

Before Walking and Talking:

Mapping the Gaps between Expert and Public Understandings of Early Childhood Development in Peru

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A **FrameWorks** Research Report

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Introduction

In Peru, the health, wellbeing, and education of every child has become a national priority measured by national budget allotments. Though there are challenges to achieving this goal, including child poverty, uncertain access to education, and malnutrition, there is also considerable energy directed at implementing creative solutions to these problems and finding innovative ways to foster positive early childhood development. One such effort is Cuna Más,¹ a government-community partnership which aims to provide support to very young children across Peru through services like home visits to families living in rural areas and daycares that serve children as young as six months.² Overall, a quarter of organizations in the country's philanthropic and social investment sector consider children from birth to age 3 among their targeted beneficiaries.³

Any initiative that aims to improve early childhood development requires empowering the public to demand change and engage with solutions. Effective communication is a vital component of this empowerment.

But communicating with the public about early childhood development is not a straightforward task; scientific principles can be abstract and complex and thus difficult for people to draw on when they make decisions. In particular, communicating about the science of early childhood development is difficult because the public's thinking about the topic hinges on deeply held and widely shared beliefs about children, families, how our minds and bodies work, and where responsibility lies for supporting positive development. These patterns of thinking are woven into, and reinforced by, cultural practices and are frequently at odds with emerging scientific knowledge that can guide decision- and policy-making.

In this research report, we explain the Peruvian public's complex set of *cultural models*⁴—implicit and largely shared understandings, assumptions, and patterns of reasoning—that shape thinking about early childhood development. While there is synergy between some of these models and core ideas from the science of early childhood development, there are also conspicuous gaps between what scientists and the public understand. These gaps impede efforts to build support for the solutions necessary to improve early childhood development.

To engage members of the public and boost support for important policies and programs, experts and advocates need an empirically based communications strategy that uses framing to anticipate and redirect public thinking. With this need in mind, the Fundación Baltazar y Nicolás and Aporta Desarrollo Sostenible (Grupo Breca) collaborated with the FrameWorks Institute and researchers from the Universidad del Pacífico to, first, identify the core principles from the science of development that are important for the public to understand and, second, to characterize how the Peruvian public thinks about these issues.

This phase of research was conducted between October 2017 and May 2018 and included two components:

- **Expert Perspective Analysis.** The first component included a distillation of principles from the science of early childhood development in Peru. We call this the “untranslated story.” This account includes explanations of what develops in children, how development happens, what threatens development, and an overview of the policies and programs that experts believe would support positive early childhood development in Peru.
- **Public Perspective Analysis.** The second component included patterns of thinking—cultural models—that members of the Peruvian public use to reason about early childhood development.

This report builds on this foundational research to describe communications challenges faced by experts and advocates who want to empower the Peruvian public to access new ways of thinking about early childhood. By documenting expert and public perspectives and surfacing the overlaps and gaps in these views, we establish the contours of a framing strategy. In further collaborations, FrameWorks hopes to build on this descriptive research by designing and testing ways of reframing public discourse about early childhood development in Peru.

The Expert Story of Early Childhood Development in Peru

This section distills the themes that emerged from analysis of 15 interviews with early childhood development experts who have knowledge and experience relevant to the social, cultural, and political context of Peru. Together these themes constitute the *untranslated story* of early childhood development in Peru: the core set of understandings that those working in relevant fields want to communicate to the Peruvian public. The untranslated story is organized around the following questions:

- What develops in early childhood?
- How does early childhood development work?
- What threatens development?
- What can be done to support positive development?

What develops in early childhood?

Children’s brains are rapidly developing in important ways during early childhood. Neural circuits grow and connect to one another across the brain over time. During early childhood, particular areas of the brain (e.g., hippocampus, amygdala, prefrontal cortex) are changing, and important neural connections within and across those regions are rapidly developing. Early childhood is a period of great potential for neurological development, which requires sensory stimulation and socioemotional support. As one expert explained, “Todo ahí está listo y preparadito y lo que necesita es estímulos y tiempo para

que puedan prenderse esos foquitos o florecer esas florcitas [...] para que llegue al potencial máximo” [“Everything is there, ready and prepared, and what you need is stimuli and time for the little lights to be activated or the little flowers to bloom [...] so that they can reach their maximum potential.”]

Important skills begin to develop. Particular capacities—those referred to as “executive function”—begin to develop in the frontal lobe of the brain in early childhood. These abilities include, for example, attention, inhibitory control, and working memory. Executive function is what enables a child to manage a broad range of experiences, situations, and challenges, beginning in childhood and becoming more sophisticated through early adulthood.

Socioemotional development is important in early childhood and essential to lifelong health and wellbeing. Socioemotional development⁵ is the process by which children acquire the skills necessary to effectively regulate emotions, set and accomplish important goals, empathize with others, create and maintain healthy relationships, solve problems, and make healthy decisions. These systems develop rapidly and actively in early childhood.

Children’s agency—their capacity to act as independent people—begins, with proper support, to develop early. Experts emphasized that a child’s sense of agency and control is another important aspect of development because a sense of agency supports cognitive development, exploratory behavior, and self-esteem. It is important for caregivers to treat children, in developmentally appropriate ways, as independent people who have control over themselves and their lives. One way parents and caregivers can support this development is by interacting with children verbally, even before they can speak. This demonstrates to children that others see them as separate beings with their own thoughts and opinions.

Areas of development are inextricably linked. Facets of early childhood development—brain development, cognitive development, socioemotional development, language development, agency, and physical growth and development—are all intertwined. Development is integral and holistic, such that a deficit of support in one aspect of development affects all areas.

How does early childhood development work?

There are critical periods in childhood when development is particularly sensitive to experiences. While the brain maintains its plasticity—the ability to change throughout life—early sensitive periods represent important opportunities for development because the brain is particularly open to change. These periods represent opportunities to facilitate positive development, build resilience, and support positive long-term outcomes. They are also periods during which adversity or a lack of positive experiences can be especially detrimental to development and the long-term outcomes that it shapes (e.g., health outcomes, educational attainment).

The quality of interactions significantly affects development. Early childhood development is rooted in dynamic relationships with caregivers. In talking about the quality of interactions, experts explained that

interactions should happen in a safe, secure context and be consistent with the cultural values of the caregivers.⁶ Experts also consider interactions with other children to be beneficial. They explained that these types of interactions drive development by allowing children to practice navigating social situations and learn how to respond to different social stimuli.

Play, in particular, is an important facilitator of brain development. Experts explained that play is key in shaping different aspects of development—cognitive, social, emotional—and that different types of play are important and valuable in facilitating positive development (e.g., independent play, social play, object play, imaginative play). The exploration, problem-solving, social negotiation, sequencing, and creativity involved in various types of play can create the ideal balance between challenge and motivation that is key in honing emerging skills.⁷

Attachment supports positive early development. Attachment refers to the emotional and physical bond that children form with caregivers.⁸ The security created by strong attachments supports positive physical, neurological, cognitive, and socioemotional development. Experts explained that lack of attachment can be implicated in inappropriate social behaviors, learning problems, violence, and physical and mental illnesses later in life. Therefore, they argued that attachment, or what one expert called “emotional nutrition,” is a vital developmental factor and should be actively supported.

Cultural and economic factors strongly influence development. A child’s interactions and experiences in various environments are important developmental influences. Thus the quality of the environments in which children live is crucial. Experts pointed out that the environments in which children develop are diverse across Peru. They also explained that environments are determined in large part by the socioeconomic status of the caregivers, rural vs. urban settings, cultural practices and values, and access to services. For example, urban areas typically boast better socioeconomic conditions and access to services and food, but they are also linked to shorter periods of breastfeeding and higher rates of obesity. On the other hand, rural areas provide more open spaces for play but are linked to higher rates of chronic malnutrition.

What threatens development?

Lack of resources can challenge positive development. Families that lack important resources may struggle to meet children’s basic developmental needs. There are many examples of such situations; in poorer communities in the Peruvian Andes or the Amazon, people may have limited access to nutrients that are essential to brain development, such as iron. If caregivers need to work long hours or hold multiple jobs and lack quality childcare, children may have fewer opportunities for healthy interaction. In rural areas, families often have less reliable access to a number of state services, which means that children may not have access to quality health care, for example.

Chronic stress threatens development and can have long-term negative effects. Exposure to poverty and violence during early childhood generates chronic stress that can negatively affect the healthy

development of the brain and other biological systems. A hungry child feels stress; a child without secure attachment to their caregivers feels stress; a child who witnesses or experiences violence feels stress. Chronic stress that is not buffered or managed by caregivers results in a child's stress response system remaining on high alert, which creates a biological response that can impede healthy development. Living daily with chronic stress can derail children's development and lead to a host of negative long-term health and learning outcomes.

Inefficient, uncoordinated government involvement threatens development. Experts asserted that the State works in a disjointed manner in efforts to support development, with little dialogue between the agencies that provide services to children and families (e.g., Health, Education, Development and Social Inclusion, and Women and Vulnerable Populations). As a consequence, there is no integrated approach to support early childhood development. For example, the government does focus on specific issues like child malnutrition (e.g., the Qali Warma program) and childcare (e.g., Cuna Más). However, these key programs are not aligned with other programs, resulting in the duplication of efforts, inefficient service provision, and suboptimal outcomes. For example, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion all operate their own programs to address the problem of anemia—without integration or coordination. Experts explained that supporting positive child development requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to service provision.

What can be done to support positive development?

Provide better services for families and caregivers. Experts emphasized the importance of the contexts in which children grow up and how environments influence development and developmental outcomes. Improving contexts requires comprehensive services that focus on supporting children, parents, and families during early childhood. By supporting the individuals who interact with and provide care for children—through initiatives such as family leave policies, employment programs, health care services, and home visits for new parents—communities are better able to promote positive early childhood development.

The government needs to prioritize early childhood development and coordinate efforts in supporting it. Peru will not see improvements in early childhood development outcomes unless the government makes supporting this developmental period a priority across agencies. This begins with auditing existing programs and coordinating them to reduce redundancy. There are also other, more specific state initiatives that experts believed would be effective in better supporting early childhood development in Peru:

- Develop intersectoral programs among agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), etc. to improve the quality of life during early childhood. The State could effectively engage the private sector in these efforts to facilitate coordination and consistency.

- The State should rigorously measure the nation’s progress on many early childhood development metrics and use the resulting information to identify problems, improve processes and interventions, and fill gaps in services.
- The State should strengthen laws to ensure that children’s human rights are respected and upheld (e.g., preventing child trafficking, child abuse, etc.).
- The State should design policies and programs based on the needs and knowledge of Peruvian populations, rather than copying policies from other nations.

Provide healthy nutrition to every child. Eating quality food not only ensures physical health in children but also positive brain development. Chronic malnutrition has decreased in Peru in recent years, but many children still lack access to vital nutrients. Experts argued that supporting healthy nutrition requires the following initiatives:

- Address the problem of anemia that persists in Peru. Iron is an important nutrient in supporting brain development, and children with anemia can suffer irreversible effects. Experts recommended developing more effective programs and interventions that provide iron supplements and encourage the consumption of foods rich in iron that are normally discarded (such as *la sangrecita*, a food prepared from the blood of various meats).
- Promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life to prevent infections in young children. Experts noted that breastfeeding during early childhood is important. To be successful, the promotion of breastfeeding requires human services investment (e.g., programs to help new mothers initiate breastfeeding shortly after birth by working through any challenges that arise).

Promote secure attachment and support parents’ ability to spend quality time with their children. Attachment, which is important for healthy development, requires quality time between caregivers and children. Government programs can help ensure that this happens by:

- Implementing work policies to support children’s development. For example, by extending maternity and paternity leave and modifying work schedules, policies can provide parents with more time to engage with their young children.
- Providing safe public spaces (e.g., parks and recreation centers) in urban areas to support quality family interaction and play.

