

## **Cultural and Critical Perspectives on Human Development**

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### Chapter 1

#### **Introduction**

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Anyone who has recently attended the biennial meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development or the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association knows that the terms in which and methods with which human development is understood and investigated are changing rapidly, as are the aims of such investigation. These are mainstream north American organizations, yet after spending a few days at either conference it would be hard to identify a mainstream position. Instead one can sample a delightful plurality of approaches to children's (and adults') learning and development. What has happened is that the cognitive-developmental paradigm that for the past four decades defined developmental research (not to mention practices like teacher education, counseling, and so on) has lost its sway. No longer is it assumed without question that development is solely a process of cognitive reorganization, directed towards a single, universal endpoint, and accomplished within the individual child. This paradigm of inquiry was so hegemonic that even when new domains such as the social or the emotional were opened up for examination, they were construed in purely cognitive terms. Of course this cognitive-developmental interpretation has never gone completely unchallenged, but these days it is no longer clearly the norm to *be* challenged. The centrality of the autonomous, individual subject has been called into question.

Instead we have a situation of flux in which the theoretical presuppositions and the research methods of cognitive-developmentalism have been swept away and a variety of alternatives are being explored. The very nature of "learning" and "development" have become called into question (cf. Donmeyer, 1996; Salomon, 1995; Kessel, 1981). New attention to social relationships, to emotions, to context, goes hand in hand with a movement of inquiry from the laboratory and the natural experiment to include ethological and ethnographic approaches, interpretive analysis, and with the exploration of biography, narrative and other new genres of writing. Increasingly psychologists now mingle with anthropologists, linguists and psycholinguists, sociologists, historians, political scientists, psychoanalysts, kinesologists, pediatricians and others. Interpretations of the passage from childhood to adulthood are offered in which the possibility of multiple developmental pathways is admitted, the role of social and

historical context is appreciated, and the value-judgment involved in calling a change “development” is acknowledged.

One sign of all this is the new attention to *cultural* and *critical* considerations in scholarship concerning human development. Cultural considerations include not simply the investigation of differences in the ways children develop in different cultures and subcultures, but cultural variation in the ends towards which development moves, as well as attention to the cultural work that children and adults are engaged in when learning and development occur. No longer is “culture” simply an independent variable in analyses of variance. Critical considerations include a growing reflective awareness on the part of researchers and theorists of their social positions and responsibilities, and of the values in terms of which they evaluate what they investigate, as well as a critical stance towards the societal institutions in which children become adults.

This new attention to culture and critique has brought new voices into academic departments, and it is beginning to transform academic institutions: journals, programs, and faculty. At the same time, there has not been a great deal of communication between, for example, cultural psychologists and critical pedagogists. There are some concerns clearly shared by those who attend to culture and those who engage in critique (increased reflexivity on the part of the investigator, to pick just one example), some interesting differences, and not much occasion of comparing notes.

This book had its origins in two linked symposia presented at the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association in spring 1995, in San Francisco. These sessions were organized by Martin Packer and Mark Tappan; the presenters were these two and Michael Cole, Peter McLaren, Lyn Brown, Robin Leavitt, Elizabeth Debold, Linda Tillman, and Frank Kessel. We sought to bring together people “doing cultural work” and those “doing critique,” in the hope that some cross-pollination (if that is the apt metaphor) would occur. In many respects our expectations were exceeded. For one thing, the person we had invited to represent cultural psychology spoke of critique, while the person invited to speak of critical pedagogy undertook a cultural analysis! The sessions overflowed the room they were held in, with an engaged and enthusiastic audience. This, and the fact that AERA reviewers had rated the theoretical significance of the symposia “excellent,” encouraged us to develop a book based on these papers. We hope and believe the book makes a timely contribution to the reformulation of the study of human development, and we think it is unique in its attention to *both* cultural and critical perspectives and the opportunity it consequently provides to explore how these perspectives can inform one another. The chapters in this volume explore many of the implications for the study of human development of an awareness of culture and the adoption of a critical stance. They bring insights from critical pedagogy, cultural psychology, feminism, postmodernism, critical theory,

semiotics and other approaches into dialogue, presenting studies of developmental change at various points across the lifespan, and presenting also reflections on the changing character of inquiry. They illustrate disparate ways in which the complexities of human development can be grasped and comprehended, while avoiding the reductionisms of cognitivism.

In this introductory chapter we first raise the questions, “What is culture?” and “What is critique?” Our intention here is not to provide an exhaustive survey, a grand review of the intellectual landscape in which these two topics have been explored, but more modestly to provide a preview of the approaches to cultural analysis and critique that are employed by the authors of the chapters in this volume. We want to give the reader some sense of the range of options available and their relation to one another. In part this is to remind the reader that the authors in this collection have not, considered together, exhausted all the possibilities for approaching culture and undertaking critique.

Next we provide a brief description of each chapter in turn, again showing how culture and critique have been taken up in each particular case.

Finally we suggest that the work represented in this volume contributes in three main ways to our understanding of human development. First, making us more aware of what the researcher brings to inquiry; second, showing how closely human development is linked to human history; and third, reminding us that development is the creation of a human being.

### **What is culture?**

**cul.ture 1** : CULTIVATION, TILLAGE **2** : the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties esp. by education **3** : expert care and training <beauty ~> **4** : enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training **5 a** : a particular stage of advancement in civilization **b** : the characteristic features of such a stage or state **c** : behavior typical of a group or class **6** : cultivation of living material in prepared nutrient media; *also* a product of such cultivation. (Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary)

The creation and use of culture is a biological characteristic of our species (Cole, 1996, p. 8), and it is equally true that our species has become a creation of culture. Bruner says of the “culturalist” approach to the nature of mind that it:

“takes its inspiration from the evolutionary fact that mind could not exist save for culture. For the evolution of the hominid mind is linked to the development of a way of life where ‘reality’ is represented by a symbolism shared by members of a cultural community in which a technical-social way of life is both organized and construed in terms of that symbolism. This symbolic mode is not only shared by a community, but conserved, elaborated, and passed on to succeeding generations who, by virtue of this

transmission, continue to maintain the culture's identity and way of life." (Bruner, 1996, p. 3)

Culture, then, is that wherein we dwell. Culture is for humans what water is for fish--without it we would cease to exist, or certainly we would not have become what we are. The difficulty is that, just as fish would presumably give no thought to water were they able to give thought to anything, culture is so much part of our lives, so much part of who and what we are, that it is hard to get it clearly enough into our sights to ascertain just what kind of thing it is. Indeed it's really no kind of thing at all--culture is what makes it possible for something to be a thing, and for a human being to be a person.

How best to conceptualize the pervasive yet evasive no-thing that is culture? One set of possibilities that is quite evident in the chapters of this book is drawn from the "cultural psychology" whose influence on developmental psychology is being strongly felt. The growing influence of cultural psychology and its cousins, such as sociocultural theory, cultural historical analysis and others (e.g., Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1995; Shweder, 1989; Valsiner, 1987, 1995; Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 1991; Engestrom, Miettinen & Punamaki, 1999) resonates with a growing realization among developmental psychologists that the assumption that human development is a movement of irreversible progress towards a universal endpoint is no longer tenable, and itself is a historical and cultural construction (cf. Kessen, 1990). The past several years have seen publication of two new journals in cultural psychology: *Mind, Culture and Activity* (edited by Michael Cole, Yrjo Engestrom, Leigh Star and James Wertsch) and *Culture and Psychology* (edited by Jaan Valsiner).

Michael Cole (1996), drawing from the work of Vygotsky (1986), Leont'ev and Luria has identified as a central notion in cultural psychology the focus on cultural artifacts and the role they play mediating person-environment interaction. Cole proposes this as a "psychologically relevant" concept of culture. (Other central notions that Cole describes are an interest in cross-cultural variation, especially in the different "designs for living" that a culture hands down to its junior members, and an insistence that adults are active agents in the developmental process, in addition to the active child that Piagetians have emphasized.)

