Chapter 1

Introduction

It is as if social psychology and developmental psychology were concerned with the same thing, the former in space and the latter in time, the first by way of the exterior and the second by way of the interior.

(Moscovici, "Social psychology," 1990, p. 169)

But unless boundaries are permeable, they retard rather than sustain the growth of new knowledge.

(Hartup, "Social development and social psychology," 1991, p. 23)

In this introductory chapter, we consider first what developmental social psychology is, asking why we need it and how we might set about building it. We step aside briefly to consider what is meant by the term "social," a label whose connotations among psychologists range from the pejorative to the panacea. Then, we consider another key concept, socialization, again one which means different things to different investigators, but one which can readily be demonstrated to relate to much more complex processes than the "shaping" or "molding" processes associated with it in everyday language. Some of the challenges to explaining development are outlined in a review of four major theoretical traditions which influence much contemporary research. These, in turn, are cognitive developmental theory (we concentrate chiefly on Piaget), social learning theory, evolutionary theories (especially ethology and sociobiology), and ecological theory. Finally, we consider the relationship between developmental social psychology and the real world, and the relevance of research conducted in different societies and cultures.

What is Developmental Social Psychology?

Before we approach the task of defining developmental social psychology, a few words about its parents are in order. Both social psychology and developmental psychology prove resistant to firm definition. We could make a start with social psychology by describing it as a subdiscipline of psychology concerned with the scientific study of human social behavior. Beyond this, scope for differences in emphasis and for downright disagreement creeps in. Most contemporary social psychologists would endorse Allport's description of the subdiscipline as "an attempt to understand . . . how the thought, feeling, and behavior of the individual are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others" (1968, p. 3). But an influential minority would accept Tajfel's (1981) insistence that the individual cannot be the only target of social psychology, and that an at least equally important level of analysis should be the inter-individual, socially shared organization of understanding within which social influence becomes possible.

This is a long-running debate, to some extent exemplifying the differences between North American and European social psychology. We will not resolve the matter here, but it is important to note it since we will draw upon work from both traditions, and it should become clear that a developmental social psychology has much to contribute to the understanding of the nature and origins of both social influence and social construction. (A fact not lost, incidentally, on either Allport, whose theories of individual differences in personality admitted at least some contribution to earlier experiences, or Tajfel, whose influential 1981 book bears the marked influences of Piagetian and Brunerian developmental psychology.)

Turning to developmental psychology, we find initial unanimity over the basic concerns of the scientist in this area: the developmentalist aims to describe and explain the changes over time in human behavior and capacities. (Although some developmentalists study nonhumans, their metatheoretical goals usually include a contribu-

tion to the understanding of humans.) However, there is considerable dispute over what is meant by *development*. For some, development entails qualitative, largely self-directed, reorganizations of knowledge and abilities; for others, it is principally a maturational process whereby endogenous properties unfold according to innate preprogramming; for others, it is largely a matter of the accumulation of learning from experience. Developmentalists vary, too, in terms of their willingness to embrace individual differences (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1988; Kochanska, 1993; Plomin, 1987; Scarr, 1992), some treating them as little more than background "noise" that probably reflects variations in stage attainment or minimal fluctuations upon nature's design, others as conclusive evidence of the impact of the environment, others as the outcome of complex genotype–environment interactions, and still others as the outcome of even more complex genotype–culture–environment interactions. Again, we cannot settle these and related disputes at the outset, but they bear importantly on the emergence of a developmental social psychology, and we will encounter examples of variants of these positions at many places in this text.

The best we can do for the moment is to take from these comments a couple of secure tautologies: social psychology is concerned with the social (however defined), and developmental psychology is concerned with development (however defined). Why and how should we put the two together?

Developmental Social Psychology: Why?

The *why* question is the easier one to answer. We have already touched upon it, in admitting the possibility that human beings themselves integrate social existence and developmental change. It is elementary yet widely overlooked by social psychologists that the phenomena they study do not arise out of nowhere, forming miraculously just before their subjects come to university (more on undergraduate subjects in a moment). For the developmentalist, it is axiomatic that "unless we understand the source, we will misunderstand the outcome" (Nelson, 1981a, p. 98).

Let us consider just one example, from a topic dear to the hearts of experimental social psychologists: how people generate explanations of performance. Darley and Goethals (1980) comment that lay psychological analyses of performance (attribution theories) tend to place a great deal of emphasis on the concept of ability (see chapter 9), and that the paradigmatic cases of ability seem to be those involving physical performance, such as running or weight-lifting. The notion of a fixed upper limit associates readily with these examples of human abilities, but we appear then to transfer the same notion to other domains, such as intellectual performance. We think of people as having fixed amounts of intelligence, an endowment of IQ which they carry around with them (cf. Mugny and Carugati, 1985). Why should we show this physicalistic bias?

A plausible reason is that physical tasks have developmental priority. They are prominent among the early challenges facing the child and they involve overt behaviors with observable outcomes, which render them interpretable to the young observer (Dweck and Nicholls, cited in Darley and Goethals, 1980). Related reasons

are that social feedback to the developing person about his or her abilities may be expressed in correspondingly concrete terms, because the adult infers that this level of explanation will be most accessible, and that adults often have the power to influence the child's circumstances so that the upper limit description becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The point is that the underlying metaphors we apply as adults striving to understand others' behavior may be influenced by what we could grasp when we first began to make interpersonal appraisals and by our parents' intuitive conceptions of how they could help us.

But the relevance of a developmental approach to social psychology extends still further, beyond charting the origins of social processes and capacities. Although the fact was disregarded by developmentalists themselves for a long time, it gradually became apparent through the work of lifespan psychologists that while there is life there is development (Baltes, 1983; Filipp and Olbrich, 1986). That is, the preserve of the developmentalist is not some period prior to the point at which the social psychologist takes over. Instead, developmental change is one of life's few constants (Blank, 1982; Bornstein, 1989b; Goodnow, 1988b; Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Lerner and Busch-Rossnagel, 1981). Yet if this is conceded, the implications for a *non*developmental social psychology are decidedly uncomfortable.

Jessor and Jessor (1977) comment that though change is inevitable, it would be difficult to find much recognition of the fact in contemporary behavioral science. Fiske and Taylor (1991) reach a similar conclusion in their hefty review of research in social cognition. In fact, in social psychology the chances of even stumbling across change are largely restricted to short-term reactions to laboratory manipulations conducted upon an unusual group of beings, *college-age students*. The college-age student is the paramount object of study in social psychology. Between two-thirds and four-fifths of the subjects of experiments reported in the prestigious journals of this subdiscipline fall into this social category (Blank, 1982; Sears, 1986). Clearly, social psychologists believe that there is much to be found out about college students, and social psychologists devote their considerable methodological skills to dissecting the intellectual and behavioral propensities of these interesting entities. Yet, as Blank (1982) and Sears (1986) demonstrate, one could easily develop a persuasive argument that there is much that is exceptional about college-age students.

The trouble with students

Blank (1982) and Sears (1986) point out that, among other characteristics, students are self-selected to be more achievement-oriented, they tend to be more egocentric than older adults, their cognitive performance is above-average, their social attitudes are not yet crystallized, and they are more compliant. (Who else would allocate several hours a week to being experimented upon? Who else would put up with our lectures?) Students spend much of their time in environments which promote rationalistic approaches to problems. In fact, there is evidence that becoming a tertiary student can affect (improve) your formal reasoning capacity, and that this is especially the case with psychology students and others exposed to probabilistic statistics and multifactorial explanations (see Lehman et al., 1988; these investigators also provide reassuring

confirmation that only chemists withstand these aspects of the intellectual provocations of university life.)

It could be alleged that students read a lot. They tend to come from particular socioeconomic strata with higher-level occupational aspirations. Students are also in a transition phase of their own lives, and in many cases entry into adult life and full personal autonomy still lie ahead. On this basis, Sears calls you, dear readers, a bunch of "lone, bland, compliant wimps who specialize in paper-and-pencil tests" (1986, p. 527).

But the problem is even greater than this unhappy description suggests. Since North American universities are especially productive in social psychology, it is not surprising to find that the great majority of research papers concern not just undergraduate wimps, but *American* undergraduate wimps (Sears, 1986). This holds for the leading American research outlets, but Sears went to the trouble of checking on American researchers' publications in international journals, too. He found that even here they tended to restrict their subject selection to (American) undergraduates (rather than American adults, or people in different societies). Some of my best friends are or once were American undergraduates, but on the basis of careful inspection I feel drawn reluctantly to agree with Blank's conclusion that "In many ways they are uniquely unsuitable populations from which to derive general laws" (1982, p. 18). In fact, having met and taught students around the world, I believe we can venture a generalization beyond even America and conclude that universities everywhere are packed with distinctly unsuitable populations.

This does not mean that all experiments conducted with students as subjects are irrelevant or meaningless: students constitute an interesting level of human life, suitable for some purposes and problematic for others (though see Blank, 1982, for a more pessimistic conclusion). It does mean that student-sample research needs to be placed in context, as contributions to the broader study of social behavior and social reasoning rather than the ultimate test of the validity of theories. We nerds who teach and test you wimps are reluctantly facing up to the fact that, although you turn up reliably each year in compliant heaps of half-baked experimental fodder, you may not be giving us the full story of human social reasoning and behavior. (But please do keep turning up.)

The trouble with change

Another reason why change may be less prominent on the social psychologist's agenda is that when attention does extend beyond the college student and beyond the laboratory, the effects of change can be so radical that they terminate what is being investigated. Take, for example, the study of relationships, another principal focus of social psychologists and one where data certainly are collected in diverse environments off-campus (cf. Buunk, 1996; Duck, 1992; Fletcher and Fincham, 1991; Gottman, 1994). Maccoby and Martin (1983, p. 2) point out that in an adult–adult relationship, dramatic changes on the part of one member may lead to a reassessment and even abandonment ("He is no longer the person I married, and I'm out of here"), while in a parent–child relationship dramatic change is endemic and calls for continuous

adjustment by both parties. Hence, developmentalists place change high among their concerns, while social psychologists sometimes regret it as a source of subject attrition. However, social psychologists have recently become increasingly interested in change in the course of relationships, and this itself is part of a broader shift toward a collaboration with developmentalists (see Hartup, 1991).