Facilitate better training and education of professionals who work with young children and their families. Training early childhood caregivers (such as those who work in child care) should be a high priority so that professionals are better able to support children’s development. Experts also suggested creating training programs for health care professionals to help them better serve families.

Taken together, these are the important themes that experts want the public to consider as they think about early childhood development.

Peruvian Public Understandings of Early Childhood Development

Having outlined the expert perspective on early childhood development, we now turn to the Peruvian public's perspective.

In this section, we present the cultural models—the shared but implicit understandings, assumptions, and patterns of reasoning—that shape how members of the Peruvian public think about early childhood development. This analysis was informed by interviews with 50 members of the public from the following regions: the Andes (la Sierra Sur), including Puno and Ayacucho; the coast, including Lima, Arequipa, and Trujillo; and the Amazon (la selva), including Iquitos and San Martín. (See the Appendix for detail on the research sample and methods.)

People have multiple ways to think about early childhood development. Based on conversational and context cues, they draw on different assumptions at different times. Some ways of thinking are typically more *dominant*—more consistently and powerfully shaping how people think; while others are more *recessive*—less top-of-mind and more easily pushed aside when a dominant model is activated. Different ways of thinking may be primed through different cues, which helps us understand why people can hold seemingly contradictory attitudes about the same issue, even within a single conversation, and why framing is so powerful in shaping opinions and understandings.

While our research suggests that the models described here are commonly held, there is certainly variation in how dominant or recessive particular models are for particular individuals or groups. It is the relative strength of these models that accounts for individual differences in opinion, rather than the absence or presence of these ways of thinking. The models we describe in this report are therefore accessible to all members of the public, even though individuals may vary in the strength with which they hold these perspectives.

In addition to these cultural models, our research finds *cognitive holes*. A cognitive hole is an area where members of the public lack practiced and robust ways of thinking about an issue.

Finally, understanding the cultural models people are able to apply in thinking about an issue provides an important tool for communicators. Some models may be more productive, facilitating a fuller understanding of an issue and generating support for policies and programs. Other models may be unproductive, shutting down thinking and depressing people's support for change and engagement with solutions. By identifying available models, communicators can frame their messages to leverage

productive models, push unproductive ones into the background, and fill in understanding where needed. This is the essence of strategic framing.

In the following section, we begin by describing the cultural models that members of the Peruvian public draw upon to think about early childhood. We then directly explore the patterns of thinking that people rely on when asked to think about what factors shape development and what factors threaten healthy development. Finally, we outline how people think about potential ways of improving early childhood development.

What is early childhood?

In their interviews, participants struggled to define the term “early childhood,” did not typically use the term “early childhood” (or *primera infancia* in Spanish), and were uncertain about how to describe this stage of life. Absent a clear definition, people’s assumptions were shaped by a cluster of related cultural models.

Participants tended to think about early childhood in one of two ways. They would either “age down”—i.e., they would think about children in their “early childhood” years as “babies”—and talk about babies as not yet fully formed humans. In a sense, babies are not yet people. Alternatively, they would “age up”—focusing conversations that were supposed to be about early childhood on much older children.

There was a developmental milestone that predicted whether people aged a child up or down: whether the child in question had begun walking and talking. Walking and talking were pivotal events in shaping people’s thinking about development.

▶ The *Walking and Talking* Cultural Model

For the Peruvian public, walking and talking are key milestones in a child’s development. The assumptions that people make about what these milestones mean are important for how they think about development overall.

Peruvians assume that the acquisition of the observable skills of walking and talking indicates that a child has become capable of thinking, learning, relating to others, developing a personality, and becoming a unique person in his or her own right.⁹ However, the assumption that accompanies this pattern of thinking is that if a child *doesn’t* yet walk or talk, he or she hasn’t begun to develop cognitive or socioemotional skills. The fundamental assumption underlying this thinking is that meaningful cognitive and emotional development begins when a child can walk and talk. It is important for those communicating about early childhood development in Peru to understand and be aware of this assumption, and we discuss the communications implications of this cultural model at length at the end of this section.

De hecho, cambian su personalidad, de hecho, desde que son bebés hasta que empiezan a caminar justo ahorita mi sobrina ha empezado a caminar y es totalmente diferente. Antes era como que digamos tímida y ahora ya no, porque es como que quiere explorar.¹⁰

In fact, they change their personality, really from the time they are babies until they start to walk. Right now, my niece has started to walk and it's totally different. Before she was like a bit shy and now she's not anymore, because it's like she wants to explore.

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Empieza a gatear. Gatear y ya comenzar a querer parar, va a tratar de pronunciar palabras, eso es su cambio de crecimiento.

She starts to crawl. She crawls and then she starts to want to stand up, she tries to start pronouncing words, that's a change in her growth.

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Hablan bien, pronuncian bien a su papá, a mamá, ya su crecimiento cambia, ya son diferenciados. Van yendo creciendo. La edad por ahí, 3, 4, por ahí cuatro caminan.

They speak well, say "dad," "mom," and their growth changes, they're differentiated. They continue to grow. At around 3, 4, around then they walk.

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Investigador: ¿En qué más piensa cuando escucha la palabra niño o infancia? ¿Qué es lo que se le viene a la cabeza?

Participante: Tienes que ayudarla, lo que no puede caminar el niño. [...] Necesitan apoyo, dar juguetes, levantar lo que se cae, ¿no?

Investigador: ¿Y apoyo en qué sentido?

Participante: Cuando se quiere levantar, apoyar, o sea, con su biberón o leche, pues.

Researcher: *What else do you think about when you hear the word "child" or "childhood"? What is the first thing that comes to mind?*

Participant: *You have to help them, when the child cannot walk. [...] They need support, give them toys, pick up whatever falls, right?*

Researcher: *Support in what sense?*

Participant: *When they want to stand up, give them support, or with their bottle or milk.*

Essentially if a child does not yet walk or talk, people think of the child as a baby (they “age down”); if a child has begun to walk and talk, discussions tend to wander toward a focus on older children—typically school-aged children or even early adolescents (children are “aged up”).

► The *Babies Aren't People Yet* Cultural Model

When asked to think about “early childhood,” participants typically defaulted to talking about “babies.” As a term like “toddler” does not exist in Spanish, the term “baby” is widely used to refer to both infants and young children. The Peruvian public therefore tends to conflate early childhood and babyhood, applying the way they think about babies to their thinking about young children.

People understand babies as not yet having their own minds and not yet able to have independent reactions to their surroundings; the public assumes that babies have not yet begun their cognitive development. In a broader sense, people assume that babies are not yet fully formed, independent individuals; they see this life stage as one that precedes personhood.

Because of the association between early childhood and “babyhood”—the two being seen as synonymous, this understanding of babies structures people’s thinking about early childhood.

0 a 3, un bebé recién está- recién está para cargarlo, para acariñarlo, para apapacharlo. Ajá, va creciendo desde niño bebito....

From 0 to 3, a baby is then just—should be carried, caressed, to be cuddled. OK, he grows up, from a baby ...

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Investigador: Entonces, ¿en qué edades piensas con respecto a la palabra niño? Si lo ponemos en un rango de edad ¿en qué edades se encuentra?

Participante: Un año, comienza hablar, llora—bueno, es decir “papá,” “mamá” o “papito,” “mamita.” Comienza hablar.

Investigador: Pero, por ejemplo, cuando una persona nace, al momento que nace, ¿es un niño ya?

Participante: No.

Investigador: ¿Qué es?

Participante: Bebé.

Investigador: ¿Bebé?

Participante: Sí.

Investigador: ¿Y entre qué edades está un niño, se encuentra un niño?

Participante: 3 años.

Researcher: *OK, what ages do you think with respect to the word “child”? If we understand it as an age range, at what ages do you situate it?*

Participant: *One year, he starts to talk, cries—well, says “dad,” “mom” or “daddy,” “mommy.” He starts to talk.*

Researcher: *But, for example, when a person is born, at that moment, is it a child already?*

Participant: *No.*

Researcher: *What is it then?*

Participant: *A baby.*

Researcher: *A baby?*

Participant: *Yes*

Researcher: *Between which ages is one a child, does one find oneself a child?*

Participant: *3 years.*

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Participante: No bueno a partir de ahí yo pienso infancia ¿por qué? Porque ...

Investigadora: ¿Y antes?

Participante: Eh, yo creo que eso es un bebé prematuro que todavía no, yo por ejemplo, no me acuerdo, no puedo escenificar esa edad, no sé. Pienso que primera infancia puede haber sido a partir de los 7, 8 años y ya me doy cuenta de lo que estoy haciendo de lo que hago y así. Pero de más antes, no sé, no lo puedo llamar como primera infancia.

Investigadora: ¿Cómo lo llamaría? O sea, estamos hablando de 0 a 6 años.

Participante: Claro. Entonces yo pienso que ahí es un bebé todavía.

Investigadora: ¿Un bebé?

Participante: Claro un bebé que no todavía, es como usted me dice es una hoja cero uno hace- Yo pienso que hasta esa etapa cero todavía.

Investigadora: Cero.

Participante: ¿No? Pienso, no llamaría mi primera infancia eso o sí tal vez. Estoy un poco confundido.¹¹

Participant: *No well, starting then I think of it as childhood. Why? Because ...*

Researcher: *And before?*

Participant: *I think that it is a premature baby that still isn't, I, for example, do not remember, I can't recall that age, I don't know. I think that early childhood could have been starting at 7, 8 years, when I realize what I am doing and so forth. But before that, I am not sure, I can't call it early childhood.*

Researcher: *What would you call it? We are talking from 0 to 6 years old.*

Participant: *Of course. Then I think then it is still a baby.*

Researcher: *A baby?*

Participant: *Of course, a baby that still is not, like you say, it is a blank slate that one makes. I think up until that stage, it's blank.*

Researcher: *Blank.*

Participant: *Right? I wouldn't call my own early childhood that, or maybe yes. I'm a bit confused.*

► The *Aging Up* Cultural Model

While it was common for people to talk about “babies” when thinking about “early childhood,” the moment they started thinking about children that were not readily seen as babies—children who could walk and talk—people’s thoughts focused on older children and their activities and developmental milestones (e.g., playing team sports, going to school, and studying). This suggests an assumption that if a child is not a “baby,” a child must be beginning to share activities and behaviors with older children or even adolescents.

Investigador: ¿En qué edades piensas?

Participante: Infancia ... ¿7 años?

Investigador: Empieza en 7 años y termina ... ¿Cuál sería tu intervalo, digamos?

Participante: Para terminar la infancia entre 12, 13 años.

Researcher: *What age range are you thinking about?*

Participant: *Childhood ... 7 years old?*

Researcher: *It starts at 7 years and ends ... what would your range be, let's say?*

Participant: *To finish childhood between 12, 13 years old.*

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Algunos niños hasta de 4 años, recién está aprendiendo a hablar o a caminar. Ya, 5 o 6 años empiezan ya a mandar al jardín, van en Wawawasi o así. Algunas las mamás mandan así. No es igual, también, algunos así no más también tipo cuidaban en sus casas hasta que van al colegio. 5 ya, 5 o 6, ya poquito tiene que estar, solitos se cuidan.

Some children even up to age 4, they're still just learning to talk or walk. Now, at 5 or 6 years of age they start to send them to a preschool, they go to Wawa Wasi or something. Some mothers send them. It's not the same. Also, some just take care of them in their homes until they go to school, either 5 or 6, they need to be there for a little, they can take care of themselves alone.

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Investigadora: ¿Cómo usted cree que es primera infancia?

