

Chapter 9

The Cultural Foundations of Fathers' Roles: Evidence from Kenya and the United States

Sara Harkness and Charles M. Super

Although fathers everywhere share a fundamental commitment to the successful growth and development of their children, anthropologists and other observers have documented wide variations in the ways that fathers in different cultures interact with their children and construe their own roles as fathers. Margaret Mead, for example, described a series of contrasts in paternal behavior among three Pacific societies: while some fathers were indulgent playmates with their children, others were feared disciplinarians (Mead 1935). More generally, in polygynous societies where the wives maintain geographically separate households, fathers may be present in the lives of their young children only intermittently. This was the traditional pattern in some East African groups, now recreated by the trend toward urban employment for men while the women and children stay home on the family farm (Abbott 1976; Weisner 1976). At the opposite extreme are "house-husbands," fathers in postindustrial societies who (usually on a temporary basis) are the primary caretakers of an infant or young child.

Sociologists and anthropologists have provided several theoretical frameworks for describing systematic variation across cultures in the ways that parents rear their children. The sociological view of "functions" of the family, as discussed by Popenoe (1988), suggests that with modernization, the basic tasks carried out by the family are increasingly delegated to other social institutions, with the result that the family declines as an institution in its own right. A variation on this view is that certain functions become more elaborated as others are relinquished:

thus, the modern nuclear family becomes socially "specialized" as a context for provision of emotional support, while other functions such as economic cooperation and education are taken over by institutions outside the family. Based on this framework, one would expect predictable patterns of variation in the ways that fathers in different cultures, both historic and contemporary, relate to their children and conceptualize their own roles as fathers.

Another framework for understanding cultural patterns of variation in parenting, particularly in relation to infants and young children, is offered by the anthropologist Robert A. LeVine. In a widely cited essay on parental goals, LeVine (1974) argues that a great deal of variation in parenting behaviors is determined by variations in the health conditions of different populations. He proposes a hierarchy of parental goals, the most basic being assuring the physical survival and health of the child, followed by the development of the child's capacity for economic survival in adulthood, and finally development of the child's ability to represent important cultural values (e.g., morality, prestige). In societies where child mortality is high and the risks to survival great, LeVine suggests, parental practices will focus on the most basic level of the hierarchy (physical survival), while giving little attention to the psychological or behavioral development of the child. In societies where these conditions prevail, such as traditional societies of sub-Saharan Africa, the cultural pattern of infant care "represents a constant medical alertness, a chronic emergency mobilization effort to save the child at risk" (LeVine 1974:233-234). LeVine stresses, however, that mothers and other caretakers carrying out these culturally established patterns of infant care may not actually feel physically threatened or anxious, and he draws the parallel to "the sentry post, which as an aspect of military structure represents an institutional adaptation to the ever present possibility of intrusion; the sentinel who mans the post, however, may be the picture of drowsy boredom as he holds his loaded gun and scans the horizon for intruders" (LeVine 1974:234). Once the child has survived the period of greatest risk, parenting practices in the same societies will reflect a priority on developing the child's future capacity for economic self-maintenance. LeVine attributes the emphasis on obedience training characteristic of both developing countries and the working classes of industrialized societies to the parental recognition of uncertainty of economic resources, and he contrasts this situation to that of middle class Western parents who, "in an economic environment of stable affluence, . . . can evolve child-rearing philosophies and fashions that are less tightly coupled to the hazards of economic failure; they are relatively free to pursue in their child rearing a wide variety of cultural and personal goals beyond those that appear to be dictated by sheer material survival" (LeVine 1974:237).

A third approach to understanding cross-cultural variation in parenting is the functionalist theory of the Whittings, which suggests that parenting practices are the outcome of the socioeconomic parameters of adult life as represented by the culture's "maintenance systems" (Whiting 1977). As further elaborated by B. Whiting (1980), the constraints on parents' own lives (for example, women's workloads) lead to different styles of parenting as well as different patterns of settings for child life. In East African societies, for example, Whiting and Edwards (1988) describe a pattern of maternal care that they term "the training mother." In interaction with their children, training mothers of East Africa are characterized by relatively high frequencies of assigning chores or infant care and teaching etiquette to young children:

The training mothers in sub-Saharan Africa believe that responsibility and obedience can and should be taught to young children. They begin teaching household, gardening, and animal husbandry skill at a comparatively early age. The Ngeca mothers we interviewed are typical: they believe that they should train a child to be a competent farmer, herdsman, and child nurse and that a child from age 2 on should be assigned chores that increase in complexity and arduousness with age. They punish their children for failure to perform these tasks responsibly or for stubbornly refusing to do what their elders request of them. They allow much of their children's learning to occur through observation and imitation; only occasionally do they instruct them explicitly. Moreover, mothers seldom praise their children least they become proud, a trait that is unacceptable. They allow the major rewards for task performance to be intrinsic. (Whiting and Edwards 1988:95-96).