In such a conceptualization, culture is viewed as "a medium of mediational means." (It is such a conceptualization that underlies the design of an environment such as the Fifth Dimension, described in chapter 2 by Katherine Brown and Cole.) Culture is a *medium* in which biology and environment interact, a medium composed of "historically accumulated systems of artifacts" (Cole, 1996, p. 10). Artifacts are "simultaneously ideal (conceptual) and material," organized, not randomly assembled. Context is not just that which surrounds, it is a qualitative relationship that weaves together structure and function. Artifacts' ideal form stems from the fact

that they, as Cole puts it, “contain in coded form the interactions of which they were previously a part and that they mediate in the present.” An axe, for example, has a “subjective component,” which is a “concept or attitude.” Cole considers that “human beings live in a double world, simultaneously natural and artificial” (p. 10). The “first world,” the “external” world, is that of “direct” unmediated, sensory contact of subject and objects; the “second world” is mediated by artifacts; this is the “world of ideas and philosophies.”

Like Bruner, Cole sees mind as the product of an interaction between the child and an environment that can be partitioned into universal features (such as gravitation) and historically specific features (such as knife and fork). And “because what we call *mind* works through artifacts, it cannot be unconditionally bounded by the head or even by the body but must be seen as distributed in the artifacts that are woven together and that weave together individual human actions in concert with and as part of the permeable, changing events of life” (Cole, 1995, p. 100). It is logical, then, to seek to influence learning and development by designing new webs of artifacts, such as the Fifth Dimension.

A related conceptualization also represented here is to see culture as the “intentional worlds” in which we live. This approach is central to Richard Shweder’s formulation of cultural psychology. (This is the basis for the study of Hindu women reported by Usha Menon and Shweder in chapter 3.) Shweder sees human experience and subjectivity as grounded in intentional worlds that consist of artifacts and events whose “existence is real, factual and forceful, but only so long as there exists a community of persons whose beliefs, desires, emotions, purposes and other mental representations are directed at it, and are, thereby, influenced by it” (Shweder, 1989, p. 2; cf. Shweder, 1991). Shweder has offered the example of “the 20th century intentional world of American baseball.” The objects, artifacts and events that populate an intentional world cannot be adequately described by an objective, neutral scientific language. Just as it is true of a “weed” that it is defined by human interests and involvements, so this is true of what is “true” or “good” or “beautiful.” In line with this, Menon and Shweder in their chapter define culture as “a reality lit up by a morally enforceable conceptual scheme or sub-set of meanings instantiated in practice.”

This strand of cultural psychology starts in anthropology, though Shweder considers cultural psychology “an interdisciplinary human science.” He acknowledges that it has “many ancestral lines” and invites other tellings of the story of its lineage: his own narrative invokes the figures of Claud Levy-Bruhl, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Aaron Cicourel and the ethnomethodologists, Roy D’Andrade, Clifford Geertz, Kleinman, and Sapir (p. 40), and even “Abelard, Herder, Hegel, Heidegger, Brentano” (p. 72). As Shweder tells it, the origins myth of cultural psychology is a narrative that begins with the failure of the cognitive revolution to “develop an adequate theory of the ‘person’” (p. 1):

Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, transform and permute the human psyche, resulting less in psychic unity than in ethnic divergences in mind, self and emotion.

Cultural psychology is the study of the ways subject and object, self and other, psyche and culture, person and context, figure and ground, practitioner and practice live together, require each other, and dynamically, dialectically and jointly make each other up.

Cultural psychology is premised on human existential uncertainty (the search for meaning) and on a (so-called) 'intentional' conception of 'constituted' worlds. (Shweder, 1989, p. 1)

So understood, Shweder judges, cultural psychology differs from general psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and psychological anthropology in not engaging in the search for Platonic general, transcendent structures of mind, and in dismissing the belief in a psychic unity to humankind, typically assumed to take the form of a standard "central processing mechanism." Psychology has for some time generally viewed the person as merely an embodied, ahistorical and universal general computational device. And anthropology has complimented this conceit by viewing culture as something exterior, arbitrary, socially sanctioned, historically in flux, and so as having nothing essential to do with psyches or persons. "The 'person' disappeared from ethnography" (p. 38).

Cross-cultural psychology has extended the error by assuming that such a universal competence is simply manifest differently in different cultures, or in different tasks in a single culture. Shweder considers cross-cultural psychology "not heretical enough, even as it raises its serious concerns" (p. 22) to the presumption of psychic unity. And psychological anthropology took just a small step forward by viewing socio-cultural environments as adapted to, and hence expressive of, the general central processing mechanism.

Cultural psychology, in contrast, rejects the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic properties of mind, between form and content, between deep and surface structure, and instead sees mind as "content-driven, domain specific and constructively stimulus-bound" (p. 23-4); as showing "local response patterns" (p. 24).

Shweder aims with this conceptualization of culture to capture the dynamic interrelationship of subject and social structure. Just as Cole sees mind as "distributed in... artifacts," Shweder views thinking not as the process of a general-purpose conceptual device, but as an extension of, or an analog to, the artifacts of a specific culture. The mind, Shweder recommends, is to be understood as "embodied in concrete representations, in so-called 'mediating schemata,' 'scripts' and well-practiced 'tools for thought'" (p. 43). This version of cultural psychology might be described in a nutshell as anthropology with the person put back

in, with a conception of the person drawn from sources other than mainstream psychology. Persons are understood as intentional—as “responding to, and directing their action at, their own mental objects or representations” (p. 41); as “directing their behavior with respect to their own descriptions and mental representations of things” (p. 44). The “central theme” of such a cultural psychology is: “you can’t take the stuff out of the psyche *and* you can’t take the psyche out of the stuff” (p. 40).

If culture is viewed as made up of the mediating artifacts of an intentional world, it follows that development is a matter of becoming adept at handling the cultural tools and signs that mediate human action; becoming skilled in employing the “toolbox” a culture provides. These tools are typically viewed as internalized or appropriated by the learner (but cf. Packer, 1993).

The tool metaphor is an apt one: a tool embodies, both formally and informally, clues to its appropriate use. A mark that has been scratched on the blade of an awl by a previous owner, for example, may show us how deep a hole to bore. And tools provide their user with a sense of the world; using a file on aluminum feels quite different from using it on steel—the character of the material becomes sensible (cf. Shotter, 1993). But material implements are not the only tools: language, too, can be thought of as a tool, or perhaps more adequately as a set of tools. The spoken utterances we produce can be understood as mediating our contact with the world. Utterances are artifacts, human creations, shaping the material medium of the air around us. Because this medium is so plastic they dissipate rapidly and vanish, unlike artifacts like digging tools or pottery which can be excavated hundreds of years later. Nonetheless, utterances mediate our interaction with, and our knowledge of, other people.

One might extend the tool metaphor still further: for example, Jaan Valsiner has considered marriage forms such as monogamy and polygamy as “social devices that organize the family units in ways that satisfy the multitude tasks of family members”, and so provide a “social structural context within which child development takes place.”

Adults play a crucial role assisting this growing expertise with, appropriation of, and internalization of artifacts. As Newman, Griffin and Cole point out:

“the objects in the child’s world have a social history and functions that are not discovered through the child’s unaided explorations. The usual function of a hammer, for example, is not understood by exploring the hammer itself (although the child may discover some facts about weight and balance). The child’s appropriation of culturally devised ‘tools’ comes about through involvement in culturally organized activities in which the tool plays a role....

Children... cannot and need not reinvent the artifacts that have taken millennia to evolve in order to appropriate such objects into their own system of activity. The child

has only to come to an understanding that is adequate for using the culturally elaborated object in the novel life circumstances he encounters. The appropriation process is always a two-way one. The tool may also be transformed, as it is used by a new member of the culture; some of these changes may be encoded in the culturally elaborated tool, as the current sociohistorical developments allow. (Newman, Griffin & Cole, 1989, pp. 62-63)

This “scaffolding” by adults and other expert members of a community is one form of interaction that results in the handing of increasing responsibility for social activities to the child, such that children’s development can be seen as changing participation in cultural practices (e.g., Miller & Goodnow, 1995). It is “guided participation,” both tacit and explicit, that includes both adults and children in a type of involvement that makes the child an apprentice learning the ways of their culture (Rogoff, 1991).

A “reciprocal causal system,” as Valsiner puts it, is at work in development, guiding children to competent adult functioning in their society, where “children’s developmental trajectories are guided by cultural organization of the environment.... At the same time, children are active in modifying the cultural environment in which they live” (Valsiner, 1989a, p. 4). The result is that “development can take place along a multiplicity of pathways, each (or at least many) of which are equally adequate for arriving at the desired outcome” (Valsiner, 1989b, p. 74).

