

Culture, Development and Self: The Work of Robert A. LeVine

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Dr. Robert A. LeVine has been honored this year (2015) in the pages of Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry. Now retired but mightily active, Professor LeVine is the Roy Edward Larsen Professor of Education and Human Development, Emeritus, at Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, USA.

Education

As indicated in my note in CMP 38(4), Professor LeVine is widely known for his work on the cultural dimensions of childhood and parenting across several continents. More recent work links maternal schooling with child health in Nepal. Dr. LeVine is an education and psychological/psychiatric (analytic) anthropologist and specialist in human development. As is the custom now for those honored by CMP, an accounting of Dr. LeVine's work is here presented in this the final CMP number of the year, i.e., volume 39, number 4.

Born in New York City, Dr. LeVine was educated at the University of Chicago (BA in 1951, MA 1953). He took his PhD in Social Anthropology from Harvard in 1958. He returned for psychoanalytic training to Chicago, where he earned a Certificate from the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis in 1971.

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Academic Positions

Professor LeVine, or Bob as he is known, has held a variety of academic positions. He began his professorial career as an Instructor (later Assistant Professor) of Anthropology and Political Science at Northwestern University (the years 1958–1960). He was then called to an Assistant Professorship of Human Development, Anthropology and Psychiatry at the University of Chicago. He served in these posts from 1960 to 1976 during which he rose to full Professor. Subsequently, he was called to Harvard University where he was named Roy E. Larsen Professor of Education and Human Development during in the years 1976–1998. He was named Emeritus in 1998. Bob served as Chair, Human Development and Psychology in the Harvard Graduate School of Education from 1977 to 1980 and again from 1985 to 1989.

Fortunately for the discipline and its students, Bob also traveled and served as a Visiting Professor after his ‘retirement.’ He was Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of Hong Kong, 2001–2002, and the Lun Visiting Lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1994. He was Visiting Professor of Anthropology at Boston University, 2007–2009, and most recently, Visiting Professor of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago in the spring of 2008, thus completing a circle of career and educational venues. The person and work of Bob LeVine has been the recipient of numerous awards, which is not surprising given the breadth and depth of his career.

Awards and Fellowships

The plethora of notices of Bob’s life and work include his inclusion in Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi. From 1962 through 1967 LeVine held a Research Career Development Award from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Subsequently, he received a Research Scientist Award from NIMH that continued until 1976.

He was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences at Stanford for the 1971–1972 year. He was elected to membership in the National Academy of Education in 1979 and served as its Secretary/Treasurer for several years (1988–1993).

Bob was elected President of Society for Psychological Anthropology in 1980 and served the term to 1981. In 1989, he was elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Among his many other honors, we should note the following and their relevant dates:

- Spencer Senior Scholar Award, Spencer Foundation, 1990.
- Fellow, Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences, Uppsala, 1992–1993
- Career Contribution Award, Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1997
- Award for Distinguished Contributions to Educational Research, American Educational Research Association, 2001

- John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, 2004–2005

Certainly, Bob has served in a number of other capacities for various groups. These services include membership in the Board of Directors of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) from 1978 through 1984. He served as SSRC Secretary from 1978 to 1979 and as its Chairman from 1980 to 1983. In addition we note the following memberships:

Member, Board of Trustees, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, MA, 1980–1983

Member, National Academy of Sciences panels:

Fertility Determinants, 1981–1984

Child Care Policy, 1987–1989

Early Childhood Pedagogy, 1998–2000

Member, Behavioral Sciences Committee, Yale University Council, 1982–1986

Member, Board of Directors, Spencer Foundation, 1991–2001

Member, National Research Advisory Panel for the Head Start Transition Project, 1991–1995

Consultant to Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Education, 1995–1997

These awards and memberships make manifest Bob's dedication to service as well as his highly regarded scholarship. We also see his many hats, psychological anthropologist, education specialist, child scholar, and synthesizing social scientist.

Anthropological Field Research

Bob LeVine's primary research was been among the Gusii of Kenya. He has spent several long-term research sojourns among them, i.e., 1955–1957, 1964, 1974–1976. He has also worked in West Africa, in Nigeria among the Yoruba (1961–1962 and again in 1963) and with the Hausa (1969). And he has considered notions of the good child in Japan (with White 1986) and also *Japanese Frames of Mind* (Shimizu and LeVine 2001) applying a cultural approach to notions of human development.