In contrast to these training mothers, American mothers in a New England community in the 1950s are described by Whiting and Edwards (1988) as "sociable mothers," distinguished by the relatively high proportion of information exchange and other kinds of reciprocal, friendly interaction with their children. Whiting and Edwards (1988) relate the two contrasting maternal behavioral styles to the parameters of the mothers' own lives. The African mothers must carry out the burden of household subsistence activities, and they rely on the help of their children to accomplish these tasks. In contrast, the American middle class mothers do not need their children to help with basic subsistence (this is being taken care of by the fathers who are off at work), but they do need the children for company as they are isolated in their own homes with no other source of companionship.

Whiting and Edwards' (1988) focus on mother-child interaction in the context of culturally structured daily life leads to recognition of the importance of settings in defining the parameters of social behavior. From this point of view, as Whiting (1980) has suggested, culture can be conceptualized as a "provider of settings," which, in their recurrent

nature, encourage the development of certain kinds of behavioral or personality dispositions in preference to others. Although this perspective has been used primarily to compare mothers across cultures, it can equally be applied to fathers.

In this chapter, we explore the issue of cultural variation in fathers' roles as socializers of infants and young children, drawing from our research in a rural Kipsigis community of Kenya and among middle-class American families in the Boston area. We begin with the question of settings, and we ask in what settings of the child's daily life is the father present, and where is he the designated caretaker. Differences in the paternal role emerge from this comparison, as do differences in the ways that childhood itself is structured. Our analysis of settings for father-child interaction in the two cultures also helps to identify culturally constituted customs of care in which fathers do or do not participate. We turn from there to review how fathers actually think about their roles as fathers, as they have expressed these ideas in interviews.

The theoretical framework for this analysis is the "developmental niche" (Super and Harkness 1986), a conceptualization of the culturally structured microenvironment of the child. In comparing fathers' roles in terms of settings of daily life, customs of paternal care, and fathers' ideas about their roles in child rearing, the analysis draws from the three main components of the niche as it has been elaborated in other contexts (Harkness 1991; Harkness and Super, 1983, 1988, 1991b; Super and Harkness 1981). Two major corollaries of the developmental niche framework are that the components of the niche operate as a system, and that each component interacts differentially with elements in the larger culture. We use these corollaries to address the question of how the roles of fathers as socializers of young children vary in relation to major dimensions of difference in the larger environments of families. Finally, we return to reflect again on the sociological and anthropological explanations of child-rearing styles that were introduced above. In doing so, we will necessarily have something to say about the roles of mothers as well as fathers.

THE RESEARCH SETTINGS

Two communities are the sources of comparative data on fathers: A Kipsigis community of western Kenya, which we studied in the early 1970s, and a sample of middle-class American families in the Boston area, whom we studied in the 1980s. The Kipsigis community of Kokwet was the locus of a 3-year field study involving many different aspects of child development and family life (Harkness 1977, 1991; Harkness et al.

1981; Harkness and Super 1983, 1988, 1991b; Super and Harkness 1981). As part of a larger panel of East African communities that were studied under the direction of the Whitings (see Whiting and Edwards 1988), Kokwet has contributed to our understanding of cultural patterns of child rearing in that part of the world (Harkness and Super 1991a,b; Super and Harkness 1986). The more recent American study was undertaken particularly to examine in more detail the dynamics of parental theories of development and their role in promoting it.

The community of Kokwet is located in the western highlands of Kenya, where it enjoys a temperate climate protected by altitude (4000 feet) from the worst of tropical diseases. Consisting of 54 households established on land repatriated from the British at national independence in 1963, Kokwet at the time of fieldwork was a relatively prosperous farming community. As a government-sponsored "settlement scheme," the community was intentionally modern in some agricultural practices, such as the use of hybrid cows for commercial milk production and the marketing of other agricultural produce from household plots of about 20 acres each. This very prosperity, however, had enabled the community to maintain some traditional aspects of life-style, particularly in regard to men's occupations. Unlike other areas where land pressures have been much greater, few men in Kokwet worked away from home, and the organization of the households thus was maintained in its traditional form. Fathers in Kokwet were around to run the political and ceremonial business of the community, settle disputes among their neighbors, direct large, often polygynous households, plough fields with oxen or tractors, harvest maize, mend fences, take care of the cows, and relax with their male friends over a pot of beer in the afternoons. Although none had more than a few years of schooling, these men were for the most part solid citizens, men who had been successful or lucky enough to be able to buy substantial pieces of land, and who had established large families to help them generate the profits. Because their families were built over a period of many years, most of the married men in the community had young children at the time of the field study.