Cultural psychology is not the only source of an interpretive framework with which to examine the role of culture in human development at work in the chapters in this volume. A somewhat different approach of culture is drawn from the work of Michel Foucault. Although his vocabulary is different, Foucault was also exploring developmental issues. He described “the goal of my work during the last twenty years” as being “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (1982, p. 208). Central to these modes are the “power relations” in which people are placed, but, unlike the case with relations of production and relations of signification and communication, the tools for studying power have been largely lacking. Seeking to forge the appropriate analytic devices, Foucault proposed that what is central to power is not actual or threatened violence, or acquiescence and consent. Rather, he suggested that “what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or future.” As a consequence it is necessary “that ‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up” (p. 220).

This description of Foucault's approach makes clear that when cultural psychologists consider ways adults influence the action, and so guide the development, of children, they are addressing a concern that was also considered central by Foucault. There is thus a certain convergence between those chapters in this volume that focus on the "medium" of development (including Brown & Cole, chapter 2, and Menon & Shweder, chapter 3) and those that focus on power (including Leavitt, chapter 5, and Debold, chapter 6). When Elizabeth Debold writes that "[d]evelopment, then, can be considered as the process by which we become drenched in and shaped by culture-bound assumptions of power/knowledge," her position can be related to that of Barbara Rogoff when Rogoff insists that "it is incomplete to focus only on the relationship of individual development and social interaction without concern for the cultural activity in which personal and interpersonal actions take place" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 141).

At the same time, this convergence should not obscure important differences in the way Foucault's "archaeology" and cultural psychology conceptualize and investigate culture. For, as Debold points out, many developmental theories, including those that have otherwise broken with cognitive-developmentalism, have assumed "that the child's construction of knowledge is politically neutral." Cultural psychology has only just begun to extend its analysis into the political dimension of everyday life and children's development. But attention to power surely leads quickly to consideration of such phenomena as social status and social division, and such issues as identity and inequality. How to conceptualize these? How to understand the place and role of power in culture? How to grasp the ways the child develops within a "socio-politico-cultural context"?

The problem to be overcome is that psychology typically "posits a functioning social order in equilibrium, and individuals molded and shaped through socialization into performers of normatively governed social roles and practices" (Lave, 1988, pp. 87). Even in cultural psychology there is often a presumption of "holism": the thesis that a social order has an overall systemic pattern that gives definition to its parts and their interrelations. The metaphor of culture as a set of tools or a toolkit is holist, and this unitary and unproblematic conception of culture can lead us to assume, erroneously, that cognition and ways of knowing, too, are unitary, fixed and unchanging, and unaffected by the situations in which they are employed.

"'Warehouse' and 'toolkit' metaphors for the location of culture in memory make it possible to abnegate the investigation of relations between cognition and culture by, in effect, defining culture as 'what people have acquired, and carry around in their heads,' rather than as an immediate relation between individuals and the sociocultural order within which they live their lives." (Lave, 1988, p. 91)

The view that development is a matter of internalization or appropriation of cultural tools can turn into a simple enculturation model: a picture of the individual acquiring knowledge and values rather than as engaged in an ongoing process of interaction, negotiation, and cultural production (Willis, 1977/1981). Against such an interpretation, Rogoff insists that “it is incomplete to assume that development occurs in one plane and not in others (e.g., that children develop but that their partners or their cultural communities do not) or that influence can be ascribed in one direction or another or that relative contributions can be counted (e.g., parent to child, child to parent, culture to individual)” (1995, p. 141).

One source of this tendency towards holism is the fact that the paradigmatic community studied by classical anthropologists was the small village society. But such societies are clearly no longer the norm, and if society is now far more complex, the same must surely be said about culture. And division is a crucial social activity. Human groups are differentiated by practices, beliefs and institutions (Lamont & Fournier, 1992). Marcel Mauss declared that “The domain of social life is essentially a domain of differences” and Pierre Bourdieu has said that if there is a principle of organization to all forms of social life, it is the logic of distinction. Boundaries and differences concentrate members of a group and separate them from others. These distinctions are symbolic but also political: they “freeze a particular state of the social struggle, i.e. a given state of the distribution of advantages and obligations.” And domination and authority require legitimation, so that culture can become, as both Marx and Weber saw, an ideology at the service of the dominant classes. It follows that power relations between groups can be read through their relations with culture.

This implies that cultural artifacts need not form a unitary, organic whole, but instead formations that are differentiated by social position and social group. Culture is a “labyrinth,” as Debold says. “Let us assume that there is no socially constructed objective reality.... This is not to deny that there are socially constructed real conditions and distinctions, but these conditions and distinctions are manifold and situational and cannot necessarily be reduced to a single, ordered objective matrix” (Hall, 1992, p. 276).

“Viewed at the surface, the cultural objects of this world have no apparent order to them. They appear everywhere, diverse, often in a jumble. Similarly, to look at how each individual acts is to see cultural practices that form a unique and shifting array. Nevertheless, the dazzling variety and endless differences of culture obtain surprising coherence when we look at them through the lens of social stratification. People prepare and consume food in distinctive ways.... Such stances toward culture differ by social position and group, there can be no doubt....

Such a model recognizes the existence of heterologous, relatively coherent cultural objects, texts, and audiences external to any individual whose actions may be

structured in terms of them. However, the multiple and overlapping institutionalized cultures described as cultural structures do not have the character of a single, encompassing objective field of distinction, and heterologous 'markets' and 'currencies' of cultural capital interfigure with one another in ways that do not reduce to a single calculus of distinction." (Hall, 1992, p. 257, 260)

In market societies, communities interpenetrate so that individuals participate in more than one, with the result that enforcing an overarching status order is both more problematic and less relevant. In such societies, culture provides the structured categories by which we organize our actions, and cultural symbols are mobilized in exclusionary practices that result in the creation of status groups, positioning individuals socially and defining social identities. Competing definitions of what counts as "legitimate" culture get mobilized in group conflict, and various types of inequality are reproduced in the process. In such a conceptualization, culture is "institutionalized repertoires that have as powerful an effect on the structuration of everyday life as do economic forces" (Lamont & Fournier, 1992, p. 7).

There are two directions one can go from here, and both are represented in our selection of chapters. One is to move outward to the larger political and economic systems in which power and money circulate in ways that seem autonomous of human agency, in order to locate their influence on culture and development. The other is to move inward to study the play of power and influence in the intricacies of human interaction.

The first move entails drawing a distinction between two aspects of society, as lived by its members and as an objectified dynamic structure--call them "lifeworld" and "system" perspectives respectively--in order to comprehend their interrelation. Habermas (1981/1984; 1981/1989) has argued for the importance of drawing such a distinction, and proposed that over historical time these two aspects become increasingly differentiated both internally and from each other. Lifeworld, "the intersubjective, sociocultural field of social relations" (Habermas), is:

"the province of reality in which man continuously participates in ways which are at once inevitable and patterned. The everyday life-world is the region of reality in which man can engage himself and which he can change while he operates in it by means of his animate organism.... Furthermore, only within this realm can one be understood by his fellow-men, and only in it can he work together with them. Only in the world of everyday life can a common, communicative, surrounding world be constituted." (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, p. 3)

The "system" is the apparatus of political and economic factors, processes and institutions that complex modern society requires for its continued operation.

Viewed in such terms it is evident that cultural psychology, with its conceptions of culture as intentional world, as mediational means, focuses on lifeworld. Such conceptions need to be complemented and extended by attention to the institutional apparatus in which the lifeworld is embedded (and which it in turn grounds).

The second move entails focusing in on the details of human relationship. Foucault (1982) has pointed out the influence of “three types of relationships which in fact always overlap one another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end” (p. 218): relations of instrumental action, communication, and power. To the first belong “things,... perfected technique, and the transformation of the real,” to the second “signs, communication, reciprocity, and the production of meaning” and to the last “the domination of the means of constraint, of inequality, and the action of men upon other men” (p. 217-8).

Evidently Piagetian genetic epistemology, with its emphasis on logico-mathematical knowledge, has attended solely to the first type of relationship. Developmental psychologists have begun to correct this by adding attention to the second, and now the third. One way to do this is to extend the notion of cultural tools to include “cultural forms.” (The chapters by Mark Tappan, by Lyn Mikel Brown, by Linda Rogers, and by Peter McLaren and Zeus Leonardo do this.) Culture can be viewed as a source of messages that young children--along with the rest of us--are always receiving and passing along to others. Such an approach to culture focuses not so much on setting or context as on the semiotics of symbolic artifacts (cf. Thompson, 1990; Eagleton, 1991). We can view attention to “voice,” as Carol Gilligan (1977; 1982) has done, as a version of this. Such an approach is likely to employ close textual reading, though this can draw for its techniques and logic on a whole range of interpretive approaches, including semiotics, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, hermeneutics, and so on. The role of interpretation becomes central, starting with the “preinterpreted” character of what is investigated--for texts and messages are already understood by participants, before the researcher comes along. This is culture now viewed not so much as a whole way of life but as the bits and pieces with which we weave a way of living. Attention is directed to the performative aspects of everyday action, to the ideological role and effects of the metaphors and messages whose sources range from the commercial media to casual gossip.

