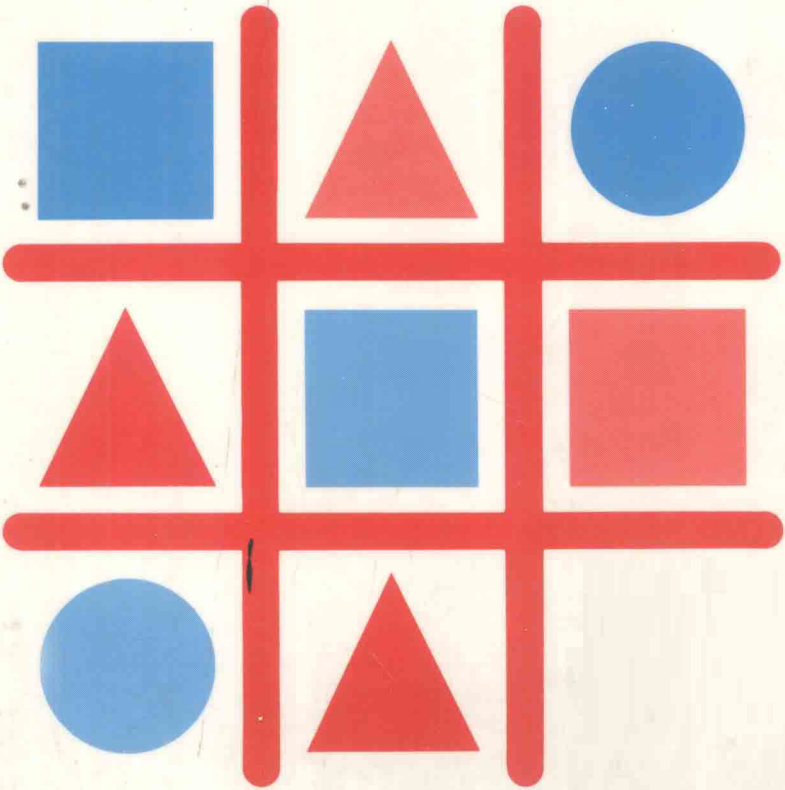
PERGAMON GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY SERIES

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN

Innovative Approaches, Second Edition



Edited by
Gwendolyn Cartledge
JoAnne Fellows Milburn

PERGAMON GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY SERIES
EDITORS
Arnold P. Goldstein, Syracuse University
Leonard Krasner, SUNY at Stony Brook

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN

Innovative Approaches, Second Edition

Edited by
GWENDOLYN CARTLEDGE
Cleveland State University

JOANNE FELLOWS MILBURN
Starr Commonwealth/The Hannah Neil Center for Children

PERGAMON PRESS
New York • Oxford • Beijing • Frankfurt
São Paulo • Sydney • Tokyo • Toronto

Pergamon Press Offices:

U.S.A. Pergamon Press, Maxwell House, Fairview Park, Elmsford, New York 10523, U.S.A.

U.K. Pergamon Press, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford OX3 0BW, England

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA Pergamon Press, Room 4037, Qianmen Hotel, Beijing, People's Republic of China

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY Pergamon Press, Hammerweg 6, D-6242 Kronberg, Federal Republic of Germany

BRAZIL Pergamon Editora, Rua Eça de Queiros, 346, CEP 04011, Paraiso, São Paulo, Brazil

AUSTRALIA Pergamon Press Australia, P.O. Box 544, Potts Point, N.S.W. 2011, Australia

JAPAN Pergamon Press, 8th Floor, Matsuoka Central Building, 1-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan

CANADA Pergamon Press Canada, Suite No 271, 253 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1R5

First printing 1986
Second printing 1988
Third printing 1992

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Teaching social skills to children.

(Pergamon general psychology series: 89)
Includes bibliographies and indexes.
1. Social skills in children–Study and teaching.
I. Cartledge, Gwendolyn, 1943- . II. Milburn, JoAnne Fellows, 1925- . III. Series. [DNLM: 1. Social Behavior–in infancy & childhood. 2. Socialization. 3. Teaching–methods. WS 105.5.S6 T253]
HQ83.T43 1986 303.3'2'07 86-2402
ISBN 0-08-031591-7
ISBN 0-08-031590-9 (pbk.)

