Sami of Norway, who also rely on children’s competence while they are working alone with the herds, non-interventionist childcare practices are also the norm, and autonomy and independent decision-making abilities in children are culturally prized (Bolin 2006; Reddy and Morris 2004).

Although nowadays more Saraguro children are integrated into authoritarian school structures than into the herding profession, this has not completely eroded the cultivation of these characteristics through childrearing practices. An appreciation for the autonomy of both children and adults alike therefore results in a general Saraguro approach to learning that views direct control over children’s actions rather negatively.

An additional factor restricting instructional interventions in infancy may lie with the high infant mortality rate that Saraguros have historically suffered (Belote and Belote 1984a; Finerman 2004). Parental goals theory (LeVine 1974) posits that parents will not invest time and energy into pedagogy until more basic survival is ensured (Morss 1988). Such was the case of Bonerate babies, for example, who were suffering a 60% mortality rate at the time of Harald Broch’s research on the small Indonesian island. For Bonerate caregivers, “the major goal....is to keep them alive [not] enculturation” (Dunn 1998: 31). Not only were Bonerate caregivers

unconcerned with teaching their children, they also seemed rather emotionally unattached (Dunn 1998), a sentiment that has been noted by a number of anthropologists since Nancy Scheper-Hughes(1996) first publicized her famous account of apparently apathetic mothering in a Brazilian favela. Although infant mortality has improved significantly since the Belotes' time in Saraguro, infants and young children still frequently suffer from diarrhea and respiratory infections (Finerman 2004), which may support a continued emphasis on mere survival in the early years.

### **The Multilayered Observational Learning System in Saraguro**

Historical, ecological and economic factors thus made the lack of intervention in Saraguro children's learning an advantageous approach. These factors, combined with a social construction of the child as potentially competent but in need of experience, create an environment in which informal observational learning has been and continues to be relied upon as a primary learning system. The various coherently integrated patterns, detailed above, which emerge in other societies who likewise heavily emphasize observational learning of this system of observational learning, were also readily discernible in the Saraguro context.

As mentioned previously, a foundational premise for observational learning is the inclusion of children into mature community activities. The absence of spatial segregation in Saraguro has already been touched upon in Chapter 2 and will be expanded in Chapter 5 as well. For this reason, I will concentrate here on the two aspects of childrearing at the heart of my research – sleep practices and babywearing – and the ways that these facilitated Saraguro babies' inclusion into mature adult life.

At night almost all Saraguro babies co-sleep with their parents, a practice which has been noted by Rogoff (2003) as a way to integrate children into adult lives and allow for continuous involvement in social life both day and night. Parents generally expressed shock and/or sadness for babies who were separated from their parents, and many made it clear that their older children still slept with them as well, an arrangement which they seemed to be

perfectly content with. They also questioned me about why North Americans were averse to co-sleeping with their babies. In the following excerpts one sees that the spatial segregation of babies in sleeping arrangements sits uncomfortably with these mothers, who seem to take children's equal participation and inclusion as a *sine qua non* of family life. Additionally, they highlight that children's physical dependence necessitates social engagement such as co-sleeping, and that it is *through* this engagement – not without it – that independence is learned.

Continuing on the list of reasons against co-sleeping in North America, I told Isabela that baby 'experts' advise making the child sleep separately so that they will become independent, because some people argue that co-sleeping children will never leave the parents' bed and will therefore not become independent. First of all, Isabela didn't seem to think it was a problem for 6-year-olds to sleep with their parents and said that some children decide on their own to move out of the parental bed. Her sister was 12 and still sleeping with her parents and one day said, 'I don't want to sleep there anymore, I would like my own bed.' Second, Isabela said that this is not how children become independent. They become independent by being included in the activities of the family, watching and observing and imitating, and this is how they learn to do things by themselves. Isabela also talked about the security and safety a child feels if they sleep with the parents, and that this is important for development. – Field Notes November 24, 2010 (interview with Isabela, mother of 3)

"We had bought a little crib, a little separate bed for her [10-month-old daughter Gloria] at first, but I felt bad putting her in it, and so we never used it and got rid of it. I think it is sad to leave a baby in another room, especially if they let them cry. I, anyway, felt bad having my baby in another bed, I felt sorry for her." Later, after asking me about North American practices and the reasons behind them, Julia said, "I don't agree with the North American sleep experts. Babies [in cribs] are separated, not independent. And anyway, when they are very little they can't be independent, they shouldn't be." – Julia, mother of 1

Of course, babies do a lot of sleeping, and not all of that sleeping is at night. In Saraguro, infants and toddlers are commonly worn in the *chalina* to help them fall asleep when they seem 'restless', tired, or fussy. As such they are also socially included during daytime sleep, with the sounds and motions of the characters and activities of their community as nap companions, rather than teddy bears or pacifiers. Chisholm (1978) reported that using a cradleboard allowed Navajo babies, who often slept while they were strapped in, to stay in close proximity to their mothers and others throughout the day and to be included in more family activities, thus allowing for much social interaction. In their waking hours, being carried in the *chalina* allows Saraguro babies to be included in everything the caregivers do.

I carried all 5 of my kids; there was no daycare back then so I had to carry them and take them everywhere with me. I carried my babies until they were about 2 and a half or three years old, until the next one came along; the children were between 2 years and 2 yrs 7 months apart. I carried them while tending the cattle, sheep, and inside the house doing chores. Well, it's true that the baby may be mistreated some being carried all the time – if it rains on the mother [while she is] up on the *cerro* [the mountaintop pasture land], it rains on the baby too; if the sun is very hot beating down on the mother, it does to the baby too, so in that way the baby could be mistreated. But, being carried, babies see more, they see everything when they are being carried. – Doña Magdalena, grandmother of 1

[In the *chalina*] children see everything the mother does. Babies in strollers are 'shut in' (*encerrados*) and they don't get to see anything. – Camila, mother of 4

Babies observe a lot more activities if they are carried than if they stay at home. Without a car, carrying the baby allows you to go anywhere; if I put her [19-month-old daughter] in the *chalina*, I can walk all the way to Guayas [coastal province of Ecuador] with her if I want! (Laughs) Because I have to walk some distance to get home, I need to carry [babywear] her, because just carrying in my arms, I won't get very far. – María Magdalena, mother of 3

The second major pattern noted in the holistic observational learning system was that learning is embedded in the contexts of natural occurrence, rather than in contrived learning experiences centered on the children. Saraguro parents do not often ask their children known-answer questions, read them story books, or ask the children to recount their day. Instruction occurs in the midst of an activity being performed, sometimes by demonstration, as in the case of an older child cousin directing one-and-a-half-year-old Emilio's hand to the proper place in the chicken coop to find the eggs, or the following example:

The kids just watched what I was doing when I would spin wool and say, 'Mommy, I want to do it too,' and they would start to pluck the wool out and try to spin. Or when I was making jewelry they would say, 'Mommy, I want to do it too' and I would give them beads and line for them to try to string them too. That's how they are. You don't have to teach them directly because they will watch and learn; they want to try to do it too. – Ximena, mother of 4

It was noted earlier that both among the Saraguros (Belote and Belote 1984a) and societies relying on observational learning more generally (Peshkin 1997), interventions for direct teaching do still often occur for teaching culturally valued lessons, such as morals. These moments of direct teaching, however, are generally still embedded in the context of natural occurrence.

Babies need to be taught some things directly by adults; they also learn from other children, but they need a mixture, because children are children, and they can't guide a younger child in the same way by explaining why one does or doesn't do certain things. With issues of right and wrong, you have to explain to them that something hurts somebody and that is why we don't do it. The parent has to talk to the child and teach them (verbally)...The parent should give them things in a way that encourages sharing. For example, never give a child a whole bread [roll]. You give them a piece, always just a piece, that way they are not accustomed to having the whole thing for themselves and don't expect that it is all for them; it is always shared. My niece came to live with us while my sister was in Spain, and, as that niece was the youngest child by quite a lot, she had been accustomed to getting everything for herself. She would cry if you only gave her a piece because she didn't want to share. She cried, but after awhile she learned to share. – Amelia, grandmother of eight

At lunch in the daycare, one of the little girls was told to eat only with her spoon, not to drink the soup. The children were then specifically reminded to only use their right hand to hold the spoon and eat. I later asked about this at the dinner table. Ernesto said that yes, children were told to eat with their right hand as that is the custom around here; his wife called from the kitchen that it was because of the belief that eating with your left hand brings bad luck. – Field notes July 30, 2010

The third characteristic of the holistic observational system was that the responsibility for the motivation and regulation of the learning process lies with the observer. Demonstrating the presence of one's motivation and internal processing of a learning event is rather difficult, for the previously noted reasons of learning's apparent invisibility. One example can be found, however, in the case of our host family's five-year-old daughter pitching in while her mother was washing clothes. She voluntarily decided to wash her baby sister's clothes (self-motivation) and then came to her mother later when she had stopped washing and said she wasn't coming along very well (assessment and self-regulation of her involvement). It was much easier to observe the absence of its opposite: adult structuring of the learning process and adult encouragement for children to learn.

This absence was highlighted by the fourth component of the learning system, the interaction style between adults and children. Saraguro adults did not routinely try to draw children into conversations and elicit verbal narratives from them. This is not to say that there was no conversation, but rather that children often sat quietly and listened while the adults conversed and then went off to play and talk amongst themselves, without much adult interest

in children's conversation. In social situations with others, babies were greeted and cooed over, generally played with for a few moments, but were not talked to much beyond that. Babies who could walk were usually left to play on their own or with the older children. Caregivers alone with their babies could often be heard singing while they worked, with baby either carried in the *chalina* or toddling nearby, but little conversation was had other than short directives to stay out of or away from particular things. There was an absence of storybook reading (certainly due in part to the high cost and lack of availability) and subsequent questioning of objects and activities that were abstractly presented on a two-dimensional page, as well as an absence of asking questions that the adults already knew the answers to. This style of interaction, which is commonly used in classrooms, reflects something of a power hierarchy in the knowledge differential, as the 'teacher' has all the answers and therefore the power to judge correct and incorrect responses by the student.

The difference between this and the Saraguro interaction style became shockingly evident when our host family hosted three Spanish volunteer tourists, who spent a few weeks in the community teaching a summer program for area children. On the first night during dinner with the family, the three Spanish ladies each attempted to bring the children into the conversation, directing questions to the children as much as to the adult parents. After dinner the tourists hovered around the 8-year-old and 5-year-old at the table, reading them story books that they had brought from Spain for two hours, asking the children questions about the stories, as well as many other questions about the children's likes and dislikes. They brought alphabet and other educational coloring handouts for the children and asked the children known-answer questions about the colors, letters, and so on.

They were physically affectionate with the children while doing so, stroking their hair, holding their hands, hugging, holding them on their laps, and sitting with their arms around the children. Their physicality with these children whom they had just met was striking since the children's parents did not even engage with them in such a way, at least not in our presence. In the months we lived there, I only saw the host father hold the 5-year-old on his lap twice during

after-dinner conversation with me, and one time the host mother kissed her one-year-old at the dinner table.

On the last night of their stay, the Spanish tourists reflected on their experiences in Saraguro and talked about how much more independent Saraguro children were, revealing the differences in the Spanish and Saraguro ideas about children's needs, capabilities, and responsibilities, as well as the adult's proper role.

The Spanish tourists mentioned that the whole reason they were here was for the kids. The tourist from Seville talked about how kids here are much more independent than similarly aged kids in Spain. She was going to accompany some child to the bathroom while camping and one of the local guys accompanying them on the trip told her she didn't need to do that. She said she was surprised because in Spain you would accompany children until they were 8 or 9 years old. Ernesto said that at 8 years old children are pretty much capable of doing everything and looking after younger siblings too. The Seville tourist said that she works for social services in Spain and sometimes has families from South America who let their 6-year-olds go around alone and stay home alone with a 3-year old sibling. She said that she has to tell them that she understands that they do that in their country but that in Spain that is unthinkable. Social services can come and take their children away because they will think they are neglecting them.

Ximena and Ernesto said that people here do that too and that they leave Simón (8 years old) and Alvina (5 years old) home too, but just for a little bit. 'For ten minutes or so,' said Ernesto, because he doesn't really think that is good. (Incidentally, we have seen them home without their parents for a couple hours at a time, though, since we were present, it is hard to say if they would also leave the children for such a long time if we weren't on the property. They could just be lying to this tourist given her obvious moral judgment about this being a form of neglect.) Ximena said some people go live abroad and leave the kids at home if there is a kid around 12 years or older. The Seville tourist said that she understands that they *can* survive without the parents but that the best place for children is with their parents. – Field Notes August 22, 2010

The tourists' understandings about who was a child and what children should do conflicted with the family's understandings, as they later revealed to us that the 12-year-old daughter seemed sad because she didn't want to play and just 'be a child', instead engaging responsibly in much of the domestic work, caring for the younger children, helping to cook, serving meals, and cleaning up. The belief that children should carry little responsibility – that their 'job' is simply to learn, be loved, and to have fun – reinforced the types of conversational and knowledge-producing interactions that the tourists tried to create with the children.

In contrast, the 12-year-old daughter, by her own and her mother's accounts, was more adult than child. She was responsible and dependable to look after her younger siblings, run the household in her mother's absence, and to make and sell jewelry by herself at the family's *artesanía* stand at the local gas station during festivals. She was considered a good daughter because, in her mother's words, "one mustn't ask her;" she just sees what needs to be done and does it. She had already mastered most of the chore curriculum by observational and experiential learning. In effect, there was no need for her to be in the protected and segregated phase of 'childhood' that the Spanish tourists envisioned, since its purpose as such is to facilitate learning for eventual community participation, and she had already become a proficient and active participant in adult activities.

The assumption that children would want to and indeed were able to learn to complete tasks in a proficient manner, if they just observed and tried, allowed adults to focus on their own activities and conversations without structuring them to assist children's potential participation. Hence, the relative absence of dyadic conversation between Saraguro adult caregiver and baby was mirrored in the absence of dyadic play time. This is not to say that caregivers never played with babies; infants at any social gathering were greeted, cuddled, and passed around, and adults enjoyed making them 'dance' by propping the babies' rear on one hand and their belly on the other hand, moving them back and forth while singing. Though I never did any time studies, it is possible that Saraguro babies get as much "face time" with adult caregivers as North American babies average, but this is a small percentage of their overall interactions with adults. Notably, even when they are being made to dance, or being held to eat, babies are facing *outward*. Additionally, much of babies' exposure to activities and social events outside the home is experienced from the *chalina*. The focus is not on the child; the child is quite literally a peripheral participant in this respect, often on the fringes of the interactions themselves, involved without being the center of attention. Rather than face-to-face interactions, the majority of what babies observe from their vantage point on the back of their caregivers is what the adult also sees, allowing them to assess the social interactions and visual stimuli by the



bodily and emotional reactions of the caregiver the baby is attached to. They might be rather active with their physical needs or desires for stimulation promptly attended to, without being the focal point or engaging in any face-to-face time or conversation with their caregiver, as the following observations from a monthly parent meeting at the village daycare illustrate.

