1 Introduction and Stage Setting

Because children grow up, we think a child's purpose is to grow up. But a child's purpose is to be a child. Nature doesn't disdain what lives only for a *day*. It pours the whole of itself into the each moment. We don't value the lily less for not being made of flint and built to last. Life's bounty is in its flow, later is too late.

Tom Stoppard, *Shipwreck* (2002, p. 100).

BACKGROUND

How do young children spend their time? Who are the people with whom children are engaged in activities and interaction? In which sorts of activities do they get involved, and how do those activities get started? Where do they spend their time? Somewhat surprisingly, we don't have very good answers to these questions. And yet it is when children are young that it is relatively easy to see the ways in which parents and other people attempt to ensure that they become skilled in the practices that are considered important and to learn the values, concepts, and ways of behaving that are valued in the culture in which the children are situated. It is possible to see this by examining the types of activities in which children are encouraged to participate, the types of activities they are discouraged from, the people with whom it is considered appropriate to interact, and the roles played by those social partners. It can also be seen from examining the types of settings into which young children are placed, the lessons they are asked to learn, the behaviors they are asked to practice, and the skills they are expected to master. All of these things are intrinsically linked to the culture in which children are being raised.

Felicia (a pseudonym, as are all children's names in this book) is at the Brownie meeting that her mother runs. Her mother asks her if she'd like to go to the room where her older brother and some other boys are playing, and Felicia

does so. She gets a tricycle to ride but is then is "captured" by the boys and put in "jail" behind some tables. She escapes on her bike and is chased by the boys, who then start talking with her about who's going to be the "bad guy." "I want to be the good guy," responds Felicia.

Jonghee is at home with her mother, who gets out a pre-kindergarten activity book and starts to teach her daughter colors, Arabic numerals, and the concepts of "big" and "small" (which she also shows her daughter how to write).

Volodya is watching a cartoon on TV and playing with his toys. His mother mends a broken toy and explains to him that the ostrich in the cartoon is sitting on an egg waiting for a chicken to appear. She asks him to put his toys away: "I won't," says Volodya. "Why not?" "I don't like doing that," he replies.

Olev is at home with his mother and older brother and sister. The children have been jumping on the bed, until their mother tells them to stop. Olev then says, "Let's sit in the car and go on summer holidays." His sister agrees: "Yes, let's go swimming," and the children start playing.

Daniel is at his child-care center, playing outside with other children, first on the slide and then climbing on the bars that separate the center from the street. Andrea is also in child care, although it is set up in someone's home. She's there with her sister and a number of other children. The TV is on, and Andrea watches from time to time but complains when her sister takes her toy away from her. "You have to share," says the watching adult.

Gisela is at home with her father and older sister. Her sister is giving her some mathematical problems. Gisela says that 5 plus 5 is 9, and her sister corrects her. Their father then calls them over and sends the pair of them on an errand to the local shop.

Simo's father and brother pick him up from child care, and after his father puts Simo into his car seat, he cleans the snow from the windows. As they approach a traffic light, his father asks Simo whether they have to stop. "No, we have to wait for the green arrows," replies Simo. "Are we able to go now?" his father asks a little later, "Look at the lights." "No," replies Simo.

These vignettes are all tiny slices of the everyday activities in which some of the young children in our study were involved; they are all taken from the field notes of the Cultural Ecology of Young Children (CEYC) study, on which much of this book focuses. The children are from the United States, Russia, Estonia, Finland, Korea, Kenya, and Brazil; some are from middle-class homes, and some from working-class homes. I doubt that it's possible to guess the country or social-class group of all of the children, although in some cases the names are a useful clue, because in many ways three-year-olds are quite similar. They tend to play a lot with the objects that are available to them, they are often in the company of someone who is responsible for them,

they are often asked questions to which the questioner knows the answer, they don't always do what they're told, and so on.

