

PN. ACQ-377

Este material fue elaborado e impreso con fondos de la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional (USAID/G-CAP) bajo el Convenio de Cooperación No.520-A-00-99-00042-00 entre USAID/GUATEMALA y WORLD LEARNING, INC. Las opiniones que se expresen en el presente documento son del autor y no necesariamente reflejan el punto de vista de la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional.



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**Developmental Norms and Community Based Indicators of
Child Development
in the Department of Quiché Guatemala.**

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July 31, 2000

Introduction

Guatemala's National Educational Law of 1991 defines "Education Initial" (Early Childhood Education), as education from conception to age five that enriches the child's whole development and supports the family in the child's formation. (Article 43). Such programming is considered "a right and an obligation of all Guatemalans." (Constitución Política, Articles 74 and 75). In many parts of Guatemala, however, this right is not realized, especially at the level of Early Childhood Education. In the department of Quiché there are eight programs providing various levels of service to children between the ages of 0 and 6 years. Together they serve about 2000 children out of an estimated 13000 children less than 6 years of age in Quiché.

The Peace Accords signed March 20, 1997 between the government of Guatemala and the URNG recognized education as one of the as one of the most important vehicles for transmitting and developing a culture's values and thoughts. The limited access to education was and the need to broaden coverage was discussed in the Peace Accords. They clearly state that Mayan culture and identity should be included within the curriculum and accessible through formal and informal educational programs.

In response to such declarations, and lack of educational coverage, Proyecto Acceso Educación Bilingüe Intercultural, (PAEBI), was developed with the central objective of promoting and amplifying access to bilingual intercultural (Mayan/ Castellano) education in the Department of Quiché Guatemala. While there are currently five projects serving children between the ages of 0 and 6 years in the department of Quiché, they include varied levels of cultural relevance in their programming. Current literature makes clear recommendations that efforts for children should be firmly set in the family and community context so that programs can be developed which respond to the particular

needs, interests, and knowledge levels of each community, (Meyers, 1991; Save the Children, work in progress). "Child development," states Save the Children in their India Study, "is not a product to be dispensed, but a process in which families, communities, fieldworkers, professionals, and planners must work together." However, none of the five Quiché based projects were developed with the participation of the communities they serve, nor have a community based system of monitoring and development. In addition, a culturally appropriate child development scale with indicators based on the activities and skills that can be seen and measured in rural Guatemala was not in use in any of the programs.

During their early years, children are developing their sense of identity, security, and self-esteem, and cultivating the skills that will serve as the base for all future social, emotional and cognitive health and well being. It is of utmost importance for the development of healthy, confident children therefore, that programs support and strengthen this naturally occurring process, rather than begin presenting worlds and modalities that are at times contradictory or at least foreign to the child's family's belief system and practices. In the final document of his consultancy to PAEBI, Adan Martinez writes, "We are obligated to recognize the subjects with their internal processes of development and to recognize the socialization process that the communities utilize to educate their members," (Recomendaciones a PAEBI, p 1). Without recognizing and including these processes in Early Childhood Programs we risk in the least, creating programs that will not match the beneficiaries needs and therefore not be grasped or carried out by the community. In so doing, we fail to impact the quality of life of the children who should be at the center of the program planning. At worst, however, by not

including the community and its specific cultural values in the programming process, we risk imposing external values and norms, thus disrupting village's expectations of their children, and the young child's developing sense of self.

Based on recommendations made in Save the Children's report on parenting practices in India, (work in progress, 2000), concerning inclusion of the family and communities in the planning process, and the UNICEF study on development and child rearing practices in Latin America, (1991), as well as the suggestions made by the consultant Adan Martinez, this study was initiated to insure that the early childhood programs and curriculum that PAEBI will develop are based in Mayan culture, meet the needs of Quiche's rural indigenous children, and are the result of collaborative effort of the people and the institution, rather than simply the institutions proposal. The objective of the study is therefore to understand childrearing practices, and developmental norms, as well as to gather information about parents' hopes and goals for their children, and to identify areas of parenting and child development which could benefit from the support of an organized program. It is hoped that the findings of the study can be elaborated into community based indicators of a quality early childhood program, and a profile of the development of the rural Mayan child in Quiché. This information can then be incorporated into programming allowing the development of curriculum, activities and materials that are rooted in the reality and cultural context of the indigenous people of Quiché.

METHODOLOGY

Community meetings, home visits, interviews with parents and observations of children in their natural environments were utilized to gather information. The

information realized from these encounters was then systematized and analyzed for its implications for programming.

Participants

Five rural agricultural communities in five different municipalities of Quiché were selected to participate in the study: Pacho-Chicalté of Santa Cruz, Patzulá of Joyobaj, Agua-hedondia of San Andres, Tzununul of Sacapulas, and Xolocul of Nebaj. Among these five communities, three different Mayan linguistic groups are represented: K'iche, Sacapultecca, and Ixil. The communities had already had some contact and familiarity with PAEBI. This awareness facilitated the communities' openness to receiving the researcher and allowing her to participate in community meetings. In four of the villages, one or more of the primary school teachers was currently attending the in-service training on bilingual education methodology that PAEBI offers, and four, including the one that does not have a teacher attending the training series, have had at least one visit and community meeting with a PAEBI staff person who promotes the importance of bilingual education.

