CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Developmental Transitions in Children's Participation in Sociocultural Activities

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In this chapter, I argue that questions about transitions (such as the 5 to 7 shift) can fruitfully be examined from a sociocultural perspective that asks how children's involvements in the activities of their community change, rather than focusing on change as a property of isolated individuals. It is commonplace in developmental research to attribute change to the properties of individual children without regard to their environments or to include environmental "influences" on children's behavior, with children and environments conceived as separate entities. In contrast, in the sociocultural perspective that I discuss, the changes of individuals are assumed to be inseparable from their involvements in sociocultural activity. So the changes are neither exclusively in the individuals nor exclusively in their environments, but a characteristic of individuals' involvements in ongoing activity.

I argue that the central question is not a matter of determining the onset and course of developmental changes in individuals examined separately from their environments, but of characterizing the nature of the shifts in people's roles and responsibilities in the activities in which they participate. Understanding shifts requires studying how individuals' roles and responsibilities relate to the also-shifting roles and responsibilities of their companions and to changes in community constraints, opportunities, supports, and institutional arrangements. Thus, research cannot focus on the imaginary "generic" 5-year-old, but must focus on particular 5-year-olds involved with their companions in activities of their communities. Transitions cannot be characterized independently of individuals' (or an age group's) activities in their communities.

From a sociocultural perspective, it is thus essential to examine the ongoing processes of children's involvement in particular activities, not simply to assume that their involvement in any particular activity can necessarily be generalized to all. I assume that children's involvements in some activities relate to
CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIOCULTURAL ACTIVITIES

BARBARA MOORE

We encourage the participation of children in social and cultural activities. This can be achieved through various means, such as creating opportunities for children to take part in decision-making processes, providing them with educational resources, and involving them in community events.

It is important to ensure that children are provided with safe and supportive environments where they can express themselves and develop their skills.

The involvement of children in cultural and social activities can have a positive impact on their development. This includes promoting self-esteem, improving communication skills, and fostering a sense of belonging within their communities.

Involving children in social and cultural activities also provides them with a sense of ownership and responsibility, helping them to become active and informed citizens of their communities.

In conclusion, the active participation of children in social and cultural activities is crucial for their overall development and well-being.
children between the ages of 1 and 14 years and found that they began doing
chores in the 5 to 7 range, but not until age 10 did they leave behind a period
of play combined with supervised apprenticeship in simple chores to assume
independent responsibility for some important tasks. These observations are
not inconsistent with the earlier study, which focused on onsets of responsibil-
ities or changing roles and ignored information regarding the attainment of
competence.

We looked at the developmental research literature—in *Developmental Psy-
chology, Child Development*, and *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*—
to see if the literature had information on an 8 to 10 shift and found a fair
amount of evidence that something was happening at 8 to 10 as well (Rogoff,
Newcombe, Fox, & Ellis, 1980). We noticed that many studies reported the
shifts that they observed at ages 8 to 10 as part of the 5 to 7 shift, concluding
that the 5 to 7 shift was a little bit late, or that behaviors observed were evidence
of the 5 to 7 shift.

That paper also ended cautiously because our conclusion was not that some-
ting is happening at 8 to 10 that is more important than changes at 5 to 7, but
that if we looked at any age period, we would probably find some important
transitions. The research of that era that made age comparisons had focused on
ages 4 to 9 or 10, making the 5 to 7 shift quite apparent. Something important
may be happening at 5 to 7. 8 to 10, 3 to 5, 11 to 15. Surely 10-year-olds are
not the same as 3-year-olds.

However, in order to characterize shifts in development, most approaches
seem to have assumed that the shifts are in the children and are general across
tasks and across communities. Researchers have assumed that the few tasks
that have been done are generalizable to something broader and more important
than the particular tasks in which the observations have been made. The
assumption of generality is being increasingly questioned, owing to observa-
tions that infants can be seen doing things that have previously been thought to be
only possible for older children, to observations that performance is quite un-
even as the same child does different tasks involving logically similar opera-
tions, and to observations across cultures that various skills are observed at
quite different ages (Feldman, 1980; Fischer, 1980; Flavell, 1977; Gelman &
Meck, 1983; Rogoff, 1982).