In general, children were shushed if their noise was so loud as to interfere with hearing what was being said, but otherwise they were allowed to come and go [from the building] as they pleased. Based on the gazes and lack of conversation with the wandering children, no one seemed to pay much attention to them, utilizing the lulls in the meeting agenda to attend to their knitting, yarn spinning, jewelry beading or chatting with their neighbors. Elisa had her baby boy (about 1 year old) in the sling on her back. At first he was positioned upright (vertically) and he was pulling Elisa's hat off; then he started pulling her hair, more and more so it started coming out of the ponytail hair wrap. Elisa didn't say anything to him or move his hand away or try to distract him with anything else, just kept fanning herself and him with a blue piece of foam. Later she passed him a pen to play with over her shoulder and he kept throwing it down. The first time it landed on the table and Elisa kept looking at the group and participating in the conversation while she went over and picked it up and handed it back to him. A couple seconds later he threw the pen down on the floor again. With similar concentration on the group discussion she bent down and picked up the pen again and handed it to him over her shoulder. He continued to throw, and she to pick up, for a number of minutes without her saying anything to him. Eventually he appeared to tire of that. Later he had his left shoe off and Elisa was giving it to him to play with, which he was flinging forward, hitting Elisa on the shoulder and arm and sometimes dropping onto the floor. She continued to pick up the shoe and give it back to him without saying anything. Every couple minutes Elisa would lean forward a bit and hop, pushing him up her back and spreading the sling under the baby's bum again, as he continued to slip down and a bit out of the bottom of the sling. The baby started crying and whining a little later on, his eyes were heavy and closing now and then, and then he started crying louder. Without saying anything, eyes still on the current speaker in the meeting, she untied the sling, leaned forward with baby sprawled onto her back like a table, spread out the cloth and pulled the fabric up over his head and tied him into the hammock in a more side-lying cocoon-like position, so his head was covered. The baby went to sleep. (It's worth noting that there were plenty of cribs at the daycare that she could have used, some even in a back room to which the door could be closed, had she wanted to put him to sleep in there.) – Field notes, September 2, 2010

Other babies and toddlers at the daycare meeting roamed in and out of the building, occupying themselves on the playground and playing with each other, including some older children who had either wandered up on their own or had accompanied their parents to the meeting. In Saraguro, rather than parents or other adults, the role of playmate is more typically filled by babies' older siblings, cousins, or neighbors. Older toddlers who can already walk well might roam the village in multi-age peer groups, meandering from one child's house to another

or playing ball in the streets, with the older ones watching out for the little ones. Children and adults often share the same physical space but children's play and conversation is generally conducted within their own sphere of activity alongside adult conversation and activity; they are not the center of adult attention.

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, children everywhere learn from participation in their particular social environments and often glean lessons from situations that are not explicitly instructed for their learning. However, cultures that prioritize observational, experiential, and informal learning often utilize practices that reinforce each other in affording these learning opportunities. Infant care practices, constructions of the child, and ideas about the roles and responsibilities of adults and children therefore work together in a holistic system. While observational learning and formal education can and do occur side-by-side in many cultures, the cultural prioritization of one or the other leads to different integrated systems of support. In the next chapter, I review features of a system of cultural support for formal learning and the ways that these informal and formal systems might clash, as evidenced in Saraguro.

**Chapter 4:**  
**Ways of Knowing: Children at the Chalkboard**

“When I was young, we learned everything by observing. My parents didn’t give me direct or verbal instructions about how to tend the cows, shear a sheep, gather the grasses for the guinea pigs, how to cook – my mother didn’t cook very elaborately or anything but, well, one watched and learned and did on her own... There is more instruction now, more workshops to teach us.” I told her that there seems to be a lot of governmental emphasis on child development and on educational programming. “Yes, the government helps us rural peasants a lot. The learning that they have is good. With my first, second, and third [child], [there was] nothing like that, I just had the babies and raised them how we raise them, like I learned from my mother.” I asked why the early child education programs were necessary. “Because the parents don’t know to do these things at home. They need the workshops in the countryside because they don’t have the knowledge about child development. The rural areas need help to catch up or to be on par anyway... for school.” – Doña Magdalena, mother of 5, grandmother of 1

**Introduction**

Commenting on the rapid economic changes in Saraguro from the 1960s to the 1980s, anthropologists Jim and Linda Belote (1984a) conjectured that the ethnogenesis caused by integration into a high-technology lifestyle would force childrearing strategies to change. While egalitarian social organization lent itself to allowing children a great deal of autonomy, the Belotes hypothesized that preparing children for authoritarian work and school structures might be better served by granting less autonomy. Additionally, children’s increasing participation in school was accompanied by an equally decreasing participation in mature community activities, thus changing the value of children’s economic contributions and restricting the time spent in observational and experiential learning. Indeed Saraguro grandparents and older parents remarked that learning styles have changed with an increasing emphasis on formal training, which is seen as essential for children’s future economic success.

Education has played a special role in the lives of indigenous Andean populations since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a variety of ideological approaches to “the Indian problem” started to combine under the label *indigenismo* (García 2005). Alternately viewed as the route to indigenous emancipation or as a method of ‘rehabilitation’ and economic integration, *indigenistas* stressed the role of education in the transformation of “Indians” into national citizens. However, the

history of the Andean and Ecuadorian educational policies will not be explored in detail here<sup>10</sup>, as it was the global discourses on children's rights, child development, and education that were referenced in the Saraguro early childhood education programs I observed.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, the cultural prioritization of particular styles of learning is systematically supported by a variety of interdependent practices, assumptions about learning, and the social construction of the child. Gaskins and Paradise (2010) argue, for example, that the effectiveness of the observational learning style is substantially reduced when one of the interdependent conditions changes, such as when self-motivated participation is replaced by coerced participation. Therefore, reaping the full benefit of formal education requires more than merely sending a child to preschool. Wholeheartedly embracing formal learning necessitates large cultural shifts in how children are thought about, in adult and child roles and responsibilities, as well as in communicative practices and interaction styles. With the integrated nature of learning styles in mind, I turn now to examine some of those patterns noted with a prioritization of formal learning.

### **Formal Education**

#### *Saving Society through Scientific Schooling*

Formal education in the West has been shaped by the dualistic view of children and childhood laid out in the introductory chapter; as a social category, children were both innocents to be protected from exploitation and mischief makers best kept off the streets. Viewed alternately as pure or as aberrant but perfectible, children also became burdened with the role of saving society from itself (Bryson 1998). In the eighteenth century scholars and social activists argued that bad upbringing was the chief roadblock for these small vehicles of social progress, and pedagogues in the following century maintained that the early years determined the life course. A public embrace of science, whose positivist ability to find 'truths' rendered its theories

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<sup>10</sup> For more on *indigenismo*, the role of education in Peruvian and Ecuadorian nation-building, and relations between the state and indigenous citizens in those countries, see Clark and Becker 2007; Clark 1998; de la Cadena 2000; and García 2005.

incontrovertible, led to an abandonment of tradition in the field of children's learning. A proper upbringing now meant raising children scientifically (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan Johnson 2006; Bryson 1998; LeVine 2007), and the monumentally important task of raising society's future redeemers could not simply be left to parents, deficient as they were in their scientific knowledge of appropriate ways to do so (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan Johnson 2006; Moss 2006; Singer 1998). Rather, scientific childrearing and effective learning necessitated a new corps of experts, whose knowledge was then used as a vehicle for governmentality and the training of self-regulating citizens, as chapter two's critiques of psychology already mentioned.

Compulsory schooling began lengthening the social category of childhood by pushing the upper boundaries of school attendance ever higher, while increasingly segregating children into same-age peer groups, reinforced by cognitive psychological theories which tied stages of development to roughly corresponding ages. The necessary interventions for early childhood came with the invention of infant schools and kindergartens, Froebel's institutions for the 'elevation of humanity' where children could be prevented from lives of criminality and immorality. But with so much time spent outside of schools, true reform would only be accomplished by providing expert guidance to parents as well, training them to raise their children "in a scientifically responsible fashion" (Singer 1998: 67). Utilizing results from child study institutes, social scientists like G. Stanley Hall and Lawrence K. Frank accommodated eager audiences in the parent education movement with "topical syllabi" about enlightened socialization techniques for optimal child development (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan Johnson 2006; Bryson 1998; Harkness and Super 1996b). "The core model...was that parents lacked certain knowledge and needed expert help to gain it"(Harkness and Super 1996b: 3). In the UK and North America, middle- and upper-class women allied themselves with doctors early in the 19th century and became inculcated in the 'proper' norms of this scientific childrearing/ social improvement project, but the lower classes still needed to be trained into the system (Moss 2006; Rose 1999).

The technical details of the internal regime of the working-class family would become the object of new forms of pedagogy.... the role of the working-class mother as one who was to be educated by educationalists, health visitors and doctors into the skills of responsible government of domestic relations” (Rose 1999: 128-9).

Assumptions of class-based deficiencies in ‘proper’ upbringing, the supposed need for learning interventions, and the collusion between parents, government, and scientific experts in their execution continued with early childhood intervention programs like Head Start. This U.S. program was created in the 1960s to give children from disadvantaged backgrounds better chances in school. The program’s scientists claimed superiority in their abilities to raise children and argued the need for the program to start as early as possible in life for greatest efficacy, including the alteration of home environments by educating the mothers. Elly Singer (1998: 67) succinctly summarizes the history thus:

Hence, from Froebel’s pre-industrial Europe to modern America, the scientific approach to day care has relayed the same ambivalent message to mothers: mothers, you must take care of your children, but we doubt your capability to do so. You need scientific advice and scrutiny.

For the past couple centuries then, ‘proper’ learning and childhood development in the West have been increasingly understood to be scientific undertakings, and society has geared itself towards these so-called experts’ theories by applying their scientific methods. Children were and continue to be assessed on their ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’ development based on ages and stages, and after more than a hundred years of scientific ‘experts’ guiding Western mothers in activities, communications, and routines that would best facilitate development and learning, pedagogy has become an expected parental responsibility. Rather problematic for anthropologists, however, has been the positivist assumption laid out in chapter two that science (and especially the ‘psy’ sciences) indeed holds the monopoly on ‘truth’ – that is, its perceived ability to give the right answer, the *sole* answer – leaving little room for the validity of customs, traditions, or cultural differences (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan Johnson 2006; Bryson 1998; Hatch 1995; LeVine 2007; Singer 1998).

### *Formal Education in Anthropology*

Since the discipline's beginnings, however, anthropologists have been interested in the obvious cultural differences in goals and methods of learning, resulting in the emergence of the separate subfield of anthropology of education in the 1950s. Among other things, this subfield has examined cultural transmission in school settings, the ways that political and historical forces shape formal education, as well as the ways those educational experiences differ according to the learner's race, class, or gender. Differences between home and school settings in communicative interactions, definitions of knowledge and intelligence, learning styles, and cultural beliefs associated with particular ways of knowing have been pointed to as reasons why some minority groups may not succeed in schools, organized as they are around one particular view of intelligence, social relations, and the construction of the child (Bame Nsamenang and Lamb 1998; Hatch 1995; Maynard and Tovote 2010; Rogoff 2003).

The literature produced on education within anthropology is vast and this is not meant to be a comprehensive review. Rather, for the purposes of my argument about a lack of fit between early childhood education programs and the holistic Saraguro observational system of learning, I will focus on literature highlighting the practices, values, and modes of interactions associated with school-based learning and how these often conflict with indigenous modes of learning, cultural assumptions about children, and communicative habitus.

Western societies tend to be cognitively oriented and emphasize formal learning activities, transmitting literacy and academic modes of social interaction (Bame Nsamenang and Lamb 1998; Woodhead, et al. 1998) in their "core" curriculum (Keller 2007; Lancy 1996; Maynard and Tovote 2010). Through kindergartens, preschools, and even informal learning that is structured towards eventual school participation, an underlying framework of cultural assumptions and proper relations are also taught (Rogoff 2003). The child is individualized and self-contained, with learning theories stressing individual development (Hatch 1995; Woodhead, et al. 1998). The child self is encouraged to explore his or her individuality via choice-making, by discovering and voicing preferences. The child is culturally regarded to be trainable from

birth, and teaching should preferably begin as close to that moment as possible if not even in utero. Good development is therefore not assumed to be naturally occurring, but rather dependent upon the right environment, support, and structuring by adults. This assumption reflects beliefs emanating from the nature-nurture debate, as laid out in the introduction and chapter two. The adult management of learning coincides with more general views on adult roles for controlling and intervening with the potentially vulnerable/potentially malicious child.

Formal learning is therefore decontextualized and often abstract, occurring in contrived structured settings that often have explicitly desired lesson outcomes and explicit roles for teachers. Verbal expressions, instructions, and explanations are prized within the dyadic teacher-student interaction, while physicality is limited and sometimes outright discouraged. Unlike in some societies where formal schooling relies upon peer collaboration in learning and teachers might not judge the correctness of student responses (Maynard and Tovote 2010; Tobin et al. 1998), Western schooling practices often view peer conversations in the classroom negatively, as a form of cheating or hindering the child's individual learning; as a self-contained organism, he must find the answer for himself. In line with the view that ages correspond to particular stages of development, formal learning activities are often conducted among same-age peer groups, and all students are ideally hoped to be learning the same material and progressing at the same rate. These heavily language-based learning opportunities are designed and regulated by adults, who must then motivate the students to accept the task of learning that they have created, oftentimes through the use of praise. Children's own initiatives are largely eliminated in adult-structured formal learning activities, where questions are continually posed by teachers who are primarily interested in eliciting correct answers.

The learning that occurs in formal settings is reinforced by practices in the home, where adults engage in school-like discourse, such as eliciting information via known-answer questions, as they fill the role of conversation and play partners for their children. Speaking is a major developmental milestone for babies as well and is encouraged by adults speaking with babies, interpreting their incomprehensible vocalizations into words and seeking affirmation



from the children that their translations were correct. Adults, for their part, take responsibility for the child's comprehension of the verbal message, adjusting their interactions by engaging in baby talk and/or simplified vocabulary (Schieffelin and Ochs 1998; Sterponi 2010).

Talkativeness is encouraged and conversation topics are quite child-focused to help adults draw them into talk, often utilizing tools like storybooks, computers, toys and other specially-designated learning materials. Parents might structure the learning environment by providing certain types of toys and then even intervene in the *way* their children play by urging them to use the toys in particular ways to promote their learning and development (Lancy 2008).

Learning is, in fact, the only real and viable 'job' of childhood when one excludes the child from participation in adult activities, dissociating rights from responsibilities. Instead of joining mature community activities in the present, children are segregated into specialized learning environments where they prepare for their eventual participation in adult activities in the future (Rogoff 2003).

Yet this segregation by schooling has led many students around the world to a dead end. In communities that traditionally emphasized everyday learning, compulsory formal schooling may have been introduced as a tool of external political control – as a colonizing tool, a nation-building tool, a tool used in the name of progress and modernity (Bame Nsamenang and Lamb 1998; Rogoff 1990). As a cultural artifact of external origin, grounded in theories and structurally organized according to Western, white, educated, middle-class sensibilities, Western-style formal schooling promotes a specific style of learning to solve particular kinds of problems. Those problems might not be overly relevant concerns and the style of learning in school and time spent there might completely disrupt the necessary practical education of children who are not white, Western, middle-class children. Schooled adolescents in the Shipibo tribe of lowland Peru, for example, failed to learn traditional productive skills, yet their schooling has not been adequate enough to make them marketable in the larger national labor scheme (Lancy 2010). Decades of promoting education as the way forward have resulted in “an

avalanche of failed aspirations throughout the third world” (LeVine and White 1986: 193), and has been linked to rise of child soldiers in Africa (Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Lancy 2008).

### *Education for Proper Citizenship*

In spite of the aforementioned failures, education is promoted as the essential precondition of a good life. Children become “instruments of a society’s need to improve itself” (Hatch 1995: 119), and educating children has become the flagship of international development programs. Particularly in the global South, education is envisioned as the great eradicator of social ills like crime and poverty, and development agencies and bureaucrats repeat, mantra-like, the need for more education without much reflection on whether that is best for *all* children. This view was given a massive boost by the rights discourse promoted through the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defends the inalienable right to attend school but does not defend the right to its antithesis, a right *not* to attend school (Montgomery 2008). Anthropologists have proffered many criticisms of the UNCRC; Stephens (1998), for example, notes how it merely gives non-Western children the right to remake their childhood in Western form. By championing a model of childhood that emphasizes biological relations, the ubiquity of compulsory education, and a period of life siphoned off from adult spheres of work, “the technology of universal human rights may become a means of sanctioning cultural authoritarianism” (Stephens 1995: 39). Via education, the child becomes a ‘human technology’ that the government can use to shape the future pursuing specific pre-determined outcomes (Bame Nsamenang and Lamb 1998), including the production of a particular kind of economic citizen who fits into advanced liberal society’s ideals of progress (Field 1995; Moss 2006; Rose 1999).

Promoting early childhood education to endow the marginalized with skills necessary to participate in the modern nation-state may seem to be an unproblematic and benevolent policy by those who are already thoroughly inculcated into academic ways of learning, in both Western and non-Western settings.

The “education gap” between those born into a society that invests in education and those from a society that lacks the cultural or real capital to create successful schools is no longer synonymous with the North-South divide in economic opportunity. The rise of private schooling and transfer of cultural capital (appreciating the importance of storybooks, preschool, homework, computers, exam preparation) to third world elites has replicated this gap in every city and country (Lancy 2010: 446).

