

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD & ADOLESCENCE

A CONTEMPORARY READER

EDITED BY MELANIE KILLEN & ROBERT J. COPLAN



WILEY-BLACKWELL

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Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN
CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

*With joyful love and affection to Rob, Sasha, and Jacob,
and with enduring love and gratitude to Marcia,
David, and Sean (M.K.)*

*With all my love to Vanessa, Adam, and Jaimie,
and with love and gratitude to my parents Barbara and Stephen,
primary contributors to my own social development (R.C.)*

PREFACE

Social development refers to how children become members of families, peer groups, communities, and cultures. Over the past several decades the field of social development has greatly expanded, reflecting biological, social-relational, social-cognitive, and social-emotional changes in development. This broadening scope of social development research has led to accompanying increases in student motivation to learn about this area. In particular, the wide range of topics encompassing multiple disciplines appeals to a breadth of interests, and encourages an understanding of the interrelations between psychological and social sciences. Moreover, student interest is heightened by the centrality of these issues for understanding everyday life. The readings in this volume were selected to represent both classic and current articles on social development from early childhood to adolescence, and which connect to the foundations of what it means to be a social being. To accomplish this goal, five sections were created that reflect topical cross-cutting approaches and include the foundations of development, the self, relationships, and groups, along with specific foci on the family, community, and culture, including both normative and non-normative development. For each of these areas of social life, we have featured different chapters to provide a rich perspective on what social developmental change entails.

Our goal is that reading this book will demonstrate the centrality of social development for understanding psychology and human behavior. No single volume can capture the wealth of information that now exists about social development from infancy to adulthood.

What we have done in this volume is to highlight key findings that will engage readers about the importance of social development as a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human as well as a member of a social species. We selected succinct theoretical articles to provide the landscape and accessible empirical studies to form the core reading list. We also developed a number of supplements to guide readers through the articles.

An introductory chapter written by the editors offers a historical and theoretical overview of social development. Introductory comments by the editors are then provided at the beginning of each section to serve as a guide for instructors and students; these commentaries highlight important points and controversial issues. In addition, chapters include “boxes” with up-to-date “new issues” pertinent to the topic, with a citation for further reading. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions, debate topics, and in-class exercises as well as a short list of recommended readings related to the topic, referred to as “A Closer Look...” in the table of contents. This Reader was designed to serve as a comprehensive text that reflects a coherent collection of articles, serving the pressing needs of college and university faculty members and instructors. It is intended for advanced undergraduate or graduate student courses in the area of “Social Development,” which are most often offered in departments of Psychology and Human Development, but can also be found in other departments and programs including Child and Family Studies, Criminology, Sociology, Social Work, and Education.

The origins of this Reader began almost a decade ago with conversations between the editors and Ken Rubin, Adam Rutland, and Paul Hastings. We discussed the need for a new Reader in social development. We gratefully thank Ken, Adam, and Paul, who are each leaders in the field of social development, for their ideas and input, and we hope that this Reader addresses the needs that we identified in our fruitful discussions. Kelly Lynn Mulvey has provided exceptional feedback on all phases of the project, and her assistance is very much appreciated. As associate editor (*Child Development*) and editor (*Social Development*), respectively, of current journals in the field, we have been privileged and fortunate to read cutting-edge research from a wide range of topics in social development, and we are appreciative of the unique opportunities that these positions have provided, and which contributed to our reach for selecting articles for this Reader.

We are extremely indebted to our many respective mentors, colleagues, and graduate students for discussions and collaborations on the topics in this

book, and to our social developmental colleagues for generously providing permission to reprint their articles. We acknowledge the feedback and assistance from our summer undergraduate intern students, Naomi Heilweil and Aliya Mann.

We thank our respective universities for support during the preparation of this Reader, the University of Maryland, College Park, and Carleton University. We thank Christine Cardone and Matt Bennett at Wiley-Blackwell publishers for their editorial support and guidance throughout the project. We hope that this collection of articles and supplementary materials leaves the reader motivated to search for more information about how, why, and what makes social development fundamental to the psychological development of individuals, and for understanding the complexity of social life.