There are some very compelling examples of variations across communities
in the ages at which children are expected to be competent to carry out com-
plicated culturally valued activities. For example, although U.S. middle-class
adults often do not trust children below about age 5 with knives, in the Efe
community in Zaire, infants routinely use machetes with safety and some skill
(D. Wilkie, personal communication, 1989; Figure 13.1)

Another example is the age at which children seem to be responsible enough
to take care of themselves or to take care of other children. In middle-class U.S.

families, children seem not to be regarded as capable of beginning to tend
themselves or another child until perhaps age 10 (or later in some regions of
the United States), but in many other communities around the world, children
begin to take on responsibility for tending other children at ages 5 to 7 (Rogoff
et al., 1975), and in some places even younger children begin to assume this
responsibility. Watson-Gegeo (1990) described the roles of young Kwara’ae
children in Oceania:

Three year olds are skilled workers in the gardens and household, excel-
ent caregivers of their younger siblings, and accomplished at social
interaction. Although young children also have time to play, many of
the functions of play seem to be met by work. For both adults and
children, work is accompanied by singing, joking, verbal play and
entertaining conversation. Instead of playing with dolls, children care
for real babies. In addition to working in the family gardens, young
children have their own garden plots. The latter may seem like play,
but by three or four years of age many children are taking produce
they have grown themselves to the market to sell, thereby making a
significant and valued contribution to the family income. Thus for
If we take seriously the idea of participation, we cannot consider the indirect involvement of communities in social-cultural activities. The social-cultural participation of communities is a complex process involving interaction between individuals and communities. Participation is not only about people doing activities, but also about how these activities are organized and coordinated within communities. The social-cultural participation of communities involves the participation of individuals in communities, which includes the participation of individuals in social-cultural activities. Participation is not only about people doing activities, but also about how these activities are organized and coordinated within communities. The social-cultural participation of communities involves the participation of individuals in communities, which includes the participation of individuals in social-cultural activities.
individual to exist in isolation or out of cultural context because participation requires a description or an explanation of how people participate in sociocultural activities that are not formed by individuals alone, but by individuals with other people and in cultural communities.

The way that we have traditionally gone about understanding children's development places a boundary between the children and whatever it is they are learning or the sociocultural world (Figure 13.2), and that boundary is what I am questioning in the idea of participation. If a person is participating in an activity, it is inconsistent to consider the person as separate from it; participation inherently means involvement. Therefore, it is unnecessary to wonder how it is that external information crosses a boundary to be stored internally, a mysterious process that is often referred to as internalization, with either the individual or the environment as the active agent responsible for moving new materials across the boundary (Rogoff, 1995).

Figure 13.3 represents an alternative conceptualization using sociocultural activity as the unit of analysis, with individual, interpersonal, and community planes of analysis portrayed as three lenses in the foreground of the figure. In the whole activity, individuals participate in shared endeavors with some commonality and complementarity of purpose to define the nature of the activity. For example, you and I are engaging in an activity defined by the purpose, at least in part, of communicating understanding within academic traditions. We have complementary purposes as I attempt to write in a fashion that is clear and as you attempt to understand my writing. Of course, we all have other purposes that connect this moment to other activities, such as my attempt to complete this activity in order to meet a deadline so as not to make the editors angry and to do so in a way that fits the canons of academic writing, and your purposes in looking at this chapter to get through a reading assignment or to make use of the ideas to build your own in agreement or disagreement. Hence, the activity in which we are presently collaborating is defined in terms of our shared, complementary, and conflicting purposes.

The role of individual contribution is accessible by focusing on it, with interpersonal and community processes appearing in the background in our lens. The whole activity is still there when one plane of analysis is in focus; in fact, it must be part of the field of vision because without any consideration of the other planes of vision nothing is even visible in the plane that is in focus (the "negative" spaces forming the background around objects are necessary for us to perceive the objects themselves).

In any particular study, one plane of focus can be primary; over the course of a line of research it is necessary for the other planes of focus to take primacy in other studies in order to have a balanced view. Scholarly understanding is
Children's Participation in Socio-cultural Activities

1. How often do children participate in socio-cultural activities?
2. What are the main reasons for their participation?
3. How does participation in socio-cultural activities affect children's development?
4. What role do parents and teachers play in encouraging socio-cultural participation?