Planning and scheduling of visits

Through a series of notes carried by itinerate técnicos or teachers to a community leader, (village president, director of the school, president of a village organization), and preliminary village visits by the researcher, arrangements were made for the researcher to come and spend two days in each village. In the villages where initial visits were utilized for conveying information, the researcher usually met with one or two community leaders

proposing her idea and soliciting their support. The leaders, whether they had received a note or a personal visit, then held community meetings to inform the people of the researcher's intent and to assess the community's interest or willingness in participating in the project. Plans were finalized through more brief visits either by the researcher to the community, or by a village representative to the office of PAEBI in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

The initial goal was to spend two consecutive days in each community in order to get a complete picture of daily routines and children's activities as well as to build some familiarity and trust so that interviews and home visits could happen with more ease. Depending on the village committee's decision however, and transportation schedules, some communities were visited on several non-consecutive days.

Activities

Through the accompaniment of a local translator who knew the people well, (a village president, teacher, or PAEBI staff person), community meetings, home visits, interviews with parents, and observation of children in their natural settings, (home, outdoors, and the pre-primary classroom), were used to gather information about parenting practices, child development norms, and culturally specific hopes for the children's growth and skill development.

Community Meetings

A community meeting focusing on the parents' hopes for their children was held in each village. The meeting agenda was developed to facilitate reflection and dialogue about childhood and the lessons or topics the parents felt are important for today's children to learn. In developing the meeting format, it was important to take into account

the people's comfort level speaking their own language rather than Castellano, and also the high rate of illiteracy. The meetings were structured therefore utilizing an interactive style, visual aids and small group work. Large colorful drawings were used as visual aids accompanying the researcher's verbal presentations, and activities were designed so that the people had time to work in small groups processing and brainstorming information in their own language.

The first activity beyond introductions and general explanation of the meeting's objectives was for each person to draw a memory from their childhood that is still strongly with them: like a memorable interaction, a daily activity, or lesson they learned. From this activity discussions unfolded about the importance of the topic of the memory what influence or lasting impact it had on them, and what had been learned from it. Though always initially met with hesitation and slight embarrassment, this activity resulted in the cheerful and open of sharing stories and led the participants to reflect on childhood and the importance of early influences. Following this sharing, the meeting flowed easily into small group work where participants discussed hopes they have for their children and issues they want their children to be familiar with or skilled in. The ideas presented in these small groups generated a list of desires that will be used to develop indicators of culturally appropriate preschool education.

Home Visits

The second phase of each community visit focused on gathering information about childrearing practices and developmental norms. This was accomplished through visiting families in their homes to conduct interviews with a parent, and observations of the

children. In the five villages a total of 35 home visits were made observing a total of 38 particular children between the ages of 0 and 5 years. The interviews were conducted as informally and unobtrusively as possible, usually while sitting on a log or rock in front of the house where the parents were found doing their daily tasks while the young children played. In about half the cases both parents were home. When both parents were available, because of cultural norms, the father almost always became the sole responder. However, culturally it is the mother who spends the majority of time with the young children and has a more intimate knowledge of their development and abilities. Effort was made therefore, to include the mother and illicit her responses and confirmation of the father's answers.

The interviews included questions about parenting practices and beliefs as well as the age at which children reached particular developmental benchmarks. Often times these interviews flowed into more open conversations as the parents comfortably shared anecdotes about the accomplishments and abilities of their children.

The series of questions used in the interviews continued to be developed and adapted through out the investigation. Certain questions were recognized as inappropriate, ineffective, or unclear, and other topics were discovered based on observations of children playing, and time spent in the rural setting. Particular skills and activities were noticed that were then incorporated into later interviews to test their relevance and universal presence in Mayan children's behavior.

RESULTS

Home Visits

Based on data received from the thirty-five parent interviews and the thirty-eight individual child observations, most children less than six years old spend the majority of their day playing at home or close to the home. This is usually in close sight of the mother who occupies most of her day with house hold tasks; however, eighty percent, (80%), of parents interviewed stated that children can be left home alone when they are between 2 and 2 1/2 years of age. The highest age that parents stated for the time when children can be left unattended in the house was three years old. Young children also spend a great deal of time with their older siblings. The mode age given for the time when children are old enough to be left alone in charge of their younger siblings was 6 years old. Though children are considered old enough to leave the house alone and do errands, such as going to the store around 3 and a-half-years (this age varied more for girls and went as high as 5 and a half years), other household responsibilities were assumed around age six. This was especially true for girls who take on and become proficient at a range of household duties such as cleaning, sweeping, and putting dishes away, and caring for younger siblings. Boys begin accompanying their fathers to the fields between the ages of 5 and 6, and often may leave to attend a herd by himself by age 6. It was also noted that though children older than six years may be physically responsible for their younger siblings; it was the siblings between 2 and 5 years old that most often and spontaneously provided stimulation and attention for the family's infant.

Infants breastfeed regularly through their first two years of life and may continue breastfeeding till close to three years but usually wean sooner because of the arrival of a new infant. Fifty percent, (50%), of the parents interviewed revealed that their children began eating soft table food at eight months of age. The remaining 50% of answers ranged from 6 and-a-half months to a year. The following developmental benchmarks were also gathered: eighty-seven percent, (87%), of the interviews revealed that children are able to sit alone at 9 months, 75% of those interviewed stated that their children began crawling at 10 months, and 65% said that the normal age to begin walking is 18 months. The remaining 45% of the answers varied from 12-19 months. The most common age given for when children begin articulating simple words was also 18 months.

Norm Ages of Some Developmental Benchmarks of Children Studied in Quiché

| Skill | Age Attained |
|--------------|--------------|
| Eating | 8 months |
| Sitting | 9 months |
| Crawling | 10 months |
| Walking | 18 months |
| Simple words | 18 months |

When asked if they talk or sing to their infants of less than one year of age, 70% of the mothers said "no," most frequently explaining that the children are too young to understand and that they, (the mothers), do not have time to play. It was also noticed

that it seems more customarily the father and siblings responsibility to play with the young children. Fathers stated however that they only play with the children above two or three years of age, and do not interact much with the infants or their young daughters. Most mothers seemed embarrassed or simply laughed at the question of playing or talking with their infants seeming to regard it as a silly or strange concept.