Printed in the United States of America

Foreword

In writing the Foreword to the first edition of this book, I identified three major conditions within our society that have made it necessary to teach social skills and concepts in schools. These were and still are relevant:

First, our basic *social* institutions (home, church, and school) are undergoing great changes.

Second, our mobile population contributes to changes in socialization.

Third, the increasing emphasis on *individuality* (do your own thing) encourages all of us to be less responsive to the needs of others.

For most newborns, mothers are the first to relate to them as they begin the socializing process. Others within the family also are influencers. But the American family has been in a state of flux since World War II. With a highly mobile population, working mothers, single parents, and reconstituted families, the family unit as a stable and predictable social institution is now problematic.

As a result, basic perceptions and attitudes of the young are more divergent and less predictable, creating a need for educational options. Some American parents are opting for non-public schools as one way to address this need. Current figures suggest that almost 15% of school-aged children now attend private and church-related schools. Although the range of differences, on certain dimensions, will be reduced by those schools with restrictive admissions, the larger society in which these youngsters are nurtured is essentially the same as for those students who are in public schools. But private school placement will not make an appreciable difference to most students because of the social forces that shape them.

Organized religion is radically changing both in the quality and quantity of influence and range of beliefs. Although religion still exerts considerable influence, its direct impact is on the wane. We no longer can expect the large proportion of school-aged youngsters to be active members of an organized religion, influenced by a prescribed set of values and ethics. A recent (1984) survey found that 60% of Americans reject the dictates of organized religion and are drawing upon their own spiritual feelings to define their faith.

Schools are the third of three traditional institutions used for socializing the young. Now, as never before in American history, all youngsters are

influenced by schools as they move through elementary and secondary programs.

School personnel have always been involved in subtle exchanges between the various socializing forces in helping to achieve societal goals. But now they must address the widest range of individual differences known in history. It is ironic that in an era of cultural homogeneity, students' social perceptions are more diverse than ever. Rapid communications, popular culture, and easy travel have made the world more immediate and accessible. At the same time the high rate of literacy, affluence, and personal freedom have combined to provide a wider range of experiences and attitudes.

This combination of a smaller world and diversity creates an educational challenge of enormous magnitude. Students' perceptions and experiences are increasingly diverse as they enter school systems and so too are societal expectations.

Consider, for example, the experiential backgrounds of children as a result of the popular culture. Many children enter school having spent more time hearing and relating to mediated unreal images than to real live people. These experiences have significant implications for school curricula and for the behavior of those who work in the schools.

Not only do children relate to automated voices, they can now have unreal experiences. For example, Digital has a supercomputer that is used in making scenes for movies. This computer simulates reality. Each point of a three-dimensional object is coded into the computer. The computer then creates a 3-D model that can be turned, stretched, colored, and shifted. To viewers, these special effects seem real. If the film shows someone falling off a cliff, viewers can now feel that sensation.

While schools continue to emphasize cognitive processes, students' learning outside classrooms involve all of their senses. And, while school personnel continue using information-laden tasks in trying to teach societal values, the moviemakers have a $12 million computer to immerse students in experiences that are often at odds with those same values that schools are expected to teach.

Expectations change as the popular culture becomes more pervasive. Social expectations have direct impact on schooling. For example, in the United States 18-year-olds are permitted to vote. And in Great Britain some political groups are now advocating for the 16-year-old vote. Yet, intelligent well-informed adults with accurate historical perspectives find it impossible to vote in an enlightened way. Issues for voters to consider in our nuclear age are overwhelming even for that mythical person—the intelligent, well-informed adult with a historical perspective.

Popular media, particularly TV, are the single most powerful socializers in our present-day society. Of the three traditional socializing institutions, only one, religion, has been able to exploit TV successfully. More specifi-

cally, the fundamentalist wing of organized religion is successfully using TV as a medium to socialize. Why have schools, families, and the mainstream religions been so unsuccessful in using TV?

Surely it is a question that needs further research. My suspicions are that TV, as a medium, influences through emotional messages, not through factual ones. That is why talk shows are the most enduring and successful programs. It is not the factual content that influences. The personal, social, and emotional ones are most appealing. *How* the people appear, or *how* they behave are best remembered.