Limits to the scientific study of the intellectual development of the hermit

If social psychologists could profit from a developmental perspective, the reciprocal benefit is possible, too. While understanding the relationship between source and outcome is crucial, it is sometimes overlooked that unless we take into account the social context, we will misunderstand the process. Developmentalists vary in terms of their willingness to admit a social dimension to their work. Unfortunately, much of developmental psychology does rest on the assumption that the most interesting things to be discovered about the developing subject are best identified by removing him or her from everyday contexts and conducting tests of individual performance. But metaphors of the child as a hermit, or as a mini-scientist with his or her own laboratory, fly in the face of daily developmental reality (Bruner and Bornstein, 1989). It does not take a great deal of investigation to discover that their subjects do not grow up in solitary cells, and that whoever else is around, and whatever context they do develop in, have fundamental implications for the nature of development. We will see many illustrations of this point throughout this text.

In sum, the answer to the question of why we need a developmental social psychology is threefold. First, social processes have developmental histories. All of the phenomena studied by social psychologists come about as the results of development, and we can aspire toward a fuller understanding by investigating that development. Second, social processes occur in developmental courses: unlike snapshots of undergraduates, "lives in progress are moving targets" (Cairns, et al. 1989b, p. 294). A developmental aspect to social psychology is a prerequisite to both descriptive and explanatory adequacy. To the extent that social psychology ignores this, it risks becoming a science of proximal effects (Costanzo, 1992), studying what is happening now, and what impinges upon people only in their immediate circumstances, with scant regard to their goals and futures. Third, developmental progress is intimately related to social context: to the stimuli, prompts, guidance, examples, expectations, constraints, choices and impositions provided by other people and the social structures they maintain.

Developmental Social Psychology: How?

All of this rhetoric brings us to the *how* question, and here the answer becomes more difficult. Clearly, like all children, developmental social psychology will inherit characteristics from each parent. But it will also make its own discoveries, grow up in a unique environment, and learn from others outside the home. How can we set about nurturing its ontogenesis? There are at least three strategies that could be adopted;

each has been, and each makes an important contribution to the work we will be considering through this book.

Strategy 1: a developmental slant on social psychology

One strategy is to take some or all of the central topics of social psychology (attribution theory, social comparison, social influence, person perception, intergroup relations and so on), and ask: how could each of these develop? This is a perfectly legitimate question, and raising it has indeed given a major impetus to research progress. We will see in later chapters many examples of insightful research ventures based in this approach, and there is wide scope for valuable future contributions. A particular benefit of this strategy is that it broadens the outlook of developmental psychology, and guides developmentalists to new perspectives on their traditional concerns. During the past decade or so, work along these lines has been quite fundamental to the emergence of an identifiable new synthesis, the beginnings of a developmental social psychology.

However, I suggest that it does not, or should not, suffice *alone* as a definition of developmental social psychology because it sets the parameters too narrowly. That is, it assumes that social psychologists have already determined what are the important topics, and runs the risk of accepting meekly that the task of developmental social psychologists is to tag on to the accepted wisdom an account of how children pick up the pieces.

There are several problems with such a starting point. First, the idea that social psychologists have asked all the questions worth asking and delineated all the topics worth investigating is a presumption that would cause any self-respecting developmentalist to suffer severe assimilative dysfunction. Social psychologists themselves readily acknowledge limitations to the predominant "middle-range theory" (Merton, 1957; Tajfel, 1981) character of the discipline which results in a state of affairs where "the topics in social psychology read more like a Sears and Roebuck catalogue than like a novel. They provide a listing of items of possible interest to the reader rather than a story with a plot, development of characters, and so on" (Kelley, 1983, p. 8). Social psychology is an exciting and wide-ranging field, but it is itself still developing; it lacks unifying grand theories, and even its catalogue listings suffer some alarming gaps, perhaps because bits of people are dispatched to other specialisms. To take just one example, if we left it to social psychologists to chart what is important, we would still be debating whether language fits into the processes of social interaction – try, for example, to find half a dozen social psychology textbooks with a chapter on language. A measure of caution is due in following the lead of those who fail to notice what is just below their nose, ringing in their ears and pouring forth from their pens.

Second, to define the scope of a developmental social psychology in terms of what is already being studied in adults runs the risk of committing what has been referred to variously as "adult egocentrism" (Zaitsev, 1992) and "the myth of the adult ideal" (Kassin and Pryor, 1985). That is, we could assume that the main focus of a developmental social psychology should be the uncovering of deficiencies in the child (and, perhaps, the decline of the older adult). It is indisputable that measuring the

child in relation to adult standards will often lead to the unsurprising outcome that children tend to get better at a lot of things as they get older. However, this directs our investigation toward inherent cognitive deficits rather than specific socialization experiences (Chandler, 1982; Higgins and Parsons, 1983; Kassin and Pryor, 1985). Equally importantly, Kassin and Pryor point out that it fosters a delusion in our investigations of adults, namely that they function as paradigmatic logical information processors – an image that has grown in popularity as a function of the cognitive revolution but which has been tempered increasingly by the rediscovery that people have feelings, habits, heuristics and biases and that they perform differently in different contexts. Social psychologists wonder where these features come from; developmental psychologists have a pretty good idea.

Finally, another risk of this strategy is that it creates a fraction of a fraction, leading to an ever more narrowly defined research area. Neisser remarked in a related context some time ago that the last thing social psychology needs is the creation of an ever more ingrown social psychology (1980, p. 603). A study group on developmental approaches to mainstream social psychological topics is a very worthwhile endeavor, but it is one which accepts others' listings of topics and hence is less ambitious in the generation of new questions and new directions.

Strategy 2: a social slant on developmental psychology

An alternative approach might be to take developmental psychology as our base, and ask: what are the social dimensions of the phenomena developmentalists study? Again, this would be a worthwhile question, and it is one that is raised from time to time among developmentalists. However, the same problems recur: developmentalists have their own catalogue, and the social section suffers from a lot of gaps as a result of the distance from social psychology.

A crucial problem is that there is not *a* developmental theory (i.e., a dominant paradigm that most people working in the field accept) that can be taken for granted and improved with an infusion of social psychology. Some years ago many, though by no means all, developmentalists might have pointed to Piagetian theory as a major framework that seemed to deliver much in terms of an explanation of the structures and overall course of child development. Piagetian theory remains a vital source of influence and inspiration but, as you learned in First Year and as we will see in later chapters, many of its basic descriptive assumptions have been seriously challenged, and fewer and fewer developmentalists subscribe now to this or other "hard" stage theories. Indeed, one of the recurrent causes of dissatisfaction with Piagetian and similar stage theories has been their limited success in accounting for the interactions of the developing person with the social context, and the variability in developmental courses and outcomes.

Furthermore, it is not clear that a "social slant" deriving from social psychology would always be as social as is required. Developmental research often points to the importance of social phenomena that are actually treated as peripheral by mainstream social psychologists. A striking example is work on social processes in the construction of knowledge. This has been a recurrent concern of developmentalists through the

work of Baldwin, Wallon and Vygotsky and others, yet the individualistic bias of much experimental social psychology has largely precluded attention to the ways in which joint understanding is attained.

Strategy 3: define the topics of social development, and study them

A third approach is to determine certain topics that self-evidently are prominent in social development, and take them as the focus of study. Examples include parent–child attachment, family influences, peer relations. This strategy is highly desirable because it keeps both of the major scientific criteria (description and explanation) to the forefront. Through the twentieth century there has been a strong tradition of social developmental research organized around topics such as these. Clearly, this work provides one of the vital tributaries of developmental social psychology. Its chief limitation for present purposes is that although its academic origins are quite diverse (Schneider et al., 1989), it has tended historically to locate itself as a subfield of developmental psychology and thus has had relatively modest contact with the theoretical and conceptual offerings of social psychology. Indeed, even within developmental psychology, social development has traditionally been regarded as a separate compartment, largely isolated from what has been the dominant mainstream, namely the study of cognitive development (cf. Shantz, 1983, p. 495).

One more strategy

Strategy 4, of course, is to tick the "all of the above" box. Each of the strategies just summarized leads to interesting and important research questions, and a developmental social psychology has little to gain by discarding any of them. Indeed, they are sketched here as indications of the variety of approaches through which we could promote a developmental social psychology, not as a set of choices from which we must determine the most desirable. Henceforth, this book will draw from each, reflecting the healthy heterogeneity that characterizes this growing field. Quite simply, this reflects the assumption that there is more to be gained from the dialectics and cross-fertilization of juxtaposition than from burying forever beneath convenient subdisciplinary boundaries.

In later chapters, then, we will encounter examples of each strategy. The reader may care to reflect from time to time on how a given researcher has conceptualized a given problem, and whether a shift in strategy would lead to a useful alternative way of looking at the issue to hand. However, to settle the definitional matter for the present, developmental social psychology is taken here to refer to the areas of intersection between social and developmental psychology, acknowledging that different contributors would place different stress on each of the adjectives in our awkwardly compounded title. I am sorry if, after all this prelude, the definition does not sound more exciting, but I hope that the content will be.

It should be added that many of the investigators whose work is drawn upon in this text would not necessarily call themselves developmental social psychologists, but this scarcely matters. The fact is that their work contributes to the overall task of the

hybrid, which is to explain how human beings develop in social contexts and how social contexts are affected by human development. Pursuing these multi-layered questions is not facilitated by an exclusive definition or by a reluctance to consider diverse perspectives.

Two Key Concepts: Social and Socialization

Two terms which we will encounter repeatedly are "social" and "socialization." Many, especially those who prefer not to study them, take the meanings of these terms to be obvious, but this gives rise to widespread misunderstanding in neighboring areas of psychological literature. It is useful to note briefly some of the considerations involved in each, because explaining what is involved in social life and development, and in socialization, are critical long-term goals of developmental social psychology, rather than self-evident processes that we can already take for granted.

Social

The term "social" is used in different ways – we have already seen that even social psychologists dispute its potential meanings. More interestingly, among psychologists, it elicits different affective reactions. Naturally enough, it is regarded as a positive by those who embrace it and whose work is concerned with what they define as social phenomena. However, it is viewed with some suspicion by many whose theoretical and research interests derive from other approaches to development (which have been very productive through the middle of the twentieth century) focused on processes presumed to be *internal* to the developing child, namely the emergence of his or her cognitive capacities. We will consider this emphasis shortly, but for the moment it is worthwhile to take note that preoccupation with individual cognition – especially object-centered cognition – has led some traditional developmentalists to misleading assumptions about what is involved in social processes.