It may be useful, then, to draw a rough-and-ready distinction among three conceptions of culture. The first views culture as mediational means, as the arrangements of artifacts, practices and events that make up an intentional world. The second views culture as the play of power, as a place and process of division, exclusion and domination. And the third finds culture in the semiotic forms of messages and texts in human communication. These three are by no means

mutually exclusive: one could conceivably draw on all of them, and consider the influence on children as power is enacted in messages circulating through one or more forms of life.

But the three-fold division is a helpful one, in part because in parallel to these three conceptions of culture we can anticipate three broad strategies of critique. After all, “every theory of criticism is implicitly a theory of culture” (Gunn, 1987, p. 5). The first seeks to disclose how culture provides conditions for a possible way of life. The second diagnoses the operation of power and its consequent exploitations and coercions. And the third aims to read critically, to disclose the operation of subtexts.

### What is critique?

**cri.tique** : an act of criticizing; *esp* : a critical estimate or discussion

**crit.i.cism** **1 a** : the act or criticizing usu. unfavorably **b** : a critical observation or remark

**c** : CRITIQUE **2** : the art of evaluating or analyzing with knowledge and propriety works of art or literature **3** : the scientific investigation of literary documents (as the Bible) in regard to such matters as origin, text, composition, character, or history. (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary)

Whether one starts to attend to the impact of the larger societal system of people’s lives and communities, or to the role of power and ideology in people’s everyday mundane interaction, one has begun to invoke something of a critical perspective in ones work. But what range of forms can this critical perspective take in developmental psychology, and how might it be combined with an exploration of the role of culture?

Two senses of the term “critical” are frequently confused, and sometimes combined. “Critique” has, since Kant at least, signified the examination of the *conditions of the possibility* of some phenomenon; Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787/1965) considered the epistemological conditions necessary for human perception and reasoning to be possible. But “critique” has, especially in the United States, also come to be understood as a politically-slanted identification of forms of exploitation and the criticism of those considered responsible. The conflation of these two senses of “critique” can probably be placed at the door of Karl Marx, who considered exploitation of wage laborers to be a condition for the possibility of a capitalist economy. Within critical pedagogy, for instance, both these senses of critique are still operative, linked in the way Marx linked them, though popular perception of critical pedagogy sometimes notes only what is taken as a fondness for complaint. To many people who wish not to practice it and who are uncomfortable with those who do, critique seems simply the habit of criticism, of carping. We hope to make clear that this is a mistaken view. On the contrary, cultural analysis and critique are intimately linked.

When culture is conceptualized as a medium, as an intentional world, critique in the first sense, that of uncovering the conditions for the possibility of a particular form of life, is readily invoked, for this critique is simply a matter of articulating the context this culture provides for a specific way of living.

Such a strategy of critique requires researchers to be both engaged and reflective. In this regard cultural psychology already, despite the absence of an explicit political stance, involves critique. This can be seen in the reflective awareness it encourages on the part of the psychologist, as theorist, researcher and practitioner, that he or she is also a member of a culture—of various cultures, in fact, from the professional to the local to the national and beyond. And one impetus for cultural psychology has been dissatisfaction with the questionable value-judgments flowing from traditional cross-cultural research, with its characterizations of “primitive” thinking. Criticism of the hidden cultural basis of such prejudiced cultural comparisons has motivated aims to reconstruct the methodology and aims of psychology.

One larger issue here is the political role and responsibilities of the scholar, theorist, and researcher, relatively privileged, and involved in the production of knowledge. For example, Jaan Valsiner has argued that developmental psychology has remained intellectually indebted to the traditions and social expectations of the Western societies in which it emerged. Children in these societies (one might add, typically white, middle-class, male children) have provided the unquestioned norms that have oriented psychologists in their investigations. As psychologists have increasingly come to see development as an interaction between organism and its environment interest in cross-cultural research should have increased, but this has not been the case. And an emphasis has largely been lacking “on culture as an *organizer* of an individual child’s development.” The result is that “the core of contemporary developmental psychology... remains remarkably separate from issues of cultural organization of childhood in different societies” (Valsiner, 1989a, p. 3).

If one adopts the second conception of culture, as practices of division, exclusion and domination, the critical strategy of diagnosing these practices of power, and seeking to undo their effects, is an evident one. To the extent that critique is concerned with understanding and combating oppression focused on gender, race, class and sexual orientation, the common moral objective is “to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (McLaren, 1995, p. 168). To the extent that critique is concerned with the dynamics, contradictions, and asymmetries of power and privilege in human experience, researchers must understand that knowledge is always a social and ideological construction tied to particular interests, relationships, and discursive practices. Feminist critique (e.g., Walkerdine, 1988, 1997) and critical

theory, for example, evidently take such an approach; both seek to draw attention to forms of systematic oppression.

This kind of critique can take the form of a challenge to the culture of one's own discipline. Several chapters in this book (and in a sense the book as a whole) challenge in fundamental ways the positivist, decontextual, ahistorical, and purportedly value-neutral analysis employed by most traditional developmental inquiry among psychologists, anthropologists, and educational researchers and practitioners. The assertion that these are sciences that seek and can achieve objective, context-free knowledge is denied by efforts to apply research findings, as well as theories and methods, to non-Western cultural contexts. "At a minimum, such applications overlook important areas of psychological phenomenology that are relevant in those cultures but absent in Western ones, such as children's development in polygamic families" (Valsiner, 1989a, p. 4). Ostensibly "objective" knowledge turns out to be culture-specific, inapplicable to other cultural conditions.

A researcher's interpretation is always shaped by the culture, the tradition, from which they come. And this means in turn that the legitimacy and authority of that tradition must be questioned. This raises complex issues concerning the nature of the relationship between critique and culture. Does criticism require somehow standing outside the traditional practices, the culture, of a community, in order to evaluate it? But how is such a stance possible?

One possible resolution to this issue is found in "positional epistemology," the view that those who are oppressed are better able to discern the forms and forces of power than those who employ them. One root of this is Hegel's depiction of the "master-slave dialectic," where since the slave must grapple with the exigencies of life in order to meet the demands of the master, who remains dependent, it is the former rather than the latter who comes to see things clearly. Feminist "consciousness raising" has a similar basis, as does Lukács' (1923/1988) depiction of "class consciousness": the interpretive frame the working class develop as a result of their position in the economic class-structure of society. To speak of only one of the chapters in this volume, Menon and Shweder effectively turn the strategies of positional epistemology back on those who would utilize them to quickly and formulaically.

And, third, if one conceives of culture as manifest in semiotic forms, critique can logically take on the task of the appraisal of the ideology of these forms, and the effort to diagnose their latent operation, the hidden interests at work in messages and texts. The analysis of cultural forms and the ways they are produced and received in social interaction and human relationship comes in many shapes and sizes--narrative analysis, conversation analysis, argument analysis, reader response theory, etc.--with as many nuances in their critical stance. But in general they can be subsumed within a hermeneutic logic of inquiry, and entail a "depth hermeneutics," a

“hermeneutics of suspicion” (cf. Thompson, 1990; Ricoeur, 1973/1990; Packer & Addison, 1989; Packer, 1999).

Hermeneutics has advanced from the study of religious and literary texts to the examination of human action (Packer, 1985). Texts, messages, signs, gestures, and utterances have a *performative* character; they don’t merely convey sense, they are ways of acting on people—moves in a language game. But censorship, displacement and substitution conceal the operative principles, hence analysis takes a critical turn. Unmasking ideology is necessary when what is *said* denies and disguises what is being *done*; when communication and meta-communication clash; when interpersonal knots are being tied.

### **Overview of the chapters**

These three forms of critique certainly don’t exhaust all the possibilities; again, our intention has been to preview the approaches to culture and critique explored by the authors of the chapters that follow. Now we’ve completed this preview we can offer the reader a succinct overview of each of these chapters, with an ear to the types of discourse in which cultural and critical considerations make their appearance. Then we shall consider some broader considerations they raise. We have divided the chapters into three sections on the basis of the *primary* way in which they deal with culture, though as we’ve noted there is much overlap.