If instead of a sentence or two, however, I gave as detailed a description of the activities and interactions of a number of children over an entire day in each of their lives, the task of guessing the children's society and, perhaps their social-class background, would be far easier. Instead of the verbal equivalent of a photograph, we would have then the equivalent of a feature film! Despite all that three-year-olds have in common, the settings in which they are situated, the values and beliefs to which they are exposed in the course of their everyday activities, the types of interactions to which they become accustomed, the activities in which they are encouraged to participate (and in which they are discouraged from participating), and so on are all linked to the culture in which they are raised.

The goal of this book is to illustrate both the impact of culture on children and the ways in which children help to change the culture of which they are a part. I'll thus show how culture is implicated in development because of the types of settings, partners, activities, and interactions that it considers possible and appropriate. If members of a culture make certain opportunities available to its young and discourage others, we can gain some insight into what it is that this group values. However, these opportunities are not necessarily chosen freely from a wide array that is equally available to all; different cultures, both within and across different societies, have access to different resources and power. Moreover, the children's personal characteristics, preferences, abilities, and so on also affect the activities, interactions, and settings in which they are involved, thereby helping to change their culture while at the same time being changed by it.

"Culture" is a word that has proven extremely difficult to define to everyone's liking, leading to a proliferation of definitions (see, for example, Matsumoto, 2006; Rogoff, 2003). In part, this difficulty exists because some scholars define culture primarily in terms of material artifacts or as "collective problem solving toolkits of individual social groups in response to their historical and ecological circumstances" and "as the entire pool of artifacts accumulated by the social group in the course of its historical experience" (Cole, 2005b, pp. 2–3) whereas others (see, for example, Super & Harkness, 2002) define it in terms of customs, practices, and parental ethnotheories (that is, their values and beliefs about raising children) or as shared cultural models, expressed in the course of everyday routines (Holland & Quinn, 1987; Weisner, 1997).

I find most useful a definition that includes the notion of a group of people who share a set of values, beliefs, and practices; who have access to the same

institutions, resources, and technologies; who have a sense of identity of themselves as constituting a group; and who attempt to communicate those values, beliefs, and practices to the following generation. Such a definition clearly does not specify the nature of the group; it can refer both to an entire nation, country, or society and to a group within any given society. One clear inference, then, is that individuals should, with rare exceptions, be thought of as members of several cultures, rather than just one. It's also the case that the degree of sharing may not be evenly distributed and that within any culture may be found competing or conflicting values, particularly where power differentials are concerned. However, as an initial working definition it will serve current purposes, and I'll provide a more critical discussion in the final chapter.

That culture is deeply implicated in children's development cannot be doubted. We thus have scholars such as Tom Weisner (1996) declaring that the single most important thing to know about a person is his or her culture and Barbara Rogoff titling her 2003 book *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*. The question of greatest interest is this: *How* is culture related to human development? As Weisner, Rogoff, and a wide variety of other scholars (for example, Michael Cole, Patricia Greenfield, Mary Gauvain, Beatrice Whiting, Carolyn Edwards) have noted, culture is important as a provider of settings, by specifying the types of environments in which members of the culture are likely to spend their time. Culture is important because it specifies the types of roles occupied and communication patterns used by high- and low-status individuals, by adults and children, and by females and males. Culture is important as a provider of resources, both material and intangible. At the most general level, culture is important as a specifier of the types of activities and modes of interaction that are considered appropriate and inappropriate.

Cultures clearly have powerful influences on how individuals develop. This is seen most easily in the case of children who, as newborns, come into the world with the potential to become a competent and successful member of any human culture but quickly become easily recognizable as members of a specific culture. However, cultures are always in the process of change. Some of that change, particularly in a world in which various technologies have made contact between widely distant societies far easier than ever before, is because of the influence of ideas and practices from other cultures.

Regardless of the extent of contact, however, cultures continually undergo change because the members of each new generation never simply adopt the totality of ideas and practices of the preceding generation. Sometimes they invent new technologies, undreamed of by their parents. Sometimes

they object to the ways their parents do or say things and find new ways of achieving the same goals. Sometimes they pursue different goals. Whether in the process of learning to do things that their parents do or doing things differently, however, it is what they do on a regular basis that matters for their development. It is by engaging in practices – activities and interactions in which we engage alone and with others – that we both recreate the culture of which we are a part and help to change that culture. To see this process, it is thus important to examine how people, particularly young children, engage in their typically occurring activities and interactions with others.