For example, in an otherwise theoretically sophisticated and informative book on the origins of face recognition, Johnson and Morton (1991) distinguish different types of approach to the study of development. In their terms, these include the *cognitivist* (emphasizing the information-processing capacities and limitations of the young), the *ethologist* (emphasizing the evolutionary adaptiveness of behavior) and the *neuroscientist* (emphasizing the development of the brain). For Johnson and Morton, these are the good guys. In addition, Johnson and Morton mention a fourth approach, which they call the "*social perspective*." This is the bad guy. According to these authors' interpretation, the social perspective "focuses on the identification of aspects of the social environment that influence the developing young . . . but this is often to the neglect of the physiological and psychological changes which undoubtedly occur *within the young organism*" (p. 1; italic added). Notwithstanding the fact that faces (the main focus of these researchers' work) tend to be found positioned outwards on the

upper frontal region of social beings and serve a number of important interpersonal functions for them, Johnson and Morton never mention the social perspective again.

No doubt sufficiently diligent literature searches could uncover someone, somewhere, who advocated a social perspective as caricatured in this passage, but it would be extremely difficult to find a contemporary social developmentalist, or a social psychologist more generally, who espoused such an impoverished view of human social and developmental processes as that which Johnson and Morton attribute to them. (Johnson and Morton do not cite any examples, and I find it equally hard to identify any.) What we will find as we venture further into developmental social psychology is that a social perspective necessarily entails attention to the biological and the cognitive, and a great deal more besides.

It is possible that Johnson and Morton had in mind someone like Watson who once proclaimed:

> Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. (1924, p. 82)

Watson was making a stimulating polemical point, but it remains the case that medical and law schools still find themselves obliged to rely on a complex interaction of ability, interests, socioeconomic background, political prejudice, chance and the right accent to sift through aspirant new professionals. The behaviorist's faith that "training" alone determines a person's development has been tempered over the decades as the complexities of the social world have become more apparent.

What is fundamentally at error in the biological-cognitivist's caricature of the "social perspective" is that it posits *unidirectional* influences. The core notion is that society "does something" to the child. This is not really a social process at all, because all the action is one-way. For reasons that will become clearer as we proceed, social developmentalists have long rejected this view, stressing that children are not simply the targets of outside forces but are actively involved in their interpersonal worlds, seeking information, eliciting reactions, processing their experiences, predicting outcomes, and both collaborating and conflicting with others as they come to understand and participate in the social world (Bandura, 1986; Corsaro, 1993; Dunn, 1988a, b; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Schaffer, 1984a, 1992; Youniss, 1992). For these reasons, cognitive and biological perspectives are each quite essential to a social account of human development.

One reason why the social perspective cannot afford to overlook the psychological processes that occur within the organism is that the representational task in the social domain is considerably more demanding than that faced by the version of the information-processing child who never meets people. To borrow just one metaphor from a more persuasive account of a social perspective, Strayer et al. (1989) suggest a comparison between the representational challenge to a chess Grand Master facing simultaneous multiple opponents and the representational challenge to a preschooler

facing day-to-day life in the kindergarten. The Grand Master has the easier task because the rules are fixed, the possible moves agreed in advance, and all interactions are one-to-one; social life is rarely so straightforward.

It is also important to avoid confusing *social influence* with *compliance* (Emler and Dickinson, 1993, p. 186). Social influence, Emler and Dickinson suggest (after Moscovici), involves complex processes of interpersonal and cultural negotiations, and these are demonstrably widespread in human existence from childhood onwards. In contrast, compliance is a behavioral acknowledgment of superior forces, and need not necessarily imply any underlying change or development in the actor. There is no doubt that in extreme circumstances (such as fulfilling First Year laboratory course requirements) some humans are obliged to comply to others' directives, but accounts of this pragmatic response should not necessarily serve as a model for the essential processes of social development. Only in misrepresentations of social perspectives is this presumed.

What, then, is involved in *social* life? Another view of social processes – and one which does find greater favor among some developmentalists – is that "social" means something akin to "harmony." We will encounter in later chapters important research which points to the joint, collaborative activity of partners (parent–child, teacher–child, child–child) in achieving cognitive advancement. One interpretation of this work could indeed be that social activity is a happily shared venture in which initially discrepant perspectives converge. There is much evidence that this is part of the story.

However, there is also scope for divergence, and divergence and conflict may be vital strands of social interchange and social development. Rather than a bed of harmony, there are respects in which "social life is a battlefield, in which diverse and contradictory influences permanently confront each other and where there is no such thing as a stable equilibrium of forces" (Codol, 1984, p. 316). Codol's summary, intended as a description of adult social life, could equally well serve as a motto for the developmental social psychologist. It captures an essential feature of the nature of social relations at any one point in time, and it emphasizes the ineluctable characteristic that was stressed earlier: change. As will be seen in later chapters, this does not mean that conflict is invariably a negative or destructive phenomenon – to the contrary, we will consider in later chapters arguments that not only are conflicts inevitable in development but also that some conflicts can enhance the nature and course of cognitive development, language development, and social relationships.

In short, "social" means different things to different psychologists, but it is straightforwardly a mistake to confuse it with unidirectional influence and, arguably, an oversimplification to equate it with harmony. It is also an oversimplification to suppose that the biological and the social are separate and that it is possible to study one without the other (see Bateson, 1987; Oyama, 1986).

Socialization

Socialization is the process whereby people acquire the rules of behavior and the systems of beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of a society. At a general level, developmental social psychology is the scientific study of socialization. Although socialization is a process experienced by most, it is observed directly by none: we can watch how some parties (e.g., parents, teachers) attempt to socialize others (e.g., children) but the ways in which these regulatory actions are incorporated into a developing person's social understanding and behavioral repertoire can only be inferred. Similarly, the activities of those who attempt to do the socializing are themselves multidimensional; their goals, strategies and reasoning are complex, and their consequences for development are difficult to unravel (Goodnow and Collins, 1990; Siegel et al., 1992). Socialization is often referred to as a given – as a straightforward process which is already understood – but in fact it remains a fundamental challenge to developmental social psychological theory.

It is interesting to consider that influential social psychologists once regarded socialization as "the central theme of social psychology" (Sherif, 1948, p. 1). Wundt (1900–1920) believed that adult social reasoning and behavior had to be understood as the outcome of lengthy developmental processes. Newcomb and Hartley (1947), charged by the American Society for the Study of Social Issues with the responsibility of compiling a text representative of the major themes of social psychology, produced a collection which not only allocated a large section to socialization but also included many other chapters drawing on research with young subjects: in those days, it seemed perfectly natural to integrate the study of social behavior with the study of social development. Lewin (1952), who regarded the segmentation of social and developmental aspects of behavior as an "utterly fruitless" exercise in pedantic classification, used issues in socialization to illustrate what he held as major concerns for his field-theoretic approach to social psychology. Brown (1965, p. 193) pointed to socialization as "the meeting ground of social science, of general psychology, and of the psychology of personality. It may reasonably be designated the central topic of social psychology." Yet as social psychology expanded and fractionated, socialization became less central and the topic slid naturally off toward the developmentalists – not all of whom turned out to be interested, for reasons indicated above.

Rather than dismiss the study of socialization as peripheral to the more fundamental problem of illuminating the psychological processes within the organism, it is useful to reflect briefly on the scale of matters to be dealt with in becoming socialized. There are two primary subgoals of socialization, namely *individuation* (determining one's own personal uniqueness) and *social connection* (discovering how to relate to, learn from, and function with other people; Costanzo, 1992; Shantz and Hobart, 1989). The rules of behavior and the value systems of a society cover an enormous range of phenomena, from the daily domestic practices of an individual's family and personal network, through the public expectations of the community concerning the behaviors appropriate to age, class, gender, and other social categories, to the understanding of societal structures and elaboration of moral systems. Learning to operate effectively in respect

of each of these involves not only building a massive information base but also changing one's personal responsibilities and capacities for action (for example, shifting through childhood from dependency to autonomy). Furthermore, many parties and institutions may be involved – including parents, siblings, peers, church, school, mass media – and the contributions of any one may complement or conflict with the contributions of others. To reiterate an earlier point, socialization, although typically studied in the young, never ceases, since progress through life involves learning new roles, entering new relationships or institutions, adjusting to new developments in one's community and myriad other accommodations to a continually changing social environment. These are not just external events that happen to people, but ongoing involvements that are at the core of being human. Furthermore, they are not one-way processes, but involve influences acting in each direction (Bell, 1968). Hence, the study of socialization is multifaceted, and part of the reason why there is a proliferation of theories of socialization is that there is so much to account for. An overarching task of developmental social psychology is to explain how socialization comes about.

Theoretical Backgrounds to Developmental Social Psychology

Developmental psychology has many theories, social psychology has still more. As already noted, social psychological theories tend to be of the middle range, concerned with some specific topic or process, such as social comparison, attribution, and so on. These theories do generate important research questions, and we will consider them in later chapters. Developmental psychology produces "grander" theories, in the sense that they attempt to embrace and explain more phenomena and to provide more general, unifying accounts of human development. In this section, we will consider four of the most influential developmental theories: Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, social learning theory, evolutionary theories (ethology and sociobiology), and ecological theory. Social development and socialization are by no means the exclusive or even the central concerns of each of these theories, but each has important implications for how we conceive of these processes. As we address specific topics in the course of this book, applications, extensions, and variants of these theories will recur and it is useful to have some familiarity with their basic concerns and claims. An overview of each theory follows, with a note of some of the major criticisms that have been raised of it, and then a brief summary of each theory's implications for the study of social development and socialization.

Cognitive Developmental Theory

Contemporary developmental psychology is pervasively influenced by Piaget's theory of genetic epistemology, a theory which attempts to explain the origins and

development of knowledge from infancy through to the higher levels of adult scientific thought (see Piaget, 1972, 1973a). Piaget's theory is wide ranging, reflecting his own theoretical influences from the fields of biology, philosophy, physics, mathematics, logic, and various psychological traditions, including psychoanalysis and Gestaltism. From the 1920s to the time of his death in 1980, Piaget led a major school of research, applying and testing his model in relation to many aspects of child reasoning. The enduring product is a body of ideas, insights, and techniques that provide a continuing source of inspiration and controversy to subsequent generations of developmentalists.

