Cultural Practices as Contexts for Development

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Development Through Participation in Sociocultural Activity

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In this chapter, we argue that development is a process of participation in sociocultural activities. We regard individual development as inseparable from interpersonal and community processes; individuals' changing roles are mutually defined with those of other people and with dynamic cultural processes. We make use of "activity" or "event" as the unit of analysis, with active and dynamic contributions from individuals, their social partners, and historical traditions and materials and their transformations (see Dewey and Bentley, 1949; Leontiev, 1981).

Studying human events or activities contrasts with the more traditional approach of examining the individual in isolation or in interaction with a separate environment. In our approach, individuals' efforts and sociocultural institutions and practices are constituted by and constitute each other and thus cannot be defined independently of each other or studied in isolation. We may focus on the contribution of one or another individual or a cultural tradition, but always in relation to the whole activity rather than extracted from it. When individuals participate in shared endeavors, not only does...
The effects of community planning and development on the local economy and the community's ability to attract and retain businesses, as well as on residents' quality of life, are significant. Community planning processes involve a collaborative effort among various stakeholders, including local government, businesses, and residents. These processes can help to identify and prioritize projects and initiatives that align with the community's goals and objectives.

One example of a community planning process is the development of a comprehensive plan. This plan typically identifies the community's current and future needs and sets forth strategies for addressing those needs. The development of a comprehensive plan often involves extensive public input, which helps to ensure that the plan reflects the values and priorities of the community.

Community planning processes can also include the development of specific plans for particular areas or sectors. For example, a community might develop a plan for economic development, which might include strategies for attracting new businesses and retaining existing ones, as well as initiatives to promote tourism and other forms of economic growth.

In addition to community planning processes, there are also initiatives to promote the economic development of specific sectors, such as the arts or agriculture. These initiatives often involve partnerships between community leaders, businesses, and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies that support the growth and sustainability of these sectors.

Overall, the effects of community planning and development on the local economy and residents' quality of life are significant. By engaging residents and stakeholders in the planning process, communities can better align their actions with the priorities of the community and work towards achieving long-term goals.
processes constituting that practice. Analysis focusing on the community plane requires attention to the contributions of individuals and groups (the other two planes of analysis) as they participate in creating new traditions, by building on existing traditions and other communities and institutions. Because focusing on the community plane of analysis involves connecting not only with the personal and interpersonal planes of analysis but also with other communities and institutions, we examine both how the community practice of Girl Scout cookie sales has developed through the contributions of individuals and groups and how transformations in the practice relate to historical changes in other institutions (for example, family structure, maternal employment).

In the last half of the chapter, we shift focus to make a parallel argument: that the individual plane of analysis requires understanding the interpersonal and community planes of analysis. We hope to convince readers of the utility of thinking of developmental processes as involving personal, interpersonal, and community processes as they mutually constitute each other.

Personal and Interpersonal Contributions to Development of Community Practices. By 1990, when we conducted our study, cookie sales were the major annual fund-raising effort of the Girl Scouts of America, a voluntary organization dedicated to girls' moral education, development of home, academic, and outdoor skills, and career preparation (Kleinfield and Shinkwin, 1983). The Scouts meet on a weekly basis in "trophies" of about a dozen Scouts and one or two women leaders. The funds from cookie sales are used to support the troops' activities, the regional administration, and girls' participation in camps run by the organization. In 1990, the average troop treasury cookie profit was $420 ("Girl Scouts Growing with Pride," 1991); nationwide revenues about this time period were $400 million (Zagorin, 1993).

The Scouts compose the sales force, trained and supervised by the organization, going door to door, selling to family, friends, and neighbors, and getting their parents to sell cookies at work. Most Scouts participate in the sales and take their economic role very seriously; their parents must sign a form agreeing to be responsible for the large sums of money involved. According to the Christian Science Monitor (Atkin, 1990), cookie sales are considered an educational tool to teach responsibility, goal-setting, and business principles.

Billboards and other advertisements remind potential customers of the tradition of buying Girl Scout cookies: "It's Girl Scout Cookie Time." Many Scouts have older sisters or mothers who themselves sold Girl Scout cookies when they were Scouts (three of the four authors of this chapter sold cookies as Scouts), and aged customers are often eager to buy cookies as they remember their own efforts to sell Girl Scout cookies. People who are not visited by a Scout selling cookies are often upset that they missed the chance to buy. According to the official publication of the Utah Girl Scout Council ("Growing with Pride," 1991), only 38 to 41 percent of the potential market is reached by the sales force.

