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Early Childhood Development & Health Symposium
Albuquerque, April 23, 2015
Semi-Random Signs of the Good Times

All to the Good? Semi-Random Signs
***Complicating Challenges-Cauterary Comments-Contrarian Provocations . . .

Conclusions < ---- > An Autobiographical Bit
(even a line or three of poetry)
The Night Before the Big Meeting Frank Receives a Visit from the PowerPoint Fairy.
Semi-Random Signs of the Good Times

- Week of the Young Child
- 50th Anniversary of Head Start
- Massachusetts Pre-K
- National Academies Reports
- Early Learning Equity
- Kenya Conference
- Botswana Gathering
- LAMICs
Research on child development in the last decades has been loud and clear about the need for a comprehensive and two-generation approach to promoting children's learning and well-being. Programs that support children's learning strengthen the different domains of children's development as well as the various environments in which children's lives occur, including the family, school, and community.
As we celebrate the Week of the Young Child, we also highlight Head Start's 50th anniversary as an exemplary comprehensive and two-generation effort. A decade ago, in an interview with Harvard Family Research Project, Edward Zigler, one of the principal architects of Head Start, put it this way: "The original planners of Head Start created a comprehensive set of services for young children that encompassed physical and mental health, nutrition, education, and social services, and included a strong parent involvement component."
According to the *Boston Globe*, Massachusetts State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz of Jamaica Plain, "...introduced a bill that would include 3- and 4-year-olds in the state's Chapter 70 funding, the mechanism that sends state aid to local public schools. (Some children would attend public schools, while private preschools would handle some of the care.) In essence, the bill — which by this week had garnered 42 co-sponsors — would make early education a state obligation, rather than a privilege for those who can afford it."

*The Globe* editorial questioned whether the state could afford universal pre-K at this point, but concluded that "the bill serves as more of a conversation starter than a realistic short-term proposal. But it's a conversation worth having."
Indeed, this conversation is happening in cities and states around the country. It is a conversation that child advocates need to be active players in to make sure any legislation that follows supports, rather than undermines, the existing child care delivery system. We have seen too many examples of well-meaning universal pre-K initiatives that end up driving high quality existing providers of care out of business.

------- ExchangeEveryDay, February 19, 2015
THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES PRESS

Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation (2015)

LaRue Allen and Bridget B. Kelly, Editors; Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8: Deepening and Broadening the Foundation for Success; Board on Children, Youth, and Families; Institute of Medicine; National Research Council.
Children are already learning at birth, and they develop and learn at a rapid pace in their early years. This provides a critical foundation for lifelong progress, and the adults who provide for the care and the education of young children bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning. Despite the fact that they share the same objective -- to nurture young children and secure their future success -- the various practitioners who contribute to the care and the education of children from birth through age 8 are not acknowledged as a workforce unified by the common knowledge and competencies needed to do their jobs well. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8* explores the science of child development, particularly looking at implications for the professionals who work with children.
A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America
U.S. Department of Education, April 2015

“I believe that every single child deserves the opportunity for a strong start in life through high-quality preschool, and expanding those opportunities must be part of ESEA [the Elementary and Secondary Education Act].”

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
January 12, 2015
This year, as Congress seeks to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), our nation is at critical moment. Congress can honor this important legacy and moral imperative – as our nation observes ESEA’s 50th anniversary – by reauthorizing a strong education law. This new law must reflect real equity of opportunity, starting with our youngest children.

Significant investments in high-quality early education are necessary to help states, local communities, and parents close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. Across the country, we must expand access to high-quality early learning to ensure that all children graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, and
In January 2014, the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, in collaboration with the IOM Board on Global Health, launched the Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally.
At this meeting, the participants agreed to focus on creating and sustaining, over 3 years, an evidence-driven community of stakeholders that aims to explore existing, new, and innovative science and research from around the world and translate this evidence into sound and strategic investments in policies and practices that will make a difference in the lives of children and their caregivers.
Aga Khan University, Institute of Human Development

"Investing in Early Childhood Development for a Better World” -- The interdisciplinary conference attracted researchers, practitioners, policy makers, programme designers, students, governmental & non-governmental agencies, and civil society leaders. It took place on February 12-14, 2015, in Nairobi, Kenya with over 200 participants from 22 countries and included the official launch of AKU's Institute for Human Development.
IHD's director, Dr. Kofi Marfo said, "Our children carry in their hands our future and our hope for a pluralistic, peaceful, harmonious, life-enriching world; we had better invest to build a strong foundation to support them, or there is no future to talk about."

The conference was made possible in part by a major grant from Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development supporting institutional capacity-building for research on early human development.

“The Botswana ministry is making plans to introduce two years of universal preschool and this conference was to inspire and to further the planning. The just-retired Vice President and his wife have started a foundation to promote and support ECE, so he was there. An impressive endeavor. . .”
“One of the participants just became eligible for doctoral support by the government, so she is coming to study with Sara [Harkness] and me next fall. She has done some interesting work on ECE and different ethnic groups in Botswana, and we are hopeful that the cultural perspective will have some representation in the government’s plans. (We certainly tried to suggest that!)”