Melanie Killen and Robert J. Coplan
August, 2010

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Part I

INTRODUCTION

1

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT *Concepts, Theory, and Overview*

Social development is the study of how children become members of the social world. This involves developing social relationships with peers and adults, acquiring morality, figuring out how groups work, developing an identity, understanding others' perspectives, learning about emotions, and interacting with others in a range of social contexts. How do these changes come about and what sources of influence facilitate or hinder these processes? In essence, social development is about how children come to think, feel, and behave towards the people that surround them and how they understand social interactions, relationships, and culture. The developmental changes that occur from infancy to adulthood in the area of social behaviors, social cognitions, and social relationships are tremendous and complex. These changes are related to cognitive, emotional, motivational, and psychopathological development within and between family, community, and cultural contexts.

Debates about the social nature of humans, the origins of morality, the nature of prejudice in childhood, the dilemma of bullying and victimization, the role of emotions in development and communication, and what contributes to healthy peer and parent-child relationships all fall under the topic of social development. Children acquire the fundamentals of social

development over thousands of social exchanges and opportunities for reflection, abstraction, inference, evaluation, and interpretation. Acquiring this knowledge is essential for children's survival, and much of this rich database of information about social development is necessary for professionals working with children, such as educators, psychologists, medical experts, and teachers. Children grow up interacting and forming relationships with people who are important in their lives, and they develop beliefs and form attitudes about the nature of humans and how individuals fit (or do not fit) together. Individualized experiences also provide each person with unique perspectives on social development.

The study of social development involves answering (at least) seven important questions: (1) How is social knowledge and competence acquired?; (2) What underlies and promotes change over time?; (3) What types of social influences are important?; (4) What aspects of social development change as a function of the context of social interaction?; (5) What differentiates normative and psychopathological development?; (6) How do institutions promote healthy social development?; and (7) What is universal and culturally specific about social development? These basic questions are explored in this volume, which is focused on the study of social development.

One central assumption of the approach taken in this Reader is that social development is a multifaceted, multileveled process that entails complex interactions that change over time and across settings (i.e., home, school, neighborhood, and culture). This conceptual approach is applied in answering the above-mentioned questions through the exploration of a wide range of topics, including: (1) the foundations of early social development; (2) how children's self-system develops in the context of social relationships and groups; (3) what happens when children are vulnerable and excluded; and (4) the role of the family, community, and culture in making children become healthy members of their worlds. Each chapter in this Reader addresses one of these fundamental issues about what it means to become a social being, and how this process occurs from infancy to adulthood.

Accordingly, in this Reader, we will cover this wide range of topics related to children's social development from infancy to adolescence through the compilation of carefully selected current research papers, which delve into these aspects of development. The study of social development involves "real world topics" and the findings have implications for policy and practice. Theories guide research questions. Knowing the theoretical basis of a study is central and necessary for evaluating the robustness of a finding, and for giving it meaning. Theories answer the "so what?" question. Methodologies, which answer the "how do you know?" question, are the crux of the phenomenon, and help determine how the behavior, attitudes, judgment, belief, or value was recorded, analyzed, and interpreted.

"Legacies" of the Foundational Theories of Social Development

As the field of social development has advanced and expanded over the past several decades, contemporary researchers rarely provide models to explain all of social behavior and development as part of one global stage sequence. Instead, current researchers, drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives, take a domain specificity approach in which different areas of social development are studied using criteria to identify a phenomenon and its related components. Multiple

levels of theory bear on understanding children's social development, from the biological to the societal levels of analysis. Despite the expansion of theory and research foci, most of the "classic theories" of social development remain extremely influential, and form the building blocks for most of the contemporary research on children's development. In the following sections, we provide a very brief overview of these major historical theories, with a specific focus on their continuing legacies.