Cookie sales and delivery occur with the constraints and resources provided by practices of the Girl Scouts of America and large baking companies licensed by the Girl Scouts, which set deadlines and provide organizational supports to the girls in their efforts to keep track of sales, cookies, and money and to manage their time and resources. The Scouts take orders on an order form provided by the cookie company and deliver cookies and collect money a month later, according to dates set by the regional administration. The layout of the order form is designed to facilitate calculation of amounts of money, presentation of information to customers, and the keeping track of deliveries. The order form is color-coded in a way that facilitates keeping track of the seven different kinds of cookies. (For example, customers order Thin Mints by indicating the number of boxes desired in the green column; the number of Trefoils is indicated in the yellow column. The boxes and cases of cookies and other materials maintain this color-coding.)

Today's elaborate system of color-coded order forms and sales training information evolved from a tiny form with a few printed suggestions for its use. An order form from the 1930s provided a stub for the purchaser to sign and a sticker for the purchaser to put in the window to give notice that the household had already purchased cookies. By 1951, in Newton, Massachusetts, the troop chair was supposed to meet with the girls a week before the cookie sale to "have a discussion of selling techniques and sales approaches" (Annual Cookie Sale," 1951). By 1971, the brochure for the same area provided calculation information for the cookie chairs (1 box, $60, 2 boxes, $1.20); in addition, the cookie chairs were to give selling aids and parent letters provided by the cookie company to each girl. Later in the 1970s, the order form for that area had a chart for orders with a checklist and a calculation box for the Scouts. It listed "Six Easy Lessons" on the back. By the time we conducted this study, ten tips, seven rules, and a letter of advice for parents were included on the back of the large, glossy, folded form that included a tear-off minibook for parents to post at their workplace.

In the troop in which we served as cookie chairs, we used the materials provided by the regional organization and the cookie companies to train Scouts to become "successful" salespeople: institutionally sanctioned sales pitches, information on how to use the color-coded order forms, rules related to safety when selling, and procedures for collecting money. The organizers also provided sales incentives and other materials for the cookie chairs, including a money-counting game that uses play money and a role-playing game in which troop members work in pairs, taking turns playing the parts of customer and salesperson.

According to the person from the Little Brownie Bakers (of Louisville, Ky.) in charge of cookie sales for the Utah area, a sales representative meets with the Girl Scout Council yearly to present any new ideas for the order form or type of cookies to be sold. The Council sometimes makes small suggestions about modifications, but this is rare. The cookie company does not make any effort to ensure that the form is manageable for young children; company officials believe that young children are so skilled in selling that few extra efforts need to be made to ensure that they will handle the task efficiently.
The following passage is about the influence of educational policies on educational outcomes. It discusses the importance of educational institutions in shaping the future of students and society. The text highlights the role of educational policies in shaping educational practices and outcomes.
from that publication beautifully indicates the historical links between the activities of Scouting (including cookie sales) and those of other community institutions:

Fundamentally, the educational principles of Girl Scouting are those underlying all progressive educational thinking and progressive educational experiments [for example, the educational philosophy of Dewey]. . . . They are being put into practice with all the resources of modern psychology and modern social and scientific theory.

Girl Scouting believes that education is life, not merely preparation for life—in other words, that living the present fully, intelligently, and wholeheartedly at any stage of development is the only true preparation for living later stages. It begins, therefore, with the interests and enthusiasms of a particular group of girls and provides a series of experiences which widen and enrich these interests and enthusiasms.

Girl Scouting believes in the immense educational value of the small group, managing its own affairs and making its own plans as far as possible and learning in this way the first lessons of cooperation and good citizenship.

The Girl Scout leader is a friend and guide of her girls, rather than a grown person in absolute authority. She makes suggestions as a member of the group, but respects the girls' proposals and ideas. [pp. 3–4]

Links with other community institutions are apparent in the impact of the structure of family and neighborhood life in the United States on the organization of Girl Scout cookie sales. Stresses in family stability (for example, the increase in divorce) and mothers' role changes have changed the supports available at home for children's endeavors. In addition, the prevalence of women working outside the home has led to changes in the way the sales occur. Decades ago, Scouts could count on finding customers at home throughout the day; now they have to return many times to find their customers at home or limit deliveries to evenings and weekends. It is also regarded as less safe for girls to go door to door in their neighborhoods now than in previous eras.