On the other hand, the majority of parents said that they teach their children proper behavior from an early age by verbally explaining their expectations. Parents exhibited therefore the belief that children can learn and retain verbally given information from and young age. Verbal instructions and explanations were stated to be the most common form of discipline used. Eighty percent of those further questioned said however that there are times when physical discipline is necessary to make a child listen.

In review of child development assessment tools currently being used by some agencies and projects in Quiché it was noted that several preschool skills mentioned can not be measured in the natural home environment because of lack of material or exposure to certain activities, for example, climbing stairs, folding paper, using scissors, turning pages of a book, placing rings on a post, and turning doorknobs. Other typical indicators of cognitive development are not customary topics of conversation in homes in rural Quiché and are therefore not learned by young Quichelenses, primarily for example, the names of colors and shapes. However, the concepts of sorting, and classifying are learned and naturally achieved by time the child is 4 and a half years old (the typical time for being able to sort by color and size.) This was observed through

noting that pre-school age children regularly with patience and accuracy help their parents sort a large pile of mixed black and white beans into two separate containers. In verifying this behavior, it was found that children begin practicing this skill around age 3 and master it by 4 and a-half years. They usually do not learn the names of shapes; but at a practical level, children match and sort forms between 2 and a-half and 3 and a-half years of age by independently and correctly putting cups, plates, and bowls in their proper places in attempts to help clean up after meal times.

Other skills such as the ability to dress and undress independently and the appropriate use of silverware develop later because of cultural particularities. Dressing oneself in a corte with its long wrap around belt requires a more advanced level of balance and coordination than is required by putting on or taking off a pair of pants or a dress. Girls in Quiché who use a corte require assistance in dressing till they are about seven years old. They however can take on and off their güipiles, and help dress and undress younger siblings by age five. Boys, who usually wear pants and a T-shirt, can dress and undress without supervision between the ages of 4 and 5 years old.

Though the use of silverware is not a common practice or easily measurable childhood skill in Quiché, children can rip their tortilla independently between 11 and 13 months, and use it adeptly as a scoop or spoon like instrument by a year and a-half of age. Further findings on differences in Quiché development from international standards and their implications for programming will be covered in the discussion section.

Community Meetings

In each village where a parent meeting was held, the following general topics were mentioned as common goals parents hope their children will attain.

- Ability to help in the house
- Success in school
- Self confidence
- Use of both their Native tongue and Spanish
- Respectful behavior within specific cultural norms
- Respect of their natural environment.

Specific skills varied slightly from village to village but all fit under the six topics mentioned above. All four villages stated that abilities and attitudes of primary importance for their children to develop are respect for their elders, respect for others, ability to cooperate, and respect of the milpa, (the corn). Also brought up in each meeting was the concern that their children learn "to defend themselves in the Spanish speaking world", but maintain their ability and use of their mother tongue.

Other specific skills mentioned as goals parents have for their children included learning to weave, tortillar, care for younger siblings, and use of the proper traditional greetings. They also hoped their children would be able to freely express their ideas, have confidence, and not be afraid or timid.

Several of the goals parents mentioned as desirable for their children are typical hopes of parents from a wide variety of countries and cultures: that they are successful in school, that they learn to read and write, that they learn to speak well, and that they have

self confidence. Others however, are much more specific to Mayan culture: that they learn the rules our grandfathers taught us, that they respect their elders, that they learn and use the traditional greetings, and that they respect the corn crop and all of the natural environment. A third set of parent hopes speaks specifically of the values of cooperation and household responsibility, necessary skills to contribute to healthy family functioning that also serve as preparation for adult work tasks: That they learn to weave, make tortillas, take care of younger siblings and respect and cooperate with others.

The Milpa

The Milpa refers to the growing crop of corn, but is also used in almost reverent terms to refer to corn in general. Corn occupies an important place of Mayan culture. Historically, it was the Mayans who first domesticated it and developed the technique for its cultivation. Corn is seen as both figuratively and concretely, the life source and strength of the Mayan people. On a very concrete level, it is indeed the only food available in some places, and therefore the care for the crop so that it yields a healthy harvest is imperative and takes on almost the seriousness and respect of a religious practice. The sowing of the seeds after the rain begins, and the period of the crop's growth to field of rich green are periods and images of hope for the people. Much pride and joy is felt as the Milpa grows tall and verdant, a concrete resource, and also a symbol of hope and survival. On a mythological and spiritual level, Milpa is considered the literal life source, the substance from which the Mayan race was formed. The Mayan people are therefore called "the people of corn."

Understanding this subject is important in considering culturally appropriate program planning and activities. Though dried up corn husks can be used as material for cutting and creating crafts, corn kernels, corn meal, or other young or edible parts of the corn should never be used as classroom play material, such as math manipulatives, or fine motor development.

However, planting a school garden, to practice responsibility for the natural environment, or developing an activity that enhances fine motor skills through making tortillas at school are appropriate classroom uses of the food source.

DISCUSSION

In the following pages we will look at parenting techniques and child development norms within the context of the parents' stated hopes and expectations for their children.