Families in the American sample were recruited through the Cambridge Center of Harvard Community Health Plan, a large health maintenance organization. Thirty-six families participated in the study, with children ranging in age from newborn to 5 years during the 18-month project. The residences of the families included the city of Cambridge itself as well as surrounding suburbs. All families were middle or professional class, intact nuclear families with healthy children. The parents were virtually all American born and the overwhelming majority were of European background. They were all committed parents, interested

enough in the daily lives and progress of their children to agree to participate in a study that made real demands on their time over a period of a year and a half. It is notable in this context, however, that of all the parents who were invited to participate in the study (based primarily on the age, sex, and health of their children), about three-quarters agreed to participate and all these remained with the study throughout its duration. In the Cambridge sample, then, we have a set of optimally functioning families in terms of health and stability, but they are not highly self-selected.

FATHERS IN SETTINGS OF DAILY LIFE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Father Presence

In comparing the Kipsigis and Cambridge fathers, we first address the question of how much these fathers are present in the lives of their infants and young children, and in what contexts. For the Kokwet fathers, the data for making this comparison are "family spot observations," an adaptation of the technique developed by the Munroes (Munroe and Munroe 1971) for observing social behavior at a given moment in time. In the family spot observations, a research assistant approached the homestead and noted down the activities of all household members who were present, then asked about the location and activities of all others. All families in Kokwet ($n = 64$) were visited in this way approximately 10 times between the hours of 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, in a pseudo-randomly assigned order, over the course of a couple of weeks (n observations = 690). Overall the family observations were spread over a year, in order to capture seasonal variation in activities at the group level. The data for the Cambridge profile of father presence come from "parental diaries," one-page sheets for keeping track of the study child's daily routines in terms of location, activity, caretaker, and others present. The parental diaries were kept by one of the parents (usually the mother) for a week at a time at 6-month intervals, making a total of four sets of diaries for each child over the year and a half of study participation. Because the times for keeping these diaries were established by the child's birthday, the diaries also cover all seasons as well as ages from early infancy to almost the fifth birthday. For the present analysis, we have included all time (both day and night) that the child was awake. Although this time does not correspond to the 9-to-6 hours for the Kokwet observations, it is a fairer basis of comparison for analyzing fathers' roles at home; in Kokwet, the 9-to-6 period is more representative of the full daily cycle that it is in the Cambridge sample. Neverthe-

less, we also examined the results with a strict comparison of the 9-to-6 hours in the two samples.

As shown in Table 1, the proportions of time that fathers in Kokwet and Cambridge are present with their young children are surprisingly similar, given the differences in ecology. Fathers in both cultures are present with children under 1 year of age about a third of the time (using the whole day for the Cambridge sample), probably reflecting the fact that these infants are likely to be more closely attended by their mothers and that the fathers will thus be in the presence of the infant as a function of spending time at home, with their wives. Thereafter, the proportions of time when the father is present closely parallel each other through age 4, varying from around 25 to 30% of the child's observed time. If we consider only the hours from 9 to 6 for the Cambridge sample, these figures drop by 5 to 10 percentage points, but the pattern across ages remains the same.

Father Caretaking

Given the similarity in overall rate of father presence, an American cultural perspective leads one to ask in what proportion of these times that father and child are together in the same space is the father taking care of the child? The Cambridge fathers' time spent in caretaking, as a proportion of the child's whole day, is reported in Table 1: it hovers around 15%, with no discernible pattern related to the child's age. In attempting to make a comparison with the Kokwet fathers on this measure, we encounter a dramatic difference between fathers' roles in the two cultures. Fathers in Kokwet are virtually never the designated caretakers of infants or young children. In fact, Kipsigis traditions prohibit the father from seeing his newborn infant at all for the first week

Table 1. Fathers' Presence and Caretaking Responsibilities as Percent of Child's Waking Day

	Age of Child (years)				
	0	1	2	3	4
Father present					
Cambridge	34	25	28	25	27
Kokwet	35	23	28	33	30
Father is primary caretaker					
Cambridge	13	15	15	14	17
Kokwet	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Cambridge $n = 16,728$ diary hours while child is awake; Kokwet $n = 748$ spot observations while child is awake.

(formally the first month) after the child's birth, lest the child be damaged by the "strength" of the father's gaze and, conversely, lest the father's masculinity be compromised by close contact with the "dirtiness" (e.g., excreta and vomit) of the baby. Close physical contact between the baby and the father is discouraged during the first year of the baby's life; for example, the baby should not be left to sleep on the father's bed. Despite these restrictions, fathers (like other members of the family) do take great pleasure in their infants and the baby is a frequent center of affectionate attention by the father as well as others. Actual caretaking, however, is left to mothers and siblings.