However, the supposed superiority of formal schooling as a way of learning is based on a particular vision of which skills and knowledge matter, and it rests on the assumption that the child is “an individual who is not reasonable, capable and competent but who could become so with the proper training” (Popkewitz 1998: 25). This reflects, once again, beliefs in the opposition of nature and culture and the assumption that children’s development from one (nature) to the other (culture) requires adult societal control and intervention.

As stated earlier, ‘proper’ training has fallen into the hands of scientific experts. They are ‘merely’ technicians, professionals who use business-like managerialism and rational control systems to measure standards and meet benchmarks. “As is the way of modernity, the ethical and political are displaced by the technical and scientific” (Moss 2006: 191).

With formal Western-style schooling grounded in cognitive theories that have been demonstrated to be very ethnocentric, cultural conflicts and cultural change should certainly be expected when these benchmarks and learning systems are exported around the world, to be applied to people with very different standards of ‘intelligence’, ‘development’, and ideas about how children learn. “[C]hild psychology always involves a question of which ‘truth’ and whose ‘judgment’ counts the most – at once an ethical question and a question of power” (Singer 1998: 80). Learning methods or exercises that are cherry-picked from one holistic learning system and placed into foreign cultural contexts grounded in different standards will not generally be supported in the ‘culture of learning’ at home, as suggested in the last chapter. For optimal results, parents are also expected to do their part by being actively involved in teaching and structuring opportunities for learning and reviewing the child’s lessons. Thus, for Western-style formal education to succeed assumptions of both child and parental incompetence must also be

exported; both must be trained by scientific 'technical' experts in appropriate pedagogic activities, just as centuries of British and U.S. mothers and children have.

### **Early Childhood Education Programs in Saraguro**

Formal learning opportunities for young children have blossomed in Ecuador over the last decade. The 1998 Constitution, which redefined Ecuador as a plurinational state, also included a lengthy Code of Childhood and Adolescence, addressing local concerns for children posed by massive emigration as well as global concerns raised by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Code's provisions for the rights of childhood in Ecuador have resulted in a number of early childhood education programs and child health initiatives, which attempt to secure equal access to these government provisions for historically excluded or disadvantaged groups like the indigenous Saraguros. Locally, projects promoting the Rights of Infancy (*Derechos de la Infancia*) are being implemented by an indigenous-operated NGO, Fundación Kawsay, working together with government institutes and international sponsors. As a major emphasis in the Rights of Infancy projects is on education, two primary activities are the training of village daycare workers and an early childhood program called *Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos* (CNH), or Growing With Our Children.

Nearly all the rural Saraguro communities had an elementary school or were within walking distance of the next village's school. I had not planned to spend any time researching the elementary schools as they seemed irrelevant for the age group I was focused on, age 0 to 3. However, when summer vacation ended during my fieldwork period, three-year-olds began matriculating in the village schools along with the elementary schoolchildren, per a new program by the Ecuadorian government. As of 2010, the 3-year-olds' enrollment was not yet compulsory, though the optional enrollment that year was seen as a phasing in to future mandatory enrollment. The special early education teacher that had been coming to the village daycare over the summer to teach colors, letters, numbers, vowel sounds, and other early curriculum would be continuing this education in the schools a couple times per week. As I had

already observed this style of teaching by the early education teacher in the daycare, and as I was also interested in younger children who were not old enough to attend the school, I focused my attention in Saraguro on the other two venues for early childhood education – the community daycares and the CNH program.

***Child Development Centers: Quality Daycare for ‘Children at Risk’***

Village daycares, or *Centros de Desarrollo Infantil* (CDI – Child Development Centers), were funded and subsidized by the government’s FODI (*Fondo de Desarrollo Infantil*– Child Development Fund) and MIES (*Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social* – Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion), under the direction of the government-funded NGO INNFA (*Instituto Nacional de la Niñez y la Familia* – National Child and Family Institute). In addition to the overall administration, INNFA conducted employee training and ongoing workshops, also utilizing local NGOs like Fundación Kawsay that were chosen to administer CNH and the Rights of Infancy programs. The direct caregivers who conducted day-to-day operations were employed from the local village, supported by a significant level of community parent participation. For instance, parents or other relative caregivers were required to attend monthly daycare meetings, were assigned rotational shifts for helping out in the daycare, contributed to *mingas* (communal work parties) for tasks such as planting the garden used for provisioning daycare meals, planned special events for holidays and village festivals, and assisted in the weekly food procurement from the market. The parents of most children who attended worked outside the home and took their children to daycare out of necessity, yet some parents said that their children were bored at home or wanted to play with friends who attended the daycare. Per INNFA’s Child Development Program, these daycare centers are intended to benefit “vulnerable children from 6 months to 6 years of age whose families work outside the home and who do not have access to adequate or quality day care.” The program defines those vulnerable children as:

those children under age 6 in marginal urban areas and rural areas throughout the country living in conditions of poverty, which present situations of risk in nutrition, health, and psycho-pedagogical development. These situations include

... limited stimuli in their family and community environment to ensure the harmonious development of the child's core functions relevant to their age.<sup>11</sup>

As we lived in two different villages during the fieldwork period and our son attended the corresponding daycares, I logged a number of hours observing in two separate centers, as well as attending required parental meetings and events, conducting interviews with the employees, and presenting my research findings for discussion with a focus group of daycare parents. I also noted similarities and differences in two other daycares, one in the town of Saraguro and another in a neighboring village, during my quest to secure our son's daycare spot. All of the Child Development Centers were significantly subsidized by the government and included one meal and two snacks per day, though monthly fees varied slightly between rural villages, and the town daycare rates were up to five times higher than village rates. Daily schedules showed similar minor differences from one rural daycare to another, and the employees were very flexible in their use of this schedule. (See Table 3 below.)

**Table 3. Posted Daycare Schedule at Llapak Daycare**

8:00 -9:20	Welcome the children, musical moment, and free play
9:30 – 10:30	Clean-up and Morning snack
10:30 – 11:30	Micro-planning/motor skill development/group activity
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch time
1:00- 2:30	Nap and free play
2:30 – 3:30	Clean-up and Afternoon snack
3:30 – 4:00	Prepare to go home

For instance, some days the employees would skip group activities altogether, and the mealtime might often fluctuate an hour or more from one day to the next. As discussed in Chapter 4, nap time generally didn't exist at all for children beyond 18 months of age, and the times of those who did nap were never scheduled or regulated. Though 'micro-planning' was included as a scheduled item, no one seemed to be able to explain what this might be. Per the UNICEF website, educational micro-planning is consensus-based problem identification and solution

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<sup>11</sup> Accessed June 24, 2011 on the website of the Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (Organization of Latin American States) at <http://www.oei.es/linea3/inicial/ecuadorne.htm#5>

brainstorming in the community.<sup>12</sup> This time was used for arts and crafts; formal educational programming using ‘visual stimulation’ flashcards or chalkboard drawings to review letters, seasons, numbers, colors, and so on; gross motor skill development activities like walks in the countryside, soccer and hopscotch; or fine motor skill development exercises like beading, tearing paper with the pincher grip, and cutting straws with scissors. Scheduling of the day’s activities seemed to be much more contingent on the current moods and preferences of all who were present, as well as what needed to be cooked for the day, since a lot of employee labor went into preparing the two snacks, cooking a three-course lunch, and cleaning up after each of them, in addition to caring for the children.

The daycares had a number of physical spaces in which to conduct different types of activities, including outdoor playground equipment, reading areas, a quiet space with cribs, puzzles and building blocks areas, space for painting and other arts and crafts, as well as a general area that was used for eating and group activities. Posters created by the various sponsoring organizations hang on the walls, including a large chart broken down from 0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-18, and 18-24 months about activities for little ones that parents and other family members should conduct with the babies, including talking to them, pointing out objects in books, and having them repeat words. Once a month the nurses from the village health post would come to the daycare to weigh and measure the children, and their stats, along with whether these were considered to be normal or abnormal values, were read aloud at the monthly daycare meetings with parents. The names of the rooms and different pictured objects on the walls are named in Quichua, the traditional language of the Saraguros, which not many people speak in either of the two villages I lived in. The larger of the two daycares attended to 19 children, with one employee caring for the young infants, another primarily on kitchen duty, and the third had the bulk of children, from toddlers up to age five. The smaller daycare employed only two ‘community mothers,’ as they are called, to care for eleven children.

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<sup>12</sup>Accessed June 23, 2011 at: [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india\\_30649.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_30649.html)

The community mothers underwent special INNFA training in nutrition, health, psychosocial development and recreation to work at the daycares and had ongoing training via workshops approximately every fifteen days, in which they said they learned how to work with children and what kinds of things they can do with children. On their sporadic visits, the INNFA coordinators were primarily interested in good management of the daycare, ensuring that finances and documentation were in order and that the registered children were indeed attending. The coordinators did not tell the community mothers which activities to do in the day-to-day operation of the daycares; rather, each daycare had a planning meeting each week where one of the workers decides which activities to do each day. The ideas for these activities, however, came from an INNFA manual.

### ***State Partnership for Optimal Development at Home: The CNH Program***

In addition to the early childhood educational programming on offer at the daycares, young Saraguro children's rights to education could also be fulfilled through a family-based early childhood education program. The objective of the CNH program is to 'maximize' children's development potential by "prepar[ing] families to conduct stimulating educational activities encouraging the development of their children, maintaining their appropriate practices and providing them with new skills in childrearing practices and healthy family life" (Programa Nuestros Niños 2003:10). According to the program manual, national research had shown that the majority of both urban and rural Ecuadorians preferred to leave their children in the care of relatives or neighbors rather than in government-sponsored daycare centers. However, the government views "direct intervention of [young children's] families and community, with the partnership of the State" as essential for optimal early childhood development (Programa Nuestros Niños 2003:10). Therefore, in order to reach all Ecuadorian children, the CNH (*Creciendo con Nuestros Hijos* – Growing with Our Children) program seeks to convert the formal educational programming offered at daycares into *informal* education at home by providing family training for children aged 0-6 and their caregivers. Program founders hope to



systematically prepare parents and communities to take the educational reins in the future, when the development activities they are promoting become permanent fixtures in the family households.

The CNH program, originally created in Cuba but rewritten to adapt to Ecuadorian realities, is administered nationwide in both rural and urban areas, to *mestizos* and indigenous groups alike. Fundación Kawsay has been administering the program in the Saraguro canton for eight years, and its CNH coordinators supervise and assist 25 promoters (or *técnicos* – technicians), each of whom works with an average of 60 children. The zero to two-year-old children are visited at home in the presence of their parents, who are supposed to watch the half hour of activities and development exercises the promoters conduct with their children and then repeat them in the home throughout the week. The three- to five-year-old children (or up to age six if they are not yet attending school) are attended to in groups at a school or other community meeting point, with a similar expectation for parental attendance and subsequent reproduction of the exercises. The CNH coordinators spend two days a week planning and completing administrative office work, such as filing required documentation for registered children or compiling data like children's achievement scores, and three days accompanying promoters on their field visits. Per my volunteer involvement with Fundación Kawsay, I was able to learn more about this program's functioning by accompanying coordinators and promoters on their field visits, hearing assessments of parents whose children were enrolled in the program, engaging in employee conversations and conducting interviews, reading program manuals, and attending weekly planning meetings and workshops.

Using the Curricular Planning Guide, the Early Stimulation Manual, and the Child Development Manuals issued by the CNH program, the promoters planned separate weekly lessons for each age group: 0-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-9 months, 9-12 months, 12-18 months, 18-24 months, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, and 4-5 years. The Child Development manual laid out all of the program's general and specific objectives, goals, and experience categories, from which the promoters choose an experience they haven't done recently, ponder its associated goals and

objectives and then deliberate the execution of the task according to the program's presentation methods. First they think up a motivational activity, which generally tends to be a song or folk tale that relates somewhat to the activity at hand. The second step is orientation with the mother, explaining what the activity for the day is, what and with whom they are going to work, and the objective of the activity. The third and largest section is the execution of the activity. Here the promoters must devise how they are going to teach the chosen experience and what materials they will use. Fourth they offer alternatives for those who are having difficulty with the activity or are flying through it with ease, a "Help Level" and a "Difficult Level." Fifth, is the evaluation stage, in which the promoter elicits feedback from the mother about the activity – was it too easy, too difficult, did they like it, does it help the child learn the stated objective, etc. Last, the promoters leave with a parting suggestion. Sometimes this had to do with the activity they had performed and the general or specific objective; at other times it seemed to be random parenting suggestions, like – 'exercise general hygiene' or, 'encourage the child to eat lots of different vegetables every day.'

### **Teaching Formal Learning in Saraguro**

Earlier in this chapter's section on informal learning I referred to fieldwork observations of the local learning approach as 'Letting Children Learn in Saraguro.' It was so named to highlight the non-interventionist mindset regarding the optimal structure or environment for learning, with the underlying assumption that both the regulation of and motivation for the learning process could be competently managed by the child learner. This section is titled as it is to emphasize the contrasting overt attempts by adult scientifically-minded 'experts' to teach a different learning style; that is, to lay out specific lessons for children while re-training parents and family members to inculcate their children into a different pedagogical habitus via development exercises and communicative patterns. What seems to be missing in this attempt, however, is an analysis of underlying general beliefs about children and learning that conflict with the formal learning approach and continue to reinforce non-interventionist relations with

regards to children's learning. This will be examined in more detail in the analysis that follows this section, but first I turn to the data to illustrate how this system of formal learning is being taught in Saraguro.

Upon finding out that the promoter we had gone out to meet was ill and not in the village, the coordinator, Sandra, suggested we visit the home of a fellow employee, where two-and-a-half-year-old Elisa was being cared for by her sister-in-law. When we arrived, Elisa was crying and the young woman caring for her picked her up and held her throughout our visit. Sandra gave her a balloon and said, "Look, it matches your shirt. What color is it?" Elisa replied, "The same color as my shirt." "And what color is that?" Sandra questioned. "This color," Elisa said, pointing to the balloon. After a few more prompts without Elisa stating the color, Sandra said, "It's red." Elisa repeated "red." Sandra asked her a couple other known answer questions – "What is your mom's name? What is your dad's name? What is your name?" which Elisa correctly answered but was further prompted to give the full name with both surnames.

In this interchange one sees how the CNH expert first tries to motivate the child and draw her into a learning opportunity by giving her a balloon. She then quizzes the child with known-answer questions, adapting her own questions by re-phrasing so that the intended meaning of her questions could be understood by the learner. Additionally, although Elisa seemed able to categorize and visually recognize that her shirt and the balloon were the same color, the questions were attempting to elicit a particular right answer that fulfilled the 'goal' of the lesson; namely, verbal recognition and classification of colors.

The chapter's opening vignettes illustrated contrasting styles, from child-motivated and child-regulated learning based on assumptions of the child as a being possessing competence in managing his or her own learning, to adult-motivated and adult-managed interventions assuming the child as a becoming that is incompetent to organize and regulate this process. The following excerpt demonstrates the mother's desire for her daughter to fit into this formal learning schema while obviously still believing in children's competence, even in potentially dangerous situations, to manage learning about objects in the world around them, as demonstrated by the reaction to her niece. This interaction also exhibits the role of experts, who quite literally in this case come into the home and tell parents how to modify their childrearing practices.

Walking across the recently harvested fields, we encountered a young woman carrying a machete and a foot-plow over her shoulder. She and the promoter, Maria, greeted each other and the woman rushed down to the house to call her children out. The family received Maria (the promoter), Sandra (the coordinator), and us (me and my daughter) on the porch, with older children alternately drifting into the house and back out to the courtyard to observe the lesson. Maria first met with two-year-old Patricia and conducted the motivation activity, which was a song about washing your face with soap and water. She then set out some little model trees for Patricia to play with and asked her questions like, 'Which is smallest/biggest?' The next activity was drawing straight lines on a portable marker board, which Patricia didn't want to do, so Maria introduced another activity with puzzles to re-capture her attention. The puzzle was comprised of six different zoo animals – elephants, giraffe, monkey, kangaroo, turtle, lion – and the promoter continued asking known-answer question to identify the different animals. Patricia's young mother was insistent that the girl answer correctly. "What animal is that, Patricia? Tell her 'monkey'."