Early Stimulation

Care is taken to provide for the infant's physical needs, and safety, but little evidence was noticed of an understanding of how to use daily routines as opportunities for interaction and development of early social and communication skills. Most mothers interviewed underestimated the importance of talking, singing, or playing with their infants. On the other hand, some very positive parenting activities are well-integrated norms of behavior, such as that of almost always carrying the child, and breastfeeding till the child naturally terminates. Having the child in the sling tied to the mother provides the constant comfort of soothing sensory input (being well wrapped, and warm, feeling the mothers breathing and heart beat). These are quality, soothing, and balancing stimuli for the infants sensory and nervous system. In addition, being so physically close to the mother fosters the mother-child bond and facilitates breastfeeding. However, this facility is not used to its full potential of interaction and the development of early communication skills. While some mothers talk to their infants before or during breastfeeding, many almost mechanically and impersonally move the child from the back to the front and back again by simply rotating the sling wrap without any other interaction with the child. Thus the child loses a possibility for face-to-face contact and a prime opportunity for verbal and gestural stimulation.

Another indication of the lack of emphasis on early stimulation is that children may be left at home alone when they are only two years old. Often times, according to parent reports, even if a parent is nearby, the child may be left playing by his or her self for extended periods of time. Though this happens out of necessity due to heavy workloads and not ill-intention, it raises concerns about stimulation, safety, and interpersonal

interaction. Indeed, several children especially those of mothers who reported leaving their children alone or on a bed or hammock for long periods, demonstrated a high degree of lethargy, timidity, and speech delay.

Social Skills

This lack of early attention given to the development of social communication is apparent in young toddlers who often appear reserved and content to sit in one place without great interest in exploring their environment. A range of behaviors was noted however, and suggests the irreplaceable influence of siblings in the development of social skills.

It is also important to comment here on the possible effects of the researcher and research methods on these findings. Because of the short length of the study, the researcher spent only two days in each village, many times meeting children for the first time when she arrived at their house for a home visit. As children in the villages are unaccustomed to seeing extanjeros, this no doubt contributed to their apparent shyness. Also, because of unspoken boundaries set by the culture, as well as the well known popular fear in rural Guatemala of Caucasians who steal Indigenous babies; the researcher chose to respect the to respect the cultural limits and not interact directly with very young children. This was a serious impediment because it kept the researcher from observing the rate and manner at which the children would have naturally warmed up and exhibited confidence and interactive behavior.

Equally important to note however, is that unlike other recently met children of the same age in similar circumstances, these children did not display a natural curiosity of the researcher or invite interactive behavior. Neither did the parents laugh or explain "Oh,

he's timid because he's not used to seeing gringos...he's not usually this shy." The lack of such commentary leads the researcher to suspect that the timidity may not be an unusual behavior.

The number of siblings and birth order seemed to have a great influence on the child's social ability. Obviously, the family plays an important role in this domain. Often times the child stood behind his/her parent or older sibling, which despite an indicator of lack of curiosity or social interaction skills, also suggests a close family structure that provides the child with a strong sense of security and safety.

By age two, toddlers are more interactive with their environment. They take an interest in and begin playing with the small puppies and kittens that are around almost every home. By three, when they often have an infant sibling, the child enjoys appeasing and entertaining the baby. Depending on the number of siblings less than school age, the pre-school age child may be very interactive and playful within the sibling "peer-group." At this point, siblings play an extremely important role in the child's socialization to family rules, and social-emotional development.

Because of the high value placed on responsibility and cooperation, some early indicators of a child's developing social skills within this context might be: attentiveness, care, and playfulness with a younger sibling; or practice of imaginary play imitating adult work.

By three and a half or four children demonstrate awareness of other social rules such as manners of showing respect. When two or more adults are talking, children by this age understand the expectation of not interrupting. They demonstrate their respect for

this rule by sitting quietly or leaving the room to play with other children when adults are talking.

A distinct difference in the socialization process between boys and girls begins to emerge during the pre-school years. While boys begin establishing more contacts outside the house developing communication skills and self-confidence, the home remains practically the only social stage for girls. Though time at home prepares her for her future gender specific responsibilities, it leaves her at some disadvantage developmentally, especially in the area of social communication, and skills that she would benefit by having by time she begins school.

Cognitive Development

Though the children involved in this study arrive at some early indicators of cognitive development later than international norms, (such as understanding of object permanence for example, as measured by noting that child looks behind or under objects to find a toy that is out of sight, is mastered between 10 and 12 months here rather than between 6 and 9 months), by the time a child reaches school age they seem to be mastering concepts at a rate similar to international standards. It is important to note that children master the same concepts as their peers in developed countries but that the means for measuring and expressing this is different.

As mentioned in the Results Section, few children observed in this study learn the names of shapes or colors because they are not topics or concepts taught at home; however they naturally learn the overall skill of sorting, and grouping, and the concepts of "same" and "different." Though their actions may not be given such labels, children are indeed learning and practicing these concepts in daily interactions and very natural

environments. As previously described, children can accurately separate black beans from white beans by age 4, demonstrating an awareness of differences. Also in putting utensils away, children demonstrate a practical knowledge of the concepts of large, and small, and practice the ability to sort by shape or form. They begin practicing this skill around age 2 and a half. Though they therefore have the cognitive framework to learn and understand the use of color terms, shapes, and sizes, and manifested comprehension of these concepts at a similar age to the international standards, they would receive low scores on developmental measures because they don't pass the internationally recognized indicators of these concepts. This suggests both the importance of contextual indicators, and topics that should be covered in early childhood curriculum, so that the children of Quiché learn in addition to things of their culture and reality, some of the topics their peers from developed nations and urban settings are learning.

Motor Skills

As in other domains, there are some motor skills that the children of Quiché reach at a relatively late age, (sitting and crawling between 9 and 10 months, walking by 18months); but later have an average to advanced skill level. Again, the indicators typically used to measure this development are not appropriate in rural Quiché. Failure to pass certain widely recognized developmental tasks does not indicate that the child has not mastered the general skill. For example, though there are no two-story houses in villages, and virtually no buildings with more than one entrance step on which to note a child's ability to climb or descend alternating feet; their equilibrium does develop, and they are able to alternate their weight freely from one side of the body to the other. This

can be noted as children of three and a half years old can climb and descend trees, a skill that requires more physical ability and body control than descending stairs does.