-------- Charles Super, e-mail, April 21, 2015
Children and Youth in Low- and Middle-Income-Countries: Toward an Integrated Developmental and Integrated Science [Larry Aber, Anne Petersen et al.]

Welcome step beyond WEIRD = Western-Educated-Industrialized-Rich-Democracies

BUT – There are middle- and low-income STATES (within the U.S.) . . . Implications -- Contrasts and Complementarities?
”Advances in neuroscience [the Neuro-Biology Narrative] and research education for young children and that the early years are a critical period in children’s learning and development, providing the necessary foundation for more advanced skills.

“A robust body of research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than those who do not participate. The gains are particularly powerful for children from low-income families and those at risk for academic failure.
“Research also suggests that expanding early learning – including high-quality preschool – provides society with a return on investment of $8.60 for every $1 spent. About half of the return on investment originates from increased earnings for children when they grow up [The Return-on-Investment Narrative].

“Providing children with quality early education experiences is not only the right thing to do for America’s youngest learners [The Moral Narrative], it’s an imperative for strengthening our nation’s economy. [The Good-for-the-Country’s-Economy Narrative].

------ A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America
What’s “Healthy”, “Normal”, “Desirable”, “Good-Moral”? 
Who Decides? On What/Whose Grounds? 
Moving from Is [Evidence] ---- ? ----> Ought [in Policy and Practice?] 
Cultural Constructions -----> Complications
***Co-Sleeping ***Attachment ***Word Gap
Wicked Problems -----> Modesty-Humility?
The Dangers of Divisions, Dichotomies, Ideology

From an empirical point of view, international moral advisers on sleeping arrangements are simply explicating their local cultural intuitions [e.g., the value of individual independence-autonomy] while skating on thin evidential ice. From a conceptual point the foundations for addressing the question Who ought to sleep by whom in the family? are no more secure. Those who condemn and those who justify parent-child co-sleeping arrangements make many limiting assumptions about moral goods. Yet rarely are those moral considerations informed by a systematic examination of the range of moral values that are exhibited in the sleeping practices of different cultures around the world [or, for that matter, within this country].

----- Richard Shweder
Different Faces of Attachment
Cultural Variations on a Universal Human Need

Editors: Hiltrud Otto, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Heidi Keller, Universität Osnabrück

Cambridge University Press, 2014
An increasing number of psychologists, evolutionary biologists and anthropologists are articulating their doubts that attachment theory in its present form is applicable worldwide, without, however, denying that the development of attachment is a universal need. This book brings together leading scholars from psychology, anthropology and related fields to reformulate attachment theory in order to fit the cultural realities of our world. Contributions are based on empirical research and observation in a variety of cultural contexts. They are complemented by careful evaluation and deconstruction of many of the underlying premises and assumptions of attachment theory and of conventional research on the role of infant-parent attachment in human development. The book creates a contextual cultural understanding of attachment that will provide the basis for a groundbreaking reconceptualization of attachment theory.
Attachment Reconsidered
Cultural Perspectives on a Western Theory
Edited by Naomi Quinn, Jeanette Mageo
Palgrave Macmillan, 2013

Attachment theory has massively influenced contemporary psychology [and beyond]. While intended to be general, this western theory harbors a number of culturally biased assumptions and is devoted to decontextualized experimental procedures that fail to challenge this ethnocentrism. This volume’s chapters rethink attachment theory by examining it in the context of local cultural meanings, including the meanings of childrearing practices, the cultural models of virtue that shape those practices, and the translation of shared childhood experience into adult cultural understandings through developmental and psychodynamic processes. The volume is not only a challenge to attachment theorists, but also an object lesson for psychologists of many other stripes.
Debunking the “Language Gap”

Eric J. Johnson

Journal for Multicultural Education, 2015, 9(1), 43-50

This paper aims to outline the misguided underpinnings of the “word gap” concept promoted by Hart and Risley (1995). This concept posits that a “30 million word gap” between children of poverty and those from affluent households accounts for widespread academic disparities. Based on this premise, there has been a recent surge in educational programs that are based on a deficit view toward the language patterns of families from economically impoverished backgrounds.
Describing the language patterns of families in poverty as inferior is linguistically false and culturally insensitive. The aim of this paper is to explain why this is and to suggest alternative approaches for supporting students who live in poverty.
Is There Really a Word Gap?

Abstract for the panel*** --

"Strangely Familiar: The 'Language Gap,’ Blaming the Victim, and Child-Rearing in Poverty”

Douglas E. Sperry
Peggy J. Miller
Linda L. Sperry

***AAA Annual Meeting, Chicago, November 2015
The claim that there is a 30-million-word gap between the number of words heard by young children of poor parents, compared to children of professional parents, originates in Hart and Risley’s 1995 monograph. This oft-cited but rarely scrutinized study used several dubious methods that undermine its ecological and cultural validity. Most relevant here is that the “gap” measured only speech directed to the child. In other words, Hart and Risley treated the “familiar” middle-class model—dyadic speech to the child—as the only speech that counts for language learning, contradicting long-standing insights from language socialization research.
Our study was designed to allow comparison with the Hart and Risley word counts. Based on archived data from ethnographic studies in five communities (four low-income, one middle-class), we examined young children’s verbal environments, including speech to and around the child. We found considerable variation within and across the five communities in words spoken to children, variation that challenged the “gap.” For example, the poor African American community ranked highest (above working-class and middle-class communities) in the number of words spoken to children.
But the biggest challenge to the “gap” emerged when we examined speech to and around the child: Children from many of the poorest homes heard far more speech than children from wealthier homes.

