Understanding Children's Development

Sixth Edition

Peter K. Smith / Helen Cowie / Mark Blades

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PREFACE TO SIXTH EDITION

This textbook now has a history of over 25 years! It has already been through four editions, published by Blackwell. The first (1988) and second (1991) editions were by Peter Smith and Helen Cowie, with Mark Blades joining as third author for the third (1998) and fourth (2003). The fifth (2011) edition was published by Wiley-Blackwell.

We have enjoyed regularly bringing this book up to date and renewing it, and the three of us are pleased to be bringing out a sixth edition.

OPINIONS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

We are bombarded by opinions on child development. Everyone has a view of how children should be brought up, and explanations for why people have turned out the way they have. Even if you have not studied psychology before, you no doubt already have views on how children develop. You may agree or disagree with the following statements, but you will probably have heard them or opinions very much like them.

1. 'Animal behaviour is instinctive; human behaviour is learned. That's the difference.'
2. 'She gave me a lovely smile. I'm sure she recognized me even though she's only 2 months old.'
3. 'I wouldn't leave my child at a nursery. If you have a baby you should look after it yourself.'
4. 'A good smack never did a child any harm. That's how they learn what is right and what is wrong.'
5. 'If things go wrong in the early years of a child's life there's not much you can do about it.'
6. 'Parents shouldn't try to teach their children to read. That's best left to the school.'
7. 'They don't do any work at Paul's school. They just play all day.'
8. 'You can't understand how a child's mind works. They just think differently from us, and that's all there is to it.'
9. 'Bullying is part of growing up—just stand up for yourself!'
10. 'Children see far too much violence on television and the media.'
11. 'IQ tests don't tell us anything about real intelligence. They're a means of social control.'
12. 'Just wait until they are teenagers. That's when the trouble starts.'
13. 'Adolescents spend so much time social networking, it is having harmful effects.'
14. 'Teenagers don't get enough sleep!'
15. 'Psychologists can't teach us much. What they say is just common sense.'
16. 'Children from poor backgrounds are doomed to fail.'

In this book we don't aim to provide absolute answers to the many questions that arise in the course of rearing children and understanding their development. But we do aim to

provide up-to-date and balanced accounts of research in this area. We hope to present controversies and to outline the various ways in which child psychologists' research findings enhance our understanding of the developmental process, from gestation and birth, up to and including adolescence.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

There is plenty of evidence that childhood experiences matter. At the time of going to press, Richard Layard and colleagues (Layard et al., 2014) have published some analyses from the British Cohort Study or BCS. The BCS study is detailed in Table 1.1, and it assessed over 17,000 children born in April 1970, following them up regularly into adulthood. Layard and colleagues looked at three main measures in childhood: intellectual performance, good conduct and emotional health. These were assessed at 5, 10 and 16 years, together with family background factors such as family income and parental education. They related these to outcomes as an adult at 26 and 34 years: income, educational achievement, social and personal adjustment, and an overall measure of life satisfaction—'How dissatisfied or satisfied are you about the way your life has turned out so far?'.

Not surprisingly, intellectual performance in childhood was a good predictor of adult educational achievement, and also of adult income. However, it was a poor predictor of adult life satisfaction. The best childhood predictor of adult life satisfaction was emotional health, followed by good conduct. These predictive effects became stronger through ages 5, 10 and 16. While noting limitations to the analyses, the authors do suggest there may be strong policy implications, especially as such research is extended and refined. So far, it points to how childhood emotional well-being is particularly important for how satisfied we are with our adult lives.

USING THIS BOOK

This book is divided into five sections: Theories and Methods; Prenatal Development and Birth; The Social World of the Child; Children's Developing Minds; and Adolescence, comprising 19 chapters in total.

Each chapter starts with a summary paragraph indicating the content to come. At various points through the text we have inserted 'stop and think' suggestions. These might help you as the reader to think actively about some of the issues being discussed, which are often open to debate.

We have tried to emphasize the variety, strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of psychological investigation, and to bring this out vividly each chapter (after the first) includes two 'boxes'. Each box consists of a detailed description of one particular study, discussing its aims, design, results, analysis, and strengths and limitations. Study of these boxes should be useful not only in terms of the content of the studies themselves, but also in helping you to get a feel for how psychological research is carried out.

More advanced students may wish to pursue the references to original work given throughout the text, while beginners should read the book without being distracted by them. The references are provided for use by teachers, for those who wish to follow up areas or

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studies in detail, and because acknowledgement should be made to those psychologists who have put forward certain theories or carried out particular studies.

Each chapter offers suggestions for further reading, giving indications of level and content. There are also ideas for discussion points, which might be taken up as essay titles or topics for debate in class.