While Patricia continued onto other exercises, drawing the lines, stringing wooden beads on yarn, putting circular wooden blocks onto pegs and identifying their colors, her four-year-old cousin was playing with a syringe. No one stopped her or said anything to her until the coordinator Sandra noticed her and drew attention to the fact that she was doing it. Patricia's mother didn't seem concerned. She merely said, "Oh, it is a new one; it's not used." But Sandra continued to voice concerns that the girl could hurt herself on the needle, and Sandra eventually got the older brother to take it out and put it somewhere where it wouldn't accidentally be picked up again.

The daycare workers reiterated that the parents they worked with, similar to Patricia's mother, desired for their children to embrace the formal learning opportunities on offer. The parents talked a lot about which activities the children do at daycare and were very interested in reviewing the children's files to see how they were progressing. While the majority of parents bring their children to daycare out of necessity rather than specifically to take advantage of formal programming, they were quite vocal to the daycares that, as long as their children were going to be there, they desired that they be learning and progressing in their skills.

The formal programming at the daycares was provided in a relatively relaxed manner that might be seen as a blending of the formal learning style with attributes of the holistic observational learning system. That is, while the activities themselves may have been created or suggested by experts via manuals, the execution of these activities was by local mothers who received expert training but were also members of a community that still relies upon observational learning. Hence, daycare workers scheduled activities, but the motivational

aspects of the process still seemed to lie with the children themselves. The daycare workers did not appear to spend time and energy trying to motivate children to join in the activity or worry about their continued participation. If the children started filtering out of the room, the daycare workers might let the activity come to an end altogether and leave the children to their free play.

After snack time they started their group activity building a hopscotch set with small flat blocks, after which they jumped in them, first with two feet and then one footed. After that they worked on making shapes together with the blocks – circle, square, triangle – after which they would repeat the names of the shapes. A few kids were running in and out of the building and not participating; others, my son included, were just doing their own thing with toys or puzzles. One boy who had been playing outside by himself came in later and wrecked the house they had outlined on the ground with blocks. Other children who were playing on their own instead of with the group were still playing with blocks and were sitting in the same area as the children working on the group activity. The group activity encouraged cooperative work at building the shapes, but children were not discouraged from playing on their own nor were attempts made to persuade them to join the group. Children were allowed to do their own thing, run in and out of the building, leave the activity without notifying the caregivers, participate or not participate. – Field Notes from Llapak daycare observation, July 30, 2010

Allowing the children to decide when and/or whether to participate is also supported by the cultural emphasis placed on autonomy. As chapter four addresses in greater detail, allowing children to self-regulate their participation is a harmonious approach with caregiver practices such as letting children self-regulate their napping and night-time sleep practices. Whether driven by this respect for autonomy or not, there seemed to be a recognition that self-motivation was necessary for learning, which worked against structured learning events in the home, as the statement by the mother of one of the older CNH program participants shows.

Children have to want to learn things; if you try to force them to sit down at home and learn something, they don't really want to do it. But they [the 3-5 year olds who meet at the school for the group CNH program] are more motivated to learn there because they are with the other children and it is a social opportunity. The program gives them the chance to learn to be social with each other, because up until that age many of them have mostly stayed in the house. – Angelica, mother of four

This emphasis on the program's opportunities for socializing was repeated time and time again. In fact, all the parents, as well as the daycare employees, talked about the social aspect of school preparedness as the major benefit of both programs. They asserted that children who had experience with the CNH program and/or attended daycare transitioned more easily to being away from their mothers, they learned how to share, and they got along better with other children and made friends. CNH employees, on the other hand, seemed to stress the advantages of the program in terms of benefits to health and nutrition and children's academic preparedness for school.

After reading through the CNH manual and accompanying employees on a number of different home visits, I could understand why the social aspect was so often stressed and why it stood out as so much more of an obvious program outcome than the physical or cognitive skills that were promoted. Outside of crafts with scissors, glue, paint, and other art materials that most families did not own, many skills promoted for the young babies and toddlers were things that did not necessitate interventions to learn. Although parents confirmed that the stimulation exercises the promoters taught were not things that they as parents normally did with the children at home, the outcomes or skills that were promoted by the activities were learned nonetheless.

I asked what kinds of things the baby [18-month-old] learned in the CNH program. "Oh, for example, they teach her how to crawl under the chairs and over or around obstacles, to comb her hair, to hold and drink from her own glass, cutting fruit with a knife, things like that." I asked if that wasn't something she would learn at home without them, and they said yes she would. I asked if her parents taught her in that way. "No, our parents never did any teaching to us. They never taught us how to do things, we just watched and observed how to do them." I remarked that the baby must get to observe a lot with three older siblings.

"Yes, Eva already knows how to do the things she teaches her. She has learned how to do them through observation and trying them out herself. Gloria came to teach her how to comb her hair, but she had already been combing her hair by herself before that." – Ximena, mother of four

Nonetheless, mothers and other caregivers seem to think that their children enjoyed this personalized play and learning time. CNH staff brings toys with them that are generally quite rare around the children's homes and try to think of fun activities, since they are creating a learning environment for a specific teaching purpose and the teacher's encouragement and motivation might be required to get the child to participate in the intended manner. CNH promoters did not force children to participate, but they came armed with their planned activities and learning objectives for each week, so if children were not interested in any of the activities, the promoters might chat with the caregivers or leave early and try again the following week. This top-down approach to learning was in the process of being analyzed while I was there, however, after CNH staff attended a workshop on fostering creativity in children by an expert from the provincial capital.

He told us that telling children to 'do this' or 'do that' inhibits creativity; the children need to be able to be spontaneous and follow their own interests. In the [CNH] program, we have been telling children 'let's do this', and we must change to be more flexible with the interests of each child to allow for creative development. It is difficult to foster this creativity in the rural areas because rural parents, for example, will just grab the children by their collar and pull them over when it is time for [the promoters] to teach; it is difficult to teach and educate the parents. – CNH Coordinator, November 10, 2010

Per the creative thinking workshop, the progressive way to structure the learning event is to avoid giving too much direct instruction and too many commands and let the children direct more of their own learning. There is an interesting paradox here, since child-directed learning is the mainstay of the observational learning process and is therefore what children had been doing before/without the CNH program. However, parents' traditional hands-off approach to learning and absence of pedagogic instruction in the home is viewed as a deficiency, requiring education of both the children and the parents.

Here one sees how 'experts,' with their esoteric knowledge of the supposedly proper way to develop children, facilitate the making of particular subjects. By asserting a singular vision of development and outcome standards that can only be reached by drawing on their claimed superiority, experts are creating new benchmarks for distinct categories – "the educated child"

or “the developed child” – and its accompanying byproducts – “the deficient child” and “the deficient parent,” with which Saraguros are identifying (Hacking 1995). The early childhood education and development programs in Ecuador seem quite reminiscent of Head Start programs, and, as noted earlier, those early childhood programs and expert interventions were assumed necessary based on supposed racial and class-based deficiencies in ‘proper’ upbringing. Indigenous populations in the Andes have historically been blamed by their countries’ leaders for thwarting the nation-state’s progress towards modernity, and education has been viewed as a nation-building tool to correct the supposed backwardness incurred by “the Indian problem” (García 2005; Pallares 2007). However, ‘the deficient parent’, in this particular Ecuadorian context, is not necessarily a purely indigenous product. The exclusion of *mestizo* participants in my research does not allow me to elaborate on whether and/or how *mestizos* may be reacting to, accepting, refuting, or negotiating these same categorizations; the class element is, nonetheless, reflected upon in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

### **Informalizing the Formal: Incompetence, Interventions, and the Role of Habitus**

In the view of the CNH program, effective early education is a responsibility to be shared by the state, society, and family. “For CNH the child is the axis of the educational process, the educator INNFA-CNH is the advisor of educational activities, and mothers and fathers the permanent executors of the educational activities to achieve the development of their children.”<sup>13</sup> In this statement one can view a number of patterns and assumptions consistent with the formal learning system. First, learning is child-centered, and learning situations are specifically created and structured for the child. Second, intervention is required by adults, and the scientific knowledge on proper learning is outside the realm of parents’ capabilities.

The CNH manual recognizes that because families play a decisive role in the transmission of culture they must construct a new “set of values, norms and attitudes” within

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<sup>13</sup>“CNH Program – Methodology.” Accessed June 24, 2011 on the website of the Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (Organization of Latin American States) at <http://www.oei.es/linea3/inicial/ecuadorne.htm#5>



the home; creating a new culture of learning, so to speak, rather than merely passing on a collection of disjointed exercises. Training must be conducted with the whole family because parents are now charged with the responsibility of educating the child in a particular way. Although formal learning is merely one specific form of training in a highly contextualized set of practices (Munroe and Gauvain 2009), the logic behind early childhood interventions clearly views this style of development as the only one that really matters, a development that is universally valid and which can be scientifically measured. “Fostering healthy development and preventing or compensating for deficiency, are functions of early education, which has been supported by [this] widely accepted assumption: Human development follows a path common to children of all cultures, regions and societies.” (Programa Nuestros Niños 2003: 131).

Charged with the task of raising their children according to some universalized concept of childhood and proper learning, based in ethnocentric Western developmental psychological theories, indigenous caregivers around the country might perhaps find some truth in the manual’s contention that the program is altruistically filling a knowledge gap.

[I]t is also true that among the families there is a growing feeling of insecurity and incompetence on how to educate [their children] feeling that the educational model in which they participated has lost its validity, but lacking an alternative that meets their expectations (Programa Nuestros Niños 2003: 131).

Therefore, the state and experts must train incompetent parents to train their incompetent children in the correct manner.

Some parents resisted having others come in to tell them how to raise their children, saying, ‘Look, we are just living. Why do we need to have a program to learn these things?’ Most parents, however, seem to have accepted the ascription of their own incompetence to assist their children down the desired universal model of proper development.

“My sister studies psychology and gave me tips, told me what I needed to do for early stimulation with Gloria. So I made some butterfly mobiles to spin over her head. Then when she was about 4 months old we started her in the CNH program. I think the program is good, Gloria has learned a lot already with the program.” I inquired as to whether the activities they do with her are activities

that they already do with Gloria. “No. We don’t know how to stimulate them.” After a while discussing some norms of babies’ everyday lives in North America, Julia said, “Yes, I mean I guess we do give our babies stimulation, just in a different manner. When they go out and are carried they see everything in the town, out in the countryside, etc.” – Julia, mother of 1

While they seemed keen for their children to take advantage of these formal programming opportunities at the daycare and the CNH program to ‘catch up’, parents in both programs were perhaps falling short of the INNFA objectives for parents to reinforce formal learning in the family’s daily life at home by adopting and implementing direct instruction and communicative interactions. Just like the aforementioned CNH goal to create a culture in the home geared towards formal learning, one of the overall objectives of the daycares (Child Development Centers) is the development of children through “continuing progressive education of the parents about their childrearing habits and their relationships with their children.”<sup>14</sup>

Parental and employee interviews confirmed what I observed in the homes, or perhaps more accurately what I *didn’t* observe in the homes; namely, that parents did not regularly reproduce the lessons from the activities taught in the daycare and CNH program. From time to time they might be done in certain homes. Practical activities like drinking from a glass or climbing over obstacles might be done on a regular basis but not as a specifically designated lesson and point of instruction. In the families where caregivers attentively observed and participated, it might be possible to recreate these exercises, but in almost all the home visits I attended caregivers seemed to welcome the CNH employees’ presence as a novel entertainment experience for the child, as a chance for them to get some chores done and/or some outside conversation that made a change from their ordinary daily village life, if they interacted at all. Daycare workers also confirmed the general absence of these activities in Saraguro homes, saying that most parents, whether working or staying at home, solely attend to the child’s physical needs. They make sure children are fed, clothed, and diapered, but they don’t worry

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<sup>14</sup> INNFA’s “Child Development Program Principles.” Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (Organization of Latin American States) website, accessed June 24, 2011. <http://www.oei.es/linea3/inicial/ecuadorne.htm#5>

about engaging the child in an educational way or conduct educational activities at home. They hinted that doing so was a pretty ambitious goal for a number of families, who come home from work tired and don't ask about the child's day and don't even ask whether they've eaten or worry about how they would have been fed. A moral judgment was further passed on those who "don't really talk with the kids or pay attention to them" as bad parents. Children and childhood can thus be seen to be a focal point of moral contestations in changing contexts, as this moral script evidences.

Children whose parents did not work or who stayed home with other caregivers were spoken to throughout the day, but it was not an overly conversational approach, and their caregivers were generally busy with their own work gardening, cooking, cleaning, tending animals, and so on. As such they also did not necessarily pay much attention to the children, at least not in the child-focused way promoted by the formal learning style. While this was construed as a negative thing by daycare workers who were trained in and committed to promoting stimulation exercises and structured learning opportunities, parents who choose not to send their children to the highly subsidized daycare seemed to recognize that focusing on pedagogy came at a price.

I don't take him [two-year-old son] to daycare because they do different activities than in the home – playing, using toys, and such – and they thereby develop a different mentality. Children who stay at home learn to do the things that are done in the house. My son walks where I walk, becomes strong and doesn't tire easily. Also carrying the children, they go with the parent and can see all the activities that they do; they develop and learn in that way. That is why it's better to have him at home than to leave him at the daycare because many children who are in the daycare don't [learn in that way]. They are only playing, and when they come home it's not the same. They don't have the same attitude as those who grow up with the mother in the home. They are very different. He is learning what one does in the home, everything; in contrast, those in the daycare are just with their toys, a few books, but they don't learn anything about the household." – Vanessa, mother of two

Parents who still count on their children's economic and household contributions likely still need to raise children with a healthy degree of autonomy to ensure that they become responsible and independent decision-makers. They may not find it in their own or the child's interests to overemphasize school-based discourse and styles of learning that require adult

intervention and assume children's incompetence, that champion individualistic conceptions of personhood, and that promote a childhood that is heavy on rights but sparse on responsibilities. This may be associated with a class divide, between those whose labor is still tied to the land and those whose source of economic income stems from more knowledge-based productive activities. The conclusion to the thesis addresses in more detail the potential class elements related to learning style and cultural change.

This conflict of interests is the more plainly discernible reason for lack of formal learning style support in the home environment. Less transparent, perhaps even invisible to those who are early education enthusiasts, is the conflict of *habitus*. One begins being "durably installed" with a *habitus* from birth, as one observes and participates in a particular communicative discourse, interaction style, and "culturally stipulated narrative practices [that] socialize children into a community's worldview and moral perspective, and into expected subject positions" (Sterponi 2010: 246-7). Since infancy these Saraguro parents have learned and reproduced contextually and culturally appropriate responses, thereby naturalizing certain attention stances, interaction styles and communicative habits. Placed "beyond the grasp of consciousness... [they] cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit" (Bourdieu 1977: 94).

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is helpful in understanding the continuity of a particular 'culture of learning' in Saraguro homes even while recognizing their reflexive choices to pursue early childhood education development exercises. Not all actions are predetermined by embodied phenomena; rather, Bourdieu proposed that reflexivity emerges in the gap created by a lack of fit between *habitus* and changing fields (Adams 2006), and it has been proposed that these gaps or 'crises' occur quite frequently in contemporary society (McNay 1999).

One of these gaps emerges as Saraguro caregivers and daycare workers try to incorporate the state's ideals of childhood from the Code of Childhood and Adolescence. Questions and conflicts arise over what is appropriate – are children's chores outlawed as child labor? If not, which chores may they do? How can one discipline if physical punishment is no

longer allowed? What kinds of activities promote optimal development? How does one provide adequate early childhood stimulation? Some of these questions apply to another 'gap', which appeared with the recognition that Saraguro children were at an academic disadvantage when they started school because they hadn't had any prior exposure to activities conducted in national school programming. Reflexive awareness about the effects of parenting practices on their children's future academic success has therefore led to an embrace of early education opportunities. The culture of learning in the home, however, is largely structured by *habitus* and harder to change, especially if it is informed by a continued desire to produce children that are significant household contributors.