Psychoanalytic theories. Freud's (1910) psychoanalytic theory, and its later incarnations (e.g., Erikson, 1950), remains largely influential across numerous domains in psychology. Freud was trained in medical school in the area of neurology, where he studied psychological disorders. In terms of social development, Freud's legacy is particularly noteworthy because he was among the first to promote some "core principles" of psychological development that are widely held today, but were considered "radical new ideas" at the time. For example, Freud argued that human development is predictable and understandable, and that it could be understood and explained through science. Moreover, Freud theorized that emotions and thoughts as unconscious processes had a role in determining behaviors. In fact, Freud was the first psychologist to propose a theoretical framework for understanding unconscious processes to explain mental illness. He outlined dynamic, structural, and sequential theories of development. Freud's dynamic theory postulated that humans were basically driven by sexual and aggressive instincts and the desire to reduce stimulation (contrary to most current theories which have demonstrated that humans seek cognitive, social, and emotional stimulation). This part of his theory was largely disconfirmed with the onset of the cognitive revolution in psychology, which demonstrated that humans actively seek cognitive activity and to understand their world.

Freud's structural theory of the id (instincts), ego (rationality), and superego (morality) provided the developmental model for the onset of social and moral development, which occurred with the formation of the superego in early childhood. Through the resolution of the Oedipal conflict for males or the Electra conflict for females, which required a positive identification with the same-sex parent, children

internalized parental values, and became capable of socially oriented behavior and judgments, developing a superego. Thus, in Freud's system, the internalization of parental values was the catalyst for social development (and guilt, as a product of the negative desires for the same-sex parent, provided the motivation to be moral). Freud drew on Kantian philosophy to define morality as a version of the categorical imperative (act in such a way as you would will your act to be universal). He then theorized that this was a principle held by parents who provide the role models for children to become social.

Freud also postulated psychosexual stages of development, which reflected a sequence of resolutions and culminated in adolescence. These stages were later modified by Erikson (1950) who focused on psychosocial rather than psychosexual resolution of conflicts throughout life. The levels of consciousness that Freud proposed, including the unconscious, the preconscious, and the subconscious, were proposed to play a role in how humans interpret, process, and filter information and social experiences in their world, and much evidence suggests that these levels are reflected in how individuals store and interpret information. Perhaps most important for social development, Freud emphasized and promoted the lasting importance and influence of early social relationships (particularly between mother and young child) in the development of children's personalities. As represented in this Reader, these concepts are evident in the exploration of the topics of temperament, attachment, behavior problems, aggression, and personality development.

Behaviorism and social learning theory. In response to the unconscious processes described by psychoanalytic theories, behaviorism emerged as a theory that focused on observable and recordable behaviors. Behaviorists viewed Freud's constructs as mostly speculation. According to the most basic tenets of behaviorism (e.g., Skinner, 1935; Watson, 1913), human development is influenced primarily by emerging associations between external stimuli and observable responses (habits). In this regard, behaviorism introduced the concepts of *reinforcement* and *punishment* as mechanisms that would lead to the increase or decrease of displayed behaviors. By the 1960s, however, the "cognitive revolution" in psychological

research largely challenged the notion that only observable behavior is of interest. From the cognitive perspective, the mind was viewed as a rich part of who we are as human beings, providing the basis for motivation, intention, judgments, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Accordingly, it was argued that observations of behaviors can provide only a part of the information necessary to understand what makes an action social.

Thus, psychologist Alfred Bandura (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963) adapted learning principles to propose a social-learning theory which accounts for aspects of children's social development that include reflection, thought, interpretation, and mental states. Essentially, his theory purported that children can learn novel social behaviors by attending to "important" others through modeling of their behaviors (e.g., parents, teachers, peers). Social learning theory also described how core constructs of reinforcement and punishment might function within the realm of social development. For example, Bandura suggested that children observe the *consequences* of their own (and others') social behaviors and that the outcomes serve to reinforce or inhibit the future display of these same behaviors.

Among the general legacy of behaviorism, however, is the focus on scientific methodology, controlling variables, and the need for carefully designed experimental protocols. In particular, social learning theory has influenced the study of social development by drawing attention to the critical influence both of parents and of peers as "models" for children's social behaviors. These ideas are depicted in the sections of this Reader that explore such topics as peer pressure, parenting styles, and the development of aggression.

