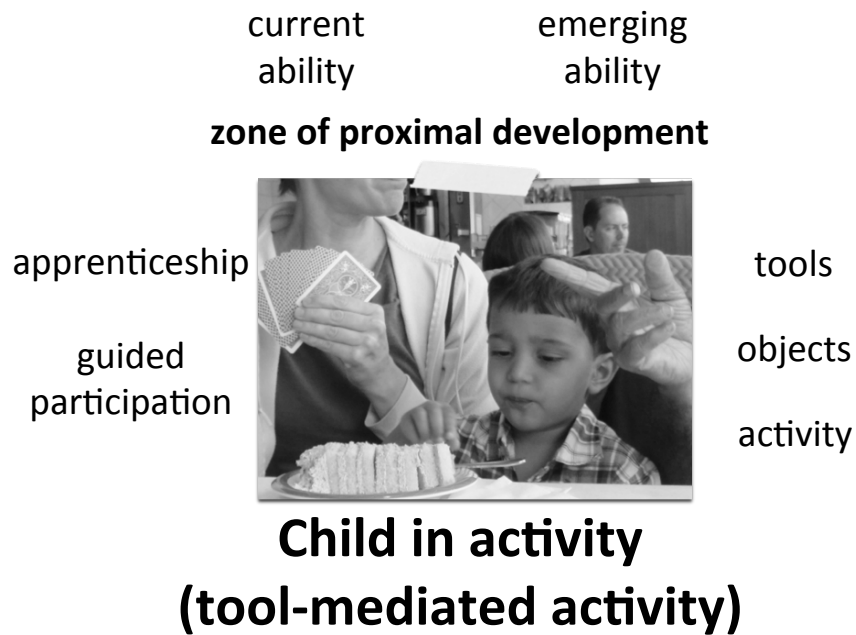


# Getting Beyond the ZPD: Further possibilities for strengthening early childhood education through cultural-historical analyses

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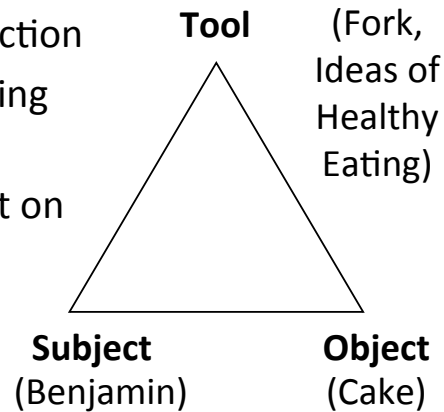
## Tool-Mediated Activity

**Subject:** individual in action

**Object:** whatever is being acted upon

**Tool:** things used to act on the object

- physical/material
- and/or symbolic



## Cultural Models as Mediators of What is Possible in Day

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## The Study

30 family child care providers (10 complete)

Initial Interview: tell me about your day...

Leave camera for two weeks

Follow-Up Interview: photo stimulated - tell me about this photo you took...

Code Development: Abductive - initial ideas tested against data

Holistic Coding: read through all materials;  
“code” provider as high, medium, low;  
support classification with quotes

## In family child care: what are they striving toward?

School Readiness	Love, Affection, & Fun
<p>Provider makes it a priority to prepare children for school and see changes in what children know and can do. Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• literacy and numeracy and/or</li> <li>• social and emotional development (e.g., taking turns, waiting in line)</li> </ul> <p>This can include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• traditional activities (e.g., circle time or “learning time”)</li> <li>• play-based learning</li> </ul>	<p>Love, affection, relationships and being together are a valued part of their work <i>for their own sake</i> (not just as a means to another end).</p> <p>Documented through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities in which being together is prioritized</li> <li>• emphasis on strong relationships as a reward of the work</li> </ul>

These are just two of many possible...

## How much or how effective?

**Valuing, enacting, *and* seeing:** state value or describe rewards AND look for and see whether it is happening

**Valuing, enacting *or* seeing:** evidence for valuing, but not enacted or assessed

***Not* valuing enacting *or* seeing:** no evidence for valuing, enacting, or assessing this aspect

Providers can have different “levels” for each: high/high, high/low, etc.

## Implications

- How can we better support the diverse goals of providers?
  - Articulating what they value (not adopting what some value)
  - Enacting what they value
  - Assessing diverse “outcomes” for children
- How can we remove the barriers to enacting and assessing the diverse things children can “learn” from experiences in child care?

## Integrating digital technologies and popular culture in early childhood curriculum: towards a new cultural tool for practice.