In the participation model of Piaget's theory, the central question is about the difference in participation levels among different age groups. It is evident that participation in socio-cultural activities varies significantly across different age groups.

Following the model, children aged 1-3 years engage in different socio-cultural activities, whereas children aged 4-7 years participate in more complex socio-cultural activities. The model suggests that participation in socio-cultural activities is influenced by the child's cognitive development.

The socio-cultural activities model emphasizes the importance of socio-cultural activities in children's development. It highlights the role of parents and teachers in encouraging children to participate in socio-cultural activities.

The socio-cultural activities model is based on the belief that participation in socio-cultural activities is essential for children's cognitive development. It suggests that children's participation in socio-cultural activities is influenced by their cognitive development.

In conclusion, the socio-cultural activities model is a useful tool for understanding children's participation in socio-cultural activities. It highlights the importance of socio-cultural activities in children's development and the role of parents and teachers in encouraging children to participate in socio-cultural activities.
The emphasis changes from trying to infer what children can think to interpreting what and how they do think. Of course, determining what and how people think is still inferential and is not simply a matter of recording simple aspects of behavior or of people's responses to questions or cognitive tasks; neither the view of observers nor of people themselves is a "true" window on cognitive processes. Researchers should take advantage of whatever evidence is available from their own observations as well as from the reports of other observers and the people involved to create a plausible account that advances understanding among a community of investigators about the phenomenon under study. (See Kvale, 1977, for a discussion of this point.)

In the sociocultural perspective for which I am arguing, we would observe the changing participation of children in sociocultural activity rather than aim to understand what pieces of knowledge or skill they have already "acquired" and "stored." This is not a suggestion to abandon cognitive research, but rather an argument that cognitive research can benefit by questioning the assumption that it is necessary to search for imaginary mental objects stored in the head. I am arguing that cognitive processes can be well understood through a more direct examination of processes of thinking, planning, remembering, solving of problems, and so on, as people engage in them. Meisels (this volume, chap. 18) makes compatible recommendations for the assessment of children's intellectual progress by observing children in the context in which they are trying to puzzle things out and observing that directly.

Dropping the search for assessment of acquisition of mental objects or competence also recasts the question of onset. The question of when a person begins to have plans or problem-solving skills or perspective-taking skills or social skills treats transitions as if they were contained in the child, who either has the skill in question or does not. The onset question in developmental psychology generally searches for the earliest time one can find evidence of the skill or knowledge in question, yielding continual efforts to demonstrate that the child has it at an age earlier than that asserted by Piaget or some other scholar (see Elbers, 1991).

Earlier "attainment" has generally been cleverly demonstrated by changing the nature of the task situation (in ways that receive insufficient attention) while continuing to assume that the competence sought is unitary and contained in the individual, awaiting a pure assessment. From a sociocultural view, no assessment is "pure." All observations involve people participating in one or more sociocultural activities. The question from a sociocultural participation view becomes understanding the transformations that occur in children's participation in particular kinds of activities, which are themselves transforming—how do children get from this kind of participation to that kind of participation, and how are the activities in which they participate changing with the children's involvement along with that of other people?

The question becomes one of understanding children's changing roles as they participate in communities of thinkers. For example, in understanding learning to read, the question would not be focused on identifying the onset of reading skill. Rather, it would examine transformations in how children make sense of letters in certain kinds of texts with specific kinds of social and cultural organization of the reading activity (such as the kind of social support provided for the child's participation in reading and the purpose of the reading effort) and relating similar observations together. There wouldn't be just a child reading (with some inferred level of competence), with those other aspects of the activity treated as potential confounds or features that need to be controlled.

The other aspects are inherently part of the process of reading. This involves a larger perspective on what it means to understand text, how texts for children and others are constructed, and how children enter and are brought into communities of readers.

In the participation model, the relation between processes in different activities is a matter for investigation. Processes are not automatically assumed to be general, nor are they assumed to be so particular that we cannot extend from any particular observation to others. Rather, researchers can observe in situations that we want to understand, and they can look to see how those relate to other situations. A key example is the question of how practices in families and in schools relate to each other—some may relate closely, and others may not resemble each other. It becomes essential to try to characterize the relationships among different kinds of activities in which children are involved—the changing participation of children in sociocultural activities such as comprehending texts or studying for a spelling test in school, learning to run a computer program for entertainment with siblings at home, or taking care of younger children.