It is therefore somewhat surprising that so little is known about how young children spend their time in the various settings that are made available to them, the people with whom they typically interact, and the ways in which they engage in activities and interactions. Or, to be more accurate, little is known about children's regularly occurring activities in the United States and Europe; rather more is known about children's lives in parts of Africa and Asia. The research that I'll describe in the course of this book was designed in part to fill that gap by examining children's daily experiences in the United States, Russia, Estonia, Finland, South Korea, Kenya, and Brazil.

First, though, I'd like to discuss some of the reasons we know so much more about children's everyday lives in non- and semi-industrialized societies than in those that are industrialized. A little discussion about terminology might be helpful. Many terms have been used to describe these types of societies, including "developed" versus "developing," "Western" versus "non-Western," and "First World" versus "Third World." Rather than use terms that define some societies by an absence of what others have (implying either envy or a linear "progression" of societal development), I borrow from Çiğdem Kağitçibaşi (1996) who prefers to refer to the industrialized world on the one hand and to those societies sometimes referred to as the developing world, the non-Western world, or the nonindustrialized world as constituting the "majority world" (given that the majority of the world's children live in these societies).

The fact that we know more about how children spend their time, the company they keep, and the settings they frequent in the majority world than we do about children in industrialized societies in part is a consequence of researchers' different disciplinary backgrounds and the different types of methods they use. I'll examine each of these disciplinary approaches and methods in more detail in the pages that follow, as a way of explaining why it is that my own study may fill an important gap in what we know about young children's everyday lives. What I think will become clear is that the types of data derived from each of these literatures do not fit well together.

It does not fit primarily because those who study children's everyday lives approach their studies from differing theoretical perspectives or without any foundational theory and use different methods to collect their data.

In some cases, mostly when studying children in the majority world, researchers spend a good deal of time with children, observing where they are, with whom they are interacting, and the activities in which they are involved. In other cases (typically when studying children from the industrialized world), the children are either observed briefly, and under controlled conditions, or are not observed at all because their parents or other caregivers are either interviewed or asked to complete reports of how their children spent their time. This lack of consistency in the methods used means that it is difficult to compare the experiences of children from the majority and industrialized worlds. The research that I present in this volume uses exactly the same methods to examine how and with whom children spend their time in diverse societies around the world.

A further problem that my research addresses is the fact that too often scholars who have studied children's daily lives in two or more societies have not paid enough attention to the heterogeneity that exists within any society. Studies contrasting the lives of White middle-class children from a Western European or U.S. urban center with the lives of rural and minimally schooled children from some part of the majority world are useful in showing the wide diversity of child-rearing practices in different parts of the world. However, they tend to downplay the fact that the lives of White middle-class children in the United States or in Europe may be different in important ways from the lives of middle-class children from other racial or ethnic groups and from the lives of White children growing up in poverty in the same countries. Scholars also typically ignore the fact that even in a society that is part of the majority world, children's experiences vary greatly by virtue of urban and rural dwelling, by extent of parents' schooling, and by relative wealth.

The research presented in this volume therefore accomplishes three major goals. The first is to describe the activities and interactions of young children from a variety of societies, using the same methods to gather, analyze, and interpret the data. The second is to show both the variations that exist across societies and, at the same time, some of the variation that exists within each society. I'm able to do this because in each place where we observed children, we chose half the children from middle-class backgrounds and half whose parents were working class. In addition, in the United States, half of the families were of African American descent, and the other half were European American. The third is both to show the influence of culture on children's

development and to describe the ways in which young children play a role in changing their culture.

First, however, I want to provide more detail about the ways in which children have been studied, grouping the research into three types: those stemming from developmental psychology, those from sociology, and those from cultural anthropology. I accept that there is some degree of overlap because scholars are influenced by a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, but this is a convenient way to show the type of diversity in method that I mentioned earlier.