The sheer scale and diversity of Piaget's writings is worth stressing, if only to advise the reader that the overview which follows is necessarily incomplete. Some familiarity with Piagetian theory will be assumed at various places in this book, and the following is intended as a reminder of the principal tenets rather than a comprehensive introduction (see Flavell, 1963). Still more to the point, it is worth bearing in mind that Piaget himself entertained such a broad theoretical framework that it is somewhat risky to accuse him of overlooking anything. Thus, while it will be seen later that Piagetian cognitive developmentalism has fostered an image of the child as a kind of independent, mini-scientist engaged in an individualistic confrontation with the mysteries of the spatiotemporal environment, Piaget himself actually accorded social factors a prominent status in the explanation of the genesis of knowledge. Indeed, Piaget maintained that social psychology comes into all of the general problems to do with psychology, and argued strongly in favor of the study of the structures and processes of social coordination (cf. Piaget, 1973a, p. 26ff), insisting that inter-individual exchanges were a prerequisite to the formation of a "decentered epistemological subject" (Piaget, 1970, p. 361). Contemporary Piagetians vary in terms of how much note they take of this feature of the theory, but some have argued that the Piagetian framework has a great deal to offer to social psychology (cf. Doise, 1989).

The beginnings of knowledge

For Piaget, the beginnings of knowledge can be traced to action. The child enters the world with a limited set of reflexive, sensorimotor capacities which form the basis for its discoveries about its surroundings and its relationship to them. Through acting upon the world (initially, in a very primitive mode of touching, grasping, looking, listening) infants gain limited but functional bodies of information and schemes for further action. Thus, from the beginning the child is *adapting* to the world as it finds it and *organizing* its own elementary structures of knowledge. For example, the infant discovers that it can grasp things, and it applies this simple manual capacity repeatedly; the infant discovers that sucking elicits milk, and it begins to open its mouth or engage in sucking motions on the approach of the nipple (Piaget, 1936). Pick up a 2-month-old and you will find, whatever your gender, that it will turn optimistically toward your bosom. Presumably, the infant does not have a conscious theory of how to get fed, but it does have an active scheme for directing its feeding apparatus.

From these kinds of schemes, the infant's experiences become increasingly predictable and certain regularities become discernible in the environment. If the reach-out-and-touch action results in an interesting outcome (perhaps a mobile above one's crib moves and tinkles), then repeating the action should result in a repetition of the outcome. Babies make these discoveries within the first few months of life, and so become able to exert increasing amounts of control over their surroundings. In due course, they become aware that objects tend to continue to exist, that they can be retrieved if they fall out of sight or uncovered if placed under a cloth. They notice similarities and differences among objects, and experiment with the use of different objects in different functions. Eventually, toward the end of the second year, they begin playfully to make objects symbolize other objects – a bowl becomes a hat, a spoon serves as a makeshift "telephone" to gabble into like other people do, and so on.

Notice the constructive nature of the infant's discoveries. A scheme is established and repeated until it is familiar. Then, this body of knowledge is assumed as the child goes on to find out more, including more complex possibilities and combinations. This results in more advanced schemes which in turn serve as the base for further explorations. Two central points of Piagetian theory are illustrated here: (a) the child seeks actively to build its own "theory" of knowledge rather than merely absorb lessons from more skilled people; and (b), what the child can learn is constrained by what it already knows – the scheme for how to video-record a TV broadcast is not going to emerge in an infant who is still working on how to control the mobile above his or her crib.

Mechanisms of development

In Piaget's view, the child's cognitive development is very similar to that of organic growth (cf. Gold, 1987; Piaget, 1970). Both are characterized by *organization*, whereby the available information is structured into coherent systems, and *adaptation*, whereby the developing organism adjusts to the prevailing conditions in the environment. Two complementary processes are continuously involved in the course of development, *assimilation* and *accommodation*. Assimilation describes the integration of new information or experiences into existing organization; accommodation describes the modifications of existing structures to deal with new discoveries. Piaget maintains that "there is no accommodation without assimilation" (1970, p. 8).

Piagetian stages

The kinds of action that we have considered so far have in common that they are all organized around the infant's sensorimotor capacities. There is a qualitative similarity among them, an elementary way of dealing with the world that is based essentially on what can be handled, watched, and heard. In Piaget's view, this characteristic unifies early intelligent action: he refers to the period from birth to around the age of 2 years as the *sensorimotor stage*. The stage is not a static period, and throughout the child is working actively to discover more about the world and

her or his effects upon it. Eventually, however, the infant's expanding repertoire and its new discoveries lead to a new level of understanding. The ability to symbolize is the forerunner of important new capacities: the child will shortly be able to conceive of a world beyond the here-and-now of its earlier physical experiences, a world in which it is possible to have a much greater influence over events and activities. In other words, there is something of a revolution in the child's thought, a breakthrough into a more sophisticated way of dealing with oneself and one's environment. This transformation is not instantaneous, but it is radical and, according to Piaget, consists of a shift into a new stage of cognitive development: the *preoperational* stage.

The stage concept is one of Piaget's best-known (though most controversial) contributions to developmental psychology. A stage is conceived of as a developmental period during which the child's thought is organized at a particular level. The child's responses to a variety of tasks will be characterized by broadly similar mental strategies. We have already seen that during the sensorimotor stage, the infant's activities are organized around physical and sensory activity. Although there are certainly developments within a stage (the sensorimotor period is subdivided by Piaget, 1936, into six substages), at any one point the child's performance in one domain should be broadly consistent with her or his performance in another.

Further illustrations of this underlying unity can be obtained when we consider the *preoperational stage*. In this stage, which extends from approximately 2 to 7 years, the child is developing capacities to represent the world. We have already touched on the emergence of symbolic capacities, and a particularly important one is the development of language, which advances rapidly during this period. According to Piaget, language is one manifestation of representational capacity. Others, which also develop during the preoperational stage, include pretend play, imagination, and pictorial representation (Piaget and Inhelder, 1966). But the preoperational child's thought is also subject to certain pervasive limitations. Two of the most studied are egocentrism and inability to conserve.

Egocentrism Egocentrism refers to what Piaget saw as the preoperational child's inability to take the perspective of others. Remember that the child thus far has been conceived of as striving to master a complex and often mysterious environment, and to discover her or his own capacities. As symbolism emerges, it is organized around the child's own construction of the world, and at this stage the child finds it difficult to conceive of the possibility of other perspectives. To take some standard examples, the egocentric child fails initially to understand that certain relationships are reciprocal. For example, a 4-year-old girl with a sister might confirm that she has a sister. But does her sister have a sister? The 4-year-old might well say no, because having exhausted her data base on sisters in the family she cannot consider how things look from her female sibling's position. If the 4-year-old is asked next to reflect on the movements of the moon, she might explain that the moon follows her wherever she goes: this is obvious, because if you walk a distance and then look up again, it is still exactly the same distance from you. These areas of knowledge – sibling relations

and the physical structures of the universe – seem quite remote, but the child's underlying cognitive organization is reflected in similar (egocentric) ways in her reasoning about each. Piaget and his colleagues provided many other examples in many other domains (Piaget, 1929).

Conservation The preoperational child's alleged inability to conserve is demonstrated in Piaget's classic conservation of liquid task, and many variants. The child is shown two beakers of equal size, containing identical amounts of liquid. The child agrees the contents are equivalent. Then, the contents of one beaker are poured into another of a different shape, say taller and thinner than the originals. The child is asked whether the contents of the old beaker and the new are the same amount. Preoperational children typically insist that they are not – asserting, for example, that there is more in the tall one because the liquid is higher there. Similar results are obtained with transformations of amount (e.g., reshaping one of two balls of plasticine), length (e.g., moving one of two identical sticks so that the ends are no longer aligned), or number (e.g., taking two equal rows of coins and spreading one out); in each case, the preoperational child is likely to report that the amount, length or number has changed. In other words, the same stage of reasoning is reflected in several different tasks.

According to Piaget, underlying both egocentrism and failure to conserve is a mental tendency toward *centration*. Centration refers to a focus on only one aspect of a phenomenon. The child concentrates on her relationship to her sister, but finds it difficult to consider the reciprocal aspect of the link; faced with a transformed volume of liquid, she notices the increase in height, but overlooks the corresponding reduction in width.

Moving on to the next stage, *concrete operations* (from approximately 7 to 11–12 years), we find that the child is now able to handle many of the problems that were beyond the preschooler. The concrete operational child can conserve, and can conceive of the reverse of transformations (e.g., he or she can imagine the liquid from the tall, thin beaker being poured back into its former container and returning to the same level). The child's thinking during this stage is more logical and more flexible; he or she can classify sets of stimuli and can order them (for example, from smallest to largest). However, these new mental operations tend to be limited to stimuli that are either directly available or easily represented. Hence, the child can think about problems involving concrete objects but finds abstract representations such as algebra or symbolic logic too difficult.

The final stage of Piaget's model is entered (by those who reach it) during early adolescence. This is the period of *formal operations*, during which the child develops new abilities in abstract reasoning. At this stage, the young person can formulate hypotheses, conceiving of possible states and outcomes without requiring a concrete representation. The formal operational thinker can work systematically through a series of factors and combinations of factors to achieve an understanding of a particular problem. If this sounds like the activities of a scientist, it is no coincidence. Piaget sees the formal operational stage as the culmination of a long process through which the child has been observing, manipulating, theorizing, testing, and revising

understanding in ways directly analogous to the development of scientific enterprise (cf. Piaget, 1972).

Given the logical sequence of the stage structures and the fact that each higher stage develops from its predecessors, it follows that Piaget regards the sequence as invariant. That is, each individual must proceed through them in the above order, although it is accepted that the pace of development and the ultimate level attained may vary as a function of environmental stimulus and other opportunities.

Criticisms of Piagetian theory

There are many criticisms of Piagetian theory and much evidence to contradict Piagetian accounts of what children can and cannot do at different ages. Although Piagetian theory remains influential in developmental research, the main thrusts of subsequent work have tended to undermine the notion of hard stages and to contradict Piaget's rather negative characterizations of infants' and preschoolers' competencies (for a variety of critiques see Bryant, 1974; Donaldson, 1978; Gelman and Gallistel, 1978; Wood, 1988; for a discussion of other stage theories, see Thomas, 1992). We will return to some of the specific issues elsewhere in the book, but for the moment three main issues should be noted. These concern the lopsidedness of applications of the theory, Piaget's ambivalence about the role of social factors in development and Piaget's neglect of the child's emotions.