The official CNH and daycare organizational literature puts a positive spin on the diversity brought about by different cultures, ethnicities, genders, races, and religions. Difference should not be viewed as a "discriminatory concept, to devalue everything that does not fit the characteristics of the dominant groups." (CNH Methodological Manual 2003:16). The CNH manual also affirms that there is not one but many possible and equally valid routes to a healthy development; however, it also contradicts this diversity by defining those who don't conform to a particular vision of development as 'at risk' or incompetent. A nationwide program for optimal child development therefore largely precludes true multicultural diversity, as it necessitates the adoption of *one* particular view of childhood, children, and the proper thing for them to become.

Scientific theories of child development imported from North America and Europe have put a universalist face on Ecuadorian visions of 'good' childhood and form the basis for government-sponsored early education programs. In this childhood, children are first and foremost becomings, not competent beings, and adult intervention is necessary to structure and guide their learning process in order to prevent deficiencies. Children are segregated from current participation in adult activities like work and are instead prepared for future community participation via formal education. With the early years highlighted as critical for children's healthy development and the prevention of 'deficiencies', children's early learning cannot be left

to the children themselves to regulate. The child, thus constructed as incompetent and vulnerable, must be managed, controlled, and have its best interests decided upon by adults. Recognizing that formal learning is optimized by a supportive home environment, the state has made an effort to reach children both at home and at daycare and to recruit parents into the educational process. A prime example of governmentality (Foucault 1991), the technocratic management of welfare (Moss 2006), and self-governing individuals (Rose 1989, 1999), in Ecuador science, the state, and parents join forces to first construct this childhood and then intervene in it.

As the learning approaches embodied by Saraguro parents in the past inadequately prepared their children for the national school curriculum, they have acquiesced to claims of their own incompetence as they accept a scientific ideal of normativity in development. However, most families are still ruled by the same *habitus* now as then, making it difficult to thoroughly implement a different culture of learning in the home, even for those who enthusiastically utilize the formally structured learning opportunities offered by the daycare and CNH early childhood education programs. To summarize, the once-weekly half-hour lesson in ‘development exercises’ administered by the CNH program and the one-hour (daily, in theory, but irregularly conducted) lessons in the daycares are generally not further practiced in the home. This might be construed as cherry-picking successful practices from one learning system to use within an unsupportive ‘culture of learning,’ which will not breed the same results, though of course the potential for ethnogenesis and a unique blending of practices exists.

The CNH manual states that family education is a way of bringing informal education to young children, but informal education already exists in those homes; it just isn’t valued as the right kind of education. The programs are attempting to build the cultural capital associated with the formal learning system, by creating informal systematic support for a specific style of learning. They are trying to replace an informal learning system that already exists with a different informal learning system, one which prioritizes verbal communication and encourages talkativeness, which values focused rather than dispersed attention, which emphasizes individual

talents and accomplishments rather than a group orientation, and which constructs the child as incompetent and in need of adult intervention.

What they are proposing parents and children do necessitates a radically different way of interacting with each other, reconstructing children as incompetent and obligating parents to take on the role of educators in addition to physical and emotional nurturing. It compels adults to intervene and regulate more of children's affairs and expect less of them in return, in terms of household contributions. It places responsibility on the adult as a teacher, who must structure opportunities for instruction, rather than on the child to observe and learn undirected. A rights-based vision of infancy and its subsequent interpretation of proper child development devalue traditional Saraguro ways of learning – informal, observational, non-interventionist – and instead emphasize co-participation with the state to create child-centered, parent-directed learning geared towards formal education. The expansion of formal early childhood education programs thus disseminates much more than mere didactics: Western constructions of childhood incompetence and the power relations stemming from them are replicated with indigenous families. In the face of scientific 'experts', not only the children but also Saraguro parents must be trained, as they are pronounced to be incompetent to properly develop their children on their own.

## Chapter 5

### Moral Competence and Culpability

*Field Notes – August 13, 2010:* Ximena and Ernesto, our hosts, asked if everything was alright with our two-year-old son, who woke up screaming a couple hours after falling asleep last night. After five or ten minutes, his father and I were high on anxiety and low on patience, as his ear-piercing shrills would certainly wake our host family and the Spanish tourists staying there. Back home in Canada we'd had many such 2 a.m. episodes, and to our dismay we'd received the explanation from family, friends, internet forums, and baby books that nothing could really be done about these "night terrors." For lack of any better idea on how to get him to stop, I would usually pick him up, with back arching – attempting to writhe away, and carried him outside. The Canadian winter cold used to literally suck the breath out of him and jar him out of the trance-like state he was in, but the mild chill of Saraguro nights didn't have the same effect. "Stop screaming! You're waking the others, the little boys and girls who live here are all going to be awake and their baby will start crying, all because of you; that is naughty! Only animals howl like this; if you keep howling then you will have to stay here and sleep outside like the animals do." I set him down on the ground. "No!" he screeched. "Do you want to sleep out here or back in the warm bed?" The spell had finally broken; he slumped into my arms, his cheek fell onto my shoulder and he sobbed, "In bed, mama."

Ximena and Ernesto didn't seem surprised about Kiva's previous night terrors, but were amused that we didn't have a remedy for them. They said they call this '*espantos*', which comes from something scaring them during the day. Ximena said that when their children would wake with *espantos* she would give them a warm bath, then have them drink cold water and then would blow in their face to startle them, and then they would never get them again.

*Field Notes – September 10, 2010:* Cristina was wearing red strings on both wrists, and I asked what they were for. Alicia, her mother, said, "Oh, that is to keep her from being cursed and from the (evil) eye. That's what we say here, that a child who wakes in the night crying is *espantosa*. Cristina has this right now because of the dog. Last night she woke up at 2 am with *espantos* and she didn't sleep well, waking again at 5 a.m. for the day. So, well, I didn't get much sleep either." I had told her that our son sometimes suffers in this way too, but we never knew what to do to cure it. Carmen offered, "I have some plants in my garden, one of which is good for curing *espantos*. And also raw eggs, rubbed all over the child and then washed off, these help to cure them of *espantos*."

*Field Notes – November 30, 2010:* Julia (mother of one) explained, "When a baby goes from some place really warm to really cold air, or vice versa, when they come back into a warm house from being out in the cold, and the baby starts to scream and cry and is inconsolable, doesn't want to eat or even want the breast, and they start to be ill, we say it is from the '*mal aire*' (bad air). That can also cause *espantos*. It happened to Gloria (her 10-month-old daughter) before when we went to visit my parents. When we came in she was crying and screaming and couldn't be calmed. So we gave her a spoonful of my young (6-year-old) brother's urine. Then she calmed right down and was fine again."



## **Introduction:**

This chapter considers conceptions of infant and toddler morality in the explanations and expectations for their behavior and moral learning. The previous excerpts highlight how sleep practices have been used as a lens through which to focus on these issues, and they preview some of the forces that are believed to have a bearing on Saraguro babies. In this chapter I examine the moral apprenticeship of Saraguro infants and toddlers as a product of local learning style and constructions of childhood, as laid out in the previous chapters. In contrast to other realms of Saraguro life, where babies and toddlers are assumed to hold some degree of competence, young Saraguros have a longer ‘grace period’ in the acquisition of moral competence. A belief in the innate innocence of children up to age 6 or 7 precludes attribution of wrongdoing to some inherent characteristic or naughty temperament, and culpability in moral affairs is further restricted by supernatural or external forces.

## **An Anthropological Approach to Morality**

Scholarly debates on morality have mostly centered on philosophical and developmental perspectives. Philosophers debate the essence of right and wrong and search for universal truths, with an emphasis on morality as an ongoing process, a continuous search for an understanding of oneself and what is good (MacIntyre 1984; Taylor 1989). They seek to explain ethical inadequacies and to locate common bases for improving and universalizing ethical visions (Collier and Lakoff 2005). Psychologists and developmental researchers have approached morality as a developmental stage of higher reasoning, as children progress along a linear trajectory from egocentric to sociocentric (Piaget 1932), or from acting out of fear of punishment to more altruistic acts based on group-centered ideals of fair play (Kohlberg 1984). These theories downplay the role culture plays in moral learning (Shweder, et al. 1987), focusing instead on individual cognitive processes of rationality (Fung and Smith 2010) and theory of mind (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2007). Psychologists following this vein continue to search for evidence of a universal innate morality guiding behavior, independent of cultural influences

(Bloom 2010). In keeping with the framework that nature and culture are inextricably fused, I reject all such views in which moral development is understood to be able to occur outside of a cultural framework, as theories of innateness based on experiments with infants presume a purely biological being based on their age.

In contrast, anthropological approaches seek to understand the socio-cultural particulars of morality in any one setting, rather than searching for human universals. Rather than emphasizing individual processes, this approach examines the social practices that embody and reinforce moral understandings (Fung and Smith 2010), which are informed by larger cultural beliefs and ways of thinking about morality. In other words, the ways that children learn to become responsible self-regulating moral agents are constrained by the socio-cultural-historical framework they live in, which offer particular visions of how one “should” live (Collier and Lakoff 2005; Ochs and Izquierdo 2009).

Geertz (1973) called for theorizing on moral value to be both derived from and validated by behaviors of people within any particular society, by heeding how they define their experiences and go about giving them meaning or coming to terms with them. However, this attention to the uniqueness of each situation makes anthropological theoretical frameworks for morality invariably problematic, as each culture’s particular take on morality focuses on different rules, and the vantage points from which they can be discerned vary as well. In fact, although moral issues creep into almost every topic, there is scant anthropological work specifically defining and addressing morality (Howell 1997), especially outside of linguistic anthropology studies on moral socialization.

One notable exception to this is Signe Howell’s (1997) edited volume as an ethnography on moralities and moral character, which highlights methodological issues of eliciting both implicitly and explicitly held premises that comprise indigenous moral realities and make them meaningful. Howell argues that all humans pursue moral sensibility, and that moral issues are embodied in such a way to make the separation of fact and value tricky. The embodiment of these elements is also noted by Geertz (1973), who points out that both a society’s sense of

fundamental reality and its moral universe must fit together as if the two are an inevitable fit, thus making moral values no longer subjective but rather necessary conditions for life within that particular model of the world.

With a wide range of potential focal points to access indigenous moralities, the methodological challenge of where to direct one's ethnographic gaze to arrive at local understandings of morality is also anything but straightforward. The unconscious 'common sense' aspect of any cultural take on morality also means that, although it infuses one's actions and thought processes, it is perhaps never *actively* reflected upon or consciously articulated. An unquestioned acceptance of the rightness or wrongness of particular ways within any culture can make the 'rules' hard for an insider to explicate, and outsiders might only perceive this moral common sense by transgressing it themselves.

Whatever the vantage point used to access indigenous accounts, a socio-cultural approach to moral learning must take into account the cultural variability not only of values, but also of the techniques and agents of socialization (Fung and Smith 2010). Additionally, one must distinguish whether moral qualities are deemed to be inherent in all persons or in a category of persons, or whether they are attainable through socialization and training (Rydström 2003). These perceptions of personhood, agency, and sociality, all of which relate to the social construction of childhood, must be taken into account as one analyzes how morality is defined and performed (Howell 1997). Finally, intracultural variation necessitates acknowledging and sorting through conflicting values within a society, which may arise at the intersection of various moral systems.

For my research purposes, I was interested in Saraguro cultural appraisals of babies' expected behavior in everyday social situations with family and institutional caregivers, which are rooted in local understandings of moral relations and moral conduct.

[M]orality is embedded in and is an outcome of everyday family practices. The flow of social interactions involving children is imbued with implicit and explicit messages about right and wrong, better and worse, rules, norms, obligations, duties, etiquette, moral reasoning, virtue, character, and other dimensions of how to lead a moral life (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2007: 5).

I therefore examined morality from the local perspective of how one became a responsible member of the community, which virtues were valued, what was interpreted as good and bad, proper and improper, right and wrong in the treatment of others.

To understand the learning process of these moral standards, I focused on children from newborn to age 3 and their caregivers, with special attention to Saraguro infant care practices and any influence that these were thought to have on babies' acquisition of moral norms and responsibility. One criticism of the sociocultural approach to moral socialization has been the tendency to ignore psychological perspectives questioning the child's role in appropriating morals (Fung and Smith 2010). For this reason, I refer to the process as 'moral apprenticeship,' to acknowledge the role that children themselves play in their moral learning, borrowing psychologist Barbara Rogoff's (1990) term to explain how children's ongoing participation in activities, peripheral or observational in character as it may be, precludes a separate internalization process. As was discussed at greater length in chapter three, Rogoff used apprenticeship to emphasize children's own contribution to their cognitive development via active participation in a particular sociocultural context, with guided participation by a more experienced member of their community. I use the term 'moral apprenticeship' as a way of describing children's active learning to embody culturally acceptable values and behavior as others bridge their understanding of unknown situations and appropriate responses. Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik (2007:5) hint to the appropriateness of using apprenticeship in this way. "[C]hildren's immersion experiences in mundane social interactions with parents ... are imbued with moral expectations and meanings ... which apprentice children into moral life-worlds."

### **Saraguro Infant Competence**

The moral expectations of Saraguro babies and the moral learning process only make sense within the wider context of a Saraguro construction of childhood. Entangled within are beliefs about the irreprehensible nature of the innocent child and underlying assumptions about infants and toddlers as autonomous and agentic persons, whose will must be respected in an

equal manner to adults. An examination of realms where the Saraguro young are presumed to hold competence demonstrates this social construction of childhood and allows further discernment of how and why the moral realm is treated differently.

As discussed in the introduction, the opposition of nature and culture in Western thought legitimates power relations in which adults control children. Children are left with little real autonomy, as the decisions that they are entrusted with carry little responsibility and require no competence.

Human development is often conceptualized in terms of an evolving competence to perceive, know, feel, and act in a normal manner. Every society establishes norms of competence and all members of society, including infants and small children, are evaluated in terms of them (Ochs 1991: 44).

I propose using 'competence' as a way to understand agency in young children, by examining what babies can and cannot do. Rather than merely looking at biological development, competence acknowledges the abilities of babies being tied to cultural self-fulfilling prophecies. The encouragement or discouragement of particular actions, the structuring of activities, and caregiver-imposed constraints on a child's world are intimately tied not only to immediate childcare concerns, but also to cultural interpretations of those around them regarding their needs and capabilities and theories about how children become functional members of their culture (Gaskins 1996; Super, et al. 1996). In Saraguro, the respect for autonomy translates to children's competence in a number of realms at precocious ages.

### ***Self-Regulating Sleepers***

One area where even babies can be seen to exert autonomy is in the management of their own biological needs. In terms of sleeping practices, Western constructions of infant incompetence and the need for parental control and regulation translate to parental imposition of sleep and separation into segregated zones for baby and parent. In Saraguro this parental intervention and spatial segregation does not exist. Saraguro infants and toddlers are deemed to be competent decision-makers with regards to their own biological needs for sleep. Children

may often choose where or with whom they want to sleep and when they want to move out of the parental bed. Some make this decision quite late, as I found a number of families where not just babies but even children aged 6, 10, and 18 still slept with the one or both of the parents. Babies slept in the parents' bed in all but one of the research participant families; in the single exception, the toddler co-slept with the parents half the time and the other half slept one meter away in a three-sided crib which he could enter and exit at will. The fact that their babies cried if they were put to sleep separately was taken as a 'voicing' of the babies' preference to sleep with the parents and their need to breastfeed in the night.

Breastfeeding occurs as often as the child desires, even if the child is seeking comfort and not food. Mothers remarked that they had not anticipated having to wake so often before they became parents; it was sometimes bothersome that their babies and toddlers would nurse 3-4 times in the night, but they learned that "that's how babies are." Caregivers therefore questioned the morality of infant spatial segregation based on the child's biological need to be near the mother to eat, as well as the emotional needs of the baby to be near others more generally. "Sleeping alone, the children will not learn the affection of their parents; they would feel separated from the parents and not part of the family. They might feel that the parents don't love them" (*Camila, mother of four*).