Gross Motor

Social standards allow boys to practice and develop gross motor skills than girls through ability to leave the house and spend time in meadows where they run, jump, summersault, and spend time in trees. Boys are also given the opportunity to "rough house" and occasionally play soccer with their dads. Girls tend to play quieter games that focus on fine motor skills; but their ability to balance objects on their head suggests a good level of muscle control and balance.

Fine Motor

Many activities in a Quiché child's daily routines develop fine motor skills. Though he or she may not use a spoon, or have a pencil or crayon on which to practice a pincer grasp and coordination of finger and wrist movement. Sorting beans requires an astute pincher grasp. Feeding chickens, making tortillas, whether of mud or corn and playing jacks and marbles develop muscle control as well as finger, wrist, and arm coordination. Their ability to play jacks, marbles, and pitch a rock at a target by age five or six all indicate an excellent level of fine motor development. There is some evidence that fine motor norms in Quiché, perhaps because of the daily life activities that provide practice for such coordination, are higher than international standards.

One boy of slightly more than two years old who spends time in the area in front of his house watching his 7 and 8 year old brothers play marbles. They allow him to handle the marbles and try pitching them as they do. When the marbles are left out, he enjoys manipulating them and imitates his brothers' concentration as he rolls the small balls between his fingers and thumb. One day while at his house, the researcher witnessed that with great care and concentration, he slowly worked the marble with his fingertips, tossed it between his tiny thumb, middle, and index fingers with precision and ease at a target on the ground.

Affection

Sufficient information is not available from this study to comment definitively on the style or amount of affection given to young children; but a wide range of care was noted. Attending their young child is almost a past time and leisure activity for some families who express love and joy, while laughing with, enjoying, encouraging, and interacting with their small child as he or she tries to imitate or practice new skills. In these families the older children participate in encouraging the baby as well, and all seem to benefit from the positive social atmosphere. An air of cooperation and warmth is felt in the home as the family laughs, cheers and shares stories about the young child's progress. Other families however, accept and expect development as a natural process, giving infants and toddlers little attention beyond their physical needs.

While being asked questions about his 13 month-old daughter's behavior, one father answered, "To be honest, we really don't place any importance on or notice what skills she is learning. She's just a baby, and she acts just like a baby." Many parents also commented that they are too busy to play with or give attention to their children. These parents also said it is fine to leave a child crying as long as he or she is safe. Though very young children are typically on the mothers back and are pulled around front to breastfeed as soon as they begin to fuss, the stated lack of attention raises concerns not only about the child's social and emotional growth, but his/ her general development as well. Affection and emotional nourishment are well recognized as essential items for the fostering of development in all domains with long-term effects on impulse control and the ability to self soothe. The care and attention from older siblings plays a particularly

valuable role therefore, seeming to serve as an important protective factor in the young child's life.

While in many parts of the world, the ability to leave a child unattended would seem abusive or negligent, here however, it is important to note that older siblings are recognized as contributing responsible members of the family. Their assumption of a certain level of care giving duties is expected and fills an imperative role in the young child's life. It is possible that the relationship of an older sibling helps fulfill the need for an unconditionally loving and trusting relationship that the child might lack if left only in the care of busy parents.

Siblings' Responsibility

When an infant or toddler is left crying by a busy mother, there is usually an older sibling, (often between the age of 3 and 6 years) nearby who tries to comfort the child picking him or her up, making faces, and sounds at the baby, and bouncing or rocking him or her. Older siblings assume a great deal of responsibility in helping to care for babies, and provide as the child grows, continued stimulation in the form of a peer group and opportunities for interaction. These sibling relationships play an important role in the child's socialization and early learning.

Older siblings natural participation in assisting their younger brothers and sisters is a manifestation of the important cultural values of cooperation and responsibility to the family. These values are cultivated at a very early age through the gradual assumption of tasks and duties. The process of learning family responsibility begins young for example with allowing preschool aged siblings to play with and respond to their infant siblings needs. At first the interaction is more like playing, but the child is learning important

behaviors and roles. By the time the older child is age six he/she can be left alone to independently care for his/ her toddler aged brother or sister.

Play

While children gradually gain more and more responsibility learning necessary skills and behaviors within their family and community, there is at the same time, a respect for the period of childhood and an understanding of the child's limited work capacity. When asked if their three to five year olds helped around the house, most parents answered quickly in their child's defense, "Oh, no, they are too little." Other parents commented that their pre-schoolers just play and are not ready to take on responsibility yet. While parents exhibited a healthy recognition of their child's inability to handle real responsibility, the majority of parents did not seem to recognize play as an opportunity to learn, or an important stage in developing and practicing life skills. Between the ages of 2 and a-half and three, children begin imitating adult behavior in their play. Girls do so in ways such as making tortillas out of mud in the yard, folding cloth to tie on their backs, and balancing small containers on their head as they pretend to fetch water. Boys practice lassoing invisible cattle with pieces of twine and plant nuts and rocks pretending to sew their field of corn. These specific adult behaviors are opportunities for developing muscle-control, fine and gross motor skills, and language enrichment. Meanwhile, of course, the children are also processing their environment, and practicing social roles.