Participante: OK, ¿cómo es una primera infancia? Bueno los—prácticamente son los niños que dependen todavía de sus padres probablemente. Donde se les debe, debería hasta los bueno ... hasta los 10 años para mí diría.

Researcher: *What do you think early childhood is?*

Participante: *OK, what is early childhood? Well, the—practically they're the children that still probably depend on their parents. It should, well ... be until they are 10 years old, I would say, in my opinion.*

Essentially, the stage of life that experts call “early childhood” is largely invisible to the Peruvian public. The *Walking and Talking*, *Babies Aren't People*, and *Aging Up* models help us understand why discussions were either focused on babies, who were assumed to have not yet begun to develop cognitively, or older children, who were assumed to already be in formal learning contexts and mastering more complex concepts. In short, there was little ability to think or talk about the period in a child's life between birth and age 5.

► The *Vulnerability* Cultural Model

Whether members of the public are aging children up or down, they clearly understand early childhood as a period of considerable physical vulnerability. Young children are seen as completely vulnerable—at risk of physical danger and in need of physical protection—because of their inability to walk and talk and thus their complete dependence on caregivers for safety and wellbeing. As children age, people continue to see them as vulnerable, but incrementally less so; because they can walk and talk, this vulnerability is somewhat reduced as they gain more independence and slowly become better equipped to handle risks and challenges in their environment.

Todavía son bebés. Son dependientes, totalmente. Bien dependientes, hay que estar con ellos hasta de la mano, por si algo les puede pasar. Con la niñez y ese período... son—hay que enseñarles todo. Hay que cuidarles de que no les vaya a—ellos son muy, todavía no saben diferenciar lo bueno de lo malo. Hay que estar de la mano para todo. Para todo. Hasta cuando duermen, incluso cuando juegan.

They're still babies. They're completely dependent, quite dependent. You have to be holding their hand in case something might happen to them. With childhood and this period you have to show them everything. You have to take care of them so they don't—they still don't know how to tell the difference between good and bad. You have to hold their hand through everything. For everything. Until they sleep, even when they play.

Communications implications

1. **Because walking and talking are seen as the beginning of cognitive, social, and emotional development, earlier development is invisible.** People are not able to see that walking and talking are, in fact, a result of the many developmental processes occurring throughout a child's early months and years, let alone prenatally. Finding ways of making it clear that cognitive, social, and emotional development is occurring well before children walk and talk is an important framing goal—perhaps the most important big idea to advance in a framing strategy.
2. **Difficulty thinking about *early childhood* makes it difficult to generate support for programs and policies targeted at this age group.** Because the public tends to think about either babies or older children, and not about early childhood as a unique, important, and rich stage of life, communicators will find it difficult to focus the public's attention on what experts typically define as early childhood (either 0–3 or sometimes 0–5) and to increase support for interventions that target this stage of life. Communicators should not assume that their idea of “early childhood” is the same as the public's. In addition, considerable work needs to be done to give people practice thinking about the important developmental period that comes between “babyhood” and school age.

What is development?

When asked to think about development—what is it or what it involves—a set of cultural models consistently structured thinking.

▶ The *Development is Physical* Cultural Model

For the public, the development of a young child is primarily physical. In other words, people think about development in terms of observable physical growth, such as increases in height and weight. The assumption is that children are healthy and developing well if they make physical gains appropriate to their age. Participants assumed that physical growth was dependent on a child having proper and sufficient nutrition. If physical growth is the primary marker of healthy development, then, according to this thinking, the most important determinant of healthy development is making sure that a child has the nutrients that his or her body needs to grow.

Participante: Por ejemplo, desarrollo en lo que es físicamente el niño, ya es distinto el niño. Unos son gorditos, otros son flaquitos, desarrollan sus ojitos. Todo lo que son los órganos de los niños, van desarrollando.

Investigadora: Físicamente.

Participante: Físico.

Participant: For example, regarding the child's physical development, the child is already unique. Some are a little fat, some are skinny, their eyes develop. Everything they are, their organs, they keep developing.

Researcher: *Physically.*

Participant: *Physically.*

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Por ejemplo, deber es llevar el control. Por ejemplo, cuando era mi niño más pequeño yo lo llevaba a sus controles, casi mensual o bimensual, trimestralmente también. Sus controles de peso, de talla, inclusive control de lo que es la nutrición, la anemia, ¿no?

For example, one should take them for their check-ups. For example, when my child was little I took him to his medical visits, monthly or bimonthly, every three months. His weight and height check-ups, even nutrition, anemia, right?

▶ The *Happy Child* Cultural Model

“Being happy” is another primary indicator of good development in the public’s thinking. There was a widely shared understanding among participants that a child is developing well when he or she appears happy (e.g., smiles often) and sociable. In contrast, children who appear sad, shy, or lacking confidence were assumed not to be developing well.

Al, si no, desganado podría decirse, distraído. No está atento, tal vez está ... se puede decir temeroso, asustado, retraído, entonces en términos generales, para abarcar todo de ahí se podría decir, “Ah este niño está mal.”

Ah, yes, we could say he is listless, distracted. He is not alert, maybe he is ... we can say afraid, scared, withdrawn, so in general terms, in general, we could say, “Ah, this child is not doing well.”

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Ya, bueno, si es que están sanos los niños y están pequeñitos, han crecido bien, a sus familias, a sus papás, a sus tíos, alegre [...] En su cumpleaños compran su regalito, van con su regalo, así hace querer con sus familias, con sus papás, con su abuelito, es alegre.

[I]f they are healthy children and they are small, they have grown well, to their families, their parents, their uncles and aunts, happy. [...] For their birthday they buy them a present, they go off with their present, in this way there is love in their families, with their parents, with their grandfather, they’re happy.

▶ The *Cognitive Development* “Cognitive Hole”

Generally speaking, cognitive and brain development were missing in the public’s thinking about early childhood, specifically ages 0 to 3. The idea that children’s brains are developing and that cognitive skills are an important aspect of those early years is not part of the public’s thinking.

Ya, ya, ya es cuando comienza pues a tener el cambio, el cambio general del cuerpo.

[Development] is when they start to have a change, a general change of their bodies.

This is not to say that it is impossible for the public to think about cognitive development or that the public cannot understand that brains change over time; rather, the topic simply was not prominent in

their thinking about early childhood and they did not bring the issue up on their own during more general discussions about young children and development.

▶ The *Cognitive = Education* Cultural Model

When cognitive development was explicitly raised by the interviewer, it was thought of in academic terms. Participants' thinking about cognitive development was associated with academic learning in the formal education system. Overall, unless they were talking about academic learning, participants did not discuss cognitive development.

In the interview excerpts below, not only do the participants link cognitive development with school attendance, but they focus on nutrition as a requirement for academic development, illustrating the dominance of the *Development is Physical* model.

Le va a afectar a ese niño cuando no está bien alimentado es porque ese niño, por eso le explicaba no va a crecer como debe de ser. No rinde en los colegios, no va a desarrollar el cerebro, ¿no? que debería ser bien desarrollado con los alimentos, la lactancia todas esas cosas son muy importantes para un niño, para un bebe.

That will affect the child when they're not well nourished because that child, that's what I was explaining, they're not going to grow as they should. They won't achieve in school, their brain won't develop, right? It should be well developed with nutrients, breastfeeding, all those things that are very important for a child, for a baby.

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Es lógico que el niño mal alimentado no rinda en el colegio, que no aprenda, que no tenga un desarrollo. Es así de simple. Todo tiene que ir junto, de la mano.

It is logical that the malnourished child will not achieve in school, that the child won't learn and develop. It's that simple. Everything has to go together, hand in hand.

▶ The *Values Are Vital* Cultural Model

Participants viewed the ability to distinguish right from wrong and act accordingly as a central feature of healthy development. People assume that if a child does not learn moral values, then his or her development has not been successful. Moral development is understood to happen through explicit teaching; the home is the first space where children learn the “values” that govern society, and parents have a responsibility to instill morals in their children and teach good behavior.

A los padres de cómo debemos criar a los hijos, los valores, qué tenemos que enseñarles, qué significa cada valor para ellos y todo.

To parents, the way we should raise our children, values, they're what we have to teach them, what each value means for them.

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Lo que vemos en las noticias, lo que vemos de corrupción, todo se origina de una mala crianza, todo viene de ahí. ¿Por qué? Si el niño no tiene los valores sólidos cuando tiene 2 o 3 años, si un día su madre le encuentra robándole una galleta su compañero y le puso el pare, le puso el freno, le dio una sanción—llámese que lo castigó o lo pegó, lo que quieras llamarlo—cambia. Ese niño el día de mañana no le va a robar un sol al Estado, un sol a la persona que se le cae. El peruano común, mira los 10 soles en la calle, los levantó y se los metió en el bolsillo.

What we see on the news, the corruption we see, everything stems from bad child-rearing practices, everything comes from there. Why? If the child doesn't have solid values when they are 2 or 3 years old, if one day their mother finds them stealing a cookie from their friend and stops them, admonishes them—either by punishing or hitting him, whatever you want to call it—they change. Later on, that child isn't going to steal one cent from the government. The average Peruvian sees 10 cents on the street and picks them up and puts them in their pocket.

Communications implications

- 1. The public's focus on visibly measurable physical growth and a lack of thinking about the cognitive development happening between ages 0 and 3 bring some areas of development into view while obscuring others.** People see measurement of a child's physical growth as the most appropriate way to determine healthy development, but the tendency to see development in this way diverts attention from brain and cognitive development. From this physical perspective, the public is unlikely to see the importance of programs and policies that support development that is less immediately or clearly measurable in physical ways—such as cognitive, social, or emotional development, or neuro-development more generally. This focus on the physical, along with the “cognitive hole” of cognitive development, shows how important it is for communicators to find ways to clearly convey all the development that is happening in early childhood that may not be measurable in terms of physical growth. Without the ability to see this development and view it as salient, many key areas of the expert story will remain invisible and poorly understood.
- 2. Seeing cognitive development in academic terms hides the importance of cognitive development in a child's earliest days.** When experts and advocates talk about “cognitive development,” the public is most likely to think of learning in school, which is very different from the concept that experts are attempting to communicate. Reframing cognitive development as a cornerstone of *early* childhood is a communications priority.
- 3. The public's focus on happiness has mixed implications for communicators.** This pattern of thinking is productive as an opening to talk about the importance of socioemotional development in early childhood, which is a key point in the untranslated story. However, the *Happy Child* model can be unproductive in two ways. First, it might lead people to think that as long as a child is smiling, no other issues require attention. Second, its focus on the individual child and family obscures other influences; parents are seen as responsible for this happiness and the child himself or herself is understood as the beneficiary. If a child's happiness is a private matter, it may be

difficult for people to see the role of government, nongovernment, or private organizations in supporting children's development.

What shapes development?

▶ The *Basic Needs* Cultural Model

People assume that healthy development requires that children's basic needs are met (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, safety). They believe that if these basic needs are met, optimal development will proceed.

Mala alimentación afecta al crecimiento, al peso, todo eso. Todo afecta. Afecta al niño en el desarrollo, el cambio. [...] Porque, en primer lugar, la alimentación para que puedan desarrollar, sino no desarrollan, sin eso los niños no crecen. Tienen que tener alimentación para que puedan crecer fuertes.

Poor nutrition affects growth, weight, all that. Everything has an effect. It affects the child that is growing and developing, the changes. [...] First of all, nutrition helps them develop, if not, they don't develop, without that, children don't grow. They need to eat to grow up strong.

▶ The *Love Is Basic* Cultural Model

Children are assumed to have another basic need: love. Across participants there was a strong assumption that positive development is contingent upon a child being shown love and affection (e.g., hugs, *el apapacho*). Just as nutrition was assumed to support physical development, love was assumed to support happiness.

