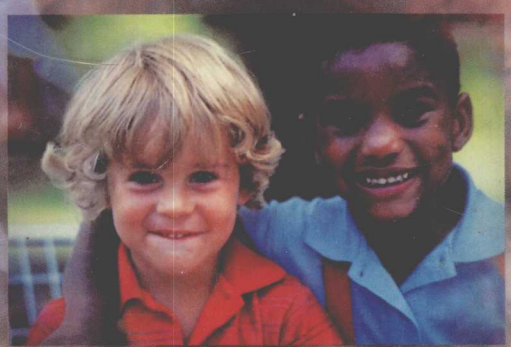
CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

The Modern Science



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CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

The Modern Science

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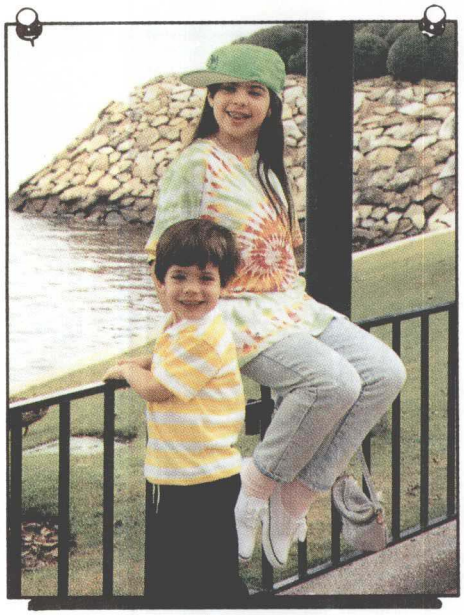

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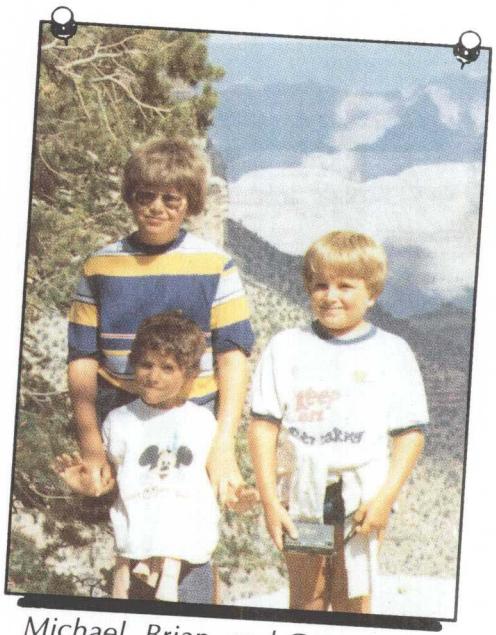

Michael, Brian, and Gary Haith

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The Contextualist Approach: A Prologue

The field of developmental psychology has changed considerably over the past few decades. Until the 1960s, the discipline focused largely on descriptive, age–stage accounts of development. Freudian, neo-Freudian, and then Piagetian approaches guided much of the thinking and research. The 1960s, with its focus on social and environmental determinants of development, saw the rise of the social-learning perspective. Albert Bandura's addition of observational learning processing to the more basic principles of reinforcement, punishment, and discrimination learning focused theoretical attention on the socialization of the child by the larger society. The zeitgeist of the 1970s moved away from environmental approaches and ushered in the so-called cognitive revolution in the discipline. Information-processing models joined Piagetian theory as an alternative approach to conceptualizing cognition, and research in social cognition began to break down the traditional walls between the two areas of development.

The past decade has seen yet another important shift in development theory. Spurred largely by Urie Bronfenbrenner's work, developmental psychology has become increasingly contextual in nature. The child is no longer viewed as a passive recipient of environment influences, but as an active producer of those influences. From the very beginning, the infant engages in a transactional "dance" with the caregiver, each regulating the behavior of the other. As the child grows, development interacts in critical ways with the social contexts in which it occurs, the two most important being the family system and the school environment. Cognitive development is believed similarly to reflect this contextual interplay, as evidenced by the dramatic rise in popularity of Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural model of development.

Textbooks of child psychology have also changed over the years. When descriptive approaches were the mainstay of the discipline, chronologically organized texts were the norm and were fine for tracing the child's development. As the field became more rigorous and empirical, topically organized books began to appear in greater numbers, many with an increased focus on cognitive theorizing and research.