#### **I. Culture as the ground for a form of life**

Katherine Brown and Michael Cole, in chapter 2, “A utopian methodology as a tool for cultural and critical psychologies: Toward a positive critical theory,” draw upon and extend their conception of cultural psychology. They describe a program of research for the study of development in the context of a community, one that involves distinct phases of involvement of the researcher with the community of people who constitute the subject of the research.

In order to develop what they call a “positive critical theory,” Brown and Cole locate their work in relation to the discourses of critical theory, critical communication studies, feminism, and critical pedagogy. They reject the pessimism they associate especially with critical theorist Theodore Adorno, the view that all efforts at radical change are “doomed to fail.” Brown and Cole argue that failure is not inevitable, and they also point out that even when it does happen, we can still learn something valuable.

Their “utopian methodology” typically involves four phases. In the first of these, issues are identified which are problematic for the community and for which the researchers believe they have relevant knowledge. In the second phase, the researchers enter into joint activity with the community to create an alternative set of circumstances that constitute an hypothesis about

the changes in social practices needed to overcome the problem. The third phase is an evaluation of two aspects of the second one: whether the hypothesized new conditions were in fact created and, if so, whether the anticipated changes in the problem situation came about. If the team of researchers and community members failed to constitute the needed new forms of practice the research now recycles, seeking revisions of the theory of activity creation. If the new forms of activity were created but did not have the desired effect, the research recycles in order to determine what was wrong with the hypothesized theory.

But if the new activity was successfully created and had the desired effects, the research enters its fourth phase--diffusing the innovation more broadly throughout the community and seeking to sustain it. This is the "utopian goal": to diffuse the new problem-dissolving practice through the community in a sustainable way. Such a goal is rarely achieved, but even when it is not accomplished the ways diffusion fails offer a critique of the theory at all levels, enabling a re-evaluation and initiating a new cycle.

Brown and Cole illustrate these ideas with a description of a project to create new forms of educational activity for children during after-school hours: the "Fifth Dimension." The concern to which this research was addressed was the desire of a community to provide high quality educational experiences for their children, and especially to provide the children with access to, and expertise in, the use of new communication and information technologies. The utopian goal was the creation and sustainable maintenance of after-school activities in existing community institutions brought about through collaboration between universities and communities. Brown and Cole provide an overview of the success and failure of a number of such efforts, efforts that have yielded valuable evidence about the quality of the theory guiding their work and about the kinds of condition which must be taken into account to make progress toward the utopian goal, conditions not ordinarily considered in educational innovations.

In chapter 3, "The return of the 'White man's burden': The encounter between the moral discourse of anthropology and the domestic life of Oriya women," Usha Menon and Richard Shweder engage in an anthropology informed by a cultural psychology. Their aim is to understand and interpret the lives of Hindu women living in a temple town in India. They seek to accomplish this through a conjunction of sensitive ethnography and interpretive analysis. One result is an account of the women's conceptions of the phases of their life, conceptions that draw upon well-articulated two, four, or five phase models of the life course (and these models neatly nest hierarchically). Menon and Shweder first explore how these models are defined in terms of changes in responsibility to others, in management of the family, and in moral duty. They then step back to consider how other anthropologists have represented and evaluated Hindu women's lives. They argue that those studies that have adopted a critical feminist stance, typically

portraying these women as either “passive victims” or “clandestine rebels,” have adopted implicit presuppositions about the moral superiority of the West, the unitary category of “women,” the ubiquity of male dominance, and consequently the moral obligation of Western intellectuals to “rescue” members of the cultures they visit and study.

It might be said that Menon and Shweder are engaged in the critique of critique, raising the question of whose values should be drawn on when (western) anthropologists visit (eastern) indigenous people. They seek to defend a local, “emic,” moral framework against those who would critique it as embodying an abstract patriarchal ideology. Turning the tables, Menon and Shweder seek to expose the ideology, the “hidden and unexamined presuppositions,” at work in anthropologists’ accounts.

Such presuppositions amount to a “thin” theory of moral goods such as “autonomy” and “individuality.” This theory, Menon and Shweder argue, is projected by critical ethnography onto a very different moral order, a different “cultural reality,” one in which women are seen--by both genders--as playing a crucial role in the social reproduction of the family and the larger social order, and in which men and women relate through “difference and solidarity” rather than “equality and competition.” If anything curbs the power these women have, power they view as both cultural and natural, it is self-discipline rather than subordination. Voluntary service to ones responsibilities as a devoted servant of the divine has been interpreted as humiliating subservience and abusive exploitation, but in actuality the Oriya Hindu women are not cultural dopes but reflective agents, aware of both the costs and the rewards of their choices.

Since for Menon and Shweder a culture is defined by its morality, obtuse moral critique is tantamount to a denial of the reality of a way of life. They don’t wish to rule out all criticism of a culture--their stance is not a cultural or ethical relativism--but it must start with a genuine respect for the inner logic, both ethical and intellectual, of that culture. They insist that the anthropologist’s journey must be a dialectical one, and reflexively so--or it can become “a late 20th century version of cognitive and moral imperialism.”

In chapter 4, “Changing classes: Shifting the trajectory of development in school,” Martin Packer also engages with critical pedagogy, while using Habermas’ distinction between lifeworld and system to explore differences between local educational reforms that acknowledged the cultural and relational character of teaching and learning, and state and national reforms that sought to rationalize public schooling as a “system.” Packer argues that too often students’ resistance in the school classroom is portrayed as their only active form of involvement. But developmentalists insist that the child is never merely a passive recipient of information, so Packer sets out to understand the active cultural work that occurs in every school classroom, whether students resist or not. He describes a participatory research project within a small school district in a U.S.

Midwestern rust-belt state. The community grew up during the Second World War around a massive plant constructed by the Ford Motor Company for mass-production of B-24 bombers, and subsequently remodeled by General Motors for automobile assembly. GM closed the plant in 1992, providing an occasion to study the roles schools play in a community's response to economic dislocation and job loss. Packer describes how the schools had already begun to prepare by redefining the endpoint of learning and development--by seeking forms of pedagogy that would suit the needs and attitude of working-class children, raised within fordism's division of labor. The local reformers, Packer argues, were aware that teaching and learning is a relational and cultural phenomenon, and he contrasts this with the efforts at rationalization that state and federal school reform initiatives brought to bear on the district with dire consequences. These efforts misinterpreted teaching as either delivery of a public good, or production of a product.

Here the culture of the classroom is one focus, but that culture is located within larger political and economic systems. Indeed, Packer views the state and federal reform initiatives precisely as efforts to change the linkages between the individual classroom and these larger systems. He defends the "practitioners' expertise" that informed local reform initiatives, taking this as his grounding from which to critique the large-scale reforms.

## **II. Culture as the operation of power**

In chapter 5, "Critical pedagogy and children in day care," Robin Leavitt reviews issues and questions that emerge from her critical inquiry into young children's lived experiences within day care programs. Her work is influenced by "multiple, diverse texts" that include phenomenology, postmodernism, interactionism, feminism, and poststructuralism, and Leavitt has crafted an interpretive ethnographic approach that allows her to question the character of her own role as researcher, and to grant that even the youngest children are active agents in the construction of their personal lives and social worlds. Yet her approach also allows her to consider how one can balance this position with a developmental perspective on children's emerging competencies and developmental limitations. How can caregivers, charged with the mission of socialization, enter into the lives of children and give them voice?

Leavitt reminds us that a critical investigation of children's lived experiences is an investigation of their political position in the social world--what they are allowed to do and how they are understood, defined, and treated by adults. Her particular focus is on forms of social control within these settings--how time and space monitor the body, and how social identities are produced by forms of institutionalized power. Leavitt, following Foucault's lead, views power as exercised rather than possessed, embedded in the micro-relations of everyday life, present in the daily routines and interactions between children and their caregivers. Thus, power is studied at

the level of everyday practices, “where it installs itself and produces real effects” (Foucault, 1980). A critical perspective applied to children in day care must, it follows, explore the hegemony produced in the everyday routines and rituals of the day care center, “the terrain of conflict and struggle” (Giroux, 1991), and look for places of resistance. What is the relationship between children’s empowerment and disempowerment and their caregivers’ experience of power and its lack within these institutionalized settings?