STUDIES IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY MODE

The first literature is that of child development and developmental psychology. We can find a wealth of data in this literature, from thousands of studies of children and their parents in the industrialized world, primarily from the United States and primarily featuring White middle-class children (Graham, 1992; Hagen & Conley, 1994; Hill, 1999; Rogoff, 2003; Scott-Jones, 2005). The vast majority of these studies are conducted in controlled laboratory settings or rely on parents completing questionnaires that feature a set of possible responses from which to choose. The reason for the emphasis on control, whether in the laboratory or via multiple choice–type questionnaires, is to remove the influence of "extraneous" contextual factors that could reduce the impact of whatever experimental factor is being studied or to restrict the responses to a predetermined set.

Not all of the studies that fit into this body of literature are conducted in laboratories, of course. Recognizing that the child-development laboratory is just one type of context, many researchers have chosen to collect their data within one or other of the contexts in which children naturally are to be found. In most cases, however, researchers are interested in imposing some control even within the home to ensure that variations in children's interactions with a parent or caregiver, or play with another child, are due to variations within the child or the interacting dyad and not to events that pertain simply to one or other household. For example, if in one house the mother spends the entire observational time talking with a friend on the phone rather than interacting with her child, most researchers would be loath to use these data to talk about the quality of mother–child interaction.

Thus observation of child–child or adult–child activity in the home is often structured to ensure a minimum of interruption and the maximum of adult–child interaction; mealtimes and bedtimes are thus thought of as optimal opportunities, and observations are more likely to occur then than at

other times of the day. Observations are far less likely to take place when the adult (typically the mother) intends to cook dinner, go shopping, entertain friends, clean the house, watch television, or do any of the myriad activities that are a feature of everyday life. However, not only are these more adult-oriented activities common in children's lives, they are also precisely those areas in which children are most likely to be exposed to and participate in adult life in that family. Moreover, the implicit message given to the mother, when the observer arrives, is that she should interact with, or at least be available to, her child. Researchers might well gain an understanding of how mother and child interact under such circumstances but have no idea of the extent to which such interactions typically occur in this family. By restricting the "disruptions," developmental psychologists may thus have presented a misleading picture of the types of activities in which children engage and the extent to which adults engage with them. Not surprisingly, then, "we are still far from understanding the daily lives of children and how these experiences fit with development" (Gauvain, 1999, p. 184). Moreover, as various scholars have noted over the past 30 years (e.g., Bloch, 1989; Corsaro, 1997; Dunn, 1988; Richards, 1977), this is particularly true of the naturally occurring activities of children from the industrialized world.

Moreover, child or developmental psychologists have typically been far more interested in the epistemic child than in actual children; that is, they are interested in general aspects of development – those that affect children in general – rather than in the specifics of any one child or particular groups of children (Hogan, 2005). This concern with the epistemic child is reflected in the titles of many introductory texts on this topic, with names such as *Child Development* or *Adolescent Development*. The exception that proves the rule is Cole, Cole, and Lightfoot's *The Development of Children* (2005), a book that takes a decidedly different approach, featuring a good deal of the variations in children's development in different cultural contexts.

An alternative approach that has been taken by many developmentalists, at least those in the United States and other industrialized societies, involves an indirect approach to children's experiences; parents are asked to respond to questionnaires or are interviewed about their values and beliefs about how to raise their children, either verbally or in written form. There is a large and growing literature on parental beliefs about child rearing (see, for example, Bornstein, 2002; Bornstein et al., 1998; Chao, 2000; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Harkness & Super, 2002; Holden, 1995; Sigel, McGillicuddy, & Goodnow, 1992), as well as a literature that discusses the cultural models related to those beliefs (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Lewis & Watson-Gegeo, 2005; Weisner, 1997).