[El amor] le afecta positivamente. No, eso yo pienso. Claro que también puede ser en otros hogares que no haiga comprensión, haiga peleas en el hogar, pero ese niño va a crecer ¿no? O sea, le va afectar negativamente, pero fatal. Pero sí en un hogar yo pienso que va la mamá, también todos y al hijo o al niño le dan amor como se debe ¿no? Cariño—ese niño va a ser uf, yo pienso que mentalmente, psicológicamente, estará muy bien.

[Love] affects [him or her] positively. That's what I think. Of course, it could also be that in some homes there is no understanding, there are fights, but that child is going to grow, right? It will affect them negatively, it's dreadful. But in a home, I think that the mom and all, you give love to the child, that's how it should be, right? Love—that child will be, oof, I think that mentally, psychologically, the child will do very well.

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Si un niño no fue amado, besado, abrazado. Si un padre fue tan bestia de serlo, ese niño después va a tener problemas para mostrar sus sentimientos, para amar a otras personas y para ser feliz. Así de claro. ¿Por qué? Porque aprendió de su papá y de su mamá—el amor. La única manera de aprenderlo es de ellos, no te lo va a enseñar otra persona, porque es la primera persona con la que tienes contacto. Es como la madre, la madre ve que su niño de meses de nacido y no lo abraza, lo apapacha, lo pone en su pecho, ese niño va a sentir una frialdad y un vacío cuando sea más grande tremendo. Va a llorar- es más,

tal vez ni llore, porque lo más probable es que no siente. No sentir, no conmoverse con el dolor o el sentimiento ajeno, es estar muerto.

If a child was not loved, kissed, hugged. If a dad was such a beast, that child will have problems showing his feelings later, loving other people and being happy. It's very clear. Why? Because he learned love from his dad and mom—love. The only way to learn about it is from them. Another person will not teach it to you because that is the first person you have contact with. It is like the mother, the mother sees her newborn child and doesn't hug him, pamper him, put him on her breast, that child will feel a terrible coldness and emptiness when he is older. The child will cry—maybe, he won't even cry, because probably he won't be able to feel. Not feeling, not feeling the pain of others or the feelings of others, is like being dead.

► The *Early Family Bubble* Cultural Model

For the public, the home is the center of early life. People assume that, early in a child's life, development happens in the home and through parenting. Participants strongly focused on parents when discussing early childhood development, and they assumed that if parents were good parents—i.e., they provided for children's basic needs, loved them, taught them right from wrong, kept them safe, etc.—then children would develop well. The public's focus on parents as the sole determinants of a child's earliest development leads to a lack of focus on the ways in which contexts influence parents.

La mamá y el papá es lo más fundamental para una familia.

The mother and father are the fundamental pieces of a family.

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Igual tiene, tiene un apoyo de los padres. Si tus padres no te apoyan no te puedes desarrollar sólo, al menos que tengas todas tus cosas ahí a la mano.

There is also parental support. If your parents do not support you, you can't develop alone unless you have everything within reach.

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Investigadora: En qué ambientes físicos, puede ser, o sociales—¿en qué ambientes puede estar ocurriendo el desarrollo de estos niños?

Participante: ¿En qué ambiente? En el ambiente del hogar, pues la casa, el papá y la mamá.

Researcher: *In what physical environments, could it be, or social, in what kinds of environments does early childhood development occur?*

Participant: *In what environment? At home, well, the house, the dad and the mom.*

When talking about a child's earliest years, participants tended to focus on parents as the sole determinants of development, to the exclusion of any other factors or influences. This exclusive focus on the family breaks down as children begin interacting more with other people in their local environment (e.g., neighbors and peers) and go to preschool. At this point in development, people assume other adults and institutions become important in a child's developmental trajectory. This is quite different from FrameWorks' work in the United States, where the narrow focus on the family—the *family bubble*—shapes people's thinking about child development beyond the earliest years.

Cuando salen, sí. [...] del pueblo a otro sitio. [...] Porque ellos pierden el miedo. ¿Cómo se puede decir? Porque cuando ellos salen con otras personas se encuentran, conversan, ven, ya no con la misma del pueblo que está. Sí, es muy importante ellos y también sus estudios se les ayuda cuando regresa.

When they leave, yes. [...] from their town to other places [...] they become less fearful. How do you say it? Because when they go out with other people and meet up, talk, see one another, no longer with people from the same town. Yes, it is very important, and also for their studies, it helps them when they come back.

Continuing with the topic of what shapes development, people bring a set of additional models to their thinking about parents and their role in the development of young children. These models are described below.

▶ The *Parenting by Gender* Cultural Model

The public believes that both mothers and fathers play important roles in child development. However, they assume that mothers and fathers play different roles in this process, and as such, parenting tasks are seen as highly gendered. Demonstrations of affection are primarily associated with the mother, who is seen as being in charge of teaching social and emotional skills (e.g., how to talk about feelings). Fathers, on the other hand, are seen as in charge of teaching things like physical skills (e.g., running, jumping, sports).

Tu madre no te va a enseñar a jugar fútbol, tu padre sí. Vas a disfrutar un momento con él. Tu padre no te va a enseñar a llorar, tu madre sí. Te va a enseñar a tener un corazón, porque es nato de la mujer. Igual es el padre: Que es nato ser la cabeza de la casa, que vamos a jugar fútbol, la pichanga... son roles que tiene la familia.

Your mom will not teach you how to play soccer, your dad will. You'll enjoy a moment with him. Your dad will not teach you how to cry, your mom will. She will teach you to have a heart, because that is natural for women. Same for the father: It is natural to be the head of the household, "let's go play soccer" ... those are roles in families.

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Estás ahí acariciándole. Mayormente las mamás. Darle un rato sus cariños. Abrazándole, queriéndole. Cuando al niño no le das cariño, no le das casi importancia, se sienten mal.

You are there caressing him or her. Mostly the mothers. They give them their love. Hug and love them. When you do not give love to a child, you don't show them they are important, they feel bad.

▶ The *Natural Parenting* Cultural Model

The public assumes¹² that a parent (specifically a mother) naturally and automatically develops a strong bond with his or her infant. This bond is understood to be stronger than any other in a young child's life. And in the public's thinking, a parent's ability to love and care for a child during his or her first years flows naturally from this bond. Thus, both the parent-child bond and the ability to provide love and support are understood, at a deep and implicit level, as instinctual and are seen to develop naturally and

without effort. This model structures people's thinking about how parenting works when children are very young.

En este caso, para mí, la madre [es la más importante]. Sí, porque la madre es más tolerante, sabe tratar mejor a los niños y el solo hecho de tener ese vínculo más cercano con el niño, que es un vínculo materno, que es un vínculo muy fuerte. Hace que ella sea la mejor persona que puede guiar al niño a su desarrollo personal.

In this case, for me, the mother [is the most important]. Yes, because the mother is more tolerant, she knows how to treat children better and the mere fact of having that close attachment with the child, that is maternal attachment, which is a strong attachment. It makes her the best person to guide the child in their personal development.

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Es como la madre, la madre ve que su niño de meses de nacido y no lo abraza, lo apapacha, lo pone en su pecho, ese niño va a sentir una frialdad y un vacío cuando sea más grande tremendo.

It is like the mother, the one that sees her newborn child and doesn't hug them or cuddle them. That child will feel a tremendous coldness and emptiness when they become an adult.

► The *Parenting by Doing* Cultural Model

While the public assumes that the mother-child bond and the ability to love and care for a child happen naturally, the public assumes that the *details* of child-rearing—e.g., how to prepare the specific types of foods that children need—are learned as parents attempt to accomplish various tasks.

Participants indicated that knowledge about the details of parenting is acquired in two ways: first, parents learn from their own direct experiences as new situations and challenges present themselves; second, parents learn from others' experiences in the form of advice from close relatives. For the most part, the public assumes that parents (especially mothers, in the public's default thinking) figure out the details of parenting as they go.

Bueno, la mamá aprende eso: a hacer comer la papilla, papita amarilla aplastadita, el hígado, la espinaca y la ... ¿cómo se llama? Todo natural. Zapallo ... Cuando recién está aprendiendo la bebé, esas cositas tienes que hacer comer: hígado aplastadito, papita amarillita, en vaso y con cabello de angelcito, pero con papa amarillita siempre entra, como purecito.

Well, the mother learns that: to make baby food, mashed yellow potatoes, liver, spinach, and the ... what do you call it? All-natural, pumpkin ... When they are just learning about the baby, those are the things you need to make to eat: mashed liver, yellow potato in a cup with angel hair pasta, but always with a mashed yellow potato.

▶ The *Exposures* Cultural Model

As discussed above, the public assumes that, once a child begins to walk and talk, a wider set of nonparental factors begin to shape a child's development. These influences include other people (e.g., extended family, other children) and different places (e.g., traveling from rural to urban areas or vice versa). Put another way, at a certain point in a child's development, members of the public begin to focus on the people and places that a child is exposed to as a key part of their development and begin to recognize that children's surroundings shape their outcomes.

De bebitos los llevábamos al parque, a la piscina, al río, o a la chacra. Y así, se han criado ellos juntos. Nunca ha habido diferencias, tampoco. Y, de hablar, hemos hablado de todo. A medida que iban creciendo, de todo, de todo. A la escuela, al jardincito, ya a la inicial, "Que tienen que portarse bien, que tienen que escuchar a la profesora, que la profesora es como tu mamá cuando estás con ella," cosas así. "Si vas a la escuela, no estés peleando, hablando lisuras o a veces contestándole malas palabras a la profesora, o entre compañeros peleando." O sea, tantas cosas, tanto que si hay problemas mi mamá otra vez la misma cosa dice, como de memoria, decían ellos siempre.

When they were babies we took them to the park, the pool, the river, or the farm. That's how they were raised together. There were never differences, either. And about talking, we have talked about everything. As they were growing, everything, everything. To school, preschool, "You have to behave, you have to listen to the teacher, the teacher is like your mom when you are with her," things like that. "If you go to the school, do not fight, swear, or talk back to the teacher or fight among peers." So many things, so many that if there were problems my mom again said the same thing, memorized it, they always said it.

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Jugando, que se socialice con los demás niños porque más adelante está el tema de las dificultades de socializar con otros niños. [...] Para que los niños estén así... estarían normal. Para que más adelante no estén con el temor si hago bien o mal.

Playing, you should socialize with the other children because later you will have the issue of difficulty socializing with other children. [...] For children to be like that ... they could be normal. So later they are not scared about what they are doing right or wrong.

▶ The *Play Is Productive* Cultural Model

Most participants understood, at a deep level, that play is an important activity of early childhood. Not only did they see it as every child's preferred activity, but they saw play as an activity that facilitates positive development. Participants focused on physical play (e.g., running around, playing with a ball, tumbling) and discussed the developmental benefits that such play confers, such as improved coordination, balance, or strength. But it was also clear that participants understood that play facilitates social development, as it helps children learn to relate to their peers and negotiate social situations.

Todo los juegos, todo lo que he pasado en la infancia. O sea, los juegos más que nada, porque creo que ahí no tenemos problemas, ¿no? más, nos abocamos a jugar más que nada.

All the games, everything I had during my childhood. The games overall, because I think that we won't have problems there, right? Most of the time we were dedicated to playing more than anything else.

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O sea, empiezan a jugar haciendo- No sé, con Legos, colores... entre ellos. O sea, a veces te piden, "papá, hay que jugar," te dicen, o "Cuéntame un cuento, cántame." No sé, ellos se divierten así, ¿no?

They start to make sense by playing—I don't know, with Legos, colors ... between them. Sometimes they ask, "Dad, we need to play," they tell you, or "Tell me a story, sing to me." I am not sure, they have fun like that, right?