In none of the families were naptimes, bedtimes, or expectations for prescribed lengths of sleep imposed upon young children. Generally babies went to bed at the same time as the rest of the family, unless they happened to fall asleep beforehand on their own. Some fathers and mothers lamented that their babies or toddlers were the last ones to go to sleep at night and the first ones up. If the child was still active while the rest of the family wanted to go to sleep, parents often didn't do much to try to get the baby to fit into their own preferred sleep schedule. The following was a typical response of the parents I interviewed:

Ernesto (father): "She (15-month-old daughter) is always staying up until 11 or 12 at night and she just always wants to play." Her mother had taken her upstairs over an hour ago when she started crying and fussing at dinner time. Ernesto pointed up to the ceiling and continued, "Like right now – she's not sleeping, she's playing up there, I can hear her. She just wants to play and play;

we'll turn the light off to try to make her want to go to sleep, but she'll still keep playing and get mad about the light going off....yeah it's hard because right now, I'll turn off the light and she doesn't want me to, I try to turn off the light but....yeah, it's hard." On the next day I followed up with Ximena (the mother): "She just doesn't want to go to sleep lately. She just plays and plays and will nurse and then she will stand up and start walking around again. It is difficult right now because of that." I asked what she does then to make her go to sleep. Ximena laughed and said, "Nothing! She gets mad if I force her to go to bed. We just let her play and play until she gets tired and she wants to sleep."

However, this does not mean that the parents wouldn't *prefer* that the child sleep at particular times or do things that might make sleep more inviting for the child. That same family would often mill around the Colombian-style hammock, made from a blanket wrapped around a rope slung from the terrace ceiling. Oftentimes it was an older sibling's duty to wrap the baby in layers of blankets, put her knit cap on, and rock her back and forth. But then she would sit up and start pointing at other things and "talking;" then they would take her out and help her walk around and play and then try to put her back into the hammock again 10 minutes later. On one occasion the mother was seen trying to get the baby to fall asleep in there by standing hunched over the hammock to allow the daughter access to her breast. Sometimes it took 3 or 4 attempts with corresponding play interludes before she actually went to sleep; other times were unsuccessful altogether, and the mother, Ximena, remarked to me on a number of such occasions, "I want her to sleep, but she doesn't want to." They had rigged up the hammock to give the mother a break from babywearing the daughter in her shawl, which was a very commonly used sleep-inducing tool among the Saraguros.

Viviana, a 35-year-old mother of three, elaborated on this after I commented on seeing babywearing used with fussy babies even in the daycare.

You carry the babies and they will fall asleep. In the sling it is like a hammock, they get bored, they can relax there, feel the warmth of the mama and rock to sleep with her motions. If you say 'Let's go to sleep' and the child doesn't want to sleep, they won't. They will fight it, so you have to coax them into it by letting them feel relaxed about the situation and that they don't *have* to do it. The majority of people carry the babies like this to get them to sleep; then once they are asleep you can transfer them to the bed or to lie down somewhere. You can tell when they are tired and you say, 'Why don't we lie down together?' or 'Come let me carry you,' and the like. You make them sleepy, you *help* them sleep – there is a difference between that and forcing them to sleep.

A couple of parents sheepishly admitted that they did sometimes “force” the baby to go to bed, by turning off the light when it got to be midnight or later. This didn’t always work to get the baby to sleep, however, and a number of parents noted that the children often got out of bed and continued to play in the dark or climbed all over them while they were sleeping. Parents said they didn’t mind because, even so, they got used to it and continued to sleep. That such a mild action as turning off the light in the family bedroom could be construed as a display of force interfering in the child’s self-regulation of sleep speaks to the level of autonomy and competence that infants are generally entrusted with. In fact, the example of Ximena above highlights that the final decision-maker on the matter of sleep needs is the child, not the adult. Despite parents’ wishes that children sleep so that they can get on with their work unencumbered at certain times, parents and daycare workers always came back to the same statement: ultimately, you cannot force them to do so.

Clearly, the case in North America would suggest that one *can* indeed force children to sleep. Gottlieb (2004) sums up the self-fulfilling prophecies of parental expectations for infant sleep in middle-class Euro-American families with the three goals that these parents have. The first is for the child to sleep through the night without waking, as soon in life as possible. Second, parents expect babies to take one or two naps at regular times each day, for a considerable and predictable length of time. Third, the baby’s sleep is expected to take place – at the very least for night-time stretches, if not for daytime sleep as well – in the baby’s own segregated space, generally in a separate room. Parental assessments of infants’ sleep and spatial needs and their expectations for the patterns that infants *should* follow consequently motivate them to act in ways that encourage such behavior. “Your own expectations can have a very strong influence on how your child’s sleep pattern develops from the day you bring him home from the hospital” (Ferber 1985: 17).

These middle-class Euro-American children are thought to need a prescribed amount of sleep each day, and adults are charged with regulating and ensuring these needs are met. Naptimes and bedtimes are routine parts of home life, and daycare institutions reinforce the



practice by mandating naps or quiet times of a fixed duration. If children wake up before the nap time is over, they are told to go back to sleep. When bed time comes, children are expected to go to bed whether they feel tired or not. The requirement to bring the child into daycare by a certain time each day also serves to reinforce bedtimes, as parents must have the child awake by a certain hour in the morning if they are to make this deadline. Parents' own rigid work schedules and the tendency to live in nuclear families, rather isolated from other potential familial caregivers, translates to a need for children to adapt to the parents' schedule, rather than vice versa.

Children are resilient and can adapt to anything, which allows for enormous cultural and individual variation in the way that children can be raised. When discussing sleep practices, Saraguro parents often asked me about the cultural norms in my own country. When I told them about getting children to sleep continuously through the night at 3 months of age, mothers were generally quite shocked. One older mother of four was quite curious about how this could possibly be done, how a baby of that age could physically go through the night without waking. "Of course, that would be great, every parent would love that if the child would sleep through the night without waking, but I don't think that seems possible. At that age they still wake a lot to eat, they are still very *tiernos* [tender, young]." I tried to place the practice within the larger culture of parenting and sleep by explaining that, rather than sleeping together in the parents' bed, North American babies usually sleep in a separate bed, if not a separate room. Bottle-feeding rates are high, and the mothers who do breastfeed must, in those arrangements, get out of bed, go to another room, feed the baby, wait until he or she has fallen asleep again, put the baby back into the crib and get themselves back to sleep again. The Saraguro mother remarked that those mothers must no sooner get back to sleep when they have to do it all over again. Considering that arrangement she added, "Perhaps sleeping in another room is a convenience for the parents, but not for the baby."

As noted above, sleeping alone was a morally contentious issue to Saraguros. Saraguro parents also seemed to believe that children – even babies – were capable of knowing their own

sleep needs, and they would sleep when they needed to. Although they might make suggestions to the child through actions like babywearing or wrapping them in blankets and putting them in a hammock, the adult caregivers did not believe in forcing their will on the child if he or she didn't show interest in sleeping. Babies were also never forced to nap; the idea of making children nap at a certain time every day for a prescribed length of time was met with wide-eyed stares, aghast or, at times, even laughing at the silliness of trying to force a child to sleep against her will.

On one level, just as babywearing is a sensible option to free up both hands, allowing the caregiver to continue working, letting children decide for themselves when, where, and for how long they sleep might be seen as a cultural adaptation that is purely practical in nature. As I had learned from my own attempts, enforcing a schedule often necessitates a lot of effort on the parents' part, often creating an hour-long routine of grooming, hygiene, dressing, books, and stories, only to have to lie for another hour with a not-so-sleepy toddler. Forcing the issue when the babies didn't seem interested in sleeping could simply be seen as the logical response of a busy person without extra time to waste. However, to embrace that perspective also requires a mental framework that does not necessitate adult control over the child and that allows experience rather than scientific derivations to guide parenting practice.

The assumption that babies hold the competence to regulate this biological sphere also intersects with Saraguro cultural appreciation for autonomy, and the extension of this value to all persons, children as well as adults. The absence of conflict between views of nature and nurture allows for a construction of the child as "not yet" adult, rather than "different from" or "less than" an adult, as in popular Western appraisals of the child, where a child is seen as a becoming, rather than a being. The child is therefore categorized as a different kind of person than an adult (a being), which means that respect for autonomy of others among adult persons does not necessarily apply to these "different from" or "less than" persons. Alan Prout (2005: 10) sums up the dichotomizing of childhood as the 'cultural other' to adulthood (Christensen 1994; Thew 2000) in the following sets of oppositional relationships:

Childhood	:	Adulthood
Private	:	Public
Nature	:	Culture
Irrational	:	Rational
Dependent	:	Independent
Passive	:	Active
Incompetent	:	Competent
Play	:	Work

Feminist theory applied the linguistic notion of the ‘unmarked category’ (Greenberg 1966) to examine power relations, discrimination, and inequalities in categories of persons (Haraway 1988). The power that adults hold relative to children in middle class Euro-American society is alluded to by the necessity to note that Saraguros respect the autonomy of children the same as adults, because the adult is the unmarked category when we think of ‘autonomous individual/person’. In fact, contemporary Euro-American childhood has been described as “the most intensively governed sector of personal existence” (Rose 1989). In Saraguro by contrast, “In terms of autonomy, children differ from adults in degree, not in kind – there is no magical age or phase marking a transition from dependent child to autonomous adult” (Belote and Belote 1984:40).

The unmarked category is that which is considered normal and appropriate, and thereby goes without saying. Transferring the idea of the ‘unmarked’ to cultural ‘common sense’, it is interesting to consider the un-stated norms and premises governing adult behavior towards babies. As the typical, these premises are unmarked and do not need to be specified; they may eventually become ‘naturalized’ and therefore come to be thought of as biologically given, universal, and beyond question. However, through cultural comparisons of typical behavior one may view these un-stated rules. In Saraguro it appears to be assumed as the default that children should not cry and that one cannot do something to children if it makes them angry; crying signals that something is wrong and must be fixed – immediately, and by whatever means possible. In middle class Euro-American society the unmarked condition which appears to be the

norm is that babies do cry<sup>15</sup>; it is to be expected, tolerated, and largely ignored if it comes as a result of a practice done “for the child’s own good,” such as parental regulation of sleep.

One Saraguro mother of two summarized the differences in her own and a relative’s babies’ sleep patterns thus: “It just depends what you make them get used to. If they get used to falling asleep nursing, that is what they will expect.” Conversely, if a baby at a young age is made to get used to falling asleep alone at a certain time, with no change brought about in their situation by crying, they will eventually come to expect spatial segregation and social isolation during sleep times. The baby might not prefer this arrangement and may even find it undesirable, but she is resilient and will get used to it. However, forcing the baby into an unwanted adaptation violates the idea of the baby’s autonomy, or respecting her will. It is, therefore, not surprising that Saraguros’ naptimes and sleep arrangements are largely left to the discretion of the babies themselves, as their social construction of the child allows children equal personhood and there is a strong cultural emphasis on autonomy.

Saraguros assert that every individual is a unique and autonomous being, responsible for his or her own behavior and destiny. Ideally, no one has the right to give anyone orders, in particular, orders relating solely to that person's own welfare; no one should wish to control directly the behavior of others; no one wishes to be controlled by others (Belote and Belote 1984:13).

When Ximena and other Saraguro caregivers say that they would like their children to sleep but the children don’t want to, what is never elaborated but implied nonetheless, is that the child must be respected as an autonomous person, and that crying is the communicative technique of these not-yet adults to voice their objection to something. As the unmarked condition, it is so obvious as to not need to be stated that one can’t force children to sleep or do anything else if it makes them angry or makes them cry.

Generally, caregivers seemed to take cries and physical manifestations of irritability quite seriously as a form of communication. If infants were crying or exhibiting fussy behavior or, as older toddlers, fighting with others, caregivers generally went through every potential

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, posters in the City of Lethbridge Health Unit, where all child immunizations are administered, remind new parents that crying 2 to 3 hours per day is “normal” for an infant.

biological and emotional impetus to try to amend things, such as offering drinks, snacks, toys, hugs, or to be carried. This tendency to do whatever was necessary to pacify a crying youngster was demonstrated not only by adults; it was picked up at an early age. The older children (three- to five-year-olds) at daycare were often seen comforting younger babies who were crying by bringing toys to them, sharing their snacks with them, or stroking and cuddling them. Upon his mother's departure from him and his grandmother, 17-month-old Eduardo started screaming and crying, trying to leave the stadium bleachers and chase after his mother, who had now taken her place on the soccer pitch. As the grandmother picked him up and down and tried to comfort him, to no avail, a girl of about 4 or 5 years sitting next to us took the ice cream cone she was feeding to her own baby sister and brought it over to Eduardo. He immediately calmed down, and the big sister continued to oscillate between the two babies with the ice cream cone until Eduardo's grandmother returned with another one. On another occasion, we swiftly exited a local restaurant with our two-year-old son, who had started screaming and crying when we told him he couldn't keep the big llama figurine he'd been playing with, only to be chased down by the waitress outside. "Here, let him take it; he's crying." We expressed our gratitude but refused; within our own cultural sense-making, his behavior simply signaled he needed a nap, not a llama.

Bodily non-compliance was also seen as a form of infant communication. Physical resistance would suggest the infant did not approve of the practice, such as the case where a two-month-old Saraguro infant started to oppose being swaddled, which was the impetus for the mother to stop doing it. Hence, both verbally and non-verbally, it can be seen that Saraguro babies communicate and collaborate with parents and caregivers, shaping both their own care and the daily life of adults.

### ***Spatial Navigation***

Additionally, once they are physically capable of crawling or walking to explore their surrounding environs, there is an assumption of competence and autonomy given to infants and

toddlers regarding spatial freedom. Rocking and shushing my infant daughter at a wedding service, the sea of black in the cathedral – black *anaku* skirts and shawls, trousers and woolen sweaters, hats and long shiny hair in braids – was punctuated with the colorful blouses of children chasing each other around the cavernous colonnades, or wandering from pew to pew visiting friends. As the priest administered blessings to the bridal pair, one of these colorful specks emerged roaming behind the priest’s pulpit. My eyes widened and mouth gaped at the awkwardness of this faux pas, but neither the bride, kneeling in her blue cape-like dress, the groom in his regal fuchsia shawl, nor anyone else in the congregation seemed to be disturbed or, in fact, even take notice of the child.

At workplaces, markets and shops, town hall meetings, the parents’ place of work and holiday office parties, babies and small children were welcome to loiter. They are not “matter out of place”, nor are they expected to fully conform to adult rules of proper conduct. At daycare, organized activities often ended because the crowd had completely dissipated, as each child could get up and leave to start playing elsewhere or even go outside as he or she desired, in contrast to the tidy circle time of North American preschools. Another father told me that his three-year-old son routinely left the house in the morning with cousins and older boys from the village and only came back home when it was time to eat. Indeed, roaming was encouraged as part of children’s learning, as this mother’s assessment of spatial restrictions demonstrates.

I visited a daycare way out in the countryside – with no cars, motorcycles, roads or traffic – where the daycare itself is at the foot of an enormous hill. There is plenty of space where the children could play and explore, but there is a very narrow entry to the daycare and it is fenced in, and that is where the children must play. Why? I don’t understand this way of thinking, children should be able to play along the hillside; this is part of their learning. The INNFA (national child and family institute) says, ‘But the children could escape!’ Yes, but here there is no traffic, it is a small community where everyone knows the children, what is there to fear? Even if they escape from the daycare, that too is part of their learning. My daughter Augusta (now four years old) escaped from her daycare once and crossed the Pan-American Highway alone to go and find me. That really scared me; here there is lots of traffic. But she did learn something from it too.” – Liliana, mother of three

In both North America and Europe, scholars note the increasing domestication and interiorization of children as they are ushered off the streets, consigned to the home or to

various safe and segregated 'islands' of childhood (Prout 2005; Zeiher 2001). This is a moral issue insomuch as adults are charged, on the one hand, with protecting the vulnerable child from the potential dangers of society by corralling children into safe zones.

“Physical, conceptual and moral boundaries circumscribe the extent of children’s wanderings....Erected by a gerontocratic hegemony and policed by discipline, the boundaries are legitimized through ideologies of care, protection and privacy” (James et al. 1998:38). On the other hand, the construction of the devilish Dionysian lurking beneath the cherub exterior of childhood reinforces “an assumption that the streets belong to adults and that children should only be permitted into public spaces when they have been socialized into appropriate ‘adult’ ways of behaving and using space” (Valentine 2004:12). These constructions have been assisted by the enclosure of children in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in schools (LeVine 2007) and orphanages, and the subsequent suburban enclosure of childhood in the latter half of that century (Gill 2007), which worked to create views of children in the street as both at risk and a source of risk (Valentine 1996; Valentine 2004).