Lopsidedness Chandler (1977, 1982) has pointed to an irony in much Piagetian work that, despite the supposed interweaving of assimilative and accommodative processes in the construction of all knowledge, in practice Piaget and his followers emphasize the child's stage as the essential determinant of how she or he will approach a given task and the resultant knowledge. The standard approach for a Piagetian is to take a problem and attempt to uncover qualitative differences in how children of different stages tackle or explain it. This has its appeal, and alerts us to the possibility of important changes in how children reason, but it neglects the other side of the relationship – that is, the *content* of what the child is acquiring. It supposes that all meaningful variation lies within the child. In contrast to theories which represent the child as the passive victim of external forces, it is almost as if the *environment* is passive and there to be assimilated (Chandler, 1982; see also Hurrelmann, 1988). In short, "by this lopsided standard, people are seen to be lost in a subjective world of their own making" (Chandler, 1982, p. 226).

When we look more closely at social development, and in particular at the relationship between the child's reasoning about the social world and her or his social experiences, the liabilities of lopsidedness become clearer. For example, Higgins and Parsons (1983), while not denying that cognitive development may well involve qualitative changes, stress that many societies organize the child's life in a series of broadly arranged, age-segregated "social life phases", each bringing its own formal institutional structure and behavioral expectations. Hence, it is possible that at least some of the changes that developmentalists tend to explain in terms of progress in the child's cognitive capacities are actually reflections of advances or changes in the child's circumstances (see also Light, 1993).

The role of social factors in development As indicated above, Piaget was too broad a thinker (and too frequently the recipient of critical feedback) to overlook something as pervasive as social factors in child development. Certainly, in one major work which continues to remain a valuable source to more socially oriented developmentalists, he did stress the importance of peer interactions as a mechanism of discovery (Piaget, 1932; see chapter 14). But this theme did not endure as a principal focus of Piaget's work, still less of the research of Piagetians more generally. Similarly, while Piaget saw a powerful relationship between intellectual advance and social context, much of his description of formal operational reasoning is focused on abstract logical achievements in terms of combinatorial logic. One of the defining characteristics of formal operational thought is the ability to conceive of different possibilities. Piaget and Inhelder (1966, p. 149) emphasize the source of these possibilities:

> In reality, the role of social factors (in the twofold sense of socialization and cultural transmission) is far more important and is favored more than was suspected by the intellectual transformations we have been discussing . . . the world of value also can remain bound by concrete and perceptible reality, or it can encompass many interpersonal and social possibilities.

Nevertheless, in practice, most of Piaget's own research was devoted to topics seemingly at some remove from the social domain (such as the child's understanding of space, time, physics, probability). Assuming that these topics are asocial is itself something of a delusion, as Piaget's own comments above indicate and as became clearer when cross-cultural psychologists attempted to replicate the supposed universals of Piagetian theory in different environments (cf. Cole et al., 1971; Greenfield, 1976; Jahoda, 1986). More to the point, Piaget's methodologies – clinical interviews and experiments – focused on the reasoning of the individual child.

The neglect of emotions Piaget studied so much that it may appear mean-spirited to object that he did not find a few extra years to squeeze in feelings. In fact, he did touch on affect in several works (e.g., 1936, 1973b; Piaget and Inhelder, 1966). Nevertheless, the enthusiasm which he inspired for the study of cognitive development led effectively to the neglect of emotions (Cicchetti and Pogge-Hesse, 1981; Cowan, 1978). Yet performances on Piagetian cognitive tasks – and, more importantly, actions in everyday life – are closely linked to emotional responses. Examples include pleasure at mastery, frustration at failure, boredom with familiar or undemanding stimuli, and anxiety in the face of uncertainty (Cicchetti and Pogge-Hesse, 1981; Cowan, 1978). This suggests, at the very least, that the two systems are unlikely to be independent. Piaget acknowledged this, but emotions remained peripheral to his theory and to later Piagetian research (see Cowan, 1978, for a discussion of the potential). Certainly, in much of Piaget's major work, one of the principal sources of emotional excitation was largely disregarded: interactions with other people.

Note that this problem is by no means unique to Piagetian developmental psychology, but cuts across much work in cognitive development. In North American developmental psychology in recent years, cognitive developmentalists have been

greatly influenced by information-processing models of cognition, in which the metaphor of the child as a mini-scientist is married with that of the child as computer. This approach, too, runs into similar difficulties. As one leading information-processing researcher puts it, the developing person is too often conceived of as "a cold, calculating chunk of hardware" (Dodge, 1991, p. 159), and this may not be the optimal metaphor upon which to base accounts of social development. It is striking that much recent work in information-processing accounts of child development has converged on the conclusion that the computer accounts for only so much, and that there is an urgent need to understand factors such as affect, mood, social context, and sociocultural variability (see Dodge, 1991, on emotions; Martin, 1991, on sex-role development; Stewart and Pascual-Leone, 1992, on moral development). While differing from Piaget over some of the details, information-processing theories share the premise of the individual as a solitary scientist – and run into similar problems.

In sum, Piaget's work makes many contributions to the study of child development, and has laid down paths that many other researchers have demonstrated to be worth following. But not all details of his accounts of development have withstood empirical challenge, and there are areas of neglect. The neglect is most marked in respect of social factors in development.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory derived initially from learning theory, the behaviorist school which was dominant in North American psychology through the first half of the twentieth century. Although in important respects social learning theory goes beyond earlier learning theories, it has in common with them a fundamental assumption that environmental contingencies play an important role in guiding behavior: "From the social learning perspective, human nature is characterized as a vast potentiality that can be fashioned by social influences into a variety of forms" (Bandura, 1973, p. 113). Or (for readers who like to spot the differences and accommodations to critics): "from the social cognitive perspective, human nature is characterized by a vast potentiality that can be fashioned by direct and observational experience into a variety of forms within biological limits" (Bandura, 1986, p. 21).

The early learning theorists were interested in child learning as one example of the processes of conditioning through stimulus–response associations (Watson, 1928), and later leaders in this field held that desirable behaviors could be encouraged by rewarding them when they occurred (Skinner, 1953). Although these models are important in the history of psychology, and still have enormous direct and indirect impact upon educational systems and parenting beliefs, their relevance to developmentalists was largely superseded by the advent of social learning theory, especially the version introduced by Bandura and Walters (1963), and subsequently elaborated, expanded, and revised by Bandura (1973, 1977) and Mischel (1973, 1979), and then re-named by Bandura (1986) as social cognitive theory.

Bandura and Walters (1963) felt that most extant research in learning theory was limited as a basis for explaining social behavior and personality development, for a

number of reasons. First, most of the work had been conducted either on animals or on individual subjects in one-person situations. Generalizations from the pigeon in its Skinner box to the human in her or his social environment were supportable only by very generous assumptions. Second, the early learning theories could not account for the production of meaningful behaviors that had not been previously reinforced. Third, it is readily demonstrable that, even when attractive reinforcement is available, a subject cannot produce a behavior that she or he has never encountered before. Fourth, if (as Skinner and others maintained) novel behaviors were the outcome of successive approximations to desired behavioral patterns by operant conditioning, then human learning would be necessarily a very slow affair, since parents would have to wait a long time until a desirable behavior occurred spontaneously that they could then begin to work on. Fifth, children sometimes avoid a particular behavior, irrespective of their own reinforcement history for that behavior, if they see someone else receive punishment for it.

A more parsimonious mechanism to account for these facts about learning is *observation*. Observation speeds up considerably the process of discovery, and helps to explain how children can sometimes produce (imitate) behaviors for which they have never been reinforced, as well as avoid those which they have seen get others into trouble. Thus, Bandura and Walters introduced what has remained one of the most widely studied mechanisms in the field of social development, namely *observational learning*. It should be stressed that this was a continuation of the learning theory tradition rather than a radical break with it. Bandura and Walters maintained the importance of rewarding consequences: "Indeed, social behavior patterns are most rapidly acquired through the combined influence of models and differential reinforcement" (Bandura and Walters, 1963, p. 5).

In subsequent work, Bandura responded increasingly to the cognitive revolution that began in psychology in the 1960s, and focused attention particularly on the information-processing activities which are held to mediate the relationship between modeled events and matching performances by the learner. In due course, partly to clarify the distinctions between this cognitively oriented theory and early learning theories, Bandura (1986) relabeled the theory as *social cognitive theory*. Unfortunately, this new label, while good for the theory, is disastrous for the textbook writer, since there are at least two other meanings of the term "social cognition" enjoying widespread application in developmental and social psychology (we turn to these in chapters 9–11). Furthermore, much of the important empirical work accumulated in the social learning tradition has continued to retain the old label. Hence, for the sake of simplicity, in most parts of this book I will retain the old label (social learning theory) except when referring to distinctive features of the more recent formulations.

Learning from models

Bandura and colleagues point out that the child has access to an abundance of information via models (parents, siblings, teachers, media personalities, neighbors, and so on). But this does not mean that a child imitates all and sundry, buffeted randomly from behavior to behavior as she watches first her mother, next her father,

and later the TV weather forecaster or the milk delivery person. Social learning theorists propose that children pay greater attention to some models than others, and that a number of factors influence what they will do on the basis of what they learn. Importantly, observing and learning a behavior does not necessarily mean that one will enact it oneself, and a behavior could be learned but not performed until a later time.

Vicarious consequences

One of the most useful things that models can do for us is provide illustrations of the consequences of *their* actions. If we see that groveling to the boss enhances a colleague's career progress, we learn an important fact about reward contingencies in the workplace; if we see our older brother scolded for swearing in front of Aunt Matilda, we learn about potential hazards in the interpersonal environment. In the first case, we experience vicarious reinforcement, in the second vicarious punishment. Bandura and Rosenthal (1966) demonstrated that classical conditioning effects (aversive reactions to a stimulus associated with negative consequences) can be induced by observing someone else experience an unpleasant outcome as a result of a hitherto innocuous action. Clearly, models can furnish us with a good deal of useful information.

The acquisition–performance distinction

Watching what is going on around us is one thing, actually enacting the observed behavior is another. As indicated, social learning theory does not hold that the latter invariably ensues. There is abundant evidence that it does not: life would be greatly simplified if all we had to do to meet our own needs was to watch the powerful and attractive reach high office, inherit wealth, or win Wimbledon – and then do the same. Bandura (1977), drawing on the information-processing paradigms dominant in North American psychology, proposed that the relationship between a modeled event and the matching pattern of behavior is mediated by four levels of process: attention, retention, production, and motivation.

Attention The onlooker's scrutiny of the potential model may be influenced by several factors, including the *distinctiveness* of the model and his or her attractiveness and power. For example, we may find the hero of the movie more attention-worthy than the villain or a bit player. Whether the behavior has *functional value* for the onlooker may also influence attention – how you handle your boss may be of little interest to me if I am unemployed. Other considerations include the *arousal* of the observer, his or her *expectations* about the model, and his or her own *past reinforcements*.