Along with other researchers whose field data are reported in Whiting and Edwards' comparative study of child rearing, we rated the Kokwet fathers' participation in several specific child care tasks for infants and toddlers (Whiting and Edwards 1988:64-65). The results are summarized in Table 2. As can be seen, fathers in Kokwet rarely played with or entertained their infants, and they were never observed to carry the infant outside the house, dress, feed, or bathe the infant, or take charge of it in the mother's absence. This picture changes only slightly for toddlers: fathers occasionally played with or held these children, and rarely carried them, engaged in physical caretaking, or took charge in the mother's absence. In contrast, the Kokwet fathers frequently disciplined their toddlers verbally, and occasionally taught them chores. Fathers' caretaking involvement for children older than toddlers is not

Table 2. Kokwet Fathers' Participation in Childcare Tasks

Task	Level of father's participation
Child 0-1 years	
Play, entertain	Rare
Hold	Rare
Carry outside house	Never
Dress, feed, bathe	Never
Take charge in mother's absence	Never
Child 2-3 years	
Play, entertain	Occasional
Hold	Occasional
Carry outside house	Rare
Dress, feed, bathe	Rare
Teach chores	Occasional
Teach symbolic material	Never
Physically discipline	Never
Verbally discipline	Daily
Take charge in mother's absence	Rare

Note: adapted from Whiting and Edwards (1988: 64-65).

reported for the simple reason that children over about 2 years of age are not considered to need an assigned caretaker. In this environment where there are always several people of varying ages available, caretaking becomes a diffuse responsibility where even preschoolers are expected to help out in taking care of infant siblings, while older siblings and adults supervise their activities in turn.

Contexts of Father Presence

While fathers in the Kokwet and Cambridge samples can be compared in terms of simple presence or absence and involvement in "caretaking" (as culturally designated), an important aspect of fathers as socializers of young children is reflected in the social contexts that they share with their children. From the child's point of view, the question can be posed first as: What is the child doing when the father is present? As we will see shortly, presence of the father does not imply the same pattern of interaction in different child activity contexts, but this at least provides a

Table 3. Distribution of Children's Major Activities (Percent of Time) While Father Is Present

	Age of child (years)			
	0	1	2	3
Playing				
Cambridge	39	38	33	27
Kokwet	0	7	45	17
Eating				
Cambridge	33	24	33	21
Kokwet	6	17	13	13
Errand, entertainment away from home				
Cambridge	8	19	16	20
Kokwet	0	0	0	0
Bed and bath routines				
Cambridge	10	11	16	18
Kokwet	0	0	0	0
Chores				
Cambridge	0	0	0	1
Kokwet	0	0	13	30
TV or reading				
Cambridge	2	3	7	9
Kokwet	0	0	0	0
Watch, socialize, "be with"				
Kokwet	94	73	26	35
Help/accompany parent				
Cambridge	4	5	5	7

starting point for our comparisons. Table 3 shows the percent of time that the child is involved in different activities while the father is present. It will be noted immediately that several of the child activity categories are empty or absent for one sample. This is due partly to different data collection methods (it is not possible to derive the category "help/accompany" from the Kipsigis data), but mainly to the fact that some activity categories that are important in one culture are unimportant or nonexistent in the other. For the Cambridge families, bathing and bedtime routines, watching TV or looking at books, and time away from home (for example, a trip to the doctor, grocery shopping, or a family outing) emerge as distinctive and significant contexts in which fathers and their young children are both present. Among the Kipsigis families of Kokwet, there are no bedtime routines for young children, there are no recreational books or televisions, and errands (which must be done on foot) are usually carried out individually. In contrast, the Kipsigis children from age 2 on are spending a good deal of time doing chores while their fathers are present, and the Cambridge children are doing virtually no chores.

Contexts of Father-Child Interaction

To some extent, of course, the profiles of child activity while the father is present simply reflect the profiles of child activity more generally. The Kipsigis trends in play and chores, for example, are consistent with other data from this community showing that children's play time peaks at age 2, dropping off in subsequent years as the proportion of time children spend doing chores increases (Harkness and Super 1983). To get a better picture of what activities fathers and children might actually be doing together, we turn to further analyses. For the Kokwet sample, the best estimate that can be derived of father-child interaction in the context of different activities is simply the pattern of co-occurrence of the same activities by child and father.

The possible patterns of activity co-occurrence between fathers and children, shown in Table 4, are limited by the fact that some activity categories apply only to babies or children. Most meaningful here is that fathers do not "play" in Kipsigis (nor do mothers, for that matter). The major potentially shared activities are chores, eating, and sociability (including children's play). For each of these, Table 4 lists the shared activity time as a percent of each actor's overall time in that activity, that is, for the child and the father. For 1-year-old children, for example, the concurrent eating time is 57% of all the child's time eating, while it is 67% of the father's overall time eating.