Leavitt describes with subtlety the power relations that operate in the everyday, commonplace interactions among young children and their daycare providers, showing that these relations flow both ways. She illuminates how children’s dependency can be, given the economic and political conditions of childcare in the U.S., oppressive of caregivers. She reaches the conclusion that the caregivers’ command over children’s bodies in space and time is a fundamental, pervasive source of social power in and over children’s everyday lives. But she also insists that the children must be considered competent dialogic participants, able to participate in an unmasking of the hegemony they are subjected to. By means of writing interpretive narratives, “tales from the field,” Leavitt illuminates the dynamics and asymmetries of power within day care settings, and children’s developmental, situated otherness.

Chapter 6, Elizabeth Debold’s “Engendering subjects: A Foucauldian analysis of developmental gender differences,” draws, like Robin Leavitt, upon Michel Foucault’s notion of culture as a web of connections, even identities, among power, knowledge, and desire. This perspective on culture provides Debold with a critical framework for examining our fascination, both as a society and individuals, with gender identity and gender differences. Gender, Debold proposes, is a way of knowing and categorizing self, a way of disciplining self, and a basis for identity. But it is also a traumatic splitting against which resistance can be observed at specific points of discontinuity in both historical and psychological transformation.

Foucault (1980) argued that knowledge creates power and vice versa; that the use of power is evident in what we know as ourselves and our expectations of the “normal,” as well as in how we experience our bodies. Knowledge of social norms creates desire to embody those norms, and this is one of the effects of power. Foucault explored discontinuities in history--times of rebellion and resistance--as moments when power is especially at play. Thus Debold is led to explore two discontinuities in the individual psychological development of gendered subjectivity, searching for evidence of the developing child’s incorporation of engendered power relations. Specifically, she examines early childhood in boys and early adolescence in girls.

Early childhood, ages 3-5, has long been understood as a time of psychological crisis for boys, evidenced by the greater prevalence of symptoms of psychological distress. Recent research indicates that early adolescence poses a similar psychological crisis for girls. These two times

correspond with the development of greater cognitive capacities by which, Debold argues, children incorporate gendered power relations. Her analysis interprets the embodiment of masculinity and femininity as, in part, strategic responses to psychological distress, and so begins to explain gender differences not simply in behavior and attitude but also in mental disorder and even physical disease. Debold shows how children's expanding ability to understand the world around them, to "imagine, extrapolate and anticipate increasingly abstract forms of pleasure and pain," brings them into relations of power that are frightening, even traumatic. She emphasizes that division and distinction--especially that between 'male' and 'female'--are not only cultural, or only cognitive. Division is a psychological process that divides each of us internally. The social practices that divide people from one another also involve a psychic splitting that each of us is subject to and that, paradoxically, renders us 'normal.'

### **III. Culture as the circulation of semiotic forms**

Chapter 7, by Linda Rogers, titled, "Exploring the felt pathways of the self: From experience to meaning-making in children, K-5," examines elementary school-age children's understanding of their home, school, and peer interactions. Rogers draws on Umberto Eco's (1979) semiotics to read children's narratives and interview responses in order to understand how they reacted in their understanding of the signs and symbols of their environment. She argues that it is context that shapes moral and intellectual understanding, rather than gender or developmental stage. The children she studied learned not only how their world functioned, and who was important in their interactions, but also began constructing concepts of personal identity, including concepts of gender behavior. These children used the experiences available in their immediate environment to create patterns of meaning which Rogers sees formed in complex narrative self-structures (Danesi & Santeramo, 1992) that deal with issues such as friendship. These ways of understanding, these "meaning making systems," were forged from the sensed life of the child, knowledge gained from making sense of doing and living, everyday experience. Rogers draws from Vico (1968) to explore how, in a world in which adults play the dominant role, children find even silence and non-responsiveness important signs that require interpretation.

Lyn Mikel Brown is also concerned with gender identity. In chapter 8, titled "Adolescent girls, class, and the cultures of femininity," Brown, like Debold (and Tappan, as we shall see), considers the messages and pressures that culture can deliver. Her approach to culture derives not from Vygotsky and the notion of cultural tools, but from Gilligan's work on women's development and their "different voice." The notion of voice emerged casually in Gilligan's 1982 book--in phrases like "discovery of an inner voice," "voice of self and others," and "the inner

dialogue of voices to which she attends"--but the concept was developed in her research group. Brown characterizes voice in complex terms, as "a relational, discursive phenomenon--linguistically constituted, socially constructed, physically embodied and, thus, by definition, polyphonic, layered, infinitely varied, often contradictory, fragmented, and rich with intentions." Brown locates her work between, on the one hand, a feminist poststructuralism that sees each of us as subject to language and, on the other hand, an appreciation of an authentic self. She thus acknowledges a tension between agent and social order, a gap between subjectivity and language, within which resistance can take place.

It is in resistance that Brown is able to ground her critique of white, middle-class messages about "femininity." A good deal of recent research in psychology and education has documented the psychological struggles and losses adolescent girls sustain as they confront cultural pressures and messages to be traditionally feminine--i.e., to be nice and kind, silent, passive and accommodating. Unfortunately, because so little attention has been given to girls who stand outside white and middle-class culture, researchers rarely interrogate the very notions of culture and femininity on which their work rests.

In an effort to counter this bias, Brown explores the ways sixth, seventh, and eighth grade girls from working-class and poor families in rural Maine understand, express, and react to cultural definitions of femininity. She draws from videotaped focus groups and individual interviews, asking us to attend to the "class accent" in these girls' voices. Brown suggests that we think of social class as an "accent": literally and metaphorically a manner, a style, of speaking. "Voice" now has a dimension of social class as well as gender. And gender, she suggests, is a performance, a fiction, that invokes an ideal and so never quite contains the person. Consequently performance can become parody. Brown underscores the contradictory nature of what constitutes appropriately feminine behavior for these working-class girls. It is behavior radically different from the dominant white middle-class cultural ideal; behavior that offers these girls a wide range of physical and verbal expression not usually considered under the rubric of femininity. "Raucous, active, funny, loud, and loving... not, as it were, a 'pretty' sight," writes Brown. She suggests, however, that while such behavior may signal a direct rejection of middle-class propriety and, in this sense, a resistance to the dominant ideologies of femaleness as passive, accommodating and helpless, it may also work to cement the girls' lower caste status. That is to say, the very behavior that frees them from stereotypical gender conventions may also label them, according to the dominant notions of femininity, socially inferior.

In chapter 9, "The cultural reproduction of masculinity: A critical perspective on boys' development," Mark Tappan draws on Vygotsky's notion of cultural tools, the "mediational means" whose appropriation shapes development. In a study of young boys' social and

personality development, drawing on interviews with boys in first, second, and third grades living in rural Maine, Tappan seeks to understand how identity is forged in and by culture.

Tappan locates his work in contradistinction to the psychodynamic perspective that, of course, goes back to Freud, though it is Chodorow's account of parental identification in early childhood and its connection to gender identity that Tappan wishes to question. Chodorow leaves unanswered, Tappan suggests, questions about the role of culture in gender identity formation, and to correct this omission he draws on work by Penuel and Wertsch that sees identity shaped by "cultural tools in the form of ideologies." He attends to the ideology of the messages that culture offers and circulates to young boys. With this extension of the notion of cultural tool to include messages, "cultural forms," Tappan introduces a critical dimension to his analysis.

Tappan pays particular attention to the phenomenon of "male bonding," described by Stoltenberg (1992) as a process by which groups of boys or men affirm their masculinity by verbally and/or physically harassing, abusing, and otherwise oppressing those--typically females, gay men, weaker males, or animals--who are perceived to be less powerful. Taking as his starting point an incident of sexual harassment perpetrated by some of the first-grade boys against a group of girls in their class, Tappan argues that male bonding is a ritual and discursive process by which, in the context of their interactions with peers, boys internalize and thus reproduce cultural messages about the necessary links between masculinity, power, and violence. This analysis suggests, Tappan concludes, that peer interaction deserves the attention of a critical developmental psychology, as a locus of socialization and developmental processes that perpetuate or reproduce oppressive social relations and practices. Critical pedagogy has generally approached the processes of social and cultural reproduction by attending instead to the institution of school, and the ways it perpetuates or reproduces social relationships, attitudes, and dynamics necessary to sustain dominant gender, class, and cultural relations of the larger society.