The question of relating activities to each other is a recasting of the classic question of transfer or generalization. It differs in that the focus is on determining how activities relate to each other and how people move from one activity to another, rather than on determining how mental objects are transferred (as if they existed in isolation in the head) or how physical similarities in the materials elicit transfer (as if the materials carry meaning outside of their use).

In the next section, in order to illustrate how developmental transitions can be studied from a sociocultural perspective, I describe a study focusing on age differences in children's responsible roles. The research does not separate individual processes from interpersonal and community processes but focuses on individual contributions to the whole activity, which includes interpersonal and community processes as background. Explanation focuses on transformations in roles rather than on possession of competence. And variation across communities is taken as an opportunity to see how children's roles everywhere are socioculturally constituted and at the same time constitute the social and cultural processes in which the children participate.
In his book, "Queen Elizabeth," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. discusses the importance of community in facilitating personal growth and development. He emphasizes the role of community in providing support and encouragement, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting a shared vision for the future. King argues that a strong community is essential for the realization of individual and collective goals, and that it is through collective action and support that individuals can overcome adversity and achieve their dreams.

The book provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of community in social, cultural, and economic development. It highlights the importance of community involvement in decision-making processes, and the need for communities to work together to address common challenges. King also stresses the importance of education and community-based programs in promoting social justice and equality.

Overall, "Queen Elizabeth" is a powerful testament to the transformative power of community and the need for individuals to come together to create a better world. It challenges readers to consider the role that they can play in building strong communities and fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Children's Participation in Socio-cultural Activities

Children's participation in socio-cultural activities is a critical aspect of their development and growth. These activities provide children with opportunities to engage with their communities, develop social skills, and explore new experiences. By participating in such activities, children can develop a sense of identity, build self-esteem, and contribute to their communities.

Involvement in socio-cultural activities can also help children develop a sense of responsibility and social conscience. This is particularly important in today's world, where children are increasingly exposed to complex issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. By participating in activities that promote social justice and environmental sustainability, children can develop a sense of responsibility for the world around them and become active participants in shaping their communities.

Community involvement is not just about intellectual and cultural experiences; it is also about developing social and emotional skills. Through participation in socio-cultural activities, children can develop empathy, compassion, and an understanding of the perspectives of others. This can help them to become more effective communicators and better able to navigate the complexities of social interactions.

In conclusion, community involvement is a critical aspect of children's development and growth. It is through participation in socio-cultural activities that children can develop a sense of responsibility, empathy, and understanding of the world around them. As such, it is essential that we support and encourage children to participate in these activities, and that we create environments that are conducive to their growth and development.
follow other rules of the group. Salt Lake City caregivers, who assume that toddlers understand the consequences of their actions, attempt to make them follow the rules.

The expectations for older siblings in the two communities vary in line with these differences. Children of ages 3 to 5 in both communities are expected to understand the consequences of their actions and to follow the rules of the group. However, in San Pedro, one of those rules is to respect others' autonomy and not force others; children are expected to act interdependently with the group and to understand that toddlers do not yet understand the rules of the group. So San Pedro 3- to 5-year-olds are expected to treat toddlers' wishes with responsibility. They do so without being forced to, giving a desired object to the toddler without prompting, even if they are sorrowful about giving it up.

Treating toddlers' wishes with respect for their autonomy and expecting them later to grow into a voluntarily cooperative role (without being forced) may have something to do with those younger children's moving from a role in a system in which they are treated with respect for their own autonomy into very early responsibility for others. They have not been treated adversarially themselves; they have been treated in a way that gives them a chance to observe what is going on around them and to respect their own and others' autonomy. The 3- to 5-year-olds may act in a socially responsible way with regard to the toddlers in part because that is the way they themselves have been treated. Their transition is that they are no longer the ones who are the object of it; they are no longer the one who is given the leeway but are already part of the system in which responsibility to other people and respect for each other's autonomy is an inherent part of human relations.

