BOOK REVIEW:

GIVE AND TAKE OF EVERYDAY LIFE: LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION OF KALULI CHILDREN by Bambi B. Schieffelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

In an ethnography about the Kaluli, a Papua New Guinea group, Bambi Schieffelin expertly and thoughtfully shows how much can be learned about a culture from observing, recording, and analyzing the ways mothers socialize their children through language. Schieffelin's fieldwork occurred in 1967-8, 1975-7, and 1984. Her husband, their young son, and she stayed in Sululib, a community of 101 individuals on The Great Papuan Plateau in the middle of Papua New Guinea, off the northwest coast of Australia.

As a woman, Schieffelin was given "privileged access to the activities of women and children. No man could have sat in the women's section or gone bathing with small children" (p. 23). Since she was also a mother, she was viewed as an adult. Early on she recognized she could not be an impartial observer. The Kaluli brought her into their world giving her kinship or relationship names. They drew lines, however; she was referred to as yellow-skinned and different.

In this Kaluli community she studied, some lived in long houses made from bark and leaves; others lived in separate family dwellings. They hunted in the bush for small animals, fished, and gathered wild edibles, but most of their food came from gardens tended by the women. The primary foods were sago (a starchy foodstuff derived from the soft, interior of the trunk of various palms and cycads), greens, and scrapings from long cobs of pandanus (a plant of the genus Pandanus). Schieffelin studied primarily three families and selected four children: Meli (a female), Wanu (a male), Abi (a male) and SueIa (a female). She chose them because they were already using single words or just starting to use syntax and because the mothers were willing to explain the recordings she

made and the interactions with Schieffelin. She had a total of eighty-three hours of naturalistic interaction between children and their mothers, siblings, relatives, and other villagers.

Schieffelin's choice of families also reflected the social change affecting the village from the late 1960s to the 70s and 80s. SueIa and Abi, 25 months, lived in a family with a mother, father, and two older sisters. The parents were the most traditional, practicing strong food and post-partum sex taboos; having a strong belief in witches; and procuring food through hunting, fishing, gardening, sago making, and gathering. They also lived in a long house and had almost no interaction with Christian missions. Wanu, 24 months when the study started, also lived with a mother, father, and two older sisters. The males wore traditional simple pubic coverings, and the girls donned skirts made of string and inner bark. At Christian events such as weddings, the parents and children wore Western clothes that they purchased at mission stores. The family feared witches, and the mother followed menstrual taboos and went to a menstrual hut during her period. Finally, Meli, aged 24 months, came from the least traditional family. She was the first born, and her brother, Seligisc, was 7 months old. They lived with their mother and father in a single family house in a Christian area. Both parents, baptized Christians, were members of the Evangelical Church of Papua. They wore Western clothes, did not believe in witches, and did not follow any of the food, menstrual, or post partum sex taboos that effectively spaced children about 32 months apart. Also Ali's mother did not have time for sago making.

In the Kaluli society, face-to-face interactions are key, because they express cultural values. In her study, Schieffelin assumed "the process of acquiring language is deeply affected by the process of becoming a competent member of a society. The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations. . ."(p. 15). She concluded that a person does not "acquire culture"; a person "acquires a set of practices that enable one to live in a culture" (p. 15).

According to the Kaluli, children do not learn language by babbling or waiting for a genetic program to start. Instead, they must be "shown" language in order for them to learn it. Interactive and cumulative learning are key. Language begins when the young child says "no" meaning my mother and "bo" meaning breast. A child may have used other words but these two words are culturally essential. Children who do not talk, who have not yet said "no" and "bo" are not part of the everyday sharing and reciprocity. Thus very few demands are made on children who do not use language to share or cooperate. The mother is the primary teacher since she shows language to a child. The mother-child relationship also underscores the social view of language because the first social relationship a person has is between mother and child, mediated by food from the breast (p.74). According to Schieffelin, "the giving and receiving of food is a major means by which relationships are mediated and validated" (p. 74).

Understandably then, baby talk is not encouraged. "The goal of language development is to produce speech well-formed and socially appropriate, enabling individuals to establish and maintain sociable relationships" (p.105).

Interestingly, monologues do not exist in Kaluli life, even children talking to themselves in imaginary play. When Schieffelin's son did this he was considered "really different." In Kaluli society, people are rarely alone. To be alone is to be vulnerable to negative forces such as witches. If a person is alone, he is suspect.

Interdependence is also evident in the word "*ade*." An ade relationship between siblings, especially an older sister and younger brother is the most important bond between men and women outside marriage. Food sharing is frequently from an older sister to a younger brother, and he feels "owed." Ade then conveys expectations of nurturing,

sharing, and giving compassion. An older sister is expected to share food. Through language children learns to ask in an assertive Kaluli manner and through ade relationships to feel sorry for and give to others. As readers, we now understand how children learn a contradiction and live with it. Each is an individual and negotiates with others for food and other objects. At the same time, each child also learns that he must be and is interdependent.

Schieffelin also shows ably through language how gender roles are reinforced. Threatening demeanor and aggressive actions are not tolerated in girls, even from an early age (p.203). Girls are encouraged to be compliant and nurturing. Even though mothers may express frustration and anger toward sons, they treat them in a preferential manner giving them more food, especially more meat and attention than they give daughters. They treat the daughters far more abruptly and critically. These contradictory attitudes make sense to Kaluli mothers because daughters grow up, get married, and move to other villages to live with their husband's families. Boys, on the other hand, belong to the mothers. If their husbands dies, the sons would take care of them.

Gender then is reflected in the way family members interact verbally in terms of reciprocity. Who asks, who receives, and who is refused? Schieffelin concluded that brothers could always ask their sisters for food or assistance, but sisters could not make the same demands on their brothers. Men also display the exuberant self; they are "hard" and assertive. They, however also appeal, especially to women. No matter how they ask, they expect to be given to and easily "felt owed." Women are most often in the giving position. Finally men display a greater range of emotions and are generally more likely to have tantrums, angry rituals, and spontaneous weeping. Women are more steady in everyday and formal situations.

In her readable and insightful ethnography, Schieffelin shows her reader how studying the way mothers teach their children to use language and how they interact with each other can reveal the important themes and values in Kaluli society. These are autonomy versus interdependence, authority, and the importance of gender and reciprocity. Focusing on the connections between language and socialization, the stuff of everyday life, can give us more accurate insights into another culture, even our own.

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KALULI MEN DISPLAY A GREATER RANGE OF EMOTIONS THAN WOMEN