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Sus amiguitos, entre amiguitos juegan bien, con el otro que me llevan mal, se retiran con otros amiguitos. Ahí se juegan. A su mamá le van dando cuenta de esto, "ese niño es bueno, ese niño es malo," te cuenta. "¿Quién es tu amiguito?" tu cuentas, entonces con esa persona se va.

Their friends, they play together well as friends, but the others who seem bad, they go off with other friends. They play like that. They go telling their mom, "That kid's good, that kid's bad," they tell her. "Who's your friend?" You tell her, then you go with them.

Importantly, participants did not recognize play as something that could occur before walking and talking; the examples of play that they provided unequivocally involved children who could already walk and talk.

► The *Gender Affects Development* Cultural Model

Cultural models of gender differences clearly affect the public's thinking about early childhood development. Most notably, in the public's thinking, girls tend to be calmer and boys more restless. In some cases, participants suggested that girls are calmer even before birth and move less in utero. The majority of participants assumed that girls, as babies, are less restless and active than boys, and as a result they are often taken outside the home because they can be relied upon to behave.

En sí las mujeres, creo que son más tranquilas que los hombres. Se podía salir a caminar, con ella se podía, con los niños, no. Porque ellos querían "esto," por donde ellos querían. Era... más distinto era lo que es—a parte de que ella era más tranquila, no tenía problemas con ella. Se quedaba, no lloraba. Los otros, no. Lloraban, querían salir.

In fact, girls I think are calmer than boys. I could go for a walk with her, with the boys, no. Because they wanted "this," wherever they wanted. It was ... different than what it is—besides, she was calmer, she didn't have any problems with her. She would stay, didn't cry. The others, no. They would cry and wanted to go out.

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Creo que ya a partir de los 3 años por lo menos, 4 años. Creo que los niños son un poco más liberales o sea como que los dejan ahí más abandonados. O sea como que ya los dejan a su suerte, no, o sea digamos ya le dan más espacio que a las niñas creo. Creo que son más cuidadosas, no ves los problemas que pasan un poco más como que las niñas, más las tienen ahí pues.

I think that starting at 3 at least, 4 years old, boys have more freedom. It's like they abandon them a bit. Like they just leave them, give them more space, not like with the girls. I think they are more careful with them. You don't see the problems happening, you have the girls there.

► The *Government as Protector* Cultural Model

The public clearly understands that the government—el Estado—has a role to play in protecting the wellbeing of the vulnerable. They also clearly understand children as inherently vulnerable and in need of care and protection. Therefore, even as participants emphasized the important roles of parents, relatives, and community in shaping development, especially for very young children (see the *Early Family Bubble* Cultural Model), they also understood government as playing a key role and bearing responsibility. As a protector, the government's role is to provide services for parents and children, not to be involved in raising children. For example, the public understands the need for there to be a role for government in providing education and medical care because these are systems and services that parents cannot always provide on their own.

In this way, government was described as a “protector” in that it has the responsibility to create and improve the systems that protect young children when they are outside the family domain. Government is also understood as responsible for ensuring access to food, health care, and recreational spaces, as well as improving the quality of infrastructure and institutions that provide education to children and families.

De protección. Formativo, si es que hay ausencia, trabajar en conjunto con las comunidades que la tienen, ¿no? No sé... [...] Eso para mí... los Wawawasis funcionan. Hay mucho por hacer. Yo que he viajado al extranjero he visto que empresas estatales tienen en su oficina guardería o nido. Entonces, si tú eres una madre lactante, puedes ir a darle de lactar y luego subir. Si tiene un año o algo, tu hijo está enfermo, puede estar abajo, mientras estás en la oficina arriba. Sí, lo he visto y funciona, pero para eso necesitas una ayuda.

Protection. Important, if there's absenteeism, work together with the communities who are absent, right? I don't know [...] For me ... the Wawa Wasis work. There's a lot to do. I've traveled abroad and I've seen government offices that have, in the office, a daycare or nursery. Then if you're a breastfeeding mom, you can go breastfeed your child and then go up. If you have a 1-year-old or something, and your kid is sick, they can be below while you're in the office above. Yeah, I've seen it and it works, but for this you need help.

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Si el gobierno no te apoya en darte un buen colegio, un buen docente, libros y otras cosas más, ¿no? sin eso un niño también no va a aprender nada, pues.

If the government doesn't support you with a good school, a good teacher, books, and other things, right? Without that a child will learn nothing.

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Una atención más—que el niño tenga más controlado sus controles, ¿verdad? Que en todas las postas hayan controles, incluso las medicinas un poco más cómodas en el caso de necesitar medicinas. Y sus controles deberían ser no tan distanciados, deberían ser más continuos para ver el desarrollo, el Estado del niño según cómo se está desarrollando y eso no ocurre acá en el país. Como en la Sierra, ¿verdad?

Another point—that the child has more monitoring or medical check-ups, right? That they should be offered in all the small hospitals, even low-cost medications in case they are needed. Their check-ups shouldn't be so far away from each other. They should be continuous to see their development, the state in which that child is developing, and that doesn't happen in this country. Like in the Andes, right?

Communications implications

- 1. The focus on basic needs makes other needs harder to see and prioritize.** The *Basic Needs* and *Love Is Basic* models, both dominant in the public's thinking, show that people understand the importance of many fundamental determinants of positive development—things like proper nutrition and strong child-parent attachment. However, because people focus so intensely on basic needs, it can be hard for people to see the importance of other needs, like cognitive stimulation, which are not considered fundamental to positive growth. This lack of attention to cognitive stimulation is exacerbated by the “cognitive hole” around cognitive development that is discussed above. Overall, if the public's attention remains focused on these basic needs, it could be difficult for communicators to create support and demand for initiatives that focus on other factors that support healthy development.
- 2. The “early family bubble” model diverts attention away from the broader contexts and environments that shape development in the earliest years of life.** This model puts sole responsibility for a child's early development on parents. As such, this model will impede efforts to build support for community-based developmental interventions for young children—especially very young children. That said, the Peruvian public's tendency to see the role of the broader community as important in the lives of older children is promising. It suggests that people can see and consider the importance of a wider set of actors and larger community context at some point in the process of child development. The challenge for communicators is how to get this broader, more expansive thinking to extend to *early* childhood.
- 3. The *Natural Parenting* model makes it hard to see the need for increased support for parents of very young children.** Because the public sees the bond between parent and child and the ability to love and care for a child as instinctive, it is difficult to see why intervention during this time would be necessary. If this bonding and love flows naturally, then it is logical for people to think the best course of action would be to avoid interfering with the process. This obscures the fact that parents and families need support in the earliest years of a child's life. Communicators should focus on parenting as an active process that needs to be supported and as a practice that can be very challenging when parents face stress and difficulties in their lives. Finding ways to activate the *Parenting by Doing* model (e.g., featuring parenting tasks that people recognize as developing through experience) might help with this task. Despite the promise of the *Parenting by Doing* model, communicators need other strategies to help the public think about the relationship between parent and child (age 0–3) as one that can be *intentionally* improved.
- 4. The public's thinking about the government's role in child development has mixed implications.** On one hand, people clearly see a role for government and recognize its

responsibility for children’s development and wellbeing by providing needed services. This is an asset for communicators seeking to increase public support for government programs and policies focused on improving early childhood development. If government is assumed to be a protector of the vulnerable, there are certain activities that people can easily see as justified, important, and perhaps even in need of increased investment. That said, evoking government responsibility risks backfiring, as it elicits fear about state incursion into family life, creating a resistance to the provision of more robust early childhood services. Further research is required to test the effects of different ways of framing government responsibility in the domain of early childhood. This is a priority framing question.

What threatens development?

► The *Information Matters* Cultural Model

In discussing threats to development, participants focused on parents. There are two assumptions underlying this focus. First, parents’ behavior is a primary determinant of child development. Second, parents’ actions are determined by education and instruction; this assumption is consistent with the *Parenting by Doing* cultural model, which assumes that parents get information about the details of parenting from the experiences that they or others have. In a sense, the public believes that some parents simply do not know how best to parent their children, and this knowledge deficit can lead to poor development.¹³ Per the *Natural Parenting* model, some aspects of parenting—like loving one’s children—are assumed to be instinctual, but the details depend on having information about proper parenting.

Participante: Cuando yo tuve mi primera hija igual. Yo vivía en la casa de mis suegros, bueno mi suegra siempre nos apoyaba ¿no? En ese aspecto, porque no sabíamos.

Investigadora: Claro.

Participante: Ni yo ni mi esposa.

Investigadora: Ah ya.

Participante: Entonces como poder alimentar, claro que a veces en el hospital te dan charlas ¿no? A las mamás que van a ser charlas que es lo que tienen que dar, comer, esto, entonces más o menos sabíamos. Igual mi esposa, casi yo no como varón en mi caso. Pero claro que también siempre estar, o sea, también ahí. Entonces sí, sí, sí. Sí sabíamos. Estamos como que ya preparándonos.

Participant: *When I had my first daughter, it was the same. I lived at my in-laws’ house and, well, my mother in-law always supported us, right? In that way, because we didn’t know.*

Researcher: *Of course.*

Participant: *Nor me nor my wife.*

Researcher: *OK.*

Participant: *So how to feed them, of course sometimes at the hospital they offer workshops, right? They offer talks to the pregnant mother, what they need to give, eat, all that, so we knew more or less. It was for my wife mainly, not for me as a man in my case. But of course I also wanted to attend. So, yes, yes, yes. We knew. We were kind of prepared.*

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Si el sitio donde tú trabajas te puede dar esa facilidad, hasta charlas. Creo que toda madre desea lo mejor para sus hijos de cualquier estrato social que seas, pero si no te dan educación e información ...

If the place where you work gives you that opportunity, even workshops. I think any mother of any social class wants the best for their child, but if they don't give you any information or education ...

► The *Deficient Environment* Cultural Model

The public assumes that, as children get older and begin to walk and talk and explore their community, the environment in which they grow affects their development. When thinking about the influences that threaten healthy development, there was a widely held assumption among participants that deficits or deficiencies in the environment have adverse effects on children.

This pattern of thinking relates to other models described above. For example, consistent with the *Basic Needs* model is the assumption that, if a child's parents lack resources and cannot provide food, shelter, or other necessities, the child's development will suffer. Economic precariousness also affects access to basic services and food, which affects the health and physical growth of the child. Likewise, if a child's environment is not safe (e.g., if the family or community regularly experiences violence), a child's development is affected.

Es que los padres trabajan, se van a otro lugar a trabajar. [...] Sólo el padre y la madre se queda acá en la casa y a veces no le alcanza el tiempo, no sé. [...] O también por la separación puede ser.

It is because the parents work, and they go somewhere else to work. [...] Only the father and mother stay here at home and sometimes they don't have enough time, I don't know. [...] Or also it could be because of the separation.

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Creo que son los más comunes a nivel nacional, vestimenta, educación, alimentación. [...] Por cuestiones económicas, no pueden obtener los recursos económicos o el alimento adecuado que un niño de cero a tres deba comer, con lo que deba de alimentarse. Lamentablemente no todos tienen leche, hay extrema pobreza que no sé les dará mi imaginación, como se dice tucito, "no hay leche hijito en tu biberón, toma tu tucito nada más" que le darán.

I think those are the most common at a national level, clothing, education, nutrition. [...] For economic reasons, they can't obtain the economic resources or the adequate nutrition that a child between 0 and 3 should eat. Unfortunately, not all of them have milk. There is extreme poverty such that I don't know what they'll give them, as I can imagine, only tea—"There is no milk in your bottle, my baby. Take your tea, nothing else." Who knows what they'll give them?