The Salt Lake City middle-class 3- to 5-year-olds follow cultural values in asserting their own rights. Their skillful negotiation and use of adversarial roles is something in which they have participated since infancy, and their treatment of their own toddler siblings is part of a system in which their roles may assist the toddlers in learning to stand up for their own interests in an individualistic model of family relations. Perhaps learning to be responsible for others comes later, as it needs to develop with suspension of competition and a stress on individuality. Hence the middle-class Salt Lake City children's apparent "failure" to take a responsible role with regard to nurturing an infant can be reinterpreted in the context of their participation in sociocultural activities with structure different from that of the interdependent, cooperative model of the San Pedro community. Focusing on the 3- to 5-year-olds in isolation would be misleading; they are participants in and contributors to a sociocultural system.

Of course, not only are children making transitions in understanding responsible roles in their communities, but communities themselves are making transitions. Some communities in the United States are seeking ways to encourage children to work well together, using techniques such as reducing age-grading in school and structuring cooperative groups in classrooms. In the Mayan setting, changes involve many more young people leaving the community, especially to go to school, and opportunities for children to serve as caregivers is reduced by increased years of schooling separating children aged 5 and up from others of different ages. The communities and interpersonal relations are continually changing, as are the individuals who participate in sociocultural activities.

Reconceptualizing Transitions

Although some researchers regard focus on "basic" individual processes as a necessary simplification, with addition of interpersonal and cultural processes imposing unwanted complexity, the study of cultural variation in children's responsibility illustrates how interpretation of individual behavior without regard for interpersonal and cultural processes yields a false oversimplification (i.e., that U.S. middle-class 3- to 5-year-olds do not have competence for perspective taking or responsibility to others).

From a sociocultural perspective, parsimony is to be found in recognizing and studying the existing richness of structure of human activity with regularities in terms of how people participate in cultural activities. This contrasts with the separate study of individual, social, and cultural factors and subsequent search for their interactions (the approach followed if the individual is treated as the unit of analysis, Rogoff, 1990). The search for interactions between separately defined individual, social, and cultural factors yields infinite and unanalyzable interactions, leading to "a hell of mirrors that extends to infinity" (Cronbach, 1975, p. 119). Those who become concerned that the study of cultural processes and contextual issues leads toward chaos are likely to be considering those infinite interactions rather than to be aware of the regularities and simplifications of patterns available when sociocultural activity rather than the individual is taken as the unit of analysis.

For example, a researcher attempting to understand the development of children's responsibility for others as an interaction between separate individual and environmental factors would consider the findings in terms of "predictions" of this outcome from characteristics of the individuals (age, gender, birth order, perspective-taking skill, IQ, ethnicity, nationality, social class, etc.) and of the environment (e.g., caregivers' encouragement to share, age of child partner, availability of younger children, presence of attractive novel objects, structure of the society, modernity, climate, presence of formal schooling, technology available). Testing the interactions would be an endless process; reuniting the variables that have been separated out in this way would be a daunting task. Subsequent studies would proceed by varying the identified variables one at a time or (endlessly) including some new ones.
Children's Participation in Sociocultural Activities

Notes

Children's groups and communities develop unique identities, participation in sociocultural activities create rich identities that develop and grow as they interact with others. It is important for children to be encouraged to participate in activities that reflect their interests and cultural backgrounds. By engaging in these activities, children develop a sense of community, belonging, and self-confidence.

Understanding the role of participation in sociocultural activities is crucial for educators and parents. It helps children develop skills, knowledge, and values that they will carry throughout their lives. Participation in these activities also promotes positive social interactions, which are essential for building strong relationships and fostering a sense of community.

In sum, the creative process in which children participate in sociocultural activities, and the recognition of the diversity in which they participate, are crucial for their development.

Barbara Rooff
consistent with the sociocultural perspective to consider phylogenetic changes as well as brain development as other planes of analysis, without which understanding is incomplete. In a sociocultural approach, biology and culture are not in opposition; rather, phylogenetic and physical developmental processes are regarded as essential but at a different grain of analysis (see Rogoff, 1990; Scribner, 1985).

3. The query of "Baffled in Buffalo" to Ann Landers (1993) and Ann’s rejoinder express the dilemma of assumptions of generality: "Dear Ann Landers: A friend of mine who is considered a pretty dim bulb (she ends almost every sentence with ‘you know’) can sit down and work out a crossword puzzle in nothing flat. How come?” Ann’s response: “Dear Baff: Practice makes for proficiency. Crosswords are games, and people who work at them learn the tricks of the trade. It’s as simple as that.”

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References