Tappan ends with some suggestions about how teachers and parents might encourage young boys to resist pressure to engage in male bonding, and could, instead, develop relations with both boys and girls characterized by genuine mutuality, respect, and responsiveness.

Critical theory has taken the approach of locating communities and the lifeworld of their cultures within larger societal structures, institutions and dynamics, thereby drawing attention to conflict and contradiction, inequality and exploitation, and the problems of legitimation that attend the maintenance of any community. Critical pedagogy (e.g. Apple, 1982; Willis, 1977/1981; Giroux, 1983; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; McLaren, 1989) has developed the implications of critical theory for the institutions of schooling in Western society. Schools are seen as important sites for the

reproduction of a society whose economic organization is capitalist, through the preparation of young people for the particular forms of their participation in its inequities and exploitations. The development of the child is seen as typically subordinated to and directed by the imperatives of the economy and, though less attention tends to be paid to this, to the demands of the state.

But critical pedagogy has recently taken a new direction, into the analysis of cultural forms. Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren have recently emphasized that cultural studies should take seriously debates in education and the issue of pedagogy (Giroux & McLaren, 1994) (and a new journal of essays, *the review of Education/ Pedagogy/ Cultural Studies*, edited by Patrick Shannon and Giroux, undertakes this). Chapter 10, by Peter McLaren and Zeus Leonardo, “‘Dead Poets Society’: Deconstructing surveillance pedagogy,” illustrates this well. McLaren and Leonardo leave school for a trip to the movies. They consider one recent example of a popular genre: the “school movie.” Peter Weir’s film *Dead Poets Society* is one of a kind with films like *Stand and Deliver*, *Dangerous Minds*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, even in some respects Lindsay Anderson’s *If...* In the main, these films portray the arrival, unexpected triumph, and ultimate downfall of a heroic figure who is able, through charismatic example and energetic exhortation, to connect with truculent students in ways others have not. In *Dead Poet’s Society*, the choice of comedian-turned-character actor Robin Williams to play teacher John Keating already suggests that this mold will not be broken.

McLaren and Leonardo explain how popular culture can be “valuable terrain for a critical study of race, class, gender, and sexual relations,” and in *Dead Poets Society* in particular they find seductive themes of liberation and learning, but also a lack of attention to social contradictions that ultimately undermines the film’s progressive potential. McLaren and Leonardo show this film in their graduate school classroom, and John Keating is seen at first by students who view the film as an embodiment of critical pedagogy, but they are soon able to point out the limitations of his pedagogical philosophy and praxis. Keating calls into question his students’ conformism with their New England boys prep school’s practices of discipline and authority, inviting them to “Seize the day!” But he provides them with no vocabulary with which to formulate a truly political project. The movie represents resistance merely as personal revelation rather than rebellion. This is, Leonardo and McLaren conclude, the “romantic pedagogy of individual expression,” seductively appealing to a mainstream audience, but also instructive for a critical pedagogy.

### **Intersections and projections**

It becomes evident on surveying these chapters that despite their common aim and the common forum for which most of them were initially prepared, there are appreciable differences in the way culture is introduced as a factor to be considered, and what the “cultural perspective” brings

into view in each case. There are equally important differences in the form, character and purpose to which critique is put, and in the consequences of adopting a “critical perspective.” It is helpful to consider the scope of these variations; they derive, to be sure, from the diverse sources drawn upon by the authors as the study of culture has seen “an unprecedented international boom” and emerged as “an alchemy,” with “no distinct methodology” but “bricolage,” and with influences as diverse as ethnography, media studies, and text criticism (Nelson, Treichler & Grossberg, 1992, pp. 1, 2; cf. Agger, 1992).

We’ve distinguished three distinct approaches to culture, and three to critique. Culture can be the “medium” in which a form of life blossoms, the product of the play of power, or the flow of messages and semiotic forms. Critique can be an unveiling of the conditions of possibility, an unmasking of violence and exploitation, or the decoding of a text. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and although we’ve matched them into pairs in this introduction, the chapters are not so constrained. Nonetheless a certain regularity can be perceived among them.

For example, attention to culture as the ground for a form of life is coupled here with efforts to nurture, cultivate and protect that life-form. Katherine Brown and Michael Cole put into practice the notion that culture provides mediational means, building a system of artifacts that has diagnostic power. Their critique has a deconstructive edge to it, too, as they seek to question and overthrow a set of binary divisions that define the system their “after-school” activity stands outside of. Usha Menon and Richard Shweder similarly approach culture as the ground for a definition of the life-course, and they then turn to protect it from feminist critique, unmasking a perpetuated colonialism, deconstructing the narratives of their own discipline of anthropology. Martin Packer similarly seeks to protect the local culture of a working-class school district from the dictates of representatives of a “system” of public schooling, defending the ethos of the local community and contrasting it with imposed system imperatives. In each of these chapters we find an effort to disclose and defend the inner rationality and morality of a way of life (Brown and Cole in addition seek to *create* a lifeworld without division; to foster a culture) conjoined with sensitivity to the threats to which this way of life is vulnerable.

Attention to culture as a heterogeneity of practices where power and knowledge intersect--and to action on another’s action--draws attention to the marks left by the application of power on the growing child. Robin Leavitt moves us with her depictions of children constrained in day care settings, Elizabeth Debold with her portrayals of the traumatic quality of developmental transformation. In both cases the aim is to show us something hitherto obscured or unnoticed, to have us consider the costs of what has gone by the name of “education” or “progress.”

And we find attention to cultural forms, to messages that circulate, and to the voices, both literal and metaphorical, with which they are produced, coupled with a critical appraisal of these performances. Lyn Mikel Brown hears the class accents of a voice that mocks the ideology of femininity; Zeus Leonardo and Peter McLaren view the antics of Robin Williams as a muted, well-intentioned but ineffectual critique of schooling; Linda Rogers reads children's narratives as resistance to adult dominance; Mark Tappan finds the bonds of male identity forged in the flames of male violence.

Viewing the chapters in this volume as a whole, we can see several respects in which the work they report and represent offers significant contributions to the study of human development. First, by bringing an increasing awareness of the position and stance of the researcher. Second, by providing an increased understanding of the linkages between development, society and history. Third, by encouraging an appreciation that development involves the creation of a subject, a human being. We close by briefly considering each of these contributions in turn.

Youniss (1983) has declared that "developmentalists have to start from a different definition of science and perhaps create that science anew," in a manner that "places the discipline in a historical and sociological context and, by necessity, does the same for the subjects of our studies" (p. 49-50). The chapters in this volume aim to do just this. Several of the chapters draw the reader's attention to ways conceptions of development stem not just from the children who are studied, but also from the assumptions, the values, the cultural background, of the investigator, researcher, and theorist. For example, Menon and Shweder articulate the newly dialectical character of their own inquiry and of cultural psychology more broadly: it is "a means to understanding one's self and one's own culture by journeying through other selves in other cultures." Brown and Cole write as researchers who have become designers of alternative activities; here the divide between research and practice is overthrown. Leavitt considers the dilemmas of the "critical researcher." Debold interrogates the notion that we all need a sense of "identity." All draw our attention to the ways accounts of development are legitimized, not least of which is a declaration by a "scientific" psychology concerning what is normal. Furthermore, inquiry feeds back to influence the very practices it seeks to describe. Writing about one's research can change the phenomena one studies. Recent debate over child-centered and behaviorist approaches to such seemingly straightforward matters as toilet-training and parent-child sleeping arrangements illustrates the role of values in inquiry, and the effect of such professional judgments on social practices. With all of this, developmental psychologists have surely relinquished forever the right to appeal to a criterion of natural and universal progress.

George Marcus (1986) has proposed that we make a final break from the Western historical metanarratives employed unthinkingly by classic developmental theory, and with its historical determination. The relation between the process of human change and its description must, he says, be recognized as complex and two-way: an ethnography, for example, is “a story that is synonymous with addressing the construction of personal and collective identity itself” (p. 317). Development and its investigation fuse together. The chapters in this volume are crafting new kinds of narrative, as developmentalists find new places to stand. And they present new types of inquiry that break the mold of “method.”

The second contribution the authors in this volume have begun to make is a more powerful grasp of the connections between individual development and the historical reproduction and transformation of society. As Debold puts it, “We develop... along two axes of history--cultural history and the individual lifespan.”