► The *Spiritual Threats* Cultural Model

The public assumes that, in addition to being threatened by parental behaviors or deficient environments, children's development can be adversely affected by malevolent spiritual forces. Participants tended to fall back on this pattern when neither parenting nor environment could explain a poor developmental

outcome. When a child experiences some sort of problem whose cause is unknown or mysterious—for example, a child’s sleep patterns are irregular, or a child falls off a horse for no apparent reason—people assume that the child has been afflicted by “fright” or the “evil eye.” People tend to assume that these challenges are more appropriately addressed by traditional forms of treatment, rather than through the health care system.

Algo así, incluso ha pasado con mi sobrino porque cuando mi mamá lo ve, dice mi hermano que lo ojea, ¿no? le da el mal de ojo, porque como que no puede dormir. Le ha pasado dos veces último como que no puede dormir él, o duerme tarde—bueno no puede dormir en realidad, está despierto hasta tarde entonces. Entonces tienen que limpiarlo para que ya le pase. Con un huevo o con un periódico—en mi casa siempre ha sido con un huevo o con un periódico.¹⁴

Something like this has happened with my nephew because when my mom looks after him, my brother says she gives them the evil eye, right? Because he can’t sleep. It has happened twice, like he can’t sleep, or he sleeps late—well, he can’t really sleep, he’s awake until late. So they have to clean him so it goes away. With an egg or a newspaper—in my house it has always been with an egg or a newspaper.

Communications implications

1. **The *Deficient Environment* model makes people sensitive to the importance of a range of structural interventions for older children.** The public understands that if a child’s surroundings do not provide for his or her basic needs, once the child gets beyond infancy and gains some independence, development will not proceed as it should. While the public may support structural interventions for slightly older children, they are less likely to support large-scale interventions for the very young.
2. **The *Spiritual Threats* model takes responsibility off of social systems, structural change, and policy interventions.** People need a way to explain problems that seem to have no explanation, and thinking about spiritual forces helps provide that explanation. Therefore, when these models are active, people’s focus shifts away from important policy and structural change.
3. **The *Information Matters* model has complicated implications.** On the one hand, the model leads people to see that parents do indeed need certain types of intentional, focused support to better foster their children’s optimal development: education and information. This pattern of thinking might be leveraged to increase support for public education efforts. On the other hand, this pattern of thinking threatens to mute some of the more environment-focused thinking that is prominent in public thinking on early child development. If people see developmental problems as resulting from uninformed parenting and understand these behaviors to be the exclusive result of a lack of information, other factors that affect parenting and development more generally—like poverty, program quality and coordination, violence, and housing instability—may no longer be considered viable influences. Therefore, cueing this model risks putting more responsibility on parents and less responsibility on government and nonprofit sectors. But it also reinforces the assumption that if people have information, then they behave differently. This way of thinking

eliminates the importance of how contexts shape people (both parents and children) and influence their behaviors. Early childhood development can't be improved if the environments in which children grow are not improved.

Solutions thinking: What can be done?

Based on the cultural models described, participants generated a range of suggestions for how early childhood development could be improved in Peru. The connection between the people's understanding of an issue and their thinking about and support of effective solutions is documented in FrameWorks' research across issue areas. Below we describe the solutions that participants most frequently suggested and the cultural models above that undergird these suggestions.

► Solution 1: Government must provide more financial and human services support to families.

The *Government as Protector* model was highly dominant when participants were asked to think about solutions. Participants were clear in their opinion that government was responsible for carrying out initiatives across many domains of life to benefit the youngest Peruvians. Responsible government entities included national ministries, regional governments, and municipalities.

Pues tendría que ser pues de todas maneras nuestra municipalidad, ¿no? O sea donde esto, pero eso tendría que venir desde allá pues, ¿no? Desde la ciudad de Lima que eso debería implementarlo.

Well, it would have to be, anyway, our municipality, right? I mean, it would have to come from there, right? It should be implemented from Lima.

The *Basic Needs* model also supported this commonly discussed solution. People reasoned that, while parents are most directly responsible for the provision of these basic needs, where they are unable to meet these requirements for their children, government bears responsibility for ensuring that these core needs are met.

Mira, del Estado también tiene lo importante, pero importante también viene de la familia. Ver el cuidado de sus niños, cómo estén bien, que nazcan sanitos, que estén bien bonitos. Y si algo les falta, yo pienso que deben pedir ayuda al Estado o al gobierno, y ellos si el gobierno ve sus necesidades de esas personas que a veces no tienen recursos, yo pienso que deben ayudarles.

Look, the State provides important things, but everything has to come from the family. The family has to watch how children are cared for, how they can be well, that they be born healthy, that they look well. And if the parents lack anything, I think they should ask for help from the State or the government, and the government will see what people need if they don't have resources, and I think the government should help them.

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Inversión seria, dar concentrados, alimentos o complementos, ¿no? que mejoren la alimentación es lo que más se podría hacer. O sea que complemente su alimentación y en segundo abrigo. Alimentación primero y segundo abrigo.

There should be investments in foods and nutrients, right, that would improve nutrition, it's the most that can be done. I mean, take care of your nutrition and then your clothes. Food first and second, coat.

Drawing on the contextual focus of the *Deficient Environments* and *Exposures* models, participants would see that providing these basic needs entailed improving the systems and structures that are supposed to provide them. Some of the suggestions shared by participants referred to improvements in health and education services, such as better training for health care providers and teachers.

Tomar importancia, bueno no, cuestión de salud me refiero a buenos doctores, buenos profesionales.

It's important, on the matter of health, I'm talking about good doctors, good professionals.

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Pueden invertir en sus maestros por ejemplo, traerían un maestro bien capacitado. [...] Inversión otra seria, construir buenas aulas, tener más útiles puede ser. [...] Ayudaría por, en todo aspecto ayudaría.

They can invest in teachers, for example, bring in capable teachers. [...] Another investment would be to build good classrooms, maybe that have more uses. [...] In every way, it would help.

► Solution 2: All institutions must get involved in social services work.

On occasion, people's ability to see government responsibility extended to private organizations and NGOs. Thinking about government responsibility was dominant, but some participants recommended that all institutions be involved in carrying out initiatives in education, health, infrastructure, etc.

Es un ONG que siempre apoya a los niños. Yo tengo un hijo de 7 años y en ese colegio hay una ONG, creo que siempre apoya y en su colegio siempre hay una cosa. Apoya lo que es este la alimentación, este libros. Siempre mi hijo llega a veces a mi casa con un libro nuevo. "Mira papá, esto me han regalado." "Quién te ha regalado." "No se, han venido ahí unos señores."

It's an NGO that always supports the kids. I have a 7-year-old, and there's an NGO in his school. I think they always provide support and there's always something there. Support is food, books. My kid always arrives home with some new book. "Look, Dad, I got this as a gift." "Who gave it to you?" "I don't know. Some men brought it."

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De que debemos tener un programa más intensivo del Estado o las ONGs, como la que tu trabajas donde puedan tener programas para fortalecer un poco la infancia, la niñez, todo eso. Básicamente eso, donde haya programas que se dediquen un poco más a los niños.

We should have a more intensive agenda between the government and the NGOs, like where you work where they have programs to strengthen infancy, childhood, all that. Basically that, where they have programs dedicated to kids.

► Solution 3: Provide more and better child care.

Participants frequently commented on the difficulties that parents face in balancing work and parenting. In addition to helping parents with finances and services, participants mentioned the importance of child care as a help for parents who need a place for their children to be cared for while they work. Drawing on the *Basic Needs* model, participants understood that providing food and shelter to their children is a priority for parents. They also clearly understood that, to achieve this goal, it is often necessary for both parents to work outside the home. Despite this necessity, they recognized that most parents lack quality care for their young children in such situations (though participants mentioned *Wawa Wasis* and *cunas* as trusted options).

Que la madre no se sienta tan culpable de irse a trabajar, que el niño no se sienta tan desolado. Si es que no tuvieras, porque acá suplen los padres, los abuelos, la familia.

So that the mother doesn't feel so guilty about going to work, so the child won't feel so inconsolable. If you don't have [child care], family pitches in here.

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Sí, debería haber Wawa Wasi, debería haber cunas porque a veces los papas se dedican a trabajar... O sea, a veces las mamás dicen "Tengo mi hija, ¿a dónde lo voy a dejar?" O sea es un problema dicen.

Yeah, there should be Wawa Wasi, there should be nurseries because sometimes parents are working. ... I mean, sometimes moms say, "I have my daughter. Where am I going to leave her?" I mean it's a problem, they say.

It is important to note that participants unequivocally saw parental care as optimal and child care centers as a less ideal option. Child care centers were not seen as providing unique benefits to children, and, instead were seen as places where children could be minded so that parents could work. But because of the importance of providing for a child's basic needs, participants recognized that options should be available to help parents do so.

► Solution 4: Provide public spaces for recreation and sports.

Participants often mentioned public spaces when thinking about ways to improve outcomes for children. These discussions were structured by the *Exposure* model that focused people's attention on the power of experiences outside the home to influence early childhood development. Together with the *Play is Productive* model, the focus on the importance of environments leads people to call for improving public spaces as a way to support more positive child development.

A ver, si hablamos solo de mi distrito al menos donde estoy no hay ni siquiera parque, así como el parque zonal de Villa María o el parque zonal de Huiracocha de Villa el Salvador. O sea, si hubiera algo así como para poderse despejar sería excelente. Sería excelente.

Let's see, if we're talking about the area where I live, there's not even a park, like the Villa María park or the Huiracocha de Villa el Salvador park. I mean, if there were something like that that could be cleared, that would be excellent. It would be excellent.

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Sería lugares de esparcimiento tal vez, especialmente para niños por ejemplo así como parques pero para niños donde tenga todo tipo de juegos, pero juegos educativos. Donde incentiven bastante al deporte y tal vez los lugares así como los zoológicos tal vez, deberían ser gratuitos. Es una distracción sana, o sea mira y te vas de acá entras al zoológico pierdes, ganas un día pero distrayéndote con algo sano.

They'd be places for entertainment, maybe, especially for kids, for example like parks for kids where they'd have all types of games, but educational games. Where they'd encourage sports and maybe those places like zoos maybe, which should be free. It's a healthy distraction, I mean, look, you go to the zoo and you lose a day but you're distracting yourself with something healthy.

There was a tendency, however, for participants to *Age Up* when talking about this particular solution. In other words, when thinking about the potential of better parks and public spaces to improve development, it was clear that participants had older children in mind.

► Solution 5: Teach parents about the basics of child-rearing.

Drawing on the *Information Matters* model, participants recommended holding workshops to educate parents about important topics such as food, hygiene, and general parenting principles. Through the workshops, parents who proved to be incapable of learning the basics from their experiences or their family members would have a way to become good parents and make better decisions for their children.

Puede ser con una charla para las madres para que ellas estén capacitadas. [...] Sobre los niños, cómo dar el alimento, como bañarle todo eso.

It could be like a workshop for mothers so that they could be capable [...] about children, how to feed them, how to bathe them, all that.

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Implementar una forma de cómo yo debo tal vez, hasta de bañarle a mi hijo, no sabes cómo bañarlo, está tan chiquitito ¿cómo lo baño? [...] Debería de haber una charla de cómo cambiar un pañal, cosas básicas tal vez. Darle el biberón al bebito, botar su chanchito, tantas cosas, bañarlo, si es que está con escaldadura qué debo de hacer qué debo de usar.

Implement a type of how should I, maybe, bathe my child, you don't know how to bathe him, he's so tiny, how do I bathe him? [...] There should be a workshop on how to change a diaper, basic things, maybe. Give the baby his bottle, bounce the baby, so many things, bathe it, if it's too hot what should I do, what should I use.