Retention Not all modeled events are equally comprehensible; if we find something difficult to understand, we are less likely to encode, retain, and reproduce it. Whether or not we use memory strategies (organization, rehearsal) has consequences for what we retain.

Production Even if we attend to and retain a modeled performance, we may lack the skills necessary for its reproduction. This is why a Wimbledon championship is not on the agenda for most of us, and more generally why many actions produced by older individuals are not immediately replicable by many children.

Motivation The key motivational processes, according to Bandura, are reinforcements, which may be direct external consequences, vicarious reinforcement, or self-reinforcement.

Notice that these processes can be applied by any (human) learner in almost any learning situation. The outcomes will be influenced by individual competence and age-related abilities but the potential for acquiring new information and enacting new performances is not dependent upon being at a certain stage of development. In other words, one of the distinctive features of social learning theory is that it predicts the lifelong ability of the individual to learn (Hurrelmann, 1988).

Reciprocal determinism

Although social learning theory is often interpreted and applied as a "shaping theory" (see Maccoby and Martin, 1983), Bandura himself has long stressed that the theory does *not* represent the person as the helpless victim of environmental influences. Nor does he favor the thesis that something in the person and something in the environment simply "add up" to determine behavior. In Bandura's view, it is an oversimplification to depict "individual" and "environmental" factors as independent influences: "Contrary to this assumption, the environment is only a potentiality, not a fixed property that inevitably impinges upon individuals and to which their behavior eventually adapts. Behavior partly creates the environment and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior" (1973, p. 43).

The process through which this comes about is described by social learning theorists as *reciprocal determinism* (Bandura, 1977, 1986). An individual's characteristics (personality, beliefs, cognitive abilities) will influence his or her selections in the social environment: who to play with, what to do, what to avoid. These selections in turn influence the opportunities that he or she finds to develop skills and to learn about the consequences of particular attributes and behaviors. An aggressive child, for example, might find that she gains control over peers. This may be rewarding, and encourage her to maintain this form of behavior. In turn, the social environment will adapt to characteristics of the child. In the case of this aggressive individual, some peers may reduce interactions with her while others will be interested in aligning with her, controlling her, or defeating her. People are both products and producers of their environment (Bandura, 1986).

The self and social learning

Another important emphasis in Bandura's work is the role that the self plays in the regulation and evaluation of behavior. Two particular aspects of the self have been the

focus of much work in social learning/ social cognitive theory: self-monitoring and self-efficacy.

Self-monitoring As a result of modeling and reinforcement, the self incorporates societal standards and monitors whether own behaviors are in line with adopted standards. In this way, behavior is regulated even in the absence of external reinforcement: "There is no more devastating punishment than self-contempt" (Bandura, 1971, p. 28).

Self-efficacy Self-efficacy refers to the individual's belief that he or she can exercise some control over events that influence his or her life (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is intimately connected to motivation, since people's judgments of their own capabilities are likely to affect their expectations about their future behavior. Perceptions of self-efficacy influence how one responds to perceptions of a discrepancy between one's own behavior and that of a model. If you feel that the model's actions are within your range then you may attempt to emulate, but if you have a low sense of self-efficacy in respect of the modeled skill, then you may demur. These expectations, one's sense of self-efficacy, do not arise out of nowhere but reflect the individual's prior history of attainment and reinforcement. They have implications for future attainments, since a high sense of self-efficacy is likely to promote further efforts and experimentation, while low self-efficacy could result in avoidance of opportunities and challenges. A great deal of research has supported the relevance of self-efficacy as a dimension of personal mastery and goal-setting throughout the lifespan (Berry and West, 1993).

Criticisms of social learning theory

Social learning theory has many points of overlap with mainstream social psychology, especially in the North American tradition, which emphasizes external influences upon individual behavior. It takes the "exterior" and examines its implications for childhood (and other) learning. However, it has some limitations in terms of what it has to say about the "interior". Although current versions place great emphasis on internal cognitive processes, the theory is often criticised for failing to take note of cognitive *development* (Grusec, 1992; Grusec and Lytton, 1988; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Perry and Bussey, 1984). Bandura (1986) certainly assumes changes in information-processing capacities with maturation and experience, but resists the notion of general structural reorganizations as a response to conflicts between developing understanding and empirical discoveries, as proposed by Piagetian and other cognitive developmental psychologists.

Another objection is that notions of reward, reinforcement, and punishment, although central, are not very clearly defined (Hogan and Emler, 1978). Hogan and Emler comment that the implicit definition is circular: something is reinforcing if a subject finds it reinforcing. Others have complained that Bandura's acknowledgment of biological factors is little more than lip-service, and too much emphasis remains on situational variables (Scarr, 1992; Wallace, 1993). Social learning theorists tend to be

dismissive of the notion of personality as a major feature of social behavior, and do not address in detail the nature and origins of human emotions (Wallace, 1993).

Finally, despite its title, social learning theory is curiously limited in its conception of social context and social influences. The principal mechanisms of the social environment are taken to be modeling and reinforcement but, apart from this, little attention is paid to the ways in which other people help us to construct and enter the social world, how we acquire shared representations of interpersonal and societal phenomena, and how social arrangements make possible some developmental routes and inhibit others.

Evolutionary Theories: Ethology and Sociobiology

Studying the histories, successes and failures of various forms of life, Darwin (1859) came to the conclusion that evolutionary selection ensures that species are organized around two priorities: survival and reproduction. Those who do survive and prosper will pass on to their descendants the genetic characteristics that led to their own success; those who are less adaptive meet a different fate.

Darwin's theory has proven a useful basis for the explanation of many aspects of evolution. Although much work in evolutionary biology has been concerned with nonhuman species, scientists have also attempted to explore the implications of the theory for the study of humans. Two, related, manifestations of the theory have attracted considerable support as accounts of the bases of human social organization. These are ethology and sociobiology. Although neither theory is a psychological theory (that is, they are not concerned with human mental processes), they do raise interesting issues for the study of social development, and have been very influential in respect of both theoretical and methodological concerns in this field.

Ethology

Ethology is the study of animal behavior, with particular reference to behavior in natural environments (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989; Hinde, 1982, 1992). Much ethological work is concerned with nonhumans, but humans are an interesting subset of the primates, and many ethologists have attempted to apply their methods and theories to the study of this species. Modern versions owe much to the work of Lorenz (1935, 1963) and Tinbergen (1953, 1973), European naturalists who emphasized the role of biological factors in the causes of behavior, and Bowlby (1969) who developed a highly influential account of mother–child attachment based on ethological theory and evidence of cross-species similarities in adult young bonding. Leading contemporary ethologists include Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989) and Hinde (1988, 1992), both of whom have elaborated the implications of ethological theory and methods for the social sciences.

Ethologists maintain that the behavior of members of a species is based at least in part on an inherited repertoire of capacities and responses. Ethologists are skeptical of the view – assumed by many psychologists and other social scientists – that behavior

can be understood principally in terms of skills and information learned by each individual in the course of his or her development.

Consider some of the kinds of phenomena that ethologists study, and it is easy to see why they attribute much of the causation of behavior to nature. For example, many species appear to be preprogrammed to react to specific threatening stimuli (such as the color of the breast of some male birds, the angle of approach of certain predator fish, the baring of teeth by another canine); these kinds of signals often inspire fight or flight. In the terms of the early ethologists, fight or flight reactions are examples of *Erbkoordinationen* or *fixed action patterns* (FAPs), triggered by particular stimuli and designed to ensure the survival of the actor. Other preprogrammed behaviors serve to facilitate reproduction (such as birds' songs, preening or postures that signal sexual interest) and others to maximize the survival prospects of the young (such as building nests, rolling back into the nest any eggs displaced to the edge, attacking or diverting creatures that approach the young; see Hinde, 1982).

As we will see in later chapters, humans display some behavioral tendencies that are very similar to those that ethologists find in the wilds of nature. We are alert to threat signals from members of our own species and others, we engage in courtship rituals, we protect our young who are endowed with certain properties that serve to evoke our affection (cute faces; cf. Lorenz, 1943) and solicit interventions (crying; cf. Bowlby, 1969). Much of our day-to-day behavior is organized around basic concerns similar to those of the species we regard as lower. We give priority to our requirements for resources, such as foodstuffs and protection against the elements, and we do not take kindly to anyone who gets in the way of our access to these necessities; we strive to establish comfortable nests in the best positions we can get, and furnish them with materials we find in forests or on the backs of other animals. We may be a good deal more sophisticated than the humble chaffinch or the crested newt in our means of fulfilling our biological needs, but it is irrefutable that such needs are there, and that much of human social life is organized around them.

We should note certain particular strengths of the ethological approach. Hinde (1988) maintains that one of the distinctive features of ethology is in the *orienting attitude* it fosters toward the scientific study of humans. Ethologists insist that the first step of a rigorous scientific investigation must be to *describe* the phenomena of interest. Very few scientists, psychologists included, would disagree with this axiom, but not so many honour it in practice. Hinde comments that experimentally oriented psychologists may have been too eager to follow the scientific model of physicists, setting up highly contrived tests of abstract theories in laboratory contexts, instead of examining carefully exactly how humans behave and develop in their natural habitats. One of the major contributions of ethology to the study of social development has been via painstaking observational investigations of children's and parents' behaviors in authentic environments, such as homes, playgrounds, and schools. Still more importantly, the orienting attitude of the ethologist leads him or her, following Tinbergen, to ask of any behavioral phenomenon under investigation: what were the causes? How did it develop? What is its function? How did it evolve?

For the ethologist, then, attention ranges from immediate causation through to the evolutionary derivation of physical and behavioral capacities. One merit of this

perspective is that it places human behavior in a broader setting than the history of a single hypothetical individual, the decontextualized "subject" of much psychological research.

Sociobiology

Sociobiology is a particularly controversial offspring of ethology. Sociobiologists share ethologists' interests in the application of Darwinian evolutionary theory to the social behavior of animals, including humans (Barash, 1982; Smith, 1987; Trivers, 1985; Wilson, 1975, 1978). The boundaries between the two approaches are not very distinct, and both maintain that a species' social behavior is organized to maximize its survival fitness. However, sociobiologists draw more extensively upon population genetics and some have tended to make bolder – more deterministic – theoretical statements about the implications of genetic survival for group and societal organization.