This spatial segregation is absent from Saraguro childhood, both within the home, as noted earlier with regards to sleep location, and in the public space of society at large. Social inclusion has ramifications both for the breadth of learning opportunities a child is exposed to as well as for the discursive place of the child within Saraguro society. Relating to the first point, the increased participation in social activities accelerates a child’s competence in negotiating space and demonstrating culturally appropriate behavior. Children do not suddenly go from incompetent to competent beings; it is through participation that they continually grow in competence (Rogoff 1990; Rogoff 2003; Woodhead, et al. 1998). Hence, the more opportunities they are offered to participate, the more competent they will become, reinforcing the premise of this self-fulfilling prophecy. Likewise, the social equality and autonomy of children in discourse is reinforced by their equal access to public space, as participation in everyday practices relates to the (re)production of cultural and power systems (Olwig and Gulløv 2003; Schwartzman

2001c). In the Saraguro case, this participation reproduces a society in which children have influence.

### ***Experimentation with Danger***

As was just mentioned, avoidance of danger and spatial segregation work hand-in-hand in many North America and European societies, creating a moral charge for adult supervision and intervention. Hence, the third realm where an assumption of young Saraguro children's competence can be seen may perhaps be most striking for the outsider; that is, in the experimentation with potentially dangerous items or situations. My husband and I went into a brief state of panic when we spied our two-year-old toddling out of our hosts' kitchen and down the hill carrying a sharp knife half his size. Seeing our concerned faces as we yelled down to him, our hosts hollered back with a smile, reassuring us that it was okay for him to play with the knife; *he* wouldn't damage *it*.

Anthropologists Jim and Linda Belote (1984) hypothesized that Saraguro parents would alter their approach to children's autonomous exploration of potentially dangerous objects and environs as Saraguros increased their purchases of expensive consumer goods. While I cannot make a comparative analysis based on my own longitudinal experience in the area, this realm of autonomy has certainly not been eradicated. Parents assisted children in reaching and playing with stereo wires, which could potentially send the heavy unit crashing down. Babies were given \$10 and \$20 dollar bills and pricey technology, such as mobile phones and laptops, to play with. Their caregivers seemed to be unconcerned that a child of that age would not have the refinement to handle these without ripping or breaking the goods or inflicting damage upon themselves. A common pastime for bored young children at home seems to be playing with matches and lighting small fires. Even the local daycare would light matches as a game to distract toddlers while their mothers were trying to take leave without the little ones noticing. One- and two-year-olds are given regular scissors (rather than the child-proofed



safety variety) to practice with at daycare, and machetes, hammers and nails were all within the practical toy box of toddlers.

Caregivers did not throw *all* caution to the wind, however; they often gave verbal warnings that something was dangerous or could make one sick. The degree of physical versus verbal intervention varied depending on the age of the child; for instance, the mother of a 13-month-old, who had just started walking but was a rather fast fugitive when it came to crawling, was constantly re-routing her daughter to keep her from the staircase. Once children were confident on their feet, however, they seemed to be entrusted more with learning from experience. In home settings they were generally still in a caregiver's line of sight but allowed to roam much further around the property.

At daycare, the lack of enforcement to adhere to group activities meant that once children were physically able to roam the grounds, they were often outside the range of overt supervision and allowed to let their curiosity lead them. One of the swings on the first daycare playground I visited was ripped, a jagged metal piece protruding downward from it. It was never repaired or even brought up as an issue at the monthly daycare meetings with parents; children continued to play on it and I heard of no injuries on it. Rather than worrying *on behalf of* the children about hypothetical injuries and safety issues, caregivers seemed to trust that young children are competent to understand these potential dangers themselves; or, at the very least, to learn through a negative experimental experience. With these older babies, the interventions that did occur frequently remained in the verbal sphere, and a large degree of experimentation was allowed.

They are respecting the rights of children to make their own decisions. And under these conditions, children learn rapidly to make their own decisions, to deal successfully and autonomously with the environment in which they live" (Belote and Belote 1984:15).

These realms of autonomy and experimentation for infants and toddlers coincide with a non-interventionist approach to learning more generally. As chapter two explained in greater detail, parenting and caregiving practices reinforce the idea that the infant and young child must

learn by doing, by trial and error, from a young age. This 'practice makes perfect' attitude coincides with one local defining issue of morality, which is being a hard worker. Children, just as adults, are socially valued for their productive contributions. Hence, learning by trying makes sense, as children pick up on the social reinforcements given to hard workers and the negative social repercussions for those who do not help contribute to the household. Children's curiosity and the imperfect products that result from their attempts to fulfill tasks is not appreciated in many cultures and is often discouraged or outright scolded (Lancy 2008). In the Saraguro context, however, one sees how an appreciation for children's initiative in work-related activities, regardless of the quality of the output, coincides both with cultural values on autonomy and on cultivating hard workers. Making mistakes is how children reach higher levels of competency and learn to become independent.

Interestingly, in daycare activities that outsiders might view strictly as playful and pedagogical, such as crafts or cooperative building projects with wooden blocks, the children and daycare workers alike referred to this as the children's 'work' (*trabajo*, or the verb *trabajar*) rather than as playing (*jugar*), learning (*aprender*), or doing an activity (*hacer una actividad*). Perhaps using the language of work for activities that by all appearances the children seemed to enjoy and indeed beg for when boredom struck helps to socialize children into positive associations with work. As chapter two explicated, part of a Saraguro's learning to be a hard worker and contributing to the household is coming to see these activities as enjoyable parts of family and group membership rather than as obligations of individuals.

### **Moral Competence**

However, an assumption of precocious competence does not carry over to all realms of life. In all cultures, the costs of cultural transgression increase as the child ages, in tandem with growing expectations for cultural competency (Hirschfeld 2002). The age at which adults expect 'transgression' to stop says something about their expectations for adult-like behavior and the time frame in which a child can be excused for not meeting those standards. I used this idea of

transgression to examine Saraguro expectations for moral responsibility and therefore, culpability, and argue that young children are afforded a longer period of exemption from cultural competency on the *moral* front.

The non-interventionist approach to learning does also carry over to the moral sphere, albeit in a tempered version. Autonomy was generally respected when young children did not wish to engage in morally appropriate behavior like etiquette and manners. Whether it was getting a child to socialize with a guest, share a toy, or play with another child, noncompliance on the part of the child was quickly met with a chuckle and a statement of '*no quieré*' – she doesn't want to – by the adult, and the attempt was dropped. The observational form of learning, coupled with verbal clarification, was also noted as the way that children learn much of their moral judgment. Accompanying the parents on their daily work and errands, children are exposed to a number of social situations which they can learn from.

The most important thing is that they – the little ones – observe the behavior of others, at least that is what I have seen.... And, as he [her two-and-a-half year old son] is with me, always at my side and sees what I don't like, what I do; so I say, 'that one doesn't do, that isn't good', and he understands everything, that which he should do and what he shouldn't do. – *Vanessa, mother of two*

With the emphasis placed on personal autonomy in Saraguro society, informal social controls like praise, social acceptance, gossip and ridicule are the preferred means through which to maintain the social order and conformity to moral values. Parents and daycare workers both stressed the need for adults to give instruction and advice, and childrearing practices were often cited as the reason that some children did not share. Moreover, it was generally agreed that adults should tell children when and why their actions were wrong and they should search for underlying problems when the children act out physically.

Intervention was necessary at times when children were hurting others, and this, along with failure to contribute to the household, was one of two realms where Saraguros would exercise some direct control over children's actions (Belote and Belote 1984). However, even then children were not always stopped from acting out, as I witnessed in a scuffle between two

young daycare tots with the daycare worker watching at arm's length. She waited until the fight had run its natural course and the hitting had stopped to instruct them to make up. Children learn by violating norms and suffering consequences in the moral realm too, and there is a degree of understanding for the moral imperfections that the learning child will exhibit. Scholars such as Rogoff suggest that children might indeed only become responsible moral agents capable of comprehending sophisticated nuances of appropriate behavior if they are allowed to violate norms in a variety of circumstances, with a variety of social actors.

The freedom to err in manageable (or even graceful) ways is inherent to a transfer of responsibility [for problem solving in guided participation]....More sensitivity is not necessarily better. While it may be important for children to experience a benevolence in their interactions with others, variation in the sensitivity of support may be necessary for children to stretch their understanding and skills (Rogoff 1990: 201).

### **Factors Restricting Saraguro Babies' Moral Culpability**

The longer period of time afforded to Saraguro children to become competent in moral realms stems from two sources. The first relates to local constructions of the child as maintaining a period of innocence until age six or seven, when the child reaches its First Communion in the Catholic Church. This interpretation of Roman Catholicism has been noted by anthropologists in the past (Belote and Belote 1984a; Finerman 2004), who posited its use as a mechanism to deal with grief and loss since Saraguros suffered from very high infant mortality rates. Although infant mortality has decreased dramatically since the 1980s, when immunization campaigns were fortified, Saraguro babies "still face substantial risk of diarrhea and dehydration, respiratory infection, and communicable disease" (Finerman 2004: 943). This perhaps explains why many parents feel no rush in naming their babies, a practice common to many cultures where babies' survival is not taken as a given (Montgomery 2008). One baby girl I met soon after her birth still had not been named when I went to visit before our departure, though she was already 6 months old and was, by the parents' own assessment, plump and in good health.

Childhood as an 'age of innocence' exists in multiple cultures, but how innocence is construed – in other words, innocent from *what* – is defined differently in different cultures

(Montgomery 2009:235-6). Childhood “innocence” in the Western context is often tied to ignorance of death, violence, power and sexual matters (Howell 1997; Jenkins 1998; Mills 2000; Montgomery 2008). This type of innocence therefore requires a staunch effort by parents and professional educators to protect children from this knowledge, even to the point of banning certain children’s books that might elicit questions from children about anatomy and sexual organs (Nodelman 2011). This contrived state of innocence and ignorance “leads to a false prolonging of childhood in which physical and emotional development are allowed to run ahead of appropriate knowledge and understanding. Yet, at the same time in other spheres, children are expected to be rational and all-knowing in identifying the potential consequences of their actions” (Scraton 1997:180), such as with moral and criminal responsibility. Although innocence is propagated as a natural and pre-existing essence of childhood, this is merely “a cultural myth that must be “inculcated and enforced” upon children” (Jenkins 1998: Introduction).

In the Saraguro context, innocence does not need to be “protected” in the same manner, as it is an attribute tied to a finite period of life, which has a distinct end and cannot be “lost” by exposure to certain forms of knowledge. As in other indigenous Andean herding communities, the spirit of a child is said to be pure and white, without sin, whereas an adult is considered according to how they behaved during life (Bolin 2006). Before the age of spiritual accountability, should Saraguro children die, their passing will be celebrated as they become little angels who go directly to the Lord’s side and can intercede for the family they leave behind (Belote and Belote 1984; Finerman 2004).

Although a number of Saraguro families have converted to Protestant religions or are embracing animist deities and beliefs of the Incas, this historical association with a particular age of accountability seems to continue in other realms. For instance, both the age for moral accountability (at which the child ought to ‘know better’ so to speak) and for the age for domestic accountability (at which parents expected their children to help out in the house and would hold them responsible for uncompleted tasks) roughly corresponded with the historical age of spiritual accountability.

*Field Notes September 5, 2010:* I asked what age they start to have responsibilities in the house and Ximena said, “Eight. When they reach eight they are independent enough to do those things. From eight years old they need to wash their own clothes; I don’t do it anymore then. If there is something heavy, like jeans, I will wash that, but otherwise they need to wash their own clothes from that age. Simón (her 8-year-old son) has to make his own room up too. And he can help washing dishes and things like that. Alvina (her 5-year-old daughter) helps too but that is her own good will, she does that voluntarily, saying that she wanted to help wash [her baby sister’s] clothes. But then she will come and say she isn’t progressing. She is still little. But she still helps; with her, it is her own voluntary decision though.”

As Ximena suggests, her 5-year-old daughter is capable of helping out with simpler tasks but her contributions are seen as acts of goodwill; at this age she remains exempt from any real responsibility in household chores. As such, her failure to complete work is not looked down upon, nor is it a moral shortcoming for which she is held responsible, as her mother has no expectation that she should do it. Her 8-year-old brother, however, is old enough that he is *expected* to help. His contributions to a smoothly operating household are accompanied by accountability, and a failure to fulfill his responsibilities will render him culpable for the shortcomings.

So if young children are innocent, where does culpability for moral transgressions lie? First, the kind of behavior I counted as morally transgressive in examining this question must be clarified. As I focused my research on newborns to three-year-olds, I primarily concentrated on crying and fussiness, along with some of the symptoms of what North Americans characterize as “the terrible twos” – tantrums, aggressive behavior, whining, and screaming. Another important characteristic of “the terrible twos” is being overly assertive or defiant (i.e. saying ‘no’ a lot), which does not seem to be a point of dispute between young Saraguros and their caregivers, probably due to adult respect for children’s autonomy.

This approach to childrearing has been called ‘permissive’ in Western childrearing literature. The word in and of itself reflects the existing power relation between adults and children there, with adults seen as allowing or ‘permitting’ their own control to be relinquished to children, rather than seeing children as inherently equal and without a need to be controlled by others. LeVine’s parental goals theory (1974) and his “optimal parental investment strategy”

(2008) suggest that parents may be more likely to exhibit 'permissive' parenting styles in environments with higher risks for infant mortality, as their primary focus in a child's early years is on physical protection and survival in the present rather than on training the child for the future. Given past infant mortality rates in Saraguro as high as 40% (Finerman 2004), this parenting style may have been adaptive to physical survival goals as well as to cultural goals respecting personal autonomy. At any rate, we see in the following example (relayed by a fellow anthropologist researcher regarding her host family) how the lack of direct control over children's actions avoids conflict, since children are not told 'no' and therefore tantrums to contest the thwarting of their activity are also rendered unnecessary.

The 2-year-old boy is allowed to do whatever he wants, which drives me nuts! No one tells him not to do "naughty" things or punishes him. They milk the cow in the morning which takes about an hour, and they make cheese from it. Once there was a big bucket of milk sitting there and the boy kicked a dirty ball all over the room and then eventually kicked it into the bucket. I would have been really mad about it, but they just took it out and skimmed the dirty part off the top and they didn't say anything to the boy or reprimand him for it. He also draws with pencils all over the wall and bookshelf while his grandpa is standing right next to him on the phone watching him and grandpa didn't tell him not to do that. He plays with whatever he wants and no one seems to mind. The aunts from Cuenca (big city in Ecuador, a few hours north of Saraguro) treat him differently. Normally if he wants something he just says, 'I'm hungry!' or 'I'm thirsty!' and someone will bring him something to eat or drink. If he does the same things with his aunts, they tell him that he has to say please, to sit down 'nicely' while he is eating or drinking it – and the child performs to their different expectations; acting differently with the aunts than he does the rest of the time. – Marjanne Bruin, (personal communication, September 2, 2010)

Notably, the 'terrible twos' phenomenon does not exist as a developmental stage among Saraguros, who, when pressed to comment on the North American categorization, simply noted that children around that age are often 'restless'. Rather, these behaviors are often attributed to external supernatural forces, such as *espantos*, evil eye, or *mal aire*. Many Saraguros believe that when people look at the baby they can harm them, even without wanting to, because of the energy the person is giving off. *Espantos* (roughly, 'fright' or 'a scare') can come from a variety of sources, people, loud noises, laughter, animals, particularly pigs and dogs, '*mal aire*' (bad air), caused by changes from hot to cold or vice versa. The results of these supernatural forces can

range from physical ailments like diarrhea and discolored urine to more behavioral issues like fussing, inconsolable crying, frequent night waking and screaming.

Infants and young children, as well as baby animals, are tied with red cord bracelets or necklaces, sometimes with stones, to protect them from the evil eye, envy or bad energy flowing into them by others, which could make them ill. The bright color and the stones are supposed to grab the onlooker's attention and divert the potentially harmful forces. For this reason some babies are also often completely covered when out in public, putting a blanket over their head or completely tucked away and out of sight in the *chalina* shawl on the mother's back. While hiding a baby away in public appears to have once been a majority practice, with infants virtually put in isolation for the first 40 days of life (Finerman 2004), this practice seems to be on the decline. Perhaps the spread of Protestantism is influential in this regard too, as Protestant families I interviewed seemed to reject these forces as superstition and also eschewed the use of the red bracelets to protect against them, instead relying on God for protection.