Communications implications

1. **The public's focus on government responsibility appears productive but needs to be expanded beyond the provision of basic needs.** Communicators do not have to convince the public that the government (and, to a lesser extent, NGOs and for-profit companies) have a role to play and have responsibility for supporting positive early childhood development. However, the dominance of the *Basic Needs* model suggests that the public might need help seeing the role that these institutions can play in supporting other aspects of early development—for example, play and social and emotional development.
2. **The public's assumption that better child care and more public spaces are important for development can be leveraged.** The public already believes that having access to quality child care on a consistent basis is important to healthy development and a key support to families. And consistent with the public's thinking about play as important, the public also thinks that having public spaces that facilitate this play is important. Communicators can highlight child care and public spaces as two of the many key initiatives that the public can support, to help generate additional support for other interventions.
3. **Support for child care and parenting workshops maintains a focus on parents' responsibility and mutes attention to collective solutions.** While child care and support for parents are important resources, the focus on these types of programs for improving early childhood development demonstrates that the public still sees parents as having primary responsibility for children's outcomes. Communicators will need strategies to shift people's thinking toward a more ecological perspective on early childhood development.

Mapping the Gaps between Expert and Public Understandings

The goals of this work have been to: (1) document the way experts talk about and explain early childhood development; (2) distill the ways that the Peruvian public understands these same issues; and (3) compare these explanations and understandings to reveal the overlaps and gaps between the perspectives of experts and the public. We now discuss these overlaps and gaps.

Overlaps between Expert and Public Understandings

There are many overlaps between how experts understand early childhood development and what the public thinks about this topic. These overlaps are areas that do not require extensive reframing and can be cued in communications to establish productive starting points for conversations about early childhood development and what needs to be done to better support development.

1. **Social-emotional development is important.** While experts and the public use different terminology to describe this area of development and differ in their thinking about the ages when these skills begin to develop, both see social-emotional development as important and value attention spent cultivating and addressing it.
2. **Nutrition is important for all aspects of development.** The focus on nutrition is held by both experts and the public. The details as to why nutrition is important and its implications may be understood in slightly different ways, but both groups value this important basic need.
3. **Play is important for development.** Experts and the public are well aligned in their thinking about the importance of play. For the public, play encourages healthy development in many ways. This topic, therefore, represents a jumping-off point for communications about how to encourage positive early childhood development. In addition to the general overlap, there are some ideas where public and expert thinking on play diverge in important ways (see below).
4. **Environments affect development.** Both experts and the public acknowledge the many ways in which a family’s environment—conditions like poverty, violence, access to resources, urban/rural setting, etc.—affect a child’s developmental trajectory.
5. **Quality time is important and often lacking.** Experts and the public believe that having time to spend with children is crucial, and if doing so is challenging because of work commitments or other reasons, it is important for parents to be supported in having quality together time with their children.
6. **Health care is a necessary resource that should be provided to all.** Experts and the public know that to develop well, children need regular, quality medical care.
7. **Government has a role to play in supporting early childhood development.** Both experts and the public see an important role for government in providing high-quality, integrated, and coordinated services for children and families, encompassing health care, education, safety, etc.

Gaps between Expert and Public Understandings

Alongside these overlaps are a series of key gaps between experts and the public. Many of these gaps occur in areas where the public is thinking with models that are overly generalized, vague, or thin compared to expert knowledge. These are areas where people’s thinking is incomplete, not necessarily incorrect, and where they can benefit from exposure to communications that make new knowledge accessible and easily integrated into existing patterns of thinking.

1. **“Early childhood”: Important developmental stage vs. Undefined and in between.** Experts have a deep understanding of early childhood and the changes that characterize this important period of life. For the public, there is both a missing term—*la primera infancia* is not used—and a

missing understanding. Members of the public can think about babies and older children but lack the language and cultural models to think about the full age range to which experts refer in discussions of “early childhood development.” Providing the public with better language and a better understanding of this period of development is *the* communications priority for the field in Peru.

2. **When development begins: From the start vs. Walking and talking.** There is a significant gap between when experts and the public believe development truly begins. For experts, it begins upon conception (or even before). For the public, development doesn’t really begin until a child starts to walk and talk. Helping people see how early, *early* childhood development begins is an important communications priority.
3. **Interactions that support development: Cognitive, social, and emotional vs. Love.** Experts believe that the quality and quantity of interactions between caregivers and children is crucial to supporting brain development and setting children up for success later in life. The public believes that caregivers’ interaction with children is important, but they focus on love and affection more than other types of activities and interactions.
4. **Attachment: Important to encourage and support vs. Natural.** Both experts and the public understand the importance of a solid parent-child bond, but experts believe that this bond must be actively developed and can be intentionally fostered to support development. The public, in contrast, believes that the parent-child bond is natural and simply happens automatically. The public also does not see as wide a range of effects and implications of attachment as experts do, focusing mainly on the emotional effects of a strong parent-child bond.
5. **Markers of development: Multifaceted vs. Physical.** Experts see cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development as integral areas of development that can be supported and assessed. The public, on the other hand, focuses on visible markers of physical development as evidence that development is proceeding as it should.
6. **Cognitive development: Happens in early childhood vs. Happens later in school.** Experts emphasize the important cognitive changes that are taking place in early childhood as children build foundational skills and capacities from their experiences and relationships. The public does not have robust ways of thinking about cognitive development in early childhood and primarily sees cognitive development as an academic exercise that happens in school. This is a fundamental gap in understanding—if the public assumes what the development experts wish to communicate doesn’t happen until later in childhood, many of the field’s core messages will be difficult to communicate.
7. **Play: Important for young children vs. Important for older children.** While experts and the public both believe play is productive and important, experts believe this to be true for children at

every age, including the earliest months and years. The public, in contrast, understands play as important for older children who have already begun to walk and talk.

- 8. Interventions that address cognitive development: Important for *early* childhood vs. Important for older children.** Again, experts emphasize that interventions need to happen *during early childhood*, but the public's default is to assume that those resources should be allocated for older children.

Next Steps for Reframing

This report represents the first stage in a long-term collaboration between the FrameWorks Institute, researchers from the Universidad del Pacífico, and our partners in Peru that aims to develop framing strategies to change culture and public policy on children's issues in Peru.

For any framing effort, it is important to first understand what experts and advocates are up against, and then use those insights to develop research-based framing tools. The analysis presented in this report reveals a set of broadly shared patterns of thinking that block the Peruvian public's engagement with information on early childhood development. Equipped with an understanding of public thinking, the next step is to develop and test communication strategies that can open up new ways for people to think about early childhood development and to consider what kinds of solutions are necessary to better support children and families in Peru. Reframing strategies can drive engagement with national and local initiatives that are designed to enhance early childhood development for all children in Peru. The end goal of this effort is to develop an evidence-based narrative that increases the salience of "early childhood" and advances the importance of prioritizing investments in early childhood development.

In this report, we have highlighted the key challenges and opportunities involved in engaging members of the Peruvian public in thinking about the importance of early childhood development. This work suggests a set of priority communications tasks, which we outline below. Taking on these tasks will require identifying and—most importantly, testing—new framing strategies.

To-Do List for Future Framing Research

Below we review the key challenges that communicators face in messaging about early childhood development. This represents a to-do list for future reframing research.

▶ Key challenge 1: Define "early childhood."

The lack of a clear, common, and shared way to talk about "early childhood" is a major challenge that must be addressed to advance this issue in Peru. Without a common language and shared idea of *what* conversations about early childhood development are about, it will be impossible to build understanding

and momentum around this issue. Research needs to identify ways of talking about the earliest years of life that show this to be a critical developmental stage.

- ▶ Key challenge 2: Fill in the cognitive hole of brain and cognitive development.

It is important to disseminate a clearer way of understanding the importance of cognitive development in *early childhood*, such that people clearly see this as a priority worth parents' time and the country's resources. Helping the public understand what is developing in early childhood, how this development happens, and what threatens it is a key communications task.

- ▶ Key challenge 3: Emphasize that development begins, and must be supported, *early*—not after children walk and talk.

Experts and advocates need ways to communicate about development that make sure the public's frame of reference for "early childhood development" becomes age 0–3, instead of after children begin to walk and talk.

- ▶ Key challenge 4: Explain that basic needs **include** interaction and stimulation to enhance cognitive development.

Communicators must find ways of talking about cognitive development that position this development as just as important as the basic needs—food and shelter—that people already recognize as essential.

- ▶ Key challenge 5: Show the public that effective parenting practices do not always happen naturally—parents and caregivers can learn ways to effectively support children's development.

The public may believe that a parent-child bond happens naturally and that this is all a child needs to be happy and healthy. But reframing strategies can help people see that parenting and responsive caregiving are skills that, like any other skill, can be improved through practice and support. People also need help seeing that cultivating such practices leads to better long-term outcomes for children, parents, and communities.

Strategies to Test in Peru

- ▶ Values

It will be important to identify and test **values messages** to understand which types of orienting values frames best position people to see the importance of early childhood and support measures designed to improve this process and its outcomes.

► Explanatory metaphors

FrameWorks has developed and tested successful **explanatory metaphors** that have been used to address several of the gaps identified above. These metaphors, however, have not been developed for use in Peru, nor have they been tested in Spanish. As such, experimenting with the best ways to iterate these metaphors is crucial.

Important metaphors to test include:

1. **Brain Architecture.** This metaphor helps promote understanding of brain development and why it is so important to address this need in the earliest years of a child's life.

Brief example: The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood.

2. **Air Traffic Control.** This metaphor clearly explains what “executive function” is, and it can be used to illustrate the cognitive skills that are important to foster early in life.

Brief example: A key developmental task of the early years is to develop executive function, a set of mental skills that work like air traffic control at a busy airport.

3. **Toxic Stress.** This metaphor was clearly part of the expert discourse, but *estrés tóxico* was not used by participants. Adapting and testing this metaphor could help emphasize how pervasive and chronic stress undermines development, even (especially) for young children.

Brief example: Chronic, severe stressors can cause a response that is toxic to the developing brain and may have long-term effects on health and wellness. Supportive relationships can serve as a buffer against a toxic stress response.

4. **Serve and Return.** This metaphor explains the importance of reciprocity in early interaction and, linked with other reframing strategies, can help people understand why this type of interaction is so important.

Brief example: Brains are built through back-and-forth interaction, much like a game of tennis, ping-pong, or volleyball. Healthy development occurs when young children “serve” through babbling, gestures, or words, and adults “return” by getting in sync with the child.

5. **Amplifying Development.** This metaphor, developed and tested in Australia, explains the importance of high-quality child care services and, more importantly, how initiatives like child care can play an important role in cognitive development.

Brief example: *Like an amplifier takes an incoming signal and makes it stronger and clearer, quality child development centers can help Peru's children reach their full potential.*

6. **Overloaded.** This metaphor explains the importance of support for parents who are struggling and gives people a way of seeing how outside factors affect parenting.

Brief example: *Just as an overloaded truck can break down from carrying too much weight, when parents are overburdened by stresses they can become unable to take care of their children's needs.*

New metaphors are also needed to address the particular key challenges described above, especially a clear, concise way to explain the critical importance of age 0–3 before walking and talking.

▶ Names

Names, much like metaphors, give people clearer and easier ways to think about complex concepts that they might not have top of mind. Developing and testing ways to talk about “early childhood” (whether *primera infancia* or other terms) will be an important part of developing a framing strategy.

▶ Other reframing strategies

Framing includes a number of seemingly small decisions about what to say and what to leave unsaid. Choosing which messenger to use to voice a message (e.g., a parent, a teacher, a doctor, a child), deciding how to frame what we have to gain vs. what we have to lose (i.e., valence framing), and manipulating tone (e.g., medical authority vs. advice from other parents) are important elements of a framing strategy to develop and test.