Unfortunately, developmental texts have not kept pace with the recent trend toward contextualism. Some have responded by simply appending chapters on the family or the school to the end of a topically organized book. One obvious problem with this approach is that it is awkward. Topical books are organized by aspects of the child's development (growth, language, morality, and so on), which typically represent dependent variables. The separate chapters on contextual influences, however, describe determinants of human development and so represent independent variables. Perhaps more importantly, the discussion of these influences comes too late. Determinants residing in the family and school need to be considered at the point where the relevant aspect of development is being discussed. If we wish to know, for example, the effects of family size or class size on intelligence, the place to present that material is in the chapter on intelligence—not in chapters on the family and the school at the end of the course. One solution to this problem—undoubtedly employed by many instructors—is to extract pieces of material from the later chapters and insert them where they belong. This, too, is awkward and unsatisfying.

There is a better solution. It is simply to integrate material on the family, school, and other contextual influences into the main body of the text. In this way, the course can move from one area of development to another in a topical manner, while including the broad tapestry of variables that affect each area. This text does just that.

We begin by introducing the ecological perspective in Chapter 2, where we also discuss the major theories that dominate the field today. Thereafter, each chapter includes a Development in Context section that describes a specific example of the application of contextualist thinking to that aspect of development. For example, in Chapter 3 (Research Methods) we describe Glen Elder's research on the life course. In Chapter 4 (Genetics) we discuss Sandra Scarr's "niche-picking" model of gene-environment interaction. In Chapter 9 (Information Processing) we present Ceci and Bronfenbrenner's now-classic cupcakes-in-the-oven research. And in Chapter 16 (Peer Relations) we examine children's social networks as assessed by Brenda Bryant's neighborhood walk technique. Some of the boxed sections also consider contextual influences, such as the nature of bilingual language acquisition (Box 11–3), the relationship between parents' disciplinary styles and their teaching styles (Box 14-2), and whether the typical high school environment favors males over females (Box 15-2). Most importantly, we weave contextual material throughout the entire text, examining specific influences (e.g., social class, race, culture) in virtually every chapter.

The result is a text designed for the 1990s. It not only accurately reflects what is happening in the discipline, but also organizes that material in a manner that will be most useful to instructors. We are confident you will agree.

ROSS VASTA

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About the Authors

ROSS VASTA is Professor of Psychology at the State University of New York at Brockport. He received his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth College in 1969 and his Ph.D. in clinical and developmental psychology from State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1974. He has spent sabbatical years at the University of California, Davis and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1987 he was awarded the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. His previous books include *Studying Children: An Introduction to Research Methods* and *Strategies and Techniques of Child Study*. He is currently editor of the annual series *Annals of Child Development*. His research interests have been both basic and applied, including work on physical child abuse and gender differences in spatial abilities.

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SCOTT A. MILLER is Professor of Psychology at the University of Florida. After completing his undergraduate work at Stanford University in 1966, he entered the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1971. His initial appointment was at the University of Michigan, where he was a member of the faculty for seven years until moving to his present position. He has previously authored *Developmental Research Methods* and is coauthoring (with John Flavell and Patricia Miller) *Cognitive Development*, 3rd edition. His research has been in the cognitive area, focusing on Piaget's work, children's understanding of logical necessity, and parents' beliefs about children.

Preface

In writing *Child Psychology: The Modern Science*, our goals were to serve instructors' needs, to maximize student learning, and to reflect accurately and comprehensively the discipline of developmental psychology as it exists today. We believe we have achieved these goals, and achieved them in a new and exciting way. Although much of what we offer is built around a format that instructors have come to expect in a topically organized introduction to child psychology, we have not hesitated to break ranks with traditional approaches in areas where improvements and innovations are needed. We hope you will take a few moments to let us share with you the philosophy and features that set this text apart.

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION

In this text we treat child psychology as a natural science and present it in a way that reflects its scientific underpinnings. In addition to providing a full chapter on research methods (Chapter 3), we discuss specific methodological issues frequently throughout the book, such as comparing research designs for examining genetic influences on development in Chapter 4 and describing Susan Harter's approach to assessing self-worth in Chapter 14.

Of course, not all scholars interested in children take a scientific approach. Nevertheless, contemporary psychology has its roots in the experimental laboratories of Wilhelm Wundt and William James, and we have attempted to show how their legacy remains in the methods that modern child researchers use to investigate current developmental issues.

FOCUS ON CURRENT ISSUES

Information is being generated in developmental psychology at a staggering rate. To prepare a textbook of manageable proportions, authors must make some tough decisions. We have chosen to present a state-of-the-art treatment of child psychology that focuses on the very latest issues and findings. In so doing, we have sometimes left behind material traditionally covered in developmental textbooks—for example, the psychoanalytic interpretation of each topic. Although the historical context of the discipline is described thoroughly in Chapter 1 (including a discussion of Freud's contributions to the field), the emphasis thereafter is on current models and controversies—like psychoteratology, the role of action in perception, Vygotsky's sociocultural model of intelligence, and the role of temperament in the assessment of attachment.