Table 4. Co-occurrence of Father's and Child's Activities, When Father Is Present (Kokwet)

	Age of child (years)				
	0	1	2	3	4
Eating					
Percent of child's	0	57	75	88	100
Percent of father's	0	67	50	70	86
Chores					
Percent of child's	—	—	25	71	71
Percent of father's	—	—	8	52	45
Socialize, play					
Percent of child's	25	47	18	49	44
Percent of father's	100	89	80	90	80

It is evident from Table 4 that Kokwet fathers' involvement in the same activities with their children begins in the child's second year of life, when eating becomes a frequent shared activity from the point of view of both child and father. In the next year or two, chores become a second context of activity shared by young children and their fathers in Kokwet. In absolute frequency, chores are the most common activity for children when the father is present, except for general sociability. By the fourth year of life, the child spends most chore time in the context of the father also doing chores (71%). Note, however, that fathers spend a considerable portion of time doing chores while their children are engaged in other activities (45% at age 4). More striking, the percent of eating time is quite high for both fathers and children, suggesting that most of their meals cooccur, although we also know from ethnographic data that fathers and their children often do not "eat together" in the same social space. The pattern of cooccurrence of sociability for fathers and children also suggests that at the very least, a good deal of their sociability is concurrent, although they may not necessarily be socializing with each other.

For the Cambridge sample, we have more direct measures of father-child interaction in the context of different child activities, shown in Table 5. The focus is on the time when the father is the child's caretaker or, even if he is not, when he is specifically the "target" of interaction with the child. Only times when the father is present are included. Two measures for each activity are presented. The "percent interaction with father" indicates the proportion of the time the child was engaged in a particular activity during which father was caretaker or interacting. The second measure, "percent of father's time" indicates the proportion of the father's total caretaking and interacting time that took place during a particular activity.

Table 5. Father-Child Interaction during Major Activities, When Father Is Present (Cambridge)

	Age of child (years)				
	0	1	2	3	4
Child eating					
Percent interaction with father	30	41	35	43	47
Percent of father's time	24	18	16	20	18
Bed/bath routines					
Percent interaction with father	48	58	39	46	64
Percent of father's time	12	13	13	15	21
Play					
Percent interaction with father	48	54	61	62	52
Percent of father's time	46	38	41	30	24
TV/books					
Percent interaction with father	50	56	64	44	45
Percent of father's time	2	4	10	10	7
Outside activity					
Percent interaction with father	35	57	41	73	66
Percent of father's time	7	20	14	16	24
Help/accompany					
Percent interaction with father	26	59	52	72	70
Percent of father's time	3	5	5	7	5
Chores					
Percent interaction with father	—	—	—	26	100
Percent of father's time	—	—	—	1	1

The results show that the Cambridge fathers are highly involved with their children when they are present. For example, they are the caretaker or interactor in a high proportion of the time the children spend in bed and bath routines (from 39 to 64%). The proportion of father involvement is especially striking in the context of child play, the largest category of child activity in absolute terms (see Table 3): during the time that they are home, fathers are interacting with or taking care of their children nearly half or more of the time the children are playing. From the fathers' point of view, they are spending from 24 to 46% of their time home (while the child is awake) actually interacting with or in charge of their children. Although the proportions in Table 5 fluctuate somewhat with age, there is a general tendency for father involvement to increase as the child gets older.

FATHERS' ROLES IN CUSTOMS OF CARE

The analyses of fathers in the settings of everyday life for children in Kokwet and Cambridge lay the groundwork for an understanding of fathers' roles in customs of care in the two cultures. For the Kipsigis

fathers, as we have seen, there is a proscription on not only taking care of but even being in the presence of the newborn, and this changes to a pattern of mandated social and physical distance between the father and infant. Following the newborn period and through the first 2 years of the child's life, then, the father is a frequent presence in the child's environment, but he rarely if ever engages in physical caretaking. Fathers' direct involvement in socialization of their children becomes more salient after the age of 2, when children begin to spend significant amounts of time doing chores with their fathers. Other data (not presented here) show that this trend continues to increase over the life span as fathers and sons become partners in work and sociability. The Cambridge fathers' roles in customs of childcare contrast strongly with the Kokwet patterns in several ways. First, fathers are directly involved in caretaking of infants from the beginning of the child's life. This general observation is supported by the fact that rates of father caretaking in the Cambridge sample remain steady at around 15% of the time during the child's first 5 years, suggesting that the amount of time the father spends in caretaking is dictated primarily by other factors such as his own availability rather than by differing cultural expectations in relation to children of different ages in the early years. We can see in the parents' diaries culturally constructed categories of child activity—play, meal-times, bedtime routines, TV watching and book reading, and outings—that become the contexts for socializing interactions between fathers and their children. It is notable in this regard that the father's participation as "caretaker" or interactor in some of these activities (most notably play and bedtime routines) surpasses that of other potential caretakers (for example, the mother) during the times that the father is present. Even allowing for the fact that the father is undoubtedly the only caretaker present during some of these times, it would appear that fathers are preferentially taking or being given the opportunity to engage in certain kinds of activities with their children. This leads us to focus on the cultural meanings of the activities as vehicles for socialization by the fathers.

