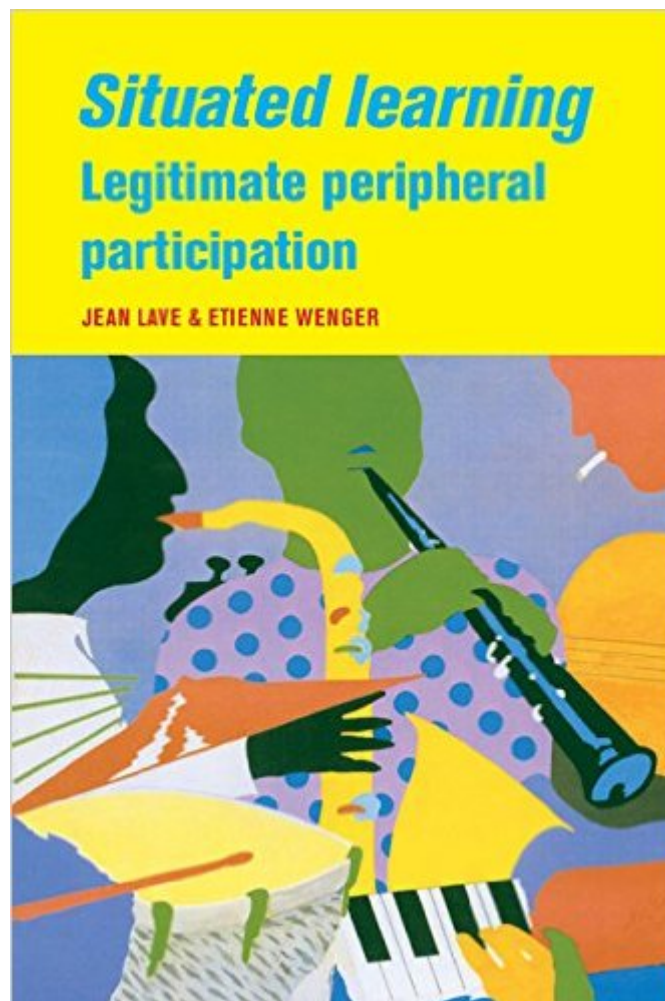


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# Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Learning In Doing: Social, Cognitive And Computational Perspectives)



## Synopsis

In this important theoretical treatise, Jean Lave, anthropologist, and Etienne Wenger, computer scientist, push forward the notion of situated learning--that learning is fundamentally a social process and not solely in the learner's head. The authors maintain that learning viewed as situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process they call legitimate peripheral participation. Learners participate in communities of practitioners, moving toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about crucial relations between newcomers and oldtimers and about their activities, identities, artifacts, knowledge and practice. The communities discussed in the book are midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and recovering alcoholics, however, the process by which participants in those communities learn can be generalized to other social groups.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are interested in the study of situated learning and social practice theory, this is the place to start - the origin of the terms 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP) and 'communities of practice' employed ubiquitously by researchers developing sociocultural critiques of Enlightenment thinking. The book is meant to open the mind, and one established notion that readers are asked to give up is a literal view of apprenticeship based on a single master and apprentice. The Lave & Wenger framework has received some criticism due to the explicit power structure associated with such a

relationship and the uniform learning trajectory that is entailed, but this criticism is no doubt levied by writers who have not read the book, as Lave & Wenger are careful to note that in their quest to find a metaphor for learning that exists outside formal educational contexts and is based on social participation rather than the internal mental processing of the computer metaphor they aim to replace, they needed to take some artistic license. Their aim is to characterize a specific form of learning, LPP, and through their detailed examples, they illustrate types of relationships and forms of participation within which it emerges -- a broader and respecified notion of apprenticeship. This book is programmatic - a specific metaphor for learning is described, it is elaborated through several examples, and major issues are discussed, but for details, you will need to look elsewhere.

Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice* is an analytical treatment that is the antithesis of the light and vibrant *Situated Learning*, but that is the go-to place to understand LPP from every angle and in all its detail.

I wonder if two people have ever had so much fun writing a book together as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Lave's choice of a cover illustration supports my point: she found the artwork at a beer-fest while visiting friends and studying in Europe. Lave and Wenger are world renowned scholars who would rather spend the afternoon in a butcher's kitchen than hobb-knobbing at the faculty lounge. With "*Situated Learning*," the reader is invited to follow Lave and Wenger as they ponder the consequences of doors, tables, timeclocks, work schedules, and union contracts on human development and potential. After reading "*Situated Learning*," it is difficult to imagine the constellation of concepts that make up our modern thinking of what learning is without Lave and Wenger's contributions. Like the artwork on the book's cover, and the story of its origins, Lave and Wenger's analysis restoke the fires fueling the learning sciences. It is not an overstatement to say that this short, sometimes difficult to follow book, is responsible for a whole new generation of thinking and research on learning and its sociocultural consequences. Their analytical objective was simple: dethrone the dominant conceptions of learning in the social sciences and everyday life. In their place, Lave and Wenger offer and illustrate a handful of concepts that students of learning across the social and applied sciences are now using to inspire new insights on the origins of social ascension and strife. I recommend that the reader, too, pick up this book with the intent of having some fun: let your inhibitions, and intellectual reservations, down for a couple of hours and enjoy the show as Lave and Wenger take off the Emperor's (modern psychology's, that is) clothes.

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