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- Early childhood education has traditionally used understandings/theories of play to inform teacher decision making about how best to support children's learning. From a cultural historical perspective the teacher can be understood as the subject, theories of play as an implicit tool and children's learning as an object. Here 'play' mediates teacher activity in terms of planning for children's learning.
- The problem: are existing theories of play adequate for helping teachers plan for children's learning in situations that are characterised by children's exposure to and use of digital technologies, digital media and popular culture?

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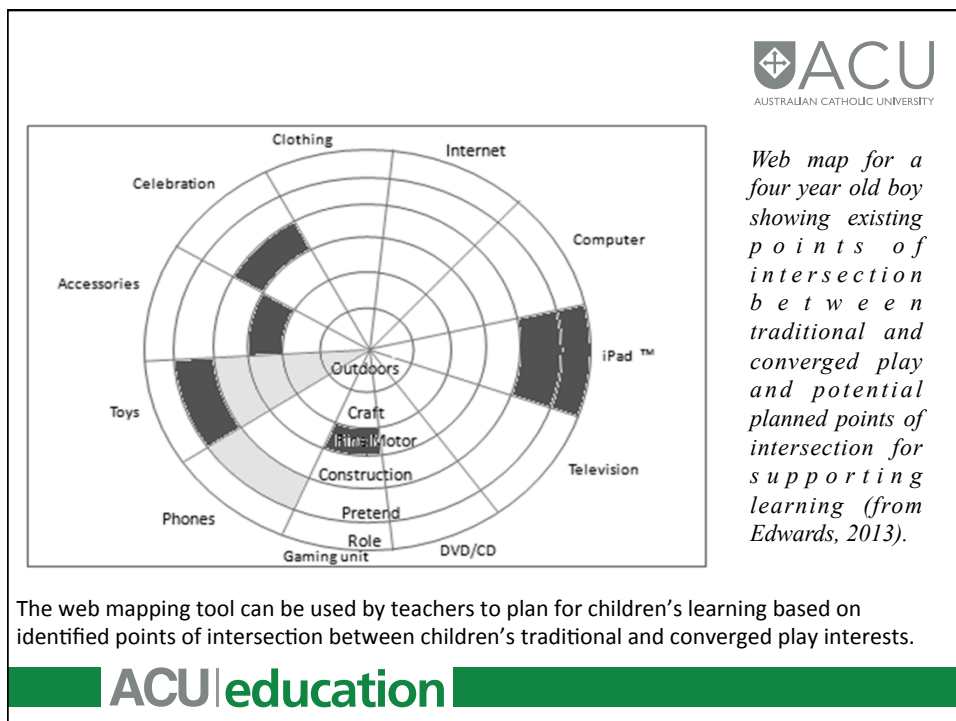
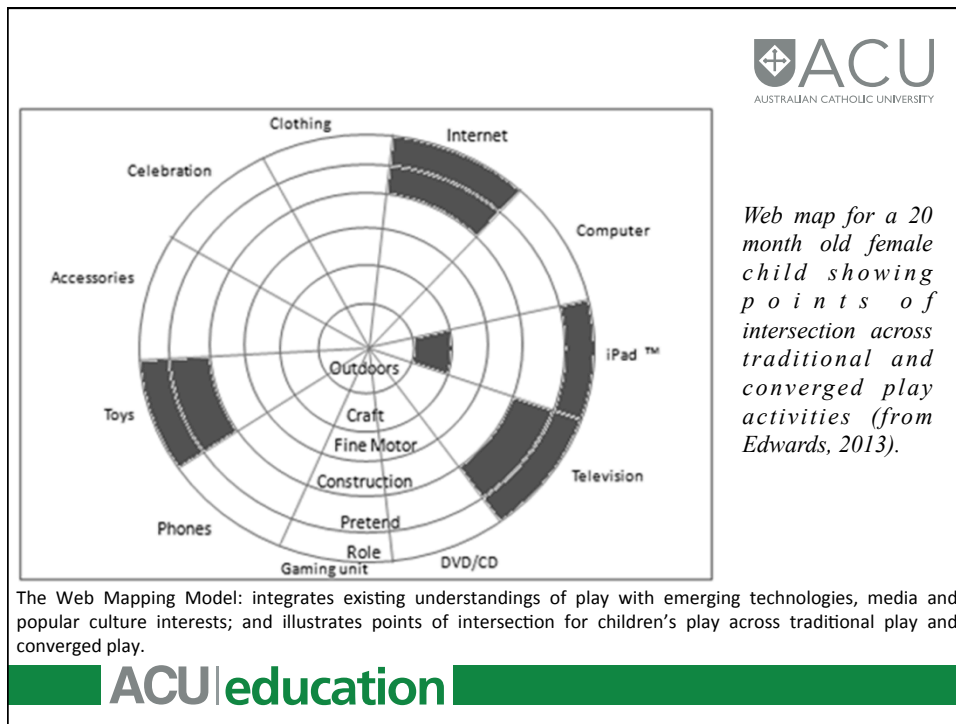