CHANGES IN THE SIXTH EDITION

We hope that this new edition will continue to keep abreast of the exciting new developments in our discipline, while retaining coverage of the core components of knowledge from previous research.

This sixth edition maintains the same chapter structure as the fifth edition (which had had some substantive changes from earlier editions). Besides general updating, some of the more major revisions are indicated below.

Part I (Theories and Methods) has two chapters.

Chapter 1 on *Studying Development* again covers core principles and methods; we have particularly reworked sections on children as researchers, ethical considerations in research, and on children's rights. We cover participatory research methods which offer an innovative way of accessing the inner worlds of children and young people in ways that traditional approaches often fail to do. Researchers in this field typically have a strong desire to enable their participants' voices to be heard, particularly in the context of marginalized young people, such as young carers, children in care and young offenders.

Chapter 2, *Biological and Cultural Theories of Development*, runs through a range of theoretical approaches, from genetics and evolution through to social constructionist viewpoints. We have introduced a new section on Belsky and Pluess' three models of human plasticity.

Part II (Prenatal Development and Birth) has one chapter.

Chapter 3 on *Prenatal Development and Birth* has been updated and includes new material on breastfeeding and cognitive development.

Part III (The Social World of the Child) has seven chapters.

Chapter 4 on *Parents and Families* includes a new section on fostering, more findings from the NICHD longitudinal study, more on non-resident or absent fathers, material on parenting styles in China, on effects of domestic violence on children, and substantial reworking of the sections on physical punishment, and on child maltreatment.

Chapter 5 on *Siblings and the Peer Group* includes an update on adjustment of only children, and a new section on immigration, acculturation and friendships in multicultural settings.

Chapter 6 on *Developing Emotional Intelligence and Social Awareness* has expanded material on the development and fostering of emotional intelligence in children; it includes a new box on the impact of a widely used classroom method, Circle Time, on students' emotional health and well-being.

Chapter 7, on *Play*, includes more discussion of the benefits of object or constructive play, and more on recent debate on the developmental significance of play.

Chapter 8, on *Children and the Media*, has been completely updated to take into account the rapid changes in the media environment. There is additional information about the use of

computer games for positive and educational purposes, more material on media literacy, and a new box about the use of celebrities in advertising aimed at children.

Chapter 9, on *Helping Others and Moral Development*, has a new box describing a study that measures young people's moral and conventional reasoning when discussing the religious and secular self-determination and nurturance rights of young asylum seekers in the UK.

Chapter 10 on *Social Dominance, Aggression and Bullying* includes a new section on disruptive behaviour and oppositional defiant disorder, and a substantial reworking of the sections on bullying, including more on homophobic bullying and cyberbullying, and on interventions.

Part IV (Children's Developing Minds) has eight chapters.

Chapter 11 on *Perception* has been updated with additional examples of studies and more references to research with newborn children.

Chapter 12 on *Language* includes new material on dyslexia.

Chapter 13 on *Cognition: Piaget's Theory* discusses the relevance and importance of Piaget's work for contemporary developmental psychology.

Chapter 14 on *Cognition: the Information Processing Approach* includes more examples of empirical studies, and has revised sections on eyewitness interviewing procedures and the effects of stress on child eyewitnesses.

Chapter 15 on *Children's Understanding of Mind* includes references to the large number of new publications in this area and extends the discussion of theory of mind to research considering very young children and also research with older children.

Chapter 16 on *Learning in a Social Context* includes more examination of the cultural practices that underpin everyday informal learning as children 'pitch in' with family and community activities. A key feature of this kind of learning is that it is embedded in the child's sense of *belonging* with all the personal and emotional commitment that is involved.

Chapter 17 on *Intelligence and Attainment* has been updated with more information about contemporary intelligence scales.

Chapter 18 on *Deprivation and Enrichment: Risk and Resilience* includes recent work on developing intercultural competence through education. There are two new boxes. One describes an innovative study of the social reintegration into their home communities of young mothers abducted by armed groups in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Northern Uganda. A second describes a large-scale evaluation of the impact of Early Head Start intervention on preschool children from deprived backgrounds.

Part V (Adolescence) has just the final chapter.

Chapter 19 on *Adolescence* has been extensively revised again, reflecting the growth of work on the social brain and insights from neuroscience; evolutionary perspectives on risk taking; more on peer relationships and romantic development; new sections on sexting and on adolescent bedtimes; and updating and expansion of the section on use of mobile phones and the internet.

As the book has extensive website support, appendices on ethical principles in research and on careers, together with much other useful material, can be found at www.wiley.com/college/smith.

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