Television is the most ubiquitous of all popular media. Few homes are without it. TV idols, those icons of the popular culture, are known to every child and adult. In 1981, Nielsen found the average viewing time for teenagers was 23 hours a week, almost 26 hours for 6- to 7-year-olds, and 29 hours for 2- to 5-year-olds. Adult men and women, the parents, averaged 29 and 34 hours a week, respectively.

Socializing forces that are internal to schools are well-known to most educators. In general, these are: curricula, school personnel, and students. But external forces shape these.

External forces include the popular culture, families, organized religion, and society's expectations. In most instances the pressures between schools and families are reciprocal. Collaborations between families and schools are natural and can cause change in both directions. The subtle messages sent by both interact. Parents have expectations for schools. In turn, schools expect students to enter with certain competencies and to maintain themselves in the system by possessing reasonable behaviors. When they don't perform, negative consequences occur; students may repeat courses or grades, they may receive low grades, they may leave school before completion.

Contrast the exchanges between schools and homes with collaboration between the popular culture and schools. Here the trade-offs are almost nonexistent. Popular culture influences schooling significantly with little flowing the other way. In other words, popular culture drives or *pushes* the schools without any counter force.

Until this imbalance changes, popular culture will continue to be a serious threat to schooling. With the emergence of television, schooling has become increasingly less valued by the overall culture. And schooling has almost no influence in shaping television. Because that medium directly influences people in powerful ways it overshadows schooling. For example, retail business and schools are interdependent. They must collaborate. But not TV. Schools draw from TV, but television has no need to be responsive to schooling. In fact, in some respects the relationship is adversarial; schools and television compete for the same audiences, for their time and for their attention.

Much of TV's content is at cross-purposes to the school's. Television deals

in emotions, entertainment, instant gratification, and conspicuous consumption. Schools focus on cognitive processes, work, and delayed satisfactions. But because of its slickness and the finances that are invested, the messages conveyed through TV are eminently more powerful than those conveyed by schools.

But schools are not totally defenseless against the inroads of television. School personnel have not yet learned how to develop reciprocal relationships and ultimately influence TV as they have with some other aspects of the popular culture. This is new territory for those who work in schools. And some important questions remain: *How are freedom of expression and other rights to be exercised in a society which must increasingly depend upon group efforts? How will we be governed without group standards? Can we have our individual freedoms and a strong society too? Can we educate the young for such a society?*

In this time of rapid change, educational needs are greater than ever, people must exercise increasingly finer judgments about more complex situations. We know that information alone seldom changes behavior and attitudes. Rather, the society shapes our responses; powerful incentives encourage us to choose, and the choices may not always be good for individuals or for this society.

Alone, no book can address these complex issues, for most include both political and educational considerations. The editors of this text clearly are aware of this complexity. There are selections that help in recognizing the need to change our beliefs about how social behavior is acquired, how to identify those behaviors to be taught, and how to go about teaching them. This book should serve as a valuable resource to those practitioners who want to add social skills teaching to their repertoires. By doing so they will help today's children to become better citizens in an increasingly complex world.

Thomas M. Stephens
Professor and Chairman
Department of Human Services Education
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio
July 1985

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many people who helped us with various aspects of this book. Some of those who should receive special thanks include: Carol Friedman and Jane Kane, along with other members of the support staff in the Specialized Instructions Department. Appreciation is also extended to Thomas Frew, department chairperson, for his administrative support and personal encouragement.

Publishers and authors who gave us permission to reproduce copyrighted material included:

Arnold, A. (1972). *A World Book of Children's Games*. New York: Harper & Row. Copyright 1972 by Arnold Arnold. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row.

Fagen, S., Long, N., & Stevens, D. (1975). *Teaching Children Self-Control*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Gambrill, E.D. (1977). *Behavior Modification*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pps. 498, 499.