In the United States at least, the views of Baumrind (1989, 1996) on parenting styles have been highly influential, seeking to understand the ways in which beliefs and behavior are interrelated. However, all too often behavior is asked about rather than observed, although presumably there should be a relationship between parental beliefs and attitudes on the one hand, and what they actually do with their children, on the other. Luster, Rhoades, and Haas (1989) provide a good illustration of how the connection between values, beliefs, and practices may occur. For example, a mother who wishes her child to be obedient and to follow the rules that she imposes (a value) may believe that she should not overly express her feelings of love and affection for her baby (a belief) for fear of spoiling or making the child disobedient therefore does not often hold or rock him or her when he or she is crying (a practice or behavior).

STUDIES IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL MODE

Although sociologists have long been interested in children, this interest was, until the 1980s or '90s, limited to studies of the ways in which the various institutions of society (primarily family and school) have treated children. Children, in other words, were typically relegated to a passive role as the objects of socialization and given the status of a minority group (see, for example, Christensen & Prout, 2005; Corsaro, 1997; James, 2004; James & Prout, 1997). From the 1950s in the United States, structural–functionalist theorists focused primarily on the ways in which children had to be socialized to fit into their social group. Critical theorists argued against this traditional view of socialization, focusing instead on the ways in which more powerful and richer groups in any society worked hard to ensure that their children would inherit their status along with their wealth. In both cases, however, children were viewed as essentially passive in the process of socialization.

Some researchers, from both sociology and family studies, made more explicit attempts to treat children and adolescents as important actors in their own right, for the most part by studying the types of activities in which they were involved. The method that was predominantly used also focused mostly on the presumed agents of socialization, with parents (mostly mothers) responding via questionnaires and interviews. In some cases, however, adolescents were asked to report on their own activities (Savin-Williams, 1982). Developmental psychologists have also used the same types of methods, asking people to record diaries or respond in various ways to an electronic signal (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Larson, Moneta, Richards, & Wilson, 2002; Larson & Verma, 1999). For obvious reasons, this work is not done

with young children, and the typical method is to ask parents to report on themselves and their children. Thus Hofferth, Sandberg, and their colleagues (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001) use parent (and parent-with-child) 24-hour diaries that attempt to list everything that the respondents did, collected from a representative sample from across the United States. Robinson and his colleagues have made similar assessments of time use by Americans (Robinson, 1977; Robinson & Godbey, 1997) and Russians (Robinson, Andreyenkov, & Patrushev, 1989), relying on questionnaires designed to elicit recollections of the approximate time that adults and children spend engaging in various types of activities. I'll describe this work in more detail in the next chapter.

STUDIES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODE

The final literature is that of cultural anthropology in which I'm including some culturally oriented developmental psychologists, including those whose work is placed in the sociocultural or cultural historical traditions (for example, Cole, 2005b; Farver, 1999; Gaskins, 1999; Gauvain, 2001; Göncü et al., 1999; Rogoff, 1990, 2003). There is in this literature a great deal of information on how children are socialized in societies from the majority world. This information, primarily based on extensive observational or ethnographic work, is more likely to portray, in rich detail, the everyday lives of children, the settings they inhabit, their social partners, the various activities in which they engage, and so on. For example, there are books on specific cultural groups in Liberia, Kenya, Zambia, and India (Lancy, 1996; LeVine et al., 1994; Serpell, 1993; Seymour, 1999) and a number of books on language and literacy, for example, in Samoa and New Guinea (Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin, 1990).

This anthropologically based research has its intellectual forebears in the pioneering work of Margaret Mead (1928/1961), Bronislaw Malinowski (1966), and Ruth Benedict (1959). The purpose of these studies was to try to provide an emic, or insider's, perspective on the varied approaches to child rearing that could be found in different parts of the world. They therefore spent a good deal of time carrying out fieldwork with the groups being studied, so that they could understand not only how members of these groups raised their children but the reasoning behind their different practices. As I mentioned with regard to structural–functionalist sociology, however, much of the research in cultural anthropology treats children as the "recipients" of culture, being socialized in such a way that they learn how to fit into their cultural group.