FATHERS' CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THEIR ROLES

As expressed in interviews, the Kokwet fathers conceptualized their roles as fathers first and foremost in economic terms. They spoke of fathers' obligation to provide food and clothing for the family, to pay for school fees so that all children could attend school at least through the primary level, and to "take care of" (i.e., pay medical costs for) children when they were sick. Beyond this basic role of material provider, the fathers ascribed to themselves the role of moral head of the household.

They should teach their children to obey them, and in cases where there was disobedience, it was the father's responsibility to discipline the errant child. What made them happy, they said, was when children were obedient and responsible, listening to the teacher at school and coming straight home afterward to do chores. What made them unhappy was when a child was disobedient or stole from someone else. Fathers anticipated that following their education, sons would remain to help them on the farm as they themselves grew older, while daughters would move away for marriage. In the meantime, sons would be the preferred social partners: one father said he never sat down to converse with his daughter except when one might have news to share from a visit with far away relatives.

In contrast to the Kokwet fathers, the Cambridge fathers emphasized the importance of developing close affective relationships with their children through activities focused around the child's interests and adapted to the child's developmental capacities. One young father summarized what he thought most important for him to provide for his 6-month-old son: "Paying attention and love. Stimulation, mental and physical." Play, in this context, was taken seriously as a means of enhancing the child's development as well as for building a strong relationship between father and child. As this same father described why he thought it was important for his son to receive stimulation and love: "I feel it might help him to deal with other situations in school, and in life later on. Whereas if he was just sitting in his little chair all the time, he may not adapt as well."

In the context of these general parental goals, the significance of recurrent settings for certain kinds of father-child interaction becomes more evident. In one interview, for example, the parents of a 3-and-a-half-year-old boy described their sense of distress and loss over a change in bedtime routines that had ended up with the child falling asleep watching a movie on the video rather than being read stories and tucked in by his parents. The father described his own feelings about this:

He didn't like to go to bed, so we would let him watch the movie and fall asleep watching the movie and then carry him to bed. It seemed like a real ugly way of putting a kid to bed. . . . It's really pleasant to sit and read a couple of books and talk about the day, answer questions. It's a great calm time of day, 8:00 at night, 8:30. And so I found that to be really pleasant, compared to leaving him on the sofa with a blanket and letting him fall asleep watching a movie and then going and picking him up and tossing him into bed. There's nothing to that. There's no relationship there.

The father elaborated further on this in terms of his own daily routine:

Well, for me, it's—I catch them very little in the morning. I catch Jonathan because I take him to school now so I see him for a little while, but very little. Then I'm gone all day. And then come home and eat dinner with them, in order to let him lay down and watch a movie; pretty much by 7:30 or so, we would have him on the sofa watching a movie. So that at least I was deprived of any more time. Once the movie is on and he is watching it, then that's it. So I was deprived of a relationship time that I like a lot. I've always liked putting the kids to bed from the time Jonathan was born. So I was losing out on that part. So that's one thing I didn't like about that. It was him and me.

The importance of "special time" or "quality time" emerges as an important element in relationship between each parent and the child, and the Cambridge fathers felt compelled to provide this to their children, sometimes even at the expense of their own time to rest or spend with their wives. Routines around bedtime again emerge as significant in this regard. As one father commented, following a meeting with their pediatrician about their 2-year-old daughter's struggles in going to bed:

Well, I sort of picked it up as my part could be that I could actually start giving Melissa some of that time at night while she was still up, regardless of whatever time it got into. Because I would be sitting down here reading the paper, listening to her upstairs either padding across the rooms or throwing a tantrum or think she's winding down kind of thing. She has in the past wound down by playing—or throwing a tantrum and then she'd be quiet, and the next thing I knew she'd get into bed and fall asleep on her own. It was just something that worked. It wasn't necessarily the best answer. Now—it would be just as easy for me to do something with her and actually give her the attention rather than have her scream for it all the time. That's something—again fighting against I'd like some time too versus her time. I think it's perfectly plausible. The fact is everything gets focused on the older child and she doesn't get too much—or she can't define too much for herself and the only way she has of doing it is kicking and screaming at 9:00 at night.

Ideally for the Cambridge fathers, bedtime, playtime, or other time allocated for exclusive interaction between father and child could serve important educational purposes. One father, who was a lawyer, described how he would talk about almost everything with his son, from his work to the creation. As he explained:

I would talk to him about a case I'm working on and try to explain it to him. If I either won or lost something in court or something along those lines, I'd try to explain to him what I won or what I lost. And then that brings up the consequent winning and losing and the concept of arguing with an attorney in court. It's not just telling him what the argument is about, it's what the argument is.