Goldstein, A. P., Spratkin, R. P., Gershaw, N. J., & Klein, P. (1979). *Skill-Streaming the Adolescent*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Harrison, M. (1977). *For the Fun of It: Selected Cooperative Games for Children and Adults*, pp. 10, 11, 15, 16 as an appendix to *A Manual on Non-Violence and Children*, compiled and edited by Stephanie Judson. Philadelphia: Friends Peace Committee. (1515 Cherry Street)

Orlick, T. (1978). *The Cooperative Spirit and Games Book: Challenge Without Competition*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Prutzman, P., Burger, M.L., Bodenhamer, G., & Stern, L. (1978). *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet: A Handbook on Creative Approaches to Living and Problem Solving for Children*. Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Group, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Quay, H.C. (1966). Patterns of aggression, withdrawal and immaturity. In H.C. Quay & J.S. Werry (Eds.), *Psychopathological Disorders of Childhood*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Spivack, G., & Shure, M. (1978). *Social Adjustment of Young Children: A Cognitive Approach to Solving Real-Life Problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 144, 194, 195, 198.

Stephens, T. (1978). *Social Skills in the Classroom*. Columbus, OH: Cedars Press, Inc. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

Streibel, B. (1977). *Conflict Resolution in Children's Literature*. Madison, WI: Center for Conflict Resolution.

Wood, M. (1975). *Developmental Therapy*. Baltimore: University Park Press.

We would also like to thank our families and friends for all the less tangible but equally appreciated kinds of help and support.

Contents

Using Coaching Techniques

Using Activities to Teach Social Skills

Teaching the Adolescent

PART 1

STEPS IN TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

Introduction to Part 1

This book is a revision of one originally published in 1980. We have updated the original material and include new sections to enhance its practical application by people who are charged with the socialization of children and youth, both normal and handicapped. The intended audience continues to be teachers in regular and special education classrooms and clinicians who work with children in schools, residential, or outpatient settings. Parents who wish to improve their ability to teach social skills to their children may also find the book useful. In addition, it is intended as a text to be used in programs for training teachers and clinicians in fields such as social work, counseling, and psychology.

The book is concerned with social behaviors, broadly considered as skills to be taught, and the emphasis is placed on building prosocial, adaptive, new behaviors rather than on eliminating problem behaviors or developing motivational systems to increase the performance of behaviors already in the child's repertoire. One major advantage of a social skills approach to treating children with problems is that it is essentially a positive approach, which assumes that children can be taught the skills necessary to behave in different, more acceptable ways. There is a rapidly growing body of research in the application of social skills training with children that supports the validity of this assumption (see, for example, review articles by Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Combs & Slaby, 1977; Conger & Keane, 1981; Eisler & Frederiksen, 1980; Foster & Ritchey, 1979; Michelson & Wood, 1980; Rinn & Markle, 1979; and Van Hasselt, Hersen, Bellack, & Whitehill, 1979.)*

The authors were encouraged to develop this book through a series of personal experiences with children, teachers, and clinicians in several schools and treatment settings. We have become convinced that social behaviors can and should be specifically taught as part of a school curriculum or remedial therapy program, and that the skills for such teaching should be in the repertoires of all teachers and clinicians. Although parents may less often feel the need to provide systematic teaching in the home, some knowledge of how

*References for chapters 1 through 5 appear at the end of Part 1, after chapter 5.

social skills are taught, both purposefully and inadvertently, can add immeasurably to their effectiveness. In addition, parents have an important role in the maintenance and generalization of social skills taught to children in other settings and should be knowledgeable about social skills training carried out by teachers and clinicians.

In clinical settings, a case may be made for teaching social skills to children for the prevention of later psychological disorders. There is evidence that many adults suffering from psychiatric illnesses—particularly anxiety states, reactive depressions, and personality disorders—are also characterized by social inadequacy (Trower, Bryant, & Argyle, 1978). Some longitudinal research (Kagan & Moss, 1962) indicates that childhood deficiencies in social interaction are carried into adulthood.