No Shortage of Toys

On first visit to a village, a city dweller who is accustomed to manufactured toys might wonder what these country children find to play with and how they occupy their time without a single toy in sight. They in fact possess a skill that developmental specialists look for as an indicator of abstract thinking. Between two and a half and five years of age they have mastered the art of representational object use. A stick becomes a truck, an acorn becomes a kernel of corn, a leaf becomes a tortilla, an old coke can becomes a rolling pin, and an empty tuna fish tin doubles as a water jug. Old bike rims provide hours of entertainment as young boys race and drive them forward with a specially

selected and properly held sticks. Tree climbing is a well-loved activity and trees have been "witnessed" to change into pick-up trucks and houses as children launch elaborate imaginative play in them. Three boys in a tree once turned the limbs and branches into a road system as they drove sticks over them choosing directions at each crossroad (intersection of branches) and discussing which branch led to what town. They had no need of a set of "Hotwheels", or toy kitchen set. Though marketed toys would be appreciated and well used, the children are not lacking without them. If given the time and opportunity, children find plenty of toys within their natural environment and perhaps in doing so, develop more imaginative and less competitive attitudes than children with modern toys.

Gender Socialization

As related to school readiness

In each community meeting, the topic of equal educational opportunities for boys as well as girls was suggested by a parent and received unanimous support. According to anecdotal evidence this is a newly arising desire, but an idea that is gaining in popularity and support in the villages as parents recognize the need to prepare their children for possible futures outside the village. Despite this stated value however, there is little emphasis put on preparing girls socially for life outside the home. While boys leave the house earlier with brothers, or fathers, or to do errands alone, it was explained that girls of the same age and size are too young and small to go out alone. Though this practice is rooted in the healthy concern of protecting young girls from physical harm, it leaves them with less stimulation or opportunity to develop social skills and confidence in public as compared to their male peers.

Though time at home with her mother provides a rich opportunity for developing expressive communication, cognitive, and motor skills in daily work/play routines, as well as the benefit of the closeness and security that develops from this sort of time with a parent, mothers unfortunately frequently revealed that they rarely talk to their daughters or get involved in their play. The mothers explained they are "too busy" to give the daughter any attention while occupied with household responsibilities. There is an apparent lack of information about ways to integrate learning activities into daily routines, and therefore the young girl usually simply plays by herself, unless there is a

younger child she can interact with. Still this level of interaction varies dramatically from the style that boys are able to develop. Without the at least occasional input or creative direction from an adult, neither the preschool aged girl, nor the infant will benefit greatly from the time together.

Mothers and fathers both reported that fathers play with their toddler and preschool age sons, providing positive interaction and building affectionate ties which make up for the mothers stated inability to play with them during the day. No one stated however, that fathers play with their daughters. Indeed, in many cases girls were not encouraged to play and the importance of their ability and time for play was seriously undervalued, as were often their developing skills.

One grandfather, who answered all the interview questions for his daughter about his five and a half year old granddaughter repeated overlooked her abilities and continuously responded, "No, she can't do that." "No, she doesn't know how to do that... she's too little, she's too timid..." At one point early in the interview the girl curiously but timidly peeked out of the house to where her grandfather and researcher were talking. She was immediately scolded and told to get back in the house. She quickly retreated and spent the rest of the interview sitting in a corner under a table while watching the interview and hearing her grandfather list the things she supposedly could not do. Early experiences like this are not uncommon as girls spend the majority of their time either alone or with their younger siblings, without the direct interaction of adults or other little girls.

Boys, on the other hand, who leave the house at a younger age to do errands or work with their fathers find many opportunities to meet and play with boys their age.

While waiting for their dads to finish a conversation that began when the two men met on a trail, one day, two four year old boys began playing and eventually wound up climbing a tree and talking about their cattle that they needed to round up, and their need to catch a pick up ride into the town the next day. They interacted with ease developing the theme and plot of their play, while unconsciously elaborating their vocabulary and practicing conversational rules. By the time they reach school age, boys have more advanced social skills, and greater confidence in public.

Though through their time at home alone, with younger siblings, or with their mothers, young girls are learning the tasks, skills, mannerisms, and expectations of their mothers, as well as their independence, and role within the family, they arrive at school with a social disadvantage.

Girls in pre-primary classes were observed to be timid, quiet, rarely offer input, or assert their involvement in an activity. They usually stood behind boys in group activities, and deferred to boys when asked questions. Girls continued to be more solitary and not have an apparent group of friends as compared with boys who had highly social, clearly interactive gangs of playmates.

Inconsistencies

As is true of parents in all parts of the world, there are at times inconsistencies between beliefs, stated cultural values, and practice in regard to actual childrearing techniques.

The inconsistencies noted between stated values and practice in Quiché provide a

window from which to view areas in which parents could use support and information, thus shedding light on possibilities for planning and intervention.

A fundamental area of conflict between value and practice, is the parents' stated hope that their children develop the ability to clearly express themselves and the lack of emphasis or time is put into fostering verbal communication skills. Beginning in early infancy, mothers do not make use of face-to-face time allowing the child to focus on her eyes, watch her expressions, or mimic faces, thus losing primary opportunities and foundational stages of interactive communication. This lack of emphasis on language development despite desired communication skills persists throughout other phases of a child's early development. Children's early sounds are rarely imitated or elongated to promote vocal play, and once a child does begin speaking, conversations with them are often limited to brief instructions and directive comments. Imaginative play, while entertaining to parents, is not seized an opportunity for interaction or vocabulary expansion.

Though children learn social norms, family routines, and expectations of behavior by playing alongside their mothers, if utilized by an adult, daily play can also provide infinite possibilities for increasing a child's vocabulary and critical thinking, and grasp of concepts. Offering descriptors, and using open ended questions that illicit the child's participation and require him or her to elaborate more descriptive and creative responses are some simple techniques that mothers could incorporate into their daily interactions in order to achieve this without having to interrupt her work and routines.

This type of verbal and preverbal attention that develops receptive and expressive communication skills is intricately connected to cognitive and social emotional

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development as well, as it simultaneously fosters the child's sense of self worth and confidence.