Sometimes I'll turn to him and say, Do you know what I meant? If I say we compromised today. It wasn't exactly win or a loss, it was a compromise. I'll say do you know what I meant by compromise? And he'll say no, always, except if he does know. But he'll say no, what does that mean? And I'll explain to him and try to bring it to his level of his words. But there is very little now that you can't translate into his words. Very few concepts that I can't turn into something that he can hold onto for some extent.

But I've talked to him about God a little bit and about the creation of the universe a little bit. Sometimes he sparks it and sometimes I spark it. It had to do with a tree. We were going for a walk. Well, going for a walk will do it because you see things. We were on a walk and he said something like, how did the trees get there? I said I think it starts with a seed and the seed grows roots and they go downward and the trunk goes up and it spreads. He said, yeah, they're all going up . . . and I said but you know Jonathan, the hard question really isn't how the tree got there from the seed. That's easy. How do you think the seed got there?

In the context of this emphasis on the importance of time spent with the child and oriented around the child, the reduction of child time and family time with both parents working at full-time jobs, as was the case for some of the families in the Cambridge sample, can be stressful for fathers. As one father of a 3-year-old boy agonized:

I think a lot of problems have come up because of both of us working such hectic schedules. Time with Michael is very rushed because the time with Michael is also dinner time, bath time and bed time, brushing teeth and everything seems to be rammed into the time allotted. It has become a terrific strain. . . . I feel very strongly about the family unit and when at dinner time and sometimes the only time we have something that you can lean on every day because you know your dad will be there. You know your mom will be there. And I am beginning to be concerned about latchkey kids. I don't really want Michael to go through that. A friend of mine once said, "Wait 'til you see some of these kids when they grow up. Them spending five hours at home alone and Mom and Dad come home at 7:00 and they've been here tending for themselves. They have grown up in an awful big hurry."

THE CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF FATHERS' ROLES

Fathers' roles in Kokwet and Cambridge are constructed rather differently, as manifested in the settings of daily life that fathers and children jointly participate in, customs of care that involve fathers, and the ways fathers talk about themselves and their children. While fathers in the two cultures are present in the environments of young children to a somewhat similar extent, the Kokwet fathers do not generally "take care

of" infants or young children. In contrast, the Cambridge fathers are involved in caretaking from the beginning of their children's lives, and they seem to share as many kinds of tasks as is physically possible (even, in one example, feeding the baby with breast milk expressed by the mother and stored in a bottle). The settings of father-child interaction that we have described here reflect the cultural construction of childhood in each society: while Kipsigis fathers are with their children in the context of doing chores, eating, and general sociability, the Cambridge fathers play with their babies and young children, take care of bedtime routines, and read books or watch TV with them. Fathers' roles in each society complement childhood roles: while sociability in Kipsigis is often in the context of work, play in the Cambridge setting is taken seriously by parents as a means of education. Thus, the Kipsigis fathers emphasize the importance of their own economic obligations to their children and, paired with this, the children's obligations to be honest, obedient, and diligent in their work. In contrast, the Cambridge fathers speak of building strong affective relationships with their children and providing them with intellectual and social stimulation in the context of activities oriented around the interests and developmental capacities of the child. These are thought necessary for building both self-esteem and the cognitive skills needed for success in later life.

The set of contrasts that can be drawn between fathers in rural Africa and middle-class American resonates to the three theories of cross-cultural variation in the family and in parental roles that we reviewed at the beginning of this chapter. The Kipsigis and Cambridge fathers represent distant points on a sociohistorical continuum in the global family trend from extended families with strong paternalistic authority to small, egalitarian postnuclear families. The trend toward "specialization" of functions in the Cambridge families is interestingly captured by the Cambridge fathers' emphasis on exclusive dyadic relationships with their children—a further step toward the concentration of emotional bonds in smaller and small social units. But what is the explanation for how shifts in the family as a social institution play out in individual roles and relationships within the family?

The Whittings' theory suggests an answer to this question through drawing links from the construction of adult life to the socialization of children through parental assignment of children to different kinds of settings. Families in Kokwet are typical in many ways of East African communities based on subsistence farming by household units. In these families, the characterization of the "training mother" described earlier could equally be ascribed to fathers, and the same contrast could be drawn to the "sociable mothers" (or fathers) of New England. But the Whittings' theory, although it suggests a basis for the different kinds of

father-child relationships in different kinds of societies, does not establish a necessary connection. Given the amount of free time that fathers in Kokwet have, they could use some of it to play with their children or have "special time" with them. Given the amount of work that Cambridge parents have to do (especially mothers who are employed outside the home), it is curious that they do not press their young children into helping more. To understand the meaning of culture as a "provider of settings," we must consider not only the practical exigencies of the immediate contexts for family life, but also parental goals for their children's future lives.