Much of the data supporting the need for teaching social skills comes from studies of the relationship between social behaviors and school achievement (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978). It has been suggested that the teaching of social skills goes on in the classroom all the time as a "hidden curriculum," even when the teacher does not deliberately engage in social skills instruction. The teacher, like the parent, is a powerful and influential person in the child's life and, as such, serves as a model for social behaviors. In addition, the teacher shapes the child's social behaviors, intentionally or not, through the process of reinforcement. Studies of teacher attitudes and behavior suggest that social behaviors on the part of the student are an important determinant of how the teacher interacts with him. Students with positive social behaviors (for example, those who seek out the teacher, initiate contacts about work assignments, answer or try to answer questions, smile at the teacher, and are attentive during lessons) generally receive more positive teacher attention and have a higher rate of academic success. A series of studies by Cobb and his colleagues (Cobb & Hops, 1973; Hops & Cobb, 1973, 1974; Walker & Hops, 1976) have identified specific social "survival skills" that predict achievement from one academic area to another and have demonstrated that training in these survival skills could bring about an increase in academic achievement.

There is some controversy in research circles about whether the most efficient target for classroom behavior change efforts may be academic responses rather than social behaviors since, for some populations, improvement in academic achievement appears to result in improved social skills, as well as the reverse. Something of a reciprocal relationship appears to exist between improved curriculum, reinforcement of academic responses, and the development of relevant social behaviors. Social behaviors and academic behaviors are so highly correlated that it is difficult to reinforce academic responses without simultaneously reinforcing the social behaviors that make the academic responses possible; for example, attention to the required stimuli, complying with teacher directions, responding under circumstances

specified by the teacher. Focusing specifically on social behaviors for direct instruction seems particularly relevant for children with very low levels of the social behaviors determined to be essential to academic success.

Another target group for instruction in social skills are those children with poor peer relationships. The importance of the peer group for the development of social skills is well documented, the quality of children's relationships with peers being predictive of school problems and later psychopathology (Rubin & Ross, 1982). Again, there is a kind of reciprocal relationship between social skills and peer relationships. Children with better interpersonal skills have more opportunities to engage in the activities with peers that, in turn, enhance the learning of social behaviors.

An underlying model serves as a framework for this book. The model exists in a number of versions variously called *prescriptive teaching*, *diagnostic teaching*, or *directive teaching* (Stephens, 1977). Essentially, the elements are (a) define in specific behaviorally stated terms the behavior to be taught; (b) assess the level of competence possessed by the learner in order to determine his or her initial level of performance; (c) teach the behaviors defined through assessment as lacking in the learner's repertoire; (d) evaluate or reassess for results of teaching; and (e) provide opportunities for practice and generalization, or transfer of behaviors to new situations. In teaching social skills, all these steps need to be present to some degree. The chapter headings, therefore, correspond to these steps: chapter 1 on selection of skills, chapter 2 on assessment and evaluation, chapter 3 on teaching procedures, and chapter 4 on maintenance and transfer. Because of the close relationship between assessment and evaluation, the book combines the two processes, which often involve the same materials or procedures, in chapter 2.

An additional chapter has been added to assist the readers in applying the model in their classrooms or clinics. Ideas for enhancing the effectiveness of instruction in social skills are presented in chapter 5, as well as an example of how the instructional model might be applied to a specific social skill. It is our thesis that, essentially, any practitioner who understands pedagogical principles can write his or her own social skills curriculum. Social skills can then be taught not only in a planned, systematic way but also by seizing the "teachable moment" to instruct children in social skills when events in the child's life reveal a need for such teaching.

In addition to the organizing model, another assumption guided the construction of the book; that is, that social skills contain cognitive and affective as well as overt behavioral aspects. Such cognitive dimensions as negative expectations, the presence of self-defeating thoughts, deficits in social perception, and discrimination and such affective dimensions as anxiety and fear of failure may interfere with performance of appropriate social skills. An attempt is made to include approaches to social skills teaching

involving cognitive and affective dimensions of social skills, as well as their behavioral aspects. The contributors to Part II of the book have expertise in teaching social skills to populations reflecting different ages or handicapping conditions, as well as in presenting a variety of unique approaches to social skills instruction.

Although, throughout the book, the authors use such evaluative terms as *appropriate, desirable, proper, positive*, and so forth, when speaking of a social behavior, it should be understood that the social and cultural context of a behavior ultimately defines those terms, as further discussed in chapter 1. It was our intent to emphasize approaches that have empirical foundations or have been demonstrated to be effective with children and youth in bringing about improved social functioning. The material presented in this volume does not constitute a comprehensive review of current literature on social skills for children, but represents, instead, a set of ideas for practice that can be applied by those working therapeutically with children.