These changes may have contributed to the development of greater reliance on parents selling in the workplace. Some zealous parents use fax machines to take orders. One mother sent out an e-mail message to co-workers at her company, seeking orders (saying, "I don't have the luxury of taking her out to sell cookies," Smith, 1991, p. L3). She had sold about sixty boxes when two Girl Scout fathers—people in the company who until that year had dominated the office cookie sales—took her aside and pointed out that she had started before the official start date for sales. The company's personnel office then worked out a way for employees to pool their cookie orders and divide the proceeds evenly.

According to Smith (1991, p. L3), "Girl Scout officials say that . . . changing families and neighborhoods have altered the sweetest of U.S. institutions.

‘Long ago, the streets were safer and the little girls used to go around in neighborhoods. Those were the halcyon days when everybody was home,' said Cecie Sander, director of product sales for the Orange County council. Now an increasing number of Girl Scouts are in single-parent homes. ‘The workplace has become in many cases a substitute for the prior activity. One, it’s safer, and two, it’s more effective,' Sander said."

It is not just the parents who are transforming sales practices to make use of current technologies (such as the fax and e-mail) and institutions (such as the company organization). Over the years, older Scouts have found themselves at a disadvantage in door-to-door sales as the sales force has changed to include younger Scouts, who have the personal resource of being "cute" and therefore more successful in the neighborhood sales. In 1989, the San Gorgonio Council instituted a toll-free phone number for customers to place orders directly; older Girl Scouts packaged the orders for delivery by United Parcel Service, yielding a 28 percent surge in orders. In 1990, the Girl Scout Council in Los Angeles began teaching older Scouts to function as sophisticated telemarketers (LaGanga, 1990).

This section has focused on the evolution of community practices, with reference to the contributions of individuals and groups as well as to connections with other societal changes. Understanding the processes that become the focus in personal, interpersonal, and community/institutional planes of analysis relies on understanding the processes in the background as well as those in the foreground of analysis.

Development Viewed in the Personal Plane

In this section, we consider how a participation perspective leads to different assumptions and questions about the processes of development. We provide a conceptual analysis of development as a process of participation rather than as acquisition and illustrate our points with observations of the Scouts and accounts of several individuals for whom this year's sale was their first. Our dual aim is to show how an analysis of individual development requires reference to other planes of analysis and to examine changes in how we conceive of development from a participation perspective.

Individuals transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation, and in the process they become prepared to engage in similar subsequent activities. By functioning in an activity, participating in its meaning, people necessarily make ongoing contributions, whether in concrete actions or in stretching to understand the actions and ideas of others. Communication and coordination in the course of participation in shared endeavors involve adjustments between participants (with varying, not necessarily compatible roles) to stretch their common understanding to fit with new perspectives in the shared endeavor. Such stretching to accomplish something together during participation in activities is development. As Wertsch and Stone (1979, p. 21) put it, "The process is the product." No
Development through Participation in Societal Activity

We suggest that development as a process of transformation of conscious experience and understanding is not a process of transformation of conscious experience and understanding but rather an acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world. It is in this sense that participation in societal activity can lead to an acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world. Participation in societal activity involves the acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world. This deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world can lead to an acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world.

The notion of participation in societal activity as a process of transformation of conscious experience and understanding is not a process of transformation of conscious experience and understanding but rather an acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world. It is in this sense that participation in societal activity can lead to an acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world. Participation in societal activity involves the acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world. This deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world can lead to an acquisition of deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the world.
present extends through the past and future and cannot be separated from them. When a person acts on the basis of previous experience, that person's past is present. It is not merely a stored memory called up in the present; the person's previous participation contributes to the event at hand by having prepared it. The present event is different than it would have been if previous events had not occurred. This explanation does not require a storage model of past events.

An analogy illustrating the superficialness of a storage model of past events can be drawn from the way we conceive of organizational change. Changes in the structure of Girl Scout cookie sales, for example, are not stored anywhere as accumulated units of some kind; they are built on the efforts of previous years in ways that prepare current and future practices. Both continuity and change are inherent in activities. Therefore it appears to us more parsimonious to examine the changes and continuities in the activities themselves than to add a construct of storage.

In our view, development is a dynamic process characterized by change throughout rather than the accumulation of new items. There is no need to conceive of development in terms of the acquisition or transmission of stored units, since development through participation is an aspect of ongoing events (see also Rogoff, in press a). People change through their participation and handle subsequent events in ways prepared by their changes in previous events.

From the perspective that development occurs through participation, it follows that personal, interpersonal, and cultural processes all constitute each other and develop in sociocultural activity. This contrasts with a model that casts development as acquisition, in which one looks first for exposure to external knowledge or skill and then for evidence of acquisition as the person retrieves the acquired knowledge or skill independently (Rogoff, Radziszewski, and Masiello, in press). In such a model, the individual would be viewed as either a passive recipient of external social or cultural influence—a receptacle for the accumulation of knowledge and skill—or an active seeker of passive external social and cultural knowledge and skill.