In the case of those truly classic studies that we believe any student of development should know, but that did not fit easily with the topics under discussion, we present the material in boxed sections labeled "Classics of Research."

INTEGRATION OF CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

In many topically organized child psychology textbooks, the discussion of family and school influences occurs in separate chapters at the end of the book. In *Child Psychology: The Modern Science*, we *integrate* family and school material with the pertinent topics rather than isolate it at the end, focusing on the area of development affected, not on the determining influence itself. Every chapter after the first also includes a "Development in Context" section that highlights an especially illustrative example of the role of contextual factors in that area of human development. For more information on contextual influence, see the Prologue.

BALANCED THEORETICAL PRESENTATION

Rather than emphasizing any single theoretical orientation, our book examines child psychology from the perspectives of the three principal traditions that characterize the discipline today—the cognitive-developmental approach, the environmental/learning approach, and the ethological approach. The fundamental tenets of these three orientations are first presented in Chapter 2. Then,

most of the chapters comprising Parts III and IV begin by examining what the three traditions have to say about that topic area and go on to consider relevant research findings and applications. As a consequence, the student can approach the substantive material in these chapters with a conceptual structure that facilitates interpretation, comparison, and critical analysis. For example, Chapter 13, on moral development, begins by outlining Piaget's and Kohlberg's stage theories of moral reasoning and then examines recent studies designed to test the validity and scope of these models.

Chapter 2 also outlines Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective on human development, which cuts across the other three approaches. The ecological orientation is then woven through the book in the "Development in Context" sections. These sections emphasize the transactional nature of developmental processes, including repeated reference to contemporary research conducted within the framework inspired by Lev Vygotsky.

ORGANIZATION

The 16 chapters of this text are organized topically and grouped into four parts. Part I provides the general foundation of the discipline, covering history, theory, and research methods. In keeping with the research-oriented approach of the text, these topics are presented in some detail. Part II focuses on biological and physical development, including genetics, prenatal development, birth, growth, and motor development. Part III investigates sensory and perceptual development, cognitive processes, and language acquisition. Part IV describes social and personality development, including emotional development, attachment, moral reasoning, prosocial and antisocial behavior, the self-system, gender role development, and peer relations.

The internal organization of the chapters within Parts III and IV is developmental. The topic area—be it language, sex roles, or whatever—begins with the newborn and describes development through adolescence. This approach helps the student to appreciate the continuity of growth within each area and also to understand the ongoing interactions between biological processes and contextual influences.

PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

In our effort to be complete and up-to-date, we have not forgotten that this is a textbook whose audience includes college sophomores. We have designed into the book a number of features to maximize the likelihood that students will learn the material.

Readability and Simplicity We have worked hard to make our text, above all, interesting and accessible to the student reader. We believe that the text's comfortable writing style and the clarity with which concepts are introduced, discussed, and interrelated will enable students to read and understand rigorous material.

In addition, rather than giving long and tedious discussions of research findings that are likely to overwhelm students, we first decided what concepts and principles we wished students to come away with and then carefully selected research findings and real world examples to illustrate and support this material. As a consequence, we believe that we have produced a text that communicates the essence and excitement of developmental psychology simply and efficiently.

Boxed Features Boxes are used selectively in this text and are of three thematic types. The "Classics of Research," mentioned earlier, present studies of enduring historical value, even if no longer of major relevance to contemporary thinking in the area (e.g., Hartshorne and May's research on moral character or Arnold Gesell's studies of motor development in twins). The "Extensions" boxes discuss provocative research findings or interesting research methods, such as studies of fetal listening (Chapter 7), neonatal imitation (Chapter 8), and the Baby X technique (Chapter 15). The "Applications" boxes describe techniques developed for use by parents, educators, and therapists in the natural environment, like teaching children self-instructional approaches to math (Chapter 14) and using peers as therapists (Chapter 16).

Running Glossary Boldfaced glossary items in the text highlight terms of continuing importance to the reader. These items are defined in the margin on the same page, as well as at the end of the book, providing students with a convenient guide for reviewing the material.

End-of-Section Summaries In addition to a Conclusion at the end of each chapter, there is a summary at the end of each major section in a chapter. This organization encourages students to pause and reflect on what they have just read and helps set the stage for the section that follows.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Accompanying the text is a full package of materials to support student learning and classroom teaching. The package includes the following:

- *Student Study Guide* Contains chapter outlines, learning objectives, key terms, application exercises, critical thinking exercises, self-test questions, and practice exams.