In its earliest and most polemical formulations (e.g., Wilson, 1975) sociobiology was promulgated as a biological explanation of social behavior which could dispense with most of (what the hard-nosed biologists regarded as) the fanciful conceptual fictions of the social sciences. Instead, everything could be explained by genetic endowment:

> Pavlov was simply wrong when he postulated that "any natural phenomenon chosen at will may be converted into conditioned stimuli." Only small parts of the brain represent a *tabula rasa*; this is true even for human beings. The remainder is more like an exposed negative, waiting to be dipped into developer fluid. (Wilson, 1975, p. 156)

As will be seen in chapter 13, based on revised accounts of the links between genes and fitness, sociobiologists have been able to formulate interesting solutions to longstanding paradoxes such as altruistic and self-sacrificial behavior. Another and especially controversial proposal is that of *parental investment theory*, the notion that an individual's behavior toward partner and offspring is governed by the costs and benefits of investment (Kenrick, 1994; Trivers 1985). This theory bears on some of the central relationships of interest to developmental social psychologists – namely those between men and women, parents and children – and we return to it in later chapters.

Early relations between psychology and sociobiology were not especially friendly. As a new beast eager to stake out its territory in a competitive environment, sociobiology was fond of taking agonistic postures and issuing threatening war cries (see Wilson, 1975, 1978). In turn, the very mention of biology is something of a red rag to many social psychologists, and biologically based theories are sometimes dismissed as flippantly as bio-cognitivists discard social perspectives. More recently, sociobiologists have moderated many of their more extreme deterministic claims, and psychologists have begun to take seriously the implications of a sociobiological perspective (Archer, 1996). Interesting prospects for some degree of synthesis are on the horizon (Buss, 1992; Crawford et al., 1987; Jackson, 1992; Kenrick, 1994;

MacDonald, 1988a, d; Smith, 1990; Vine, 1983). M. S. Smith (1987) shows that biological and psychological approaches to development are not necessarily incompatible, although they may often focus on different levels of analysis. Developmentalists, for example, have come slowly to acknowledge that development proceeds through the lifespan rather than just the first two decades; sociobiologists contend that humans as a species have been developing for thousands of years, and that what has been going on through this period might well bear on the status of human capacities as we currently find them.

At present, attempts to relate sociobiology to psychology are concentrated chiefly on enriching the theoretical framework of a model that has proven useful in the study of lower species but faces conceptual hurdles when directed toward us. But these interpretations have shifted the theory a long way from Wilson's early thesis that the "genes hold culture on a leash", and at the same time have raised very clearly issues that psychologists in general, and developmental social psychologists in particular, can scarcely afford to ignore.

Criticisms of biologically based theories of social behavior

We will meet a number of counter-arguments to specific proposals in later chapters, but three main critical objections may be noted for the present. These concern the issues of testability, biological determinism (i.e., the implication that biology is destiny, and that humans have no free will or self-determination), and the lack of a developmental perspective.

One of the major limitations of evolutionary theories is that in place of predictions, they offer retrospectives. That is, they provide accounts of how species adapted and then rest on the rather circular logic that we know these were the most adaptive strategies because they worked. Hence, the falsifiability of ethology/ sociobiology is often questioned (see Thomas, 1992): since we cannot manipulate or re-run evolution, how can we test their claims?

E. O. Wilson (1975), as a leading spokesman for the first wave of sociobiology, was dismissive of notions such as free will, emotional loyalties and culture, and, as we will see in chapter 5, sociobiologists and other evolutionists have been prone to extreme views of sex differences in behavior and achievement. It has been argued (e.g., Valsiner, 1989b) that many sociobiologists tend to confuse societal motivations (such as the need to reproduce) with individual reasoning, ignoring the mediating variable of culture. However, most contemporary ethologists and sociobiologists with interest in humans acknowledge the distinctiveness of this species in terms of its capacities to reflect consciously on its behaviors and social structures and to take deliberate steps to adjust them (cf. Barash, 1982; Hinde, 1988; Trivers, 1985).

Criticism of the lack of a developmental perspective is justifiable to a point, but this reflects areas of neglect and mutual suspicion rather than an inevitable schism. For example, Strayer et al. (1989) develop a cogent argument that evolutionary theories can explain not only humans' advanced cognitive abilities as an outcome of selective pressures, but also the emergence of social practices which facilitate development and adaptation to specific local conditions.

There are at least two ways of looking at biology. One is as the source of fixed limits; the other is as the source of immense potential. Many biological accounts, including some applications of ethology and sociobiology to the study of humans, have emphasized the former, deterministic, interpretation and sometimes these theories have been exploited to provide scientific justifications for inequities in societies (such as racial and sexual inequalities). But the rather circular reasoning which underpins these applications need not be embraced in order to acknowledge that human beings are biological organisms with finely adapted capacities and skills which have evolved over a long time and which permit us to tackle our environment in uniquely effective ways. It has to be said that much remains to be done to bring about a synthesis of evolutionary theories and developmental theories but, as sociobiologists have adapted beyond the teeth-baring epoch of their early work, the scope for fruitful interchange is becoming greater.

An Ecological Theory of Human Development

We have now considered broad theoretical perspectives which address, variously, issues of intra-organismic change, the influence of experiences and observational opportunities, and the impact of evolution. None of these approaches has a great deal to say about the contemporaneous social system within which new members of society are developing. Bronfenbrenner's (1979; Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983) ecological approach provides a much more comprehensive attempt to explain the ways in which interactions among social structures affect the content and course of human development.

Bronfenbrenner represents the ecological environment as an interrelated series of environmental structures, each nested in the next "like a set of Russian dolls" (1979, p. 3). He proposes that the basic unit is the dyad, the parent–child relationship. The dyad itself is intimately related to the larger interpersonal structures, especially the nuclear family but also the other prominent social structures of everyday life, which may include the extended family, neighbors, friends, and others with whom the dyad interacts on a face-to-face basis. These complex interrelationships form a *microsystem*, a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations which are experienced by the developing person in a particular setting with particular physical and material characteristics (p. 22).

Microsystems are themselves nested within *mesosystems*. A mesosystem consists of the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person participates, such as home, school, and neighborhood. These in turn are nested within an *exosystem*. The exosystem consists of social settings which do not themselves directly involve the developing person as an active participant, but do provide contexts which affect the mesosystem and microsystem. Components of the exosystem, for example, include the extended family, parents' workplaces, the mass media, community services, and the educational system; the availability and quality of each of these may have implications for how a given family and its microsystems are organized. Finally, the outer shell of the series is the *macrosystem*, the belief systems and ideologies of the

culture, which constitutes a pervasive set of values around which societal life is organized.

The ramifications of the structure at the outer level are readily demonstrated. For example, suppose the macrosystem is that of an advanced industrial society, placing the production of wealth at the top of its priorities. This has obvious consequences for how workplaces are structured and for the society's requirements of its educational system. As a result, adults attend the workplace for a certain proportion of their time and compete for advancement and rewards, while children attend the school for a certain number of years in order to acquire the skills to participate in the workplace. The exosystem takes on a particular shape to meet the society's broader economic and ideological priorities. Suppose that within the exosystem the available workplaces have no provision for child care and no part-time employment for males (reflecting other ideological assumptions about the optimal division of labor). In this context, a two-parent family might be obliged to organize its division of labor such that the father takes a full-time job and the mother undertakes principal caregiving responsibilities. Thus, the most basic of units – in this case, mother and child – wherein the developing person begins his or her discoveries about life is circumscribed by values and arrangements prevailing at seemingly remote levels.

Most readers of this book will live in societies that have a macrosystem similar to the above. But part of the force of Bronfenbrenner's model is to remind us that we should not assume the universality of our own macrosystem nor the developmental contexts and experiences it affords. Even among Western societies, Bronfenbrenner emphasizes, ostensibly the same "blueprint" could take on subtly different meanings in different nations (e.g., Bo, 1994; Cotterell, 1994). And if we look more widely, we find very different systems of social organization with very different consequences for development (see, for example, Tietjen, 1994). A still more important contribution of Bronfenbrenner's perspective is that it elevates developmental social psychological theory from the level of linear effects assumed in much of behavioral science (i.e., the idea of direct cause–effect relations among social variables) to a broader conception of the interrelations among systems (see Minuchin and Shapiro, 1983, for a fuller discussion of the implications for scientific paradigms).

Criticisms of ecological theory

One of the attractions in principle of Bronfenbrenner's model is that it offers a potential bridge between developmental psychology and social psychology. The problem is that the factors he highlights – the nature of social systems, the mutual consequences of different levels of societal organization – are actually neglected by much of contemporary social psychology. This is scarcely Bronfenbrenner's fault, but it points to an obstacle to integrating the theoretical perspective with what is actually available in social psychology.

It has been objected that the theory does not lead to very precise and testable predictions (Thomas, 1992) though, again, this may reflect the difficulties of fitting the theory in with existing developmental research, much of which has neglected contextual variables as depicted by Bronfenbrenner. Certainly, Bronfenbrenner (1979)

articulates a long list of clear hypotheses about the relationship between development and social ecology, at least some of which have been supported by Bronfenbrenner's own research and others offer rich prospects for future researchers. Thomas (1992) holds that, none the less, the theory is imprecise about the relations among microsystems (e.g., how does involvement in family relate to involvement with peers?), about the implications of the diversity of social roles that an individual may have (e.g., son, older brother, friend, student) and the relative strength of system components (e.g., the effects of parents versus schooling versus media exposure versus peer pressure).

As Collins and Gunnar (1990) comment, Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the impact of economic conditions on human development raises particularly urgent themes for applied research in contemporary societies which are developing large underclasses of people cut off from mainstream employment and living conditions. Perhaps the fairest conclusion at present is to agree with Thomas (1992) that not as much empirical work has yet emerged to test and develop this theory as has been the case with others, but it remains a very important reference point for developmental social psychologists because it attempts to deal head on with something that is addressed rather more indirectly by other theories: namely, the real world.

Implications for the Study of Socialization and Social Development

We have considered four quite different approaches to the study of human development. This by no means exhausts the theoretical perspectives that bear on different topics in developmental social psychology, but it provides a preliminary overview of the wide range of considerations that are relevant. We leave specific illustrations to later chapters, but let us return to a key concept, socialization, and note how each approach would represent it.