The questions to investigate are different if we move from seeing development as acquisition to viewing development as a process of transformation through participation in sociocultural activities. Questions of where memories are stored or how information is taken from external events or how children accumulate knowledge or implement plans all become less relevant ways to study development from this sociocultural approach. (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, and Matusov [in press] do not argue for necessarily dropping the stored mental representation metaphor but for recognizing it as a metaphor; one perhaps useful for communication between scholars but not to be assumed to characterize the functioning of the people studied. Greater clarity may result if the metaphor is dropped for some research questions.)

From a participation perspective, we begin to examine in closer focus the actual processes by which children participate with other people in cultural activity and the ways they transform their participation. The investigation of people's involvement in activities becomes the basis of our understanding of development rather than simply the surface that we try to get past. The central question becomes how people participate in sociocultural activity and how their participation changes from a relatively peripheral involvement, observing and carrying out secondary roles, to assuming various responsible roles in the management of such activities. As Lave and Wenger (1991) note, "Viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means that learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership. We conceive of identities as long term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another" (p. 53).

The transformations are developmental in the sense that they are changes in particular directions. The direction of development varies locally (in accordance with cultural values, interpersonal needs, and specific circumstances); it does not require specification of universal or ideal endpoints. In addition, the applicability of these ideas is not restricted to activities and development that are considered desirable by experts or other segments of the community. They apply equally to explaining how people develop through participation in community activities that many would criticize.

Given our emphasis on development as changing forms of participation, key questions for developmental research are these: How do the activity, its purpose, and people's roles in it transform as it proceeds? How do different activities relate to each other and to prior events? How do people prepare now for what they expect may happen later? How do the activities of previous generations prepare the current situation? We would want to know the following:

What roles people play, with what fidelity and responsibility
Their changing purposes for being involved, commitment to the endeavor, and trust of unknown aspects of it (including its future)
Their flexibility and attitude toward change in involvement (that is, their interest in learning versus their rejection of new roles or protection of the status quo)
Their understanding of the interrelations of different contributions to the endeavor and their readiness to switch to complementary roles (for example, to fill in for others)
The relation of their roles in this activity to those in other activities (such as the relation between participation in roles at school and at home or their involvement in several different ethnic communities)
How their involvement relates to changes in the community's practices.

Orienting our inquiry by focusing on how people participate in sociocultural activity and how they change their participation demystifies the processes of learning and development. Rather than searching for the mechanisms of acquisition or the nature of internalization as a conduit from external bits of
person was not yet comfortable for Darlene. However, the neighbor was sympathetic and suggested that Darlene return to sell to her roommates. When Darlene returned, the neighbor encouraged her to practice her sales pitch on each roommate. Darlene later practiced her sales pitch on her father and stepmother as well; they pretended to be ordinary customers, with her father refusing to buy and her stepmother encouraging Darlene to provide information on each type of cookie (and commenting, after they bought three boxes, “We’re just very impressed. I’ve never had a salesgirl quite that good”). Another customer, who said she “used to do this,” helped Darlene use the form properly, telling her that customers should fill out the form with the number of boxes they want, not just use checks.

As the sales progressed, Darlene became a skilled seller, effectively communicating knowledge of her product, using the order form effectively, and adjusting her sales pitch and interpersonal manner to fit each customer. However, Darlene also had difficulties managing the complexities of cookie delivery with little assistance: she collected too much money for the number of cookies sold.

Carla. Carla, unlike Darlene, depended heavily on the leadership of family members. Either her sister or her mother or both were with her at all times; her mother called friends throughout the sales to let them know that Carla was selling Girl Scout cookies, gave Carla ideas about where to sell, and routinely checked the order form throughout the sales phase to make sure that amounts due were tallied correctly. Carla did not regard herself as the person responsible for selling. On one occasion, she told her sister to knock on a customer’s door, saying, “I don’t understand. Why I always have to do it.”

When we asked how she had delivered the cookies, Carla’s response made it clear that her mother had organized most of the delivery from the time they picked up their cases of cookies from the cookie chair: “My mom took all of the boxes and we stuck them in the front room and then Mom went through them.... First my mom called everybody.... and then we went to their houses.... She wrote down everybody’s name.... and then she stuck the cookies and the piece of paper with their names and how many they ordered and how much money [in a plastic bag].” Carla’s mother was with her for every delivery except one to help keep track of the money; this may have contributed to the fact that Carla was one of the first girls in the troop to turn in all her money.