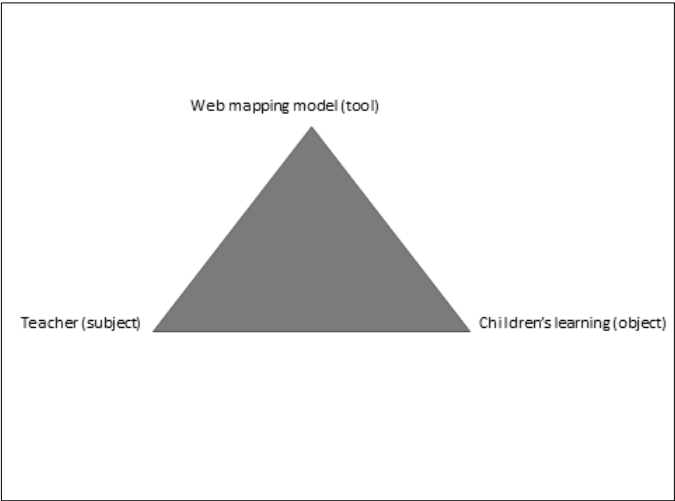
## Methodology: how do your children play?


- 10 families of children aged 20 months-5 years (14 children in total)
- Two home-based semi-structured interviews (preferred activities, toys, media, technologies and characters)
- Thematic analysis resulting in two categories 'traditional' play and 'converged' play
- Points of intersection for children's play across two categories mapped
- Intersections represented on a 'web' model and mapped for each child

Research suggests children access a range of technologies, media and popular culture artefacts in the family home and this is consistent across socio-economic groups in post-industrialised societies. Therefore need to know 'what are children's preferred activities?' (Parette, Quesenberry, Blum; Zimic, 2009; Bitman, Rutherford, Brown & Unsworth, 2011; McPake & Plowman, 2010).

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*A cultural historical perspective on early childhood education in which the web mapping model is used as a new conceptual tool by teachers to support children's learning with technologies, digital media and characters associated with popular culture.*

The problem regarding the adequacy of existing theories of play is addressed via the development of a new conceptual for informing children's learning that builds on the use of play as the existing implicit tool in early childhood education



### **Affordances and Constraints Facing 'Educational Leaders' in Australian Early Childhood Education Centres**

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email: [joce.nuttall@acu.edu.au](mailto:joce.nuttall@acu.edu.au)

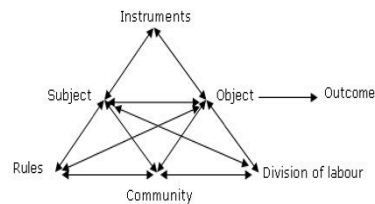
- Australia's *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and School Aged Care* (Council of Australian Governments 2009a) mandates the role of 'Educational Leader' in every early childhood service.
- What are the institutional and other practices that afford or constrain the development of this form of leadership in ECE in Australia?
- Most qualified educators in ECE have almost no understanding of principles of adult development, yet this is central to the EL role.
- 9 Centre Directors participated in six PD workshops across a 12-month period, with individual audio-taped interviews between each.





### Conceptual framework:

#### 'Third generation' activity theory (Engeström, 1987)



Thinking about a childcare centre as a collective system of human activity:

- What is the object of the Directors' work (i.e. what is the task they are working on)?
- What rules, instruments and divisions of labour mediate the achievement of this task?
- What contradictions between these elements are hindering their leadership?
- Collective subjects move in *collective* zones of proximal development.

### Adaptation of concepts as evidence of enhanced leadership

- From *teamwork-as-object* to *teamwork-as-outcome*: a system-level view identifies long-standing contradictions; when these are addressed, there is an increase in morale
- From *leader-as-knower* to *leader-as-questioner*: a distributed view of cognition means leadership is about mobilising the latent knowledge professionalism of staff, not about having all the answers
- From leadership of *individual* staff to leadership of the centre as a *collective*: by maintaining a focus on practice, rather than personality, suggestions are considered in the light of whether they will *expand the objects of the system*, not whether individuals 'like' or 'agree' with them