Building the child's confidence and social-emotional strength is another area of conflicted practice. The close family structure, relationships between siblings, and the assumption of responsibility of tasks within the home certainly serve to build the child's sense of security and accomplishment. Several of the participating communities specifically mentioned hopes that their children would grow with confidence and not be timid or afraid of anything; while certain practices interwoven into family behavior naturally develop these competencies, several others work counter productively.

Early stimulation and conversation and interaction between parents and children are opportunities for building the child's self esteem that are for the most part lost among the families interviewed. However, the acceptance of physical punishment and the reported lack of expressed affection are practices that actually undermine the development of healthy self-esteem. Once children can walk, or once a younger sibling arrives, children are rarely held or hugged except by other siblings. Positive deviances from this norm indicate that affection, intergenerational interaction, and warmth within the family are welcome and admired behaviors in the communities visited. They are simply areas that are not often tapped into or developed because of the stress and busyness of daily life. Several village leaders who were examples of such positive deviance expressed the belief that more nurturing family practices were lost in the last generation because of the chaos of the violence and urgency of the need to simply look out for physical safety.

More interactive and affectionate parenting styles could be recaptured and re-taught as well as information about the ineffectiveness and detrimental outcomes of physical

punishment, so that the people can come closer to their desire of raising children who enter the school and carry throughout their life, a strong sense of confidence and security.

The need to find ways of building self confidence and fostering early social skills is especially true in the raising of girls. As discussed earlier, despite parent's desire that their daughters as well as their sons obtain success in school, self-confidence, and a sense of security, the ways girls are treated in their early years does not equip them for such possibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The idea of an early childhood program that could encourage children's interaction an earlier age was enthusiastically received by the groups of parents who attended community meetings. Parents seemed eager to provide their children with greater opportunities and expressed interest in ways of enhancing the integration of learning tasks and social skills into daily routines. Taking into account the parent's desired outcomes as well as observed needs, the program should be developed that can provide parent education and early social opportunities for the young children.

Community Meetings

A community meeting model similar to the one used in this study should be used in each village prior to implementing the program. In this way it can be developed flexibly around the needs of each community, for example, in regards to scheduling needs and topics for discussion in parent groups.

Parent Meetings/ Child Development Scale

Despite the need to develop program details around each community's needs rather than implementing a formatted curriculum, some recommendations can be made from the research and the input of the five villages involved. The effective early childhood education program should operate holistically providing family education and child development while respecting the cultural values and norms. The program should offer interactive parent meetings where the parents can discuss the needs of their children, learn early stimulation techniques, discuss options of positive discipline, and network with other parents, enhancing social supports for both themselves and their children. A guide and series of discussion topics could be developed based on the Quiché Child Development Profile (see Appendix A), that can be used to teach parents techniques within daily routines that can enhance the child's development at each level.

The center-based children's part of the program can be open to a variety of ages of young children providing opportunities for interaction with peers as early as possible. This will be particularly important for girls. For children less than three, this may be a weekly activity group done concurrently with a mother's/parents group meeting so that it can actually be an opportunity to practice parent/child interaction and early stimulation techniques in the company of the Mother-Guide / preschool teacher.

Three- Six Year Olds

A center based approach will provide the children ages 3-6 the optimal time for learning, exploring, and interacting with each other, preparing them not only cognitively for school, but socially and emotionally as well. This program should as much as possible, take advantage of resources available in the community such as toys, games,

and activities made from the natural environment, as well as the volunteer involvement of community members. Community participation should be solicited on as many levels as possible ensuring the children's knowledge, security, pride, and identification with their community. Activities can be developed around having grandparents or community leaders visit the class to tell stories or demonstrate weaving, cooking, or other local skills. The group should also spend a great deal of time outside playing, cultivating a garden, learning about the fruits, vegetables, and herbs that grow in their village, as well as visiting the field to observe, participate in, and talk about the different phases of the milpa.

Special Education

Of the thirty-five homes visited during this study, four included children who the researcher suspected to have Cerebral Palsy, one with downs syndrome, one with cleft pallet, and one with a severe vision disorder. (The ages these children reached motor benchmarks were not added into the pool for finding average ages in which motorskills were attained). The children were adapting to their developmental differences with varied success as were their parents. With the exception of the boy with the vision disability, the children were carried, protected, and kept from leaving the house. Parents had little information about how to foster their child's development, and had little hope of their children ever learning to speak, (or communicate in some understandable manner) or attain any level of independence of self reliance. Seven homes out of thirty-five seems an unusually high rate of disability, and suggests a great need to include information on working with these children in the teacher training and parent education curriculum. Children with disabilities should be encouraged to attend early child development programs with their non-disabled peers. Especially in the early years, because of natural

variance in healthy children's development, these children can easily mix and gain a great deal from being allowed and encouraged to play with their peers. Early childhood is a perfect time to include them in the academic (preacademic) process, helping them establish skills and foundations for self XXX

Niño a Niño Model

If the center based group is developed with mixed ages from infancy to primary school aged children, a model that support the community value of responsibility to family while meeting the need for more early stimulation of the youngest children could be utilized. The older children can be taught simple techniques of interacting with the younger children in a healthy productive manner that simply build on and enhance their natural desire to respond to and care for the the small ones. A similar model was used with great success in increasing children's social-affective skills as well as their overall development scores and school success in Columbia. "Niño a Niño," an international program of UNICEF, opperates on a similar principle in southern Mexico. These programs recognize, as we have seen in Quiché, that the reality is that it is often fairly young children who are left in the care of the family's infants and toddlers. By building their understanding and sensitivity to their siblings needs, we honor the culture's expectation and value of responsibility to family, while enhancing both the infant's development, and the next generation of parents.