However, the general Saraguro public is still well aware of potential dangers that may come from these forces. Some mothers believe that if anyone else holds their baby or even looks at them, the baby could fall ill. Hence, even the babies' faces may be covered with blankets while they are out and mothers often seemed surprised when I said yes to their requests to hold our baby daughter, noting, "Really? Many mothers don't like you to hold their babies!" Pregnant women have an extra incentive not to hold another baby, as an unborn boy may be haunted by dreams of the baby girl his mother holds, and he will wake up crying frequently in the night when he is two or three years old. To cure this, the mother must then put the boy in a doorway where the light will pass through at sunrise and she must walk back and forth three times with her legs scissor-style, forming a tunnel with her legs and passing over him.

When a child does fall victim to these forces, evidenced by their bad behavior, he or she just needs to be cured; it is not portrayed as something malevolent in the child's temperament. Curing is most often achieved by '*soplar*' or blowing, often performed by parents themselves first and later by *curanderos* (curers) or shamans if the parental healing failed. Medicinal plants, water,



and smoke are used on the child's body or clothing. Another home remedy used involves the affected child's or another young child's urine, either taken orally or rubbed on the body with a cloth.

Childrearing practices were also potential creators of this undesirable behavior. One mother described at length the aggressive behaviors her son exhibited when he was four years old, and the various ways they tried to deal with his hitting. After a year of corporal punishment they started to seek the advice of the teachers at an alternative indigenous school in the neighboring village, who insisted that it was psychologically induced. Eventually the parents realized it was all due to his removal from the parental bed when his younger sister was born, which reduced the amount of physical affection he was privy to. In addition to shamanic cleansing by 'soplar', the boy was invited back into his parents' bed at age 5 until he was ready to move out of his own accord, and the aggressive behavior ended. Another mother placed the root of her son's *espantos* in the physical punishment her brother had doled out:

A little while ago my older brother slapped Noah's hand because he was doing something wrong and then Noah wouldn't even look at him. So we took one of the hairs from my brother, burned it and put it in the tea of Santa Maria and he drank it. Usually one knows what has caused the *espantos* by seeing what scares the child, what they avoid afterwards, and so on. If it is an animal you can do the same thing, trying to get some hairs from the animal, burning them, and drinking them. Or for *espantos* one can drink Santa Maria tea or bathe in it."  
(*Juanita, 23, mother of 18-month-old boy*)

## **Conclusion**

In light of these external forces and the age of innocence, it is not surprising that infants' and toddlers' culpability for moral transgressions is restricted, as the behaviors manifested are outside of their control. "[W]e tend to associate morality with the possibility of free and rational choice; people choose to do good or evil. To hold someone responsible for an act means that we believe that he could have chosen to act otherwise" (Bloom 2010:56). Aristotle likewise philosophized that the virtue of an action depended upon the agent's full understanding of what he was doing (Thomson and Tredennick 1976). While Saraguro babies and very young children are considered competent and encouraged to learn by observation and trial as they

contribute to the household, they become more proficient and confident in task fulfillment. This has the effect of creating the three preconditions that Ochs and Izquierdo (2009) note as necessary for moral responsibility: social awareness, social responsiveness, and self-reliance. Paradoxically, Saraguro children are probably therefore better equipped to assume moral responsibility at a young age than are their Euro-American counterparts. Yet in Saraguro the period of innocence, emphasis on personal autonomy, and belief in the behavioral influence of external forces serves to create a six or seven year period of exemption from moral culpability.

## Conclusion

I first set foot in Saraguro interested in babies' moral apprenticeship and their caregivers' appraisals of the ways that childrearing practices influenced that process, unaware of all the childrearing issues and moral judgments being raised by the children's rights discourse and early childhood education programs. Indeed, research did yield insights into Saraguro babies' acquisition of moral responsibility and caregivers' beliefs about the effects of intervention on children's learning. Caregivers' assumption of children's competence and their avoidance of direct control over children's actions allowed children to learn experientially from a very young age in many realms, including the moral one, albeit to a lesser degree. This respect for young children's autonomy allowed the agency and cultural influence of Saraguro babies to shine through, as they elicited their own care, shaped the daily routine and schedules of those around them, and inspired others' political actions on their behalf. Seeing their agency requires something of a shift from typical anthropological methods, which emphasize linguistic explanations and tend to overlook nonverbal communications. However, once babies are understood as socially engaged participants from the outset, who initially communicate, learn from, and interact with others in their social worlds through kinesthetic, emotional, visual, and other non-linguistic ways, identifying their roles as cultural actors becomes easier. In Saraguro this was especially facilitated by a social construction of the child that did not require constant adult intervention in the autonomous choices of children. Parents and other caregivers did take on more of a direct instructional role when it came to preventing one child from harming another or enforcing household contributions. However, in keeping with a spiritual age of accountability and beliefs in external forces, Saraguro babies' culpability for fussiness, crying, aggressiveness, and other undesirable behavior was limited.

What I hadn't planned before my arrival in Saraguro was the extent to which my research would gravitate towards and investigate learning and education more generally. Mothering in the field, however, brought me face-to-face with the Child Development Centers

(daycares) on a daily basis and limited my potential contributions to give back to the community. In this case, the volunteering constraints posed by having a small infant to care for actually worked in my favor, placing me in the midst of another formal early childhood educational venture, the CNH program, and facilitating access to the employees, families, and organizational literature associated with it. The more time I spent comparing observations in family homes with the formal programming, the more evident a clash became in the divergent visions of normative Saraguro childhoods and that of the global rights discourse.

As active participants in their own learning, children build off the bridges that more experienced members of their communities provide between known and unknown situations. In Saraguro children traditionally have been in charge of regulating much of the learning process themselves, and communicative interaction styles have developed that reinforce the informal observational approach. The early childhood education programs on offer in Saraguro, which result from the implementation of a national Ecuadorian code focusing on children's rights, reflect a vision of childhood that conflicted with certain normative aspects of Saraguro childhoods. Some Saraguros felt that the policies of child rights merely replicated *mestizo* normativities; however, as noted in chapter two, these ideas are not unique to Ecuadorian *mestizos*. From Froebel, the German founder of kindergartens, to American psychologists informing Project Head Start, science and child development research have been relied upon to validate particular childrearing practices as correct or right. Embracing the global rights discourse, the Ecuadorian government has employed this scientific approach to inform its own vision of what development should look like and how to incorporate 'better' practices into Ecuadorian children's daily lives.

Developmental psychology and other 'psy' sciences, on whose theories the early childhood education programs are based, have been used as "a technology of normalization and governance" (Moss 2006:185). While Ecuadorian indigenous social movements, including Saraguro activists, have by and large resisted being swallowed into the dominant culture, it seems that early childhood education has emerged as a relatively uncontested back door to

creating greater homogeneity. Equal access to education for historically excluded groups is seen as a positive development by local families. However, the early childhood education program poses a challenge to caregiver morality and competence and devalues other ways of learning that Saraguros quite obviously still hold dear; namely, learning by observation and trial. A major facet of the CNH program is educating the parents to conduct development exercises with their children. Although none of the parents or grandparents I talked to had received this type of training themselves and still, in many cases, went on to get university degrees, they seem to have accepted the state experts' assessment of their parental incompetence and the inadequacy of the informal, observational, and trial by error learning they experienced. Parents who repeated word for word the conviction that they 'don't know how to develop their children' often recognized that their children did receive varied stimulation in their daily life. However, an emphasis on the child's right to education necessitates the caregiver provide adequate early childhood stimulation of a certain type, for *appropriate* learning, for the *right kind* of learning.

Gearing children towards successful informal learning or formal schooling requires different ways of thinking about children, adults, and their respective roles, capabilities and responsibilities, perhaps even different social constructions of the child altogether. They breed different interaction styles in terms of adult-child play and conversation, how lessons are learned, and the structuring of activities. The social and cultural capital involved in these various cultures of learning are embodied through practices that are largely never reflected upon, which is what complicates the successful integration of practices encouraged through a different culture of learning. Integration of practices and the emergence of new, hybrid patterns of learning are certainly possible and indeed, cultures are continually changing. As reflexivity continues about the forms of development that are being promoted through national programs and those that have traditionally been valued among the Saraguros, questions emerge about what is important to retain, to change, and how these two holistic systems can be integrated.

### **Future Research Possibilities: Classrooms, Class, and Cultural Identity**

Despite the heterogeneity in Saraguros' life experiences, many of the childrearing practices focused upon in my research did not demonstrate much intracultural variation. This might be related to the moral judgments that are often tied up with childrearing, causing the appropriation of different childrearing practices to be more complex than certain other aspects of difference in a new cultural or socioeconomic context, because they might strongly conflict with one's cultural moral norms. Hence, despite the fact that many of my research participants had in fact lived and worked abroad, they voiced the same opinions as those who had not emigrated about the moral wrongness of putting babies to sleep on their own in separate beds and separate rooms as well as the spatial segregation of children in society.

However, my observations about differences in the communicative *habitus* and the 'culture of learning' created in Saraguro homes did hint to class distinctions based on parental level of formal education or socioeconomic status. Further analyses might find that the traditional communicative *habitus* of the Saraguros is more related to class differences or an urban-rural divide, thereby creating many learning style commonalities between certain rural indigenous Saraguros and their *mestizo* counterparts. While I did not have time to thoroughly investigate these connections during my fieldwork period, I believe they merit mention and perhaps future research.

As chapter four argued, success in formal education is maximized by a particular communicative interaction style in the child's family and community environment, supported by a social construction of the child and visions of proper adult-child relations, roles, and capabilities that permit adult intervention and structuring of the learning process. Some, but not all, of the communicative practices conducive to fostering children's formal educational success, such as encouraging school-like discourse and narratives, have been shown to be linked to the degree of the parent's experience with formal schooling (Rogoff 1990; Rogoff 2003). Hence, those who are highly educated in Western-style school systems are more likely to engage in

practices belonging to the formal schooling communicative *habitus* and create a supporting home environment for formal educational success without any type of additional external training by technicians or experts. In Saraguro, there was a group of parents that I noticed routinely using known-answer questions, being actively involved in eliciting talk from their babies, asking them to focus specifically on the lesson at hand, and motivating them to participate in a structured lesson. These parents were the relatively privileged, university degree holders (including some with advanced degrees) who asked me to teach their babies English.

These parents were also what one might call local activists, joined by a number of other politically-minded Saraguros who were similarly well-educated and of relatively high socioeconomic status. This activist group has been pivotal in fighting for awareness of their ethnic differences as Saraguros and in creating programs for cultural preservation and revitalization. All the activist parents I knew seemed to utilize and appreciate the early childhood education programs as clearly providing nutrition and health advantages, as well as preparedness for elementary school. However, in contrast to some who referenced Piaget in their discussion of children's needs and development, a select few expressed a hint of doubt regarding the presumed superiority of this vision of development. One highly educated activist, Liliana, said:

I have started thinking a lot about the indigenous way of perception, of thinking, of seeing. I think that really needs to be investigated and researched more, trying to look at the indigenous way of raising children versus the mestizo way. The code for rights of the child is written according to mestizo ideas of what is normal and what is acceptable, and this is something I find very, very difficult. We need to find a way to join our way of doing things with the rights of the child. I firmly believe that children have rights and they need to be respected, but of course my indigenous interpretation of what the rights are and how childhood looks are different.

As we discussed her ideas further, I expressed my interest at hearing her say this, as from what I had read in the CNH manual, the theories and ideas about development presented sounded an awful lot like, "like the United States," she proffered. Liliana was very aware that the globalized notion of childhood development in the rights discourse and early education programs was based on Western theorists' culturally-bound notions of normativity, and that this universalized

vision was merely one of many possible developmental stories. She questioned the validity of the version of development being promoted because it conflicted with certain values and learning processes that her cultural upbringing encouraged.

As one of the local NGO (Fundación Kawsay) directors pointed out, there is indeed constitutional and institutional space for changes to schooling and formal educational offerings that would allow communities to integrate locally valued traditions along with nationally propagated curriculum. The obstacles in doing so, however, are significant. First of all, while nationally created programs need only be applied, a hybrid program faces the administrative work involved with creating a new curriculum and then applying it, which would be no small task and would require some funding to compensate for all the labor involved with doing so. The official CNH program literature, for instance, invites community participation and includes structural space to tailor the program to accommodate various cultural priorities. However, as one of the CNH employees mentioned, observational ways of learning are not really valued in the program. While that could be done and incorporated at the level of individual promoters and families, this is a challenge. Some promoters are better than others at adapting the program to local conditions, taking each place and each child into account. Moreover, the fact that the program literature itself belittles the parents by declaring that their current knowledge about child development is insufficient would, I suspect, make it difficult to simultaneously create an equal organizational appreciation for the paths of development that are facilitated by such a non-interventionist learning approach. Furthermore, respecting and replicating culturally specific values and approaches is a logistical challenge since *mestizo* promoters work with indigenous children, and vice versa.

The NGO director proposed that a second obstacle facing integration of practices was to be found in the attitudes of indigenous community members towards preserving traditional approaches. Most rural Saraguros still seem to feel the sting of unequal opportunities and unequal access in the past to national services like education. Accordingly, they eagerly embrace the early childhood education programs as a chance to play on a level field. They appear to have



fully acquiesced to the assertion that they are incompetent to help their children develop properly and that they therefore need the government's corps of experts to help them. As such, repeating the mantra that exists in the manuals, "we don't know how to develop our children," they devalue the informal systems of learning that are already in place. Many see the national programs as those offering the brightest future for their children and resist attempts to preserve local traditions in the education system, as has been noted in contested efforts to preserve traditional languages through bilingual education elsewhere in Ecuador (Weismantel 1988). Conflicting feelings on the value of traditional approaches were recently evidenced in Saraguro by some parents' opposition to the integration of these at a local school in the community of Lagunas, which focuses on the whole health of the child. Based on the premises that children are energetically connected to others, and that the holistic nature of wellbeing necessitates robustness of body, mind, and spirit for optimal learning, the school and its teachers prioritize creating good family environments. One parent of children at the school said, "They don't teach there. Learning comes about in the family when the child has the rest of his or her life in order, then they learn on their own." Contrasted with the more authoritarian overtly structured lessons of the national school curriculum, some do not appraise this as an equally valid instructional method.

Whether the integration of traditional and national education agendas will succeed remains to be seen. On the one hand, Saraguros have already demonstrated a tendency to resist what has been called global homogenization (Hall 1995) by strengthening their sense of ethnic identity. Contesting interventions that conflict with local values, such as the napping policy at the daycares, "makes sense in the light of differing definitions of life success and the varying cultural organization of community life" (Rogoff 2003: 352). Indigenous activists might successfully politicize Saraguro babies' learning styles and mobilize others in the community to see their more informal approaches as merely different rather than a sign of incompetence in childrearing. However, it might be difficult to rally other highly educated Saraguro leaders, who are already involved in cultural revitalization movements, to such a cause or to have their voices

heeded by others. Those who are in positions of influence to push for the recognition and preservation of alternative traditional learning approaches are precisely those who have economically benefitted and gotten to be in those positions by excelling at those formal educational systems. On the other hand, as chapters three and four argue, *habitus* often works to preserve certain practices even in the face of reflexive choices to the contrary, and certain communicative interaction styles seem to be tied to parental experience with formal schooling. Poorer and less formally schooled families who have felt greater economic pressure and marginalization in the national society and national economy may well embrace any attempts to give their children a level playing field for future educational and employment opportunities, yet their home practices may continue to reinforce informal observational learning. Well-schooled Saraguro activists who have more economic breathing space and are organized politically might fight to preserve traditional informal learning, but they are also more likely to have integrated unconsciously into their own parenting practices some of the cultural capital, in terms of communicative *habitus*, associated with success in the formal schooling system. Hence, whether Saraguro parents choose to charge full speed ahead with formal development agendas or to challenge a singular view of development by integrating traditional approaches, certain ‘naturalized’ ways of interacting in the home may work to complicate progress towards either of those consciously elected courses of action.

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