The central premiss of Piagetian theory in this respect is that the child is engaged in *self-socialization* (Ruble, 1987, 1994). Piaget sees the child as embarking upon an active search for information that will guide his or her social behavior. Mastering this information proceeds through a series of qualitative reorganizations, and an individual's intellectual status at any one point governs how he or she deals with new information or problems. Social learning theories place greater emphasis on the influence of environmental variabilities, but (especially in Bandura's social cognitive formulation) also regard as crucial the cognitive processes which guide how the learner attends to, retains, and retrieves information from his or her social experiences. In social learning theory, development is continuous rather than stage-like. Ethological, sociobiological, and related theories highlight genetic imperatives and heritability, but most accounts admit important contributions due to local conditions (MacDonald, 1988a). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory also gives priority to the environment (though not denying that biology is implicated), and heightens sensitivity to the dynamics of intersecting social systems.

There are, then, considerable overlaps among the major theoretical approaches sketched here, as well as important differences. An emphasis on biological endowment is shared by both the ethological/sociobiological tradition and the Piagetian; stress on cognition as a mediator of behavior is common to Piagetian theory, ecological theory, and later models of social learning theory; each theory acknowledges some influence due to environmental factors. *All* of the theories acknowledge that human behavior and development entail biological and learned patterns as well as cognitive activity. There are differences among them in terms of the relative weights attached to different factors, but most stress that biology and learning cannot be separated neatly.

This is the point at which most of the major theories are beginning to converge. It would be difficult to find a theory which did not admit at least some level of interactionism in this sense. What remains problematic is to explain exactly how the interactions proceed. On the one hand, different theorists have come, grudgingly or otherwise, to acknowledge the relevance of factors other than those which they give priority; this reflects increasing theoretical maturity (and the benefits of social interaction among those with conflicting perspectives). On the other hand, these varying accommodations make each theory a little less distinctive and a little less falsifiable. And, furthermore, there is still a great deal left unexplained and under-investigated.

One way to perpetuate this state of affairs would be to haul up the factional drawbridges and concentrate on refinements to each theory within the safety of each subdiscipline. Another would be to confront the intersections, not only of the theories introduced here, but of other productive frameworks for the study of human social behavior and its development. This is essentially why we need a developmental social psychology. In the chapters which follow, the issues introduced here will recur many times. In many instances, proponents of the different theoretical perspectives offer competing explanations; elsewhere they focus on different levels of analysis; in some cases, research into certain topics has been dominated by one perspective and proponents of the others have tended to stand at a safe distance. Out of these efforts, and through increasing connections with mainstream social psychology, a developmental social psychology is emerging.

Developmental Social Psychology and the Real World

One of the distinctive features of developmental social psychology is that it bears on real-world issues and problems. Where possible, in this text I draw upon events and relationships in everyday life to illustrate the processes and phenomena that scientists are studying. Referring to the real world every now and again serves as a constraint upon a science that aims to explain the development and behavior of human beings, so much so that it may appear self-evident to the newcomer that the developmental social psychologist ought to take note of what is going on outside the

laboratory. Self-evident perhaps, but surprisingly often disregarded in the parent subdisciplines. In a book entitled the *Social Psychology of Everyday Life*, Argyle (1992a) remarks that electing to write about this broad topic (everyday life), seemingly very much the preserve of social psychology, actually necessitates filling in the gaps that the field frequently overlooks.

Argyle would have a good deal more gap-filling to undertake were he a developmental psychologist. In this context, the focus of enquiry has often been conceived of in splendid isolation not only from the real world but even from any other human contact. As we have seen and will see again, many developmentalists have adopted models of the child as an isolate, functioning as a mini-scientist working all alone in the societal laboratory, as a biologically preprogrammed organism with most of its major behaviors ordained by nature, or as an information-processing calculator who quietly remits data from mental store to mental store. These metaphors have served useful short-term purposes, but time and time again careful study of human development has led to the conclusion that it takes place in real worlds, involving real people in interaction.

Developmental Social Psychology and Culture

As soon as we begin to contemplate the real world, of course, it is inescapable that there are many different versions of it. For the cultural psychologist, "reality" is the outcome of the ways in which members of a culture represent and share their collective understandings and values (Shweder, 1991). Actions or events that are ostensibly the same on the surface may have quite different meanings within different cultural contexts. For example, as simple an action as spanking may be regarded as a quite trivial child management technique in one culture, and a brutal form of abuse in another (Walters and Grusec, 1977); a day out at Disneyland is a socially approved reward in Anaheim, a vulgar descent into the cultural wilderness outside Paris.

Attention to culture is also important because it reminds us that a historical perspective on human nature is not the exclusive preserve of the ethologist or sociobiologist. Culturally oriented developmentalists also emphasize the importance of evolved patterns of behavior and ways of reasoning. Cross-cultural developmentalists, such as Cole (1992), argue that biology and the environment do not interact directly, but that their interaction is mediated by culture, which is constructed dynamically over a long time. Cole maintains that the fact that we evolve cultures is itself an important biological characteristic of our species, and the types of cultures we construct reflect our properties and our adaptations to specific environments: "the form of our nurturing is our nature" (p. 8). In a similar vein, LeVine (1989) points out that even biological givens, such as the capacity to acquire language, take on meaning only when they intersect with actual human contexts.

Unfortunately, developmental social psychology is hampered in its inclusion of culture by the lack of an agreed definition. The natural tendency to seek help from specialist neighbors is unlikely to attract a straightforward reply (Cole, 1992; Triandis, 1994). Cole (1992) estimates that definitions of culture among anthropologists run

into several hundred. Cole's own concept of culture, which derives from Vygotskyan theory (discussed in chapter 11), is that human beings live in environments that have been transformed by the discoveries and artifacts of past generations, and that these artifacts serve to coordinate human beings' social organization as well as their relationship to the physical world.

This book does not aim to provide a wholly cross-cultural approach to developmental social psychology, not least because much of the leading work we draw upon here is restricted to just a handful of cultures with much in common, especially North American and European. But in the study of social development, social reasoning, and social behavior it is important to keep in mind that different cultures afford not only different things to learn but different ways to do the learning. Cross-cultural comparisons provide valuable natural laboratories, varying factors that experimenters cannot normally manipulate within a culture for ethical and practical reasons (Hopkins, 1989; Rogoff and Morelli, 1989), and they promote caution in the rush to deduce universals from data collected only from selected or convenient communities within the First World (Greenfield, 1994; Jahoda, 1986; Triandis, 1994).

Developmental Social Psychology and Methodologies

Many methods are exploited by the psychologists whose work we will consider in this volume. There is no revolutionary new developmental social psychological method. Although developmentalists have become keenly aware that the experiment is itself a form of social interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Davis, 1991; Garton, 1992; Light, 1986), it remains one of the most prominent and most effective tools of the discipline, and we will encounter innumerable examples of ingenious, rigorously designed, and meticulously controlled applications of this approach, both in laboratories and in the field. But there are other valuable techniques, too, including clinical interviews, observational studies and case reports. Developmental social psychologists employ cross-sectional and longitudinal designs. At various points in the text we will take note of findings from neighboring disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and linguistics, where still different methods are exploited. Because this book is aimed at advanced undergraduates, it is assumed that the reader already has some familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods, and for the moment the purpose of these comments is to remind you that each makes its contribution and each has its limitations (see, for example, Manstead and Semin, 1996; and Sabini, 1995, on methods in social psychology; Bremner, 1994; Shaffer, 1993; and Smith and Cowie, 1992, on methods in developmental psychology).

Choice of topics

Any textbook has to be selective, and not all topics or all research that could be treated under the heading of developmental social psychology have been included. My choice of topics has been guided by the four strategies for a developmental social

psychology outlined above, and by what is available (and missing) in the literature. Some topics to be discussed in later chapters could be found in most developmental psychology textbooks (morality, language), and others in most social psychology textbooks (attribution theory, social comparison, nonverbal communication), and several in both (sex roles, prosocial behavior, aggression). What is remarkable about some of the latter is that, as indicated above, the vocabulary and dialect of each subdiscipline has evolved a body of literature that is almost – not completely, but almost – independent of its neighbor. I am not confident that I have overcome all of the translation problems, but I hope to be able to convey to the reader from time to time something of the differences and overlaps in the ways social and developmental psychologists have approached topics of mutual concern.

No topic in the book has been treated exhaustively, and one of my most difficult tasks was in deciding what to leave out. To assist the reader reluctant to become the sort of compliant wimp who accepts uncritically everything that she or he reads in a textbook, suggestions for *further reading* are given at the end of each chapter which will provide starting points for pursuing specific topics in greater depth. Obviously, the best source of material beyond the textbook is the scientific literature itself. Much of this research can be found by consulting the relevant periodicals, and the chapters that follow aim to provide guidance into the primary literature where the student can then make her or his own assessments.

Although a broadly topic-based approach has been adopted, it should be mentioned that many of the topics will re-emerge in other chapters. The reader may well spot many cross-connections that I have failed to make. If this happens from time to time, perhaps it is because you are beginning to put people together again.

Further reading

Bandura, A. (1986) *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: a social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

The major statement of Bandura's theory, drawing together the conceptual basis, a mass of empirical research, and many provocative speculations in an impressive exposition.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development: experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

This book is important as an introduction to Bronfenbrenner's own ecological theory, but also as a statement of many issues concerning levels of analysis in developmental psychology and the intersection of development and environment that any adequate developmental theory must address.

Chapman, M. (1988) *Constructive Evolution: origins and development of Piaget's thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

An insightful account of the philosophical and biological underpinnings of Piaget's theory, with discussions of current extensions and reinterpretations.

Grusec, J. E. and Lytton, H. (1988) *Social Development: history, theory, and research.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

An advanced level textbook providing a valuable account of the historical and theoretical foundations of much contemporary work on social development, and detailed reviews of many key topics.

Hurrelmann, K. (1988) *Social Structure and Personality Development: the individual as a productive processor of reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A succinct but wide-ranging overview of socialization theories, including the psychological approaches discussed here and several sociological perspectives. Hurrelmann develops his own concept of socialization, relating personality, the family, and societal conditions.

MacDonald, K. B. (1988) *Social and Personality Development: an evolutionary synthesis.* New York: Plenum.

A stimulating discussion of the philosophical and empirical underpinnings of developmental psychology, with reviews of the ways in which cognitive developmental and social learning perspectives might be integrated within an evolutionary theory.

Excellent reviews of the major theories of developmental psychology can be found in:

Miller, P. H. (1993) *Theories in Developmental Psychology*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Freeman.

Thomas, R. M. (1992) *Comparing Theories of Child Development*, 3rd edn. Belmont, Calif. Wadsworth.