Fathers' conceptualizations of their roles and relationships with their children lend strong support to LeVine's idea that childrearing behavior is rooted in parental goals having to do with ensuring the health and future success of their children. It is striking, in both the Kokwet interview material and the discourse of the Cambridge fathers, that these concerns seem to be very close to the surface, easily retrievable on reflection. The Kokwet fathers want their children to be schooled in the work of the household as well as academically, to be ready to take over their own roles as eventual adults responsible for their own families and farms. The Cambridge father plays with his 6-month-old baby son to help him to "adapt" better to school and later life. The lawyer father, while responding to what he sees as his son's natural talent for understanding word concepts, is providing his son with the basic intellectual tools necessary for future success as a lawyer or scholar.

In contrasting fathers' conceptualizations in Kokwet and Cambridge, it is useful to take into account not only what is said but what is left unsaid. Fathers in Kokwet do not talk about building strong emotional relationships with their children, nor do Cambridge fathers talk about economic obligations. LeVine's theory of a hierarchy of parental goals proposes that parents are not free to worry about the psychological development of their children until they have assured their physical survival and future economic viability. The evidence on fathers' conceptualizations presented here, however, suggests a somewhat simpler interpretation: fathers in both cultures talk about what worries them, and do not talk about what they take for granted. Thus, the Cambridge middle-class fathers do not talk about economic support for their children because they take this function for granted. For Kipsigis fathers who are still in transition to a money economy, buying clothes and paying school fees are new and often formidable tasks. On the other hand, the Kipsigis fathers do not talk about building relationships with their children. Given the experience of their culture, they can reasonably expect to have lifelong daily association with their sons, and frequent contacts with their daughters. In contrast, the Cambridge fathers are

raising their children with the expectation that they will leave the household permanently within the first 20 years of life, thereafter to visit only occasionally. For both sets of fathers, ensuring future economic viability is seen within the constraints of what is culturally acceptable, and in this regard the Cambridge fathers may face a more uncertain future for their children than do the Kipsigis fathers. Thus, the Kokwet fathers would not have been content to let their children grow up to be hunters and gatherers in the nearby forest, even though this life-style is demonstrated by their neighbors the Ndorobo. In the same way, the Cambridge middle-class fathers would not be happy to raise children who would work on assembly lines or be supported by public welfare funds, even though both options are widely taken in the larger society. The Kipsigis fathers' lack of talk about their children's psychological development may reflect a greater sense of confidence about their children's ability to succeed in the adult life that awaits them right at home; in contrast, the Cambridge fathers' concern about building strong self-esteem would seem to be a realistic reflection of the uncertainties of adult life in an individualistic society.

Thus, while the three theories of culture and the family discussed here each seem to capture important dimensions of contrast, we are left with a continuing sense of mystery about how major sociocultural variables are tied to outcomes for childrearing and the formation of father-child relationships. In attempting to resolve this dilemma, it may be helpful to turn to two corollaries of the developmental niche framework. The first states that "The three components of the developmental niche operate as a system with homeostatic mechanisms that promote consonance among them" (Super and Harkness 1986:559), while the second suggests that "Each of the three subsystems of the niche is also embedded, in different ways, in other aspects of the human ecology; the niche is an 'open system' in the formal sense" (Super and Harkness 1986:560). The Whitings' theory and LeVine's theory each propose direct links from the larger environment (economic organization, demographic conditions) to one or two components of the niche. For the Whitings (to simplify somewhat), the link is from mothers' workload to the settings of daily life (the first component of the niche). For LeVine, the primary connection is drawn from health and economic conditions to parental goals (the third component). Although both theories correspond well to the real differences between family life in different societies, the examples discussed here fail to show the inevitability or necessity of the actual links between the larger sociocultural context and parents' construction of life with their children.

The challenge for understanding how large-scale social and economic change is expressed at the family level, including father-child relation-

ships, is to reconcile the independent influences of the two corollaries of the developmental niche framework. While forces from the outside may directly affect one component of the niche (e.g., settings of daily life) but not another, the press toward internal consistency among the three components (as well as within each one) produces outcomes for the niche's other components that might not seem necessary in their own right. Thus, although the settings of daily life in Kokwet would certainly allow time for fathers to play with their children or spend "special time" with them, this kind of egalitarian, child-centered interaction would be incompatible with the hierarchical helping relationship that is mandated by Kipsigis parental goals and instantiated by the customary activity of doing chores together. Conversely, children's chores among middle class Western families sometimes present difficult issues because they run counter to parents' primary emphasis, expressed in conceptualizations of their roles and in customs of care such as bedtime routines, on adapting their own interests and needs to those of their children. Although the dynamics of these relationships between societal and family forces are most evident during periods of rapid culture change, we believe that they are an important element in the re-creation and acquisition of culture in all societies. Fathers play an important role in the composition of culture for their children, through assimilation of discordant elements from the larger society into a harmonious orchestration of family life.

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