Lorna. Lorna was assisted in becoming a cookie seller by her friend Elaine, a more experienced seller from the same troop whom Lorna treated as an expert. Lorna, like Darlene, seemed unsure of herself at the beginning of the first sales trip; she asked Elaine to do the speaking at the first house, for example. At first Lorna resisted Elaine’s idea that they separate to visit different houses, protesting, “I don’t know.” After they went to one house together, Lorna agreed with Elaine’s suggestion that the two girls go to different houses and then meet up; by the third stop, Lorna was the one proposing that they go to different houses, and after about ten stops, Lorna was proposing the specific route, although this was Elaine’s and not Lorna’s neighborhood.

Amy. Amy, like Lorna, began her sales with the support of an experienced Scout from her troop. On her first selling trip, Amy went with Sue to keep her company and learn a little about how to sell; she made no sales of her own. On that trip, Sue gave several tips to Amy, worded in ways that made her advisory role clear (for example, “I’d advise you one thing...”). Sue explained to Amy how to approach customers and how to use the order form to facilitate calculations:

Sue: Well, what do you do, you know how it’s two-fifty a box?
Amy: I guess.
Sue: Well, it’s two-fifty a box. So what you do is, it helps to fill this out [the box in the corner of the order form with blanks for prices for different numbers of boxes], if it doesn’t take too much time. Write two-fifty, and then for two boxes it’s five dollars.
Amy: Mmm hmm.
Sue: Three boxes seven-fifty, four boxes ten dollars, and so on. You just fill that out. So what you do is they [the customers] just add up. [We can see from Amy’s order form that she followed this advice and wrote in the prices]... And then they put how much it is right here.

In her first sale after her practice trip with her friend, Amy spoke with confidence as a seller: “I was wondering if you would like to buy any Girl Scout cookies.” Nonetheless, she still had difficulty with some aspects of the sales procedure, including not having the customers fill out the order form themselves. The customers assisted her in solving some problems: “Okay, let’s see, you put that in the wrong thing. Should I cross that out?... You didn’t put anything down on our line.” Amy acknowledged this correction, “Okay, thanks.”

Conclusions Regarding Development Through Participation and Three Planes of Analysis

We hope that it is apparent in our account of these four cases that these Scouts, new to cookie selling, changed in the process of their participation with others to become sellers, dealing with issues of planning, calculation, keeping track of progress, and managing the seller’s role in ways that fit with the sociocultural organization apparent in their particular circumstances. We want to emphasize three points regarding the girls’ development:

- The girls’ development cannot be explained in terms that would isolate them from the contributions of other people and of the traditions of the practice in which they were participating, focusing on the personal plane of analysis requires background analyses of the interpersonal and community planes of analysis.

- Rather than seeing the girls’ development in terms of acquisition of skills (planning, mathematical heuristics, and so on), we regard the process as one of personal transformation, with changes in how an endeavor is handled as a
The section of the Q&A where the discussion about the impact of education on the development of children and the community is ongoing.

Dr. John Smith: "Education is a powerful tool in the development of children and the community. It not only provides knowledge and skills, but also helps in shaping their attitudes towards life and society."

Student: "But how do we ensure that all children have access to education?"

Dr. Smith: "Access to education is a fundamental human right. Efforts should be made to ensure that children from all backgrounds have equal access to education. This includes providing schools in remote areas and initiating programs to educate girls and women."

Teacher: "But what role do teachers play in this process?"

Dr. Smith: "Teachers are the backbone of any educational system. They play a crucial role in guiding and motivating students. Efforts should be made to improve teacher training and provide them with the necessary support to effectively teach children."

Student: "And how can we measure the success of educational programs?"

Dr. Smith: "Measuring the success of educational programs is crucial. It helps in identifying areas that need improvement and ensuring that children are receiving the best possible education. This includes looking at indicators such as enrollment rates, graduation rates, and the performance of students in standardized tests."

Teacher: "In conclusion, education is a powerful tool for development. It not only provides knowledge and skills, but also helps in shaping attitudes and behaviors. Efforts should be made to ensure that all children have access to education and that teachers are provided with the necessary support to effectively teach children."

Student: "Thank you, Dr. Smith. This has been very insightful."

Dr. Smith: "You're welcome. Let's continue to work towards improving the education system and empowering children for a better future."

Note: This section is part of a larger discussion on the role of education in the development of children and the community.