Robert A LeVine: Publications

Book Length Works

Dr. LeVine is well known to all psychological and psychiatric anthropologists and, indeed, trained many of them, including one of CMP's Consulting Editors, Dr. Eileen Anderson-Fye. He has researched a number of topical fields and has ranged widely around the globe, work that has resulted in many books and edited volumes. A major focus of his has been the cultural aspects of parenthood and child development in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and other societies. His most recent work has concerned the effect of maternal schooling and literacy on reproduction and on child health care in Nepal. This award-winning work considers the effect of

literacy among women that in turn affects the health status of their children (see LeVine, LeVine Schnell-Anzola et al. 2012).

Bob's first book (with BB LeVine, 1963) focused on the Nyansongo, a Gusii community in Kenya. This work was one of the volumes in Beatrice Whiting's *Six Cultures: Studies of Child Rearing* series. This Nyansongo community was also the focus of his first published articles (LeVine 1958, 1959a, b). Many subsequent works analyze child development and child rearing in diverse societies (e.g., LeVine, Dixon LeVine et al. 1994; LeVine 2003) but also, given his clear understanding of the relational nature of the development of the child, he has considered the nature of parental behaviors including gender roles and women's characteristics in context and in their relation to children (e.g., LeVine, Miller and West 1988; LeVine 2003; LeVine, LeVine and Schnell-Anzola et al. 2012). And let us not forget the domestic context in terms of the actual structures in which socialization occurs! (see article by LeVine and LeVine 1991). LeVine's work on socialization, human development and parenting are incomparable and were and are models for the fields. Not an equilibrium theorist, LeVine has also considered conflict in various settings as relates to notions of (ethnic) selves (e.g., LeVine and Campbell 1972) and colonialism (see article, 1959a).

In our honoree's second book, the well-known *Dreams and Deeds: Achievement Motivation in Nigeria* (with EH Strangman and LH Unterberger 1966), he shows a concern for the unconscious as expressed in dreams and its influence on conscious motivation, thus invoking his psychoanalytic training in his ethnography.

LeVine's work has shown a high degree of synthesis of disciplines, prefiguring the direction of Millennial Medical Anthropology that has appeared in this Journal. He combines sociocultural anthropological theory and its ethnographic tradition with psychoanalysis, psychology (e.g., personality theory, socialization, self theory, cognitive development), human development, adolescent studies, reproductive health and practices, education theory, culture change theory, conflict theory, and gender and gender roles scholarship. This synthesis gives richness to his work that is rare among scholars, as many mistake a limited focus and or method as the royal road to deep understanding. LeVine understands that humans are complex and multifaceted and their study requires attention to many dimensions of human experience and action as well as a relational perspective (see LeVine 1973).

Some very noteworthy works of Bob's bear mentioning. These include his *Culture, Behavior and Personality* (1973) and its clear formulation of notions of the relational nature of culture, personality and analytic understandings of their relationship and consequences for action (1973). Also of great importance is his volume edited with Richard Shweder, *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* (Shweder and LeVine 1984). His contribution to that volume is one of the clearest expositions of why ethnographic knowledge is incomparable and trumps empiricist forms of analysis of decontexted 'variables' (LeVine 1984). Other of his books include *Childcare and Culture: Lessons from Africa*, (1994) and *Human Conditions: the Cultural Basis of Educational Development* (with M. I. White) (1986). A full list of Professor LeVine's books is below. We conclude our celebration with the up to date list of Dr. LeVine's articles and book chapters. Both

lists of references may serve as a resource for scholars in the many relevant disciplines of his work.

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Robert A. LeVine: Articles and Book Chapters

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Honors for Robert A LeVine

Conclusion

We conclude the survey of Dr. LeVine's work with a few more words. As is evident from the foregoing, Bob has been a tireless researcher and teacher who has done much to advance the practice of synthesis (rather than a layering or intersecting) of heretofore disparate theories and disciplines. His legacy, to which he is yet adding, is exceptional. For this we at CMP are ourselves honored to be able to do honor to Bob, but also for another reason; that is, because he is truly the classic example of the old descriptor, "a scholar and a gentleman."

Previous CMP Honorees:

Margaret Lock (2012)

Renée Fox (2013)

Robert Edgerton (2014)

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