Cognitive- and social-cognitive developmental theories. Piaget (1929, 1932, 1952) was a genetic epistemologist, dedicated to the study of the "origins of knowledge." He studied how infants, children, and adolescents solve problems and understand the physical, logical, and social world. Drawing on multiple disciplines (including biology, philosophy, and psychology), Piaget proposed that children actively construct knowledge about their world through interaction and reflection upon these interactions. Although Piaget is perhaps best known for his research on how children

develop concepts such as number, space, time, causality, and logic, he also explored the development of social knowledge, including moral judgment, communication, and the role of peer relationships in fostering development.

In one line of research, Piaget interviewed children about social dilemmas, the rules of their games, their knowledge of social rules, and their conceptions of authority, autonomy, and fairness. Based on these extensive interviews, Piaget formulated a theory of moral judgment in which young children were initially authority-oriented (holding unilateral respect for authority). Through peer interaction, however, children constructed notions of equality and fairness, leading to a mutual respect for both peers and adults. Peer conflict provided children the opportunity to develop perspective-taking, negotiation, and social exchange skills, which provided the experiential basis for developing an understanding of reciprocity, mutuality, and respect for others. As with his logical theory, in which children constructed knowledge of math by interacting with physical objects, Piaget's social theory was based on the assumption that children constructed knowledge of the social world (and morality) by interacting with others, specifically peers.

Thus, the basic tenets of Piaget's theory of social development were that early social interactions enable children to construct social concepts, and that children's reasoning about what is "fair" evolves from early to middle childhood. Moreover, Piaget documented the ways in which children's schemes (organizing structures for assimilating information) and templates for making social decisions (e.g., allocation of resources, turn-taking, sharing, cooperation, avoiding harm to others, conflict resolution strategies, and demonstrating empathy) changed dramatically over the course of 5–10 years. The research that Piaget conducted in a few decades in the early 1900s led to many expansive areas of research in social development, including the development of morality, cooperation, theory of mind, the role of peer interaction in development, and social cognition in childhood.

A foundational aspect of Piaget's theory was that the tenets of social development are universal. From his view, developing social orientation to others is a basic aspect of being human (and today, some researchers would extend this notion to primates).

Although the way that sharing and cooperation emerge will differ across cultures, the fundamentals are the same because the focus of the acquisition is on peer interaction, not adult-child interaction. Thus, while adult-child interaction styles vary dramatically within and across cultures, peer interaction has adaptive properties that reflect an emerging mutuality and cooperation. This part of Piaget's theory has been tested and examined in many parts of the world, providing a rich understanding of early social development. The legacy of Piaget's theory is pervasive across most areas of social development and is demonstrated throughout the sections of this Reader.

Cultural communication theories. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of development was focused on problem solving, communication, cultural tools, and the role of peer tutoring in facilitating children's development. Although Vygotsky died at the young age of 37 in 1934, in his short life he produced important papers that generated many subsequent research programs. His primary focus was on children's consciousness and how thinking is an active and cooperative process. Indeed, Vygotsky theorized that knowledge is *social* in origin and referred to "cultural tools" (such as language) which help children move from one stage to the next. The phrase "zone of proximal development" referred to the time period from one point in development to the next in which children are most ready to learn and to benefit from teaching and tutoring. Identifying this point in children's development promotes their growth and change. The notion that cultural tools enable children to think in more complex ways has been tested in many cultures, providing a rich evidential basis for the universal nature of the role of culture in development. The theory has spawned research on communication and thought, language, cultural tools, play, and socialization.

George Herbert Mead (1934) proposed that "role-taking" (the mental task of putting oneself in another's position) was the foundation of human social intelligence. Being able to take another's perspective enables humans to relate to one another and to engage in symbolic communication. Mead also proposed a "social looking glass" theory about the development of self-knowledge, asserting that we learn about ourselves by observing the effect that our behavior has on others. Mead's theory provided evidence that