For Further Study

Validation of the Indicators

The length of time available for this study was regrettably short, effecting such methodology as the researcher's time in villages and ability to interact directly with certain populations of children. The time limitations also curtailed the number of subjects able to be reached and involved in the study. It is therefore of great importance to view this study as a starting point for more in depth research with a larger sample size in order to have an accurate tool of developmental indicators. Part of this second phase should include bringing these indicators before the parents who initially contributed to the study as well as other parents for validation. The parent's validation is of equal importance as that from a team of developmental experts and the ministry of education, because the parent's recommendations and approval ensure that we have a tool in keeping with the parents' and community's aims for their children.

Language Development

A second area of further specific study is that of language development. The indicators listed on the developmental scale are general stages through which this researcher could note the child progressing. However, this study does not comment on specific language goals because of limited knowledge of the acquisition and use and form of the Guatemalan Indigenous Languages. For example, the use of plurals, and pronouns, or the existence of various verb tenses and passive voice in the languages of Quiché are beyond the scope of information gathered by this study. It was therefore impossible to comment on when children should (if ever,) gain fluency in such grammatical skills. A linguist or speech pathologist familiar with language acquisition in Guatemala's indigenous languages should be included in the next phase of this study.

From information gathered in such research, Mother-guides and preschool teachers can be trained more thoroughly in recognizing speech delays and techniques for fostering their improvement.

Appendix A

Indicators of Child Development in Rural Quiché, Guatemala

| Age | Gross Motor | Fine Motor | Social/Emotional | Language | Cognitive | Self Help |
|--------------|--|--|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 0-1 month | Lifts head | Hands closed | Calms when picked up | Monotone cry | Reacts to sounds | Sucks the nipple |
| 1-3 months | Lifts head extends legs | Hands in open position | Enjoys being held. | Watches eyes and mouth of the person holding her | Turns head toward the voice. Watches own hands | Coordinates suck, swallow, and breath |
| 3-6 months | Brings feet to mouth | Reaches toward object with both hands | Touches the mother's face | Cries in various tones. Coos | Puts things in mouth | Pats mom's breast while feeding |
| 6-9 months | Can sit alone | Pulls up/ Grasps mother's hair while in back strap | Laughs when older siblings entertain him | Babbles double consonants "Ba-ba, ma-ma" | Looks for a moment for things that fall out of sight | Eats beans and tortillas |
| 9-12 months | Crawls | Picks up pieces of tortilla with her fingers | Prefers to be held by a family member | Understands and reacts to "No" | Looks under and behind things for hidden object | Crawls toward desired object |
| 12-15 months | Pulls up to standing position, walks using support of furniture. Leans forward in back strap | Puts rocks in and out of bag or bucket | Makes eye and gestural contact with people from within the backstrap | Points to familiar object when asked "dog", "brother," "tortilla" | Moves to obtain something that is out of sight | Rips own tortilla |
| 15-18 months | Walks. Can throw objects forward | Uses tortilla as a scoop/spoon | Repeats sounds, gestures or actions when laughed at | Uses single word sentences | Stacks objects, pebbles, tins | Takes off and puts on hat |

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| Age | Gross Motor | Fine Motor | Social-Emotional | Language | Cognitive | Self-Help |
|---------------|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| 18-24 months | Climbs onto chair | Can open a candy wrapper | Enjoys playing with puppies | Says own name. Says two word phrases | Can retrieve things asked for, "bring me your shoes" | Expresses need to go to the bathroom |
| 2-2 ½ year | Jumps in place on two feet. Can walk holding puppies at the same time | Tries to help tortillar | Tries to help in household jobs | Talks and sings to self while playing | Understands big and little. | Can fill cup of water from the piela or pump |
| 2 ½ - 3 years | Jumps forward on two feet | Helps take corn kernels off the dry cob | Make believe play modeling adults work. | Uses the Quiché/Ixil equivalent of the plural form | Understands concept one and more than one | Can use the larvae by him/herself during the day |
| 3 -3 ½ years | Climbs trees. Can stand on one foot. | Open door latch shut with latch or twine | Wants to follow older siblings when they leave the house | Can answer questions about what he/she is doing | Can put cups and dishes in their proper place | Take off socks, shoes, pants and shirt. Still needs help w/ guipel |
| 3 ½- 4 years | Jumps on one foot | Open buttons. Fold cloth. | Likes to entertain and soothe little brother or sister. | Using simple phrases, comments on what happened that day | Can help sort beans | Can put on cloths. Helps dress baby |
| 4-5 years | Can control a football | Draw with a stick or rock on the dirt. Can aim rocks at a target | Can leave the house to do errands nearby | Asks questions. Can express all his/her needs. | Understands & can coorectly use opposites Ej: Hard/ soft, cold/hot, Ripe/unripe. | Can wash self. Can take guipel on and off |
| 5-6 years | Can dance and hold the baby at the same time | Tie knots in fabric/back strap. Begins to tie shoes | Greets familiar adults with proper title. | Speaks clearly | Suggests solutions to daily needs | Can wash and dress baby. |

Appendix B

List of goals Named by Parents during Community Meetings

¿Que Queremos Que Nuestros Hijos Aprenden Durante sus Años Pequeños?

Tareas de la Casa

Tareas de la Escuela

Seguin el Ejemplo de sus Padres y Madres

No Juegan en la Calle

Como Saludar

Respecta

Las Reglas que Enseñaran Nuestros Abuelos

Tienen Confianza en Sus Mismos

No Tienen Miedo de Nadie

Puedan Expresar sus Ideas

Respectan Todo la Naturaleza

Conocen y Entienden la Milpa

Defienden su vida en el Mundo de Castillaño

Manejan los dos Idiomas

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