Throughout the history of developmental psychology, most descriptions of children’s development have portrayed it as universal, natural, and so asocial and ahistorical. Early descriptions tended to base their proposals for improved parenting and schooling on claims about children’s “nature”--whether that nature be described as an inherent plasticity which society might shape to its ends, or whether it be portrayed as passions and impulses that amounted to a recapitulation of earlier social forms. Empiricist theories of development, from Locke to Skinner, typically insisted that the child is inherently plastic and malleable, and has a final form that is shaped by society. Romantic theories emphasized the educability of human nature, and even linked this to a recapitulation of history; G. Stanley Hall (1904), for instance, saw in the stages of psychological growth “a repetition of racial history” (p. viii). Even genetic epistemology, despite its emphasis on the active child, still sometimes turned into a recapitulation theory: although the child is presented as an active explorer of and theorizer about the world, what is discovered through this exploration is, somewhat inexplicably, the same for all (cf. Popkewitz, 1998).

Of course disciplines other than psychology, notably anthropology and sociology, as well as interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies, have grappled with varying success with the relationship between individual, society, and history. Nonetheless, these disciplines have often neglected to consider how the social agent develops, and have taken adults as the objects of their examination. Miller and Goodnow (1995) have noted a growing recognition that development occurs in context, but “models that integrate the cultural with the developmental... are still not readily to hand” (p. 7). Psychology is pretty much alone among the social sciences in paying serious attention to the processes whereby infants become effective--or ineffective--members of society. The other social sciences either reduce these processes to the supposedly unproblematic

“socialization” of the individual, or ignore them altogether, starting with the adult, when such processes are supposedly completed.

Clearly the trajectory of change that we call development is not natural and pre-given, nor uncontested and agreed-upon by all. Communities in which a single pathway to adulthood is accepted unquestioningly are found rarely, if at all. In postindustrial societies any apparent consensus over the value of ubiquitous movement towards ends such as ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ disguises “profound rifts” and disparate appeals to moral ends thin enough to permit multiple interpretations and implementations (Taylor, 1989, p. 495). We need to grasp the ways a child becomes a skilled participant in the traditional historical practices of a community, and at the same time how, in doing this, the child makes an active contribution to reproducing and transforming these practices.

Critical pedagogy, for example, has adopted an interpretive framework for thinking about human development in which development is seen first of all as intimately linked to the reproduction of society. At its best, critical pedagogy articulates the historical dynamic that runs through human development: the way changing economic and political circumstances lead to changed demands on children, and the active way they engage with adults.

The authors of the chapters in this book see the connections between children’s development and societal organization and change as intimate and complex. What counts as development, and the pathways whereby that endpoint is sought, are defined by societal practices and institutions. Viewed at the level of cohort rather than individual, children’s development *is* the reproduction of a society. “Any theory of child socialization,” wrote John O’Neill (1973, p. 65), “is implicitly a theory of the construction of social reality, if not of a particular historical social order.”

And so, to give just the simplest summary, we find the authors engaged in subtle efforts to trace how children and adults move along the social trajectories that define class (Brown, Packer, McLaren & Leonardo), gender (Tappan, Debold, Menon & Shweder, Brown, Rogers), and ethnicity (Menon & Shweder).

There is, of course, much work to be done. The task, as we understand it, is to characterize and study the reciprocal relationship between child and society with particular attention to temporality and transformation over time, at two scales, those of psychological development and historical change. The complexity of this task is illustrated by a preparatory framework drawn up by Jurgen Habermas, who has distinguished the same three modes of human relationship as Foucault: instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interests (Habermas, 1971). Habermas has sketched a model of ontogenesis, of human development, in which social reproduction processes are associated with each of these domains (Habermas, 1981/1989). In this way he is able to speculatively explore the links between

social evolution (that's to say, history) and children's development. These reproduction processes operate at the same time on the structures of culture, society, and individual. In terms of individual development, *cultural reproduction* is a matter of the reproduction of knowledge pertinent to such tasks as childrearing and education, *social integration* is a matter of the reproduction of patterns of social membership, and *socialization* leads to the formation of identity. Standards of rationality, of solidarity and of responsibility can be applied to these three developmental trajectories respectively.

This is an ambitious formulation, and a speculative one, as Habermas grants. It also rests on questionable rationalist presumptions: Habermas accepts the basic strategies of Kohlberg's rational reconstruction of moral cognition, Piaget's cognitive developmentalism, and Selman's stages of perspective-taking (but cf. Habermas, 1983/1990, p. 116ff). We mention it here because, despite its limitations, it provides a rare model for design of a project to formulate an account of development in social context where the latter is not static but dynamically both precondition and product of human development.

But a quite different kind of framework is suggested when one reads these chapters as a group. It is a framework that distinguishes among--and explores the linkages among--the ground of a way of life (in its larger societal contexts); the relations of power and emotion in care-taking, parenting, teaching and so on; and the circulation of utterances, texts and other symbolic forms. To be sure these three interrelate: the exchange of cultural forms reproduces or transforms relationship, and sustains or fractures the language games within which relationship is possible. And in all this "culture" the child is transformed.

While Habermas considers ontogenesis a matter of growing cognitive competence, the third contribution the work in these chapters makes to a refurbished developmental psychology is to highlight the significance of a notion that development is not simply a matter of the child coming to construct or acquire more effective knowledge, knowledge that is more adequate to the world. The child him- or herself becomes a subject; becomes--in modern industrial and postindustrial societies like the U.S.--an "individual." Leavitt quotes Vandenberg (1971): "The child as a conscious *becoming* being pursues a 'project' of freedom in order to become some-one else and not a being for others."

We begin to glimpse ways to answer the question that "Vygotsky recognized but did not answer... how the child comes to be a person like the adult" (Litowitz, 1993, p. 184) in a process that is "gradual, complex, and conflictual" (p. 194). Development is to be understood not just as a transfer, or even a construction, of cultural knowledge, but as the construction of a person, a process "in which "selves are continually created and re-created" (Miller & Goodnow, 1995, p. 13). Whatever changes are deemed developmental, they are not simply a matter of knowledge, of

epistemology, but of changing motivational and personality structure--ontological changes, transformations in the child's being.

We start to get a feel for the ways what we call development is the transformation that comes about in relationships formed in a shared life-world, albeit relationships that can be traumatic as well as nurturing, misleading even when well-intentioned, relationships nonetheless that provide a sense of purpose and a moral framework. Development entails profound transformations in who the child is, the emergence of the subjectivity of a subject who may be just as neglected in postmodern declaration that the subject is dead as it was in cognitivist declaration that the subject is irrelevant. Piaget insisted that "structuralism calls for a differentiation between the *individual subject*, who does not enter at all, and the *epistemic subject*, that cognitive nucleus which is common to all subjects at the same level" (Piaget, 1970/1988, p. 139). In similar vein Levi-Strauss dismissed the phenomenological subject as an "intolerable spoiled child who for too long has held the philosophical scene and prevented any serious work, drawing exclusive attention to itself" (cited in Pettit, 1975, p. 77). The child may sometimes be a spoiled brat (there's a developmental outcome worthy of greater attention!), but lets not dismiss her so quickly. A hasty rejection of the feeling, caring subject in favor of structure, and reduction of the psychological subject to the role of intangible "generator" of structures which are always "under construction" (Piaget, 1970/1988, p. 140), was no less misleading than a "deconstructed" subject whose existence is said to be illusory. The position adumbrated in the chapters of this book is humane without being overly humanistic.

It is a position in which culture provides the ground for relationships in which human nature is nurtured and mind created; where development is the never-ending effort to understand oneself in a complex world; where evidence of self-understanding is found in cultural forms, prosaic as well as elite; in a constant struggle against scattering and splitting. Marcus (1986) points out how identity is dispersed as children move from one setting to another, and hence multiple. The state and the economy integrate and rationalize these settings and, consequently, our sense of sameness and unity. Marcus has suggested we think of development not in terms of the biological metaphor of accommodation and assimilation but in terms of a political metaphor of accommodation and resistance. The changes that have been portrayed cozily as "knowledge-construction" are also a subjugation to and struggle against power that divides people from each other and also each one of us internally.

The time is ripe, therefore, for publication of the dialogue that takes place in the chapters of this volume, among scholars whose work is at the intersection of the critical, the cultural, and the developmental. The chapters present an array of exciting studies of developmental phenomena; the authors consider the implications of their work for those who are exploring new pedagogical

practices, and also for those who seek new insights about the lived experience of children, adolescents, and adults living in the contemporary world.

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