

KaBOOM! process in his discussion called "Anatomy of a Build." He also includes a section in the book on how individuals can become more involved in the conversation and become advocates for play spaces. He encourages any one to become successful community activists like the ones he highlights throughout the book, and this advocacy and promotion of play in the public sector and our communities is Hammond's most valuable contribution.

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—David J. Watts, *California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA*

### **The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood**

*David F. Lancy, John Bock, and Suzanne Gaskins, eds.*

Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010.

Illustrations, bibliography, index. 483 pp. \$90.00. ISBN: 9780759113220

David Lancy, John Bock, and Suzanne Gaskins make an important contribution to our understanding of children's learning through a unique collection of eighteen essays written by archeologists, cultural anthropologists, evolutionary anthropologists, and linguists. This volume is noteworthy for its comprehensiveness including chapters examining the archeological record, nonhuman primates, traditional societies, and children's learning in adverse environments. The scope and depth of this work brings to the fore a variety of important, but too often understudied, aspects of children's learning. I highly recommend this book to scholars, students, and practitioners in the social

sciences, education, and human services. A few examples and key themes illustrate this book's importance and the rich discussions in its many excellent chapters.

Consider the material on children's learning emerging from an evolutionary context. Lancy, Bock, and Gaskins's anthropological focus on children's learning broadens our perspective of the evolutionary context of human learning. The lengthy period of immaturity experienced by humans is a product of evolution. Bock reviews the evolutionary ecology of childhood and how the history of adaptation plays out in various contemporary contexts. He argues that our physical maturation and cognitive development are interactively responsive to social, cultural, and ecological influences. Human history has led to learning in childhood that is broadly patterned and highly responsive to particular environments.

Next, let us look at the author's notion that the focus of children's learning is culturally shaped. An anthropological focus on children's learning deepens our appreciation of what it is that children learn, especially beyond the classroom or in other didactic contexts. The book organizes its focus of learning through culturally specific ideas about desirable learning outcomes. Sara Harkness, Charles Super, and colleagues, for example, describe how, in traditional cultures in sub-Saharan Africa, parents' concepts of children's intelligence tend to highlight aspects of social competence, including responsibility and helpfulness. Heidi Fung and Benjamin Smith examine culturally specific patterns of moral socialization and include Taiwan where care givers value children's learning of shame. Care giv-

ers initiate shaming events: emotionally charged communicative events in which they cast the child in an unfavorable light to forestall or end a transgression. The authors interpret these practices in the context of Confucian ideology in which to know shame is a moral virtue. If one possesses the moral sense of shame, one is able to examine and reflect on behaviors and to be courageous enough to humbly admit one's own inadequacy or wrongdoing, and thereby improve. Rebecca Zarger describes how rural children in many areas of the world learn to contribute to their households through their increasing knowledge of their biophysical environment: the way different organisms look, smell, and taste and how they are valued by people. Knowledge such as where to find and trap birds, catch small fish, or locate edible plants shape and guide children's daily experiences in a particular locale, accumulating over time to sustain a varied and practical understanding of how to survive in a particular environment.

Thirdly, the book examines the contention that children's learning is embedded in everyday social processes. An anthropological focus on children's learning also strengthens our understanding of the ways in which children learn. Children's learning is shaped not only by culturally specific ideas about desirable learning outcomes but about effective means to achieve them. Lancy and Annette Grove point out that many of the early ethnographic studies indicate a near absence of children being explicitly taught by adults. The cultural perspective of many of these adults is that children will become competent adults largely through their own initiative. Much of children's

learning is embedded in ongoing, everyday social processes not necessarily organized for learning—for example, ongoing work in the home, village, farm, bush, and streets. Gaskins and Ruth Paradise argue that in many indigenous cultures, children's socialization intentionally relies on their learning by observing others. Learning to weave, for example, may take place when the adult's primary motivation is to complete work rather than to teach or to demonstrate. Adults may recognize that children need opportunities to observe skilled work and—through trial and error and lots of practice—attempt to replicate it. The children, however, have primary responsibility for organizing their own learning, including directing and sustaining attention.

Finally, let us look at the discussion about children learning from siblings and peers. An anthropological focus also broadens our understanding of those from whom children learn. Jon Wolseth's study of street children in Santo Domingo underscores the importance of peer socialization in difficult environments where contact with parents or other adult care givers is limited or nonexistent. Even in less extreme environments, Ashley Maynard and Katrin Tovote observe, children's interactions with other children in many cultures are more prevalent in their day-to-day experiences than are their interactions with adults. Sibling care giving is nearly universal, and a number of cross-cultural studies have described siblings as especially effective at socializing each other. As they interact with each other, children learn skills that are useful in play, domestic chores, and other kinds of work. They also learn new perspectives, empa-

thy, and communication skills through everyday, unstructured interactions with siblings and peers.

In general, many Western educators, psychologists, other social scientists, and practitioners associate learning in childhood with activities occurring in school or other settings in which adults deliberately instruct children. Many university students associate the study of learning in childhood with information processing, cognitive, or developmental psychology. Yet, anthropological research on learning has advanced significantly since the mid-twentieth century. As Lancy, Bock, and Gaskins's book reflects, this scholarship has resulted in a fundamental reformulation of learning including its evolutionary significance, what children learn, and how learning takes place in diverse cultural contexts.

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### **Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds**

*Celia Pearce and Artemesia*  
Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2009.  
Forwards, illustrations, references,  
index. 327 pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN:  
9780262162579

Celia Pearce's *Communities of Play* is a fascinating, wide-ranging study relevant to anyone interested in online games and worlds, ethnography, or game studies. The book tells the story of a group of players who originally met in the massively multiplayer online game (MMO)

*Uru Prologue* and their efforts to stay together after the game closed. This work is significant for three major reasons. First, it is a study of the processes that give rise to emergent behavior in MMOs, a topic of relevance to both game designers and sociologists. Second, the book is also one of very few studies addressing how a virtual world's closing affects its players. Finally, it contains an insightful analysis of the perks and perils of doing ethnography in an online community, an analysis that is invaluable for anyone considering a similar project.

*Uru Prologue* was intended as the beta test for *Uru Live*, an MMO set in the popular *Myst* universe. *Uru Live* was canceled before release, however, and *Uru Prologue* closed on February 9, 2004. This closure marked both the end of the beta test, the cancellation of *Uru Live*, and the birth of what Pearce refers to as the "Uru Diaspora," a group of players who now inhabit other online spaces but still identify as *Uru*-vians (p. 93). The book focuses on how one particular group of players known as "The Gathering of Uru" (TGU) reacted to the closing and attempted to stay together.

One notable theoretical tool Pearce defines early in the book is a continuum of online game types, with "fixed-synthetic worlds" (such as *Uru* and *World of Warcraft*) at one end and "co-created worlds" (such as *There.com* and *Second Life*) at the other. In the former, users have few content-creation tools, while the latter emphasize user-created content. Pearce's continuum provides a useful means of analyzing how the emergent social behavior occurring in an MMO is shaped by the affordances and constraints placed on