As experts, advocates, and communicators take on the challenge of communicating the science of early child development, the need to translate this science in accurate and meaningful ways for members of the public is important and cannot be taken lightly. Translating science, especially on a topic as familiar as childhood, takes thought and care. Reframing the public discourse in Peru about early childhood development demands a comprehensive, research-based reframing strategy to inform communications campaigns across the country.

Appendix: Research Methods

Expert Story

To explore experts' understandings of the core principles of early childhood development, 15 in-person, 75- to 90-minute interviews were conducted with experts in disciplines such as medicine, psychology, and social science, and whose areas of focus included research, policy, private practice, and not-for-profit work. Interviews were conducted in November and December of 2017 and, with participants' permission, were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Expert interviews consisted of a series of probing questions designed to elicit expert understandings about what early childhood development is, how it works, who is responsible for it, and what needs to happen for early childhood development's later outcomes to improve across Peru. In each interview, the researcher used a series of prompts and hypothetical scenarios to challenge experts to explain their research, experience, and perspectives; break down complicated relationships; and simplify complex concepts. Interviews were semistructured in the sense that, in addition to preset questions, researchers repeatedly asked for elaboration and clarification and encouraged experts to expand upon concepts they identified as particularly important.

Analysis employed a basic grounded theory approach.^{15,16} Researchers categorized common themes from each interview. They also incorporated negative cases into the overall findings within each category. This procedure resulted in a refined set of themes, which represents the core content to be communicated to the public through a future reframing strategy.

Public Perspective

The cultural models findings outlined in this report are based on 90- to 120-minute, in-person, one-on-one interviews with a total of 50 members of the public from the following regions: the Andes (la Sierra Sur), including Puno and Ayacucho; the coast, including Lima, Arequipa, and Trujillo; and the Amazon (la selva), including Iquitos and San Martín. Participants were diverse in terms of gender, marital and family status, education level, age, area of residence, socioeconomic status, religion, and native or first language. All participants spoke Spanish fluently, and the interviews were conducted in Spanish. The interviews were audio recorded, with participants' permission, and transcribed for analysis. The interviews were completed between December 2017 and May 2018.

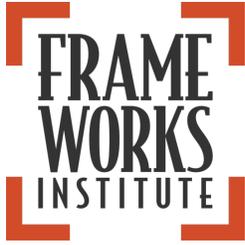
Cultural models interviews—semistructured interviews lasting approximately two hours—allow researchers to capture the broad sets of assumptions, or cultural models, which participants use to make sense of a concept or topic. These interviews are designed to elicit ways of thinking and talking about complex and difficult concepts that are often taken for granted—in this case, early childhood

development. Interviews covered thinking about childhood in a general sense before turning to a more focused conversation about how development works and what types of resources are needed to support healthy development.

The most important goal of these interviews was to elicit the cultural models that participants use to make sense of early childhood development; therefore, researchers gave participants the freedom to follow topics in the directions they deemed relevant. Researchers approached each interview with a set of topics to cover but left the order in which these topics were addressed largely to participants.

By including a range of people, researchers could identify cultural models that represent *shared* patterns of thinking among members of the public. To analyze the interviews, researchers used analytical techniques from cognitive and linguistic anthropology to examine how participants understood issues related to early childhood development.¹⁷ First, researchers identified common ways of talking across the sample to reveal assumptions, relationships, logical steps, and connections that were commonly made, but taken for granted, throughout an individual's talk and across the set of interviews. In short, the analysis involved patterns discerned from both what was said (i.e., how things were related, explained, and understood) and what was not said (i.e., assumptions and implied relationships).

Analysis centered on ways of understanding that were shared across participants. Cultural models research is designed to identify common ways of thinking that can be identified across a sample. It is not designed to identify differences in the understandings of various demographic, ideological, or regional groups (which would be an inappropriate use of this method and its sampling frame).



About the FrameWorks Institute

The FrameWorks Institute is a think tank that advances the nonprofit sector's communications capacity by framing the public discourse about social problems. Its work is based on Strategic Frame Analysis[®], a multimethod, multidisciplinary approach to empirical research. FrameWorks designs, conducts, publishes, explains, and applies communications research to prepare nonprofit organizations to expand their constituency base, build public will, and further public understanding of specific social issues—the environment, government, race, children's issues, and health care, among others. Its work is unique in its breadth, ranging from qualitative, quantitative, and experimental research to applied communications toolkits, eWorkshops, advertising campaigns, FrameChecks[®], and in-depth study engagements. In 2015, it was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Foundation's Award for Creative & Effective Institutions. Learn more at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

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Endnotes

- ¹ See Cuna Más. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.cunamas.gob.pe/>
- ² Josephson, K., Guerrero, G., & Coddington, C. (2017). *Supporting the early childhood workforce at scale: The Cuna Más home visiting program in Peru*. Washington, D.C.: Results for Development.
- ³ Bird, M., & León, V. (forthcoming) In G. Steiner-Khamsi, J. Monks, & A. Terway (Eds.), *A will in search of a way: Philanthropy in education in Peru*. Amsterdam: Edward Elgar.
- ⁴ For an introduction to cultural models, see D’Andrade, R. G., & Strauss, C. (Eds.). (1992). *Human motives and cultural models* (Vol. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ⁵ Socioemotional development was understood as the basis of a whole person and the foundation of a future citizen. It was therefore emphasized by experts as being particularly important for the public to understand.
- ⁶ For example, one expert described how in the indigenous Ashánika community of the Peruvian Amazon (la selva), homes are typically open, and children are cared for by the community at large rather than only by the nuclear family. In this community, then, messages about *parent/child* interactions may be too narrow.
- ⁷ As one expert explained, “Las interacciones son claves a través del juego. Los niños que tienen mayor exposición a los juegos, tienen mejor desempeño en las pruebas de matemáticas.” [“Interactions through play are key. Children who are more exposed to play/games perform better on math tests.”]
- ⁸ Some experts suggest that the idea of *attachment* includes the child’s attachment not only with parents, but with members of the broader community who may provide sources of interaction and security for young children. Relatedly, parental bonding refers to caregivers’ emotional links with the child.
- ⁹ In addition, there is a sense—related to this pattern of thinking—that people seem to define *personhood* in terms of an individual’s ability to verbally interact with others and control his or her own physical movement.
- ¹⁰ Spanish-language quotes excerpted from interviews, and basic English-language translations, have been edited to improve readability and to remove personally identifiable information.
- ¹¹ Read the extended quote:

Investigadora: Ya bueno qué pasa si hablo ahora de primera infancia ¿qué piensa sobre eso? ¿qué piensa sobre la primera infancia?

Participante: ¿La primera infancia? Yo creo que eso- Esa etapa es otro eh es otra etapa ¿no? Que uno va entrando en la infancia, pero no tanto ¿no? Porque entre niñez e infancia es lo mismo aparte ¿no?

Investigadora: ¿Pero primera?

Participante: ¿Primera?

Investigadora: Sí. Primera infancia.

Participante: O sea, yo creo que es la niñez, todo esto. Porque después de la infancia, viene la adolescencia.

Investigadora: Sí claro. Ya ¿y qué cosas cree que ocurren en la primera infancia que son importantes? ¿en qué edades piensa en primera infancia? Porque digamos que infancia me dijo desde que nacen hasta los once, doce años ¿pero la primera infancia?

Participante: Primera infancia yo creo que es ... más o menos a partir de los seis, siete años.

Investigadora: ¿Hasta los seis años o?

Participante: No bueno a partir de ahí yo pienso infancia ¿por qué? Porque ...

Investigadora: ¿Y antes?

Participante: Eh, yo creo que eso es un bebé prematuro que todavía no, yo por ejemplo, no me acuerdo, no puedo escenificar esa edad, no sé. Pienso que primera infancia puede haber sido a partir de los siete, ocho años y ya me doy cuenta de lo que estoy haciendo de lo que hago y así. Pero de más antes, no sé, no lo puedo llamar como primera infancia.

Investigadora: ¿Cómo lo llamaría? O sea, estamos hablando de cero a seis años.

Participante: Claro. Entonces yo pienso que ahí es un bebé todavía.

Investigadora: ¿Un bebé?

Participante: Claro un bebé que no todavía, es como usted me dice es una hoja cero uno hace- Yo pienso que hasta esa etapa cero todavía.

Investigadora: Cero.

Participante: ¿No? Pienso, no llamaría mi primera infancia eso o sí tal vez. Estoy un poco confundido.

¹² A version of this cultural model was found in FrameWorks' research in Australia as well. See Volmert, A., Kendall-Taylor, N., Cosh I., & Lindland, E. (2016). *Cuing context: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of effective parenting in Australia*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

¹³ A version of this cultural model has been found in other FrameWorks' research; for example, see Kendall-Taylor, N., & Lindland, E. (2013). *Modernity, morals and more information: Mapping the gaps between expert and public understandings of early child development in Australia*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

¹⁴ See additional excerpt:

Yo podría decirte que he crecido en ese ámbito de las creencias, de que si sales tienes que abrigarte, ponerte la gorrita, abrigarte porque te puede dar aire, te puede dar viento, no puedes salir temprano a tal sitio porque te puede dar - ¿cómo se dice? - el Huaspi, enfermedades culturales que se creen en la zona rural, que están muy presentes en la actualidad, tanto en adultos como pequeños. Aunque algunos no lo admitan está presente, el susto, digamos. Y eso hacen todos, sea la mamá que viva acá en la ciudad o en el campo, contra el susto. El susto es cuando, digamos, uno ha recibido una impresión fuerte por algún motivo. De repente estaba cabalgando y se cayó del caballo por algún motivo, se asustó demasiado, entonces lo explican culturalmente que el espíritu se salió y hay que retornar, regresar el espíritu al cuerpo de la persona. A

través del llamamiento que va a ser el Qayapa o el pago a la tierra, tal vez le dio alcance. Tal vez dormía en un lugar que no es bueno, y hay que hacer un pago a la tierra a la Pachamama, la madre tierra. El susto, desde pequeñitos “uy, está con susto.” “Qayapanaiki,” dicen. Entonces, tienes que hacerle Qayapa. Se puede hacer con huevo. O “está mal el niño, no se sabe lo que tiene,” entonces tenemos que pasarle el cuy. Y eso lo han hecho conmigo, lo han practicado conmigo, porque te tienen que enterrar. Eso se llama Pampapu.

I could tell you I have grown in that environment of beliefs, that if you go out, you have to bundle up, wear a hat, bundle up because you can catch air, or wind, you can't go out early because you will get—how do you say it?—the huaspi, cultural illnesses that we believe in, especially in rural areas, they are present nowadays in adults and children. Even when some people do not want to admit it, the fright (susto) is present. And that is what everyone does, the mom that lives here in the city or in the countryside, against the susto. Susto is when one has received a strong scare for some reason. All of a sudden I was riding a horse and fell, got really scared, so the cultural explanation is that the spirit left and it has to come back, the spirit needs to return to the person's body. We do this by calling the Qayapa or we pay to the land, maybe reached the person. Maybe the person was sleeping in a place that wasn't good so we need to repay the land, the Pachamama, mother Earth. The susto, since we are little, “Uy, he has susto.” “Qayapanaiki,” they say. So then, you need to perform Qayapa. You can do it with an egg. Or “the child is not doing well, we don't know what is wrong with him,” so then we need to pass a guinea pig over his body. They have done that with me, because they have to bury you. It is called Pampapu.

¹⁵ Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

¹⁶ Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

¹⁷ Quinn, N. (Ed.). (2005). *Finding culture in talk: A collection of methods*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.