- *Instructor's Resource Guide* Contains guidelines for the first-time instructor, chapter outlines, learning objectives, key terms, lecture topics, discussion questions, in-class and out-of-class activities, supplemental readings, videoguide, and media materials.
- *Test Bank* For each chapter, approximately 120 questions are keyed to the text in a multiple-choice, true/false, and essay format. Each question notes the corresponding text page, where the correct answer can be found, and whether the question is factual or conceptual.
- *Computerized Test Bank* Available for the IBM or the MacIntosh.
- *Overhead Transparencies*—Approximately 100 color transparencies of figures and tables from the text.
- *Video Tape* Two 1-hour programs, on Infancy and Early Childhood and on Childhood and Adolescence (ages 6–20), from the Annenberg *Seasons of Life* series, narrated by David Hartman.

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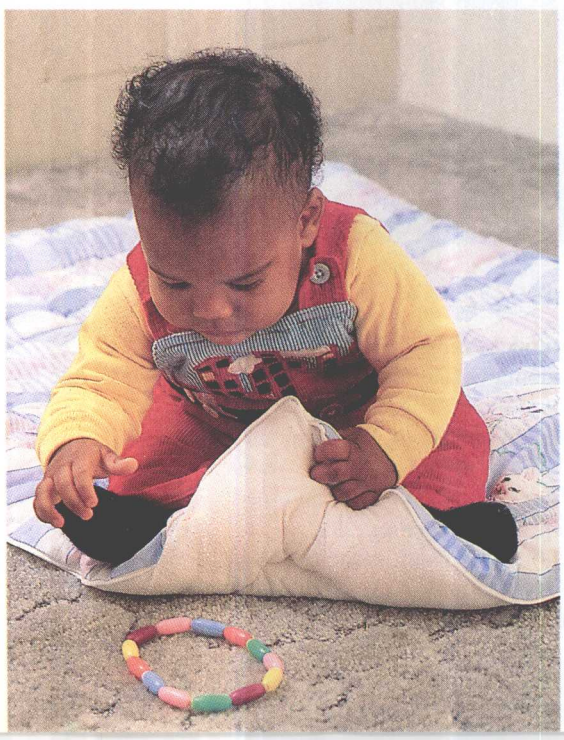

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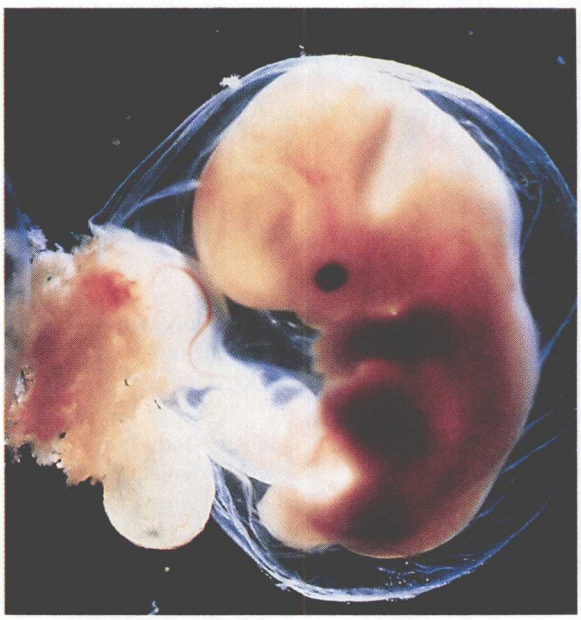

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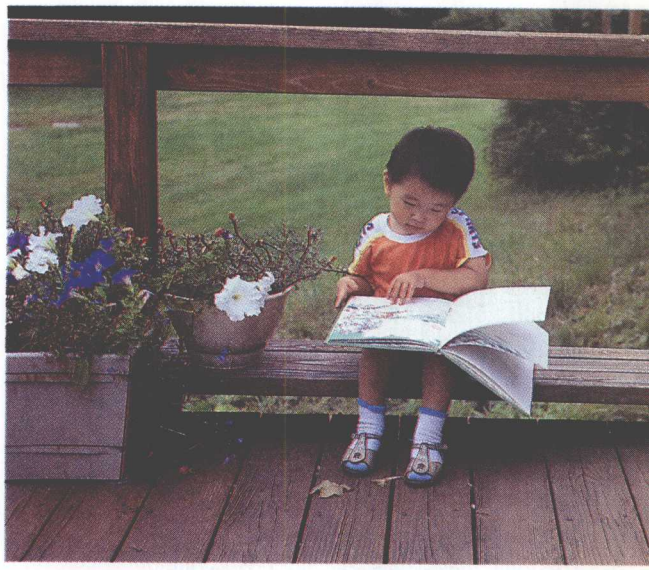

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PART I

Foundations of a Science

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