We argue that the “gap” disappears when the angle of vision is expanded beyond a single (middle-class) definition of the kind of speech that matters for language learning.
“The Child and Other Cultural Inventions”
----- William Kessen

“Psychology as a Moral Science”
----- Sheldon White

“One Mind [Brain?], Many Mentalities” . . .
----- Richard Shweder

“The fact that many things go, doesn’t mean that anything goes” . . .
----- Richard Shweder

****Implications for Policy and Practice?
Wicked Social Problems [e.g., ECDH] Are Difficult to Solve for At Least Five Reasons:
- Their complex and interconnected nature, and their links to other problems (may be unknown);
- Incomplete or contradictory knowledge
- The number of people, policy sectors and opinions involved
- The large economic burden (probably) required for solutions
- There is no easily agreed-upon idealized end-state -- And . . .
- There are multiple other known and unknown factors on the path to that ‘end state’ over which we may have little or no control.

So approaches to wicked problems should seek tractable ways to improve a situation rather than solve it.

‘Transdisciplinary’ Ideal(s)?

**Definition of Transdisciplinary Research by Requirements (for Knowledge Production)**

**Aimed at Problem-solving:**

Transdisciplinary research requires framing and processing problems such that . . .
- the complexity of problems is grasped;
- the diversity of life-world and scientific perceptions of problems is taken into account;
- abstract and case-specific knowledge are linked; and
- knowledge and practices that promote what is perceived to be the common good are developed.

The Ideal Transdisciplinary Research Process

Fig. 3: Integrative mode of access

(Jahn 2008, 6)
The Ideal Transdisciplinary Research Process (2)
The Dangers of Divisions: ECDHE?
Demonizing-the-Academy, Romanticizing-the-Community . . .

“My impatience with ideology has carried over in recent years to my encounters with the societies in the West that are my home; to the widespread propensity, as I have sensed it, for people who lack the excuse of brutal duress that is a constant in the totalitarian world to fall sway to the various ‘isms’ of left and right, each of them full of Yeats’s ‘passionate intensity’ that excuse, and indeed smother, free thinking.”

----- John Burns (New York Times, April 12, 2015)
He is quick, thinking in clear images; I am slow, thinking in broken images.

He becomes dull, trusting to his clear images; I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images.

Trusting his images, he assumes their relevance; Mistrusting my images, I question their relevance.

Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact; Questioning their relevance, I question the fact.
When the fact fails him, he questions his sense;
When the fact fails me, I approve my senses.

He continues quick and dull in his clear images;
I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.

He in a new confusion of his understanding;
I in a new understanding of my confusion.

------ Robert Graves
“(Re-)Examining” because . . .

"PRESCHOOLING" FOR THE DISADVANTAGED: THE INTERPLAY OF SOCIAL POLICY, SCIENTIFIC THEORY, AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Frank S. Kessel
Scientific Associate, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague

Déjà Vu All Over Again -- “Know It For the First Time”?

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

---- T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets
As responsible members of this society and dedicated to serving the needs of all the young children of this society, what then is our will, how can we express that will (for example, in the summary and recommendations of this Conference), and how can we seek to influence social policy so that the paramount needs of disadvantaged children and their parents are more effectively met, at all age levels and in all social spheres -- in education (particularly early childhood education), in health care, in housing facilities, in job opportunities and rates of pay? Doubtless you will agree that in the face of such questions any differences between "scientists" and "practitioners" [and “policy-makers”], any distinctions between "curriculum models", "teaching styles", and the like, shrink somewhat in significance.
Two years ago at a Cape Town symposium on “The Deprived Child” I concluded a paper with the poetic view penned by Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1972). It is no less appropriate today.

I like the picture of the mind of our child as a house owned by his[her] soul, inhabited by his[her] instincts, his[her] wants, fears, desires and loves, his hates and happinesses. A merry, motley, moving company, some potential homicides, others pure saints, rubbing shoulders and elbows with one another . . . At times, from the pressures within, they venture outside into the street for a breath of fresh air, exercise themselves, encounter others, bring back food and something new to talk about, returning somewhat changed.
If we wish to build a humane and just society, we must seek to ensure that the inhabitants of our young children's minds do have fresh air to breathe, space in which to exercise themselves and encounter others, nourishing food to bring back, and new things to talk about, so that the inhabitants of our children's minds will return somewhat changed, *and changed for the better*. How do we propose to meet the challenge of providing for such change in the inhabitants of *all* our children's minds?
Children need roots and wings
Thank You -- Gracias!