CHAPTER ONE

Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Research in Social Development

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Research in social development began more than a century ago. Its roots are much older, springing from enduring philosophical traditions, as well as from theory and research in other sciences such as biology and pedagogical studies (e.g., Dewey, 1899; Hall, 1904). Only in the most general way, however, can these distal influences be discerned in the directions and concerns of social development research today. Much more visible are the intellectual currents within the social sciences themselves and themes arising from pressing social problems. The goal of this chapter is to detect those currents in this vital and increasingly diverse research enterprise.

The traditional purview of research in social development is "changes over time in the child's understanding of, attitudes toward, and actions with others" (Hartup & Laursen, 1991, p. 253). Although interest in these phenomena was apparent from the earliest research on psychological development, no history of social development as a coherent field of inquiry has previously appeared. Rather, existing historical accounts have addressed particular research topics (e.g., Eisenberg, 2002; Hartup & Laursen, 1999; Maccoby, 1992a, 1992b; Modell & Elder, 2002), the contributions of influential researchers (e.g., Arnett & Cravens, 2006; Cahan, 2003; Cairns, 1992; Emde, 1992; Grusec, 1992; Horowitz, 1992; White, 1992), and institutions and organizations that have shaped social development research (e.g., Hartup, Johnson, & Weinberg, 2002; Sears, 1975; Senn, 1975). This chapter aims to distill from these disparate efforts a historical perspective on contemporary research in the field. The chapter is divided into three sections: (a) a brief overview of historical trends, identifying significant shifts and transitions; (b) a description of major historical transformations in the field during the past century; and (c) an

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attempt to show how methodological issues have been interwoven with the substantive concerns of social development researchers.

Three Eras of Social Development Research

Few scholarly fields yield easily to simple chronological accounts. Social development is no exception. Cairns and Cairns's (2006) division of the first century of developmental psychology into three periods provides useful markers, with slight adjustments for social development: emergence (roughly 1890–1919), the middle period of institutionalization and expansion (1920–1946), and the modern era (from 1947 to the present). These broad divisions reveal striking variations in the degree to which systematic theoretical perspectives influenced the dominant questions and methods of social development research.

Emergence

Interest in the phenomena of social development suffuses early accounts of childhood, from the writings of philosophers to the writings of diarists and social historians (e.g., Darwin, 1877; Shinn, 1893–1899). Systematic scientific study began only in the final decade of the nineteenth century (White, 1992). Among the early efforts were Hall's questionnaire studies focusing on "(a) simple automatisms, instincts, and attitudes, (b) the small child's activities and feelings, (c) control of emotions and will," and the like (White, 1992, p. 29). In the same decade, studies of peer collaboration (Triplett, 1897) and similarity between friends' attitudes and values (Barnes, 1896–1897, 1902–1903; Monroe, 1899) appeared. The interests of these early researchers, if not their methods and interpretations, thus are strikingly like the topics that preoccupy researchers at the beginning of the 21st century.

Middle period

Initially, concern with theory in social development research was slight, at best. Researchers generally shared the view that "nascent social competences were … among the child's endowments, and the work of the scientist was to chart their unfolding" (Hartup, 1992, p. 107). This situation changed as views of psychological research shifted and as strong formal theories from other fields penetrated the study of social development. These converging forces asserted that experience, not merely the unfolding of natural endowments, was an essential element in development. The most commanding figure in American psychology at this time, Watson (1913), declared that learning alone accounted for development, effectively challenging the suppositions underlying most work in the field up to that point.

The orientation to environmental forces in behavior and development intensified as psychoanalytic propositions permeated the literature. Although of greatest interest to

clinical and personality psychologists, Freud's ideas further pressed social researchers to consider the nature and substance of socialization, or "the processes through which the child is assimilated into society" (Hartup, 1992, p. 107; Maccoby, 1992a, 1992b). Similar pressures emanated from sociological theories, such as symbolic interactionism (Cooley, 1909; Mead, 1934), that were concerned with how developmentally advanced individuals contribute to child growth and development. The interest in socialization born in this period dominated social development research from the 1930s until the 1960s and remains a salient theme today. Among its early ramifications were an emphasis on parental influences and a relative neglect of interactions with peers, who were thought to lack the experience and authority to serve as socializing agents (Hartup, 1992).

The modern era

The most recent sea change occurred in the 1960s with the renascence of structuralist ideas. Piaget's theory emphasized the significance of social processes and the role of the child as an active agent in development (Flavell, 1963). Without denying the role of authority figures in early development, Piaget (1932/1965) took the view that children most readily experienced the cognitive conflict necessary for developmental change when interacting with peers. Kohlberg (1969), in a germinal chapter on stage and sequence in social development, further developed the notion of cognitive conflict as a necessary ingredient of movement from one stage to another and peers as ideal social resources for this process. Kohlberg's essay remains the major marker of a shift to theory encompassing both social environments and a child actively operating on those elements.

Piaget's and Kohlberg's writings gave rise to a new interest among social developmentalists in a normative descriptive account of social cognitive functioning (e.g., Selman, 1980). For many researchers, however, issues of socialization and the prediction of social behavior remained salient (e.g., Dunn, 1992; Harris, 1992), raising the possibility that cognitive activity was central to other aspects of social development. Three current directions in the field have resulted from this impetus: (a) increasing interest in the ways in which children regulate their own behavior and emotions, (b) attention to biological processes in control and regulation, and (c) a conviction that the dyad is an essential unit of analysis in social development.

What Is Social Development the Development Of? Historical Determinants

Over the first century of social development research, the answer to the question "What is social development the development of?" changed in concert not only with shifting theoretical emphases but also with changing societal views of optimal behavior (Beatty, Cahan, & Grant, 2006; Kagan, 1992; Sears, 1975). Early studies of children focused on the qualities of independence, intelligence, honesty, and sociability largely because "wise commentators in America were certain" that these qualities represented the ideal

culmination of development (Kagan, 1992, p. 992). In an era with little theoretical commitment, social values determined the typical set of outcome variables of interest in psychological research.

As psychoanalytic theory and its offshoots became more dominant, other variables become more salient. The classic longitudinal studies of the 1920s and 1930s, for example, focused on social and mastery variables. Among these were dependence, independence, aggression to peers and parents, achievement, anxiety, and sociability. All have demonstrable connections to Freudian theory and the related shift to primary interest in parental socialization and children's social dispositions and control of emotions. An interesting corollary is the significance of these assumptions for the salience of particular parenting variables. Before World War II, when most mothers stayed at home, concerns about child-rearing problems tended toward fears about overprotectiveness, encouragement of dependency, and discouragement of age-appropriate independence. In this case, the psychodynamically influenced concerns with independence and emotional control accorded with typical rearing circumstances for middle-class American children (Kagan, 1992).

By the 1960s, a driving vision of the active child further redirected scientific attention. Interest increased in children's concepts of self, others, and the interrelation of the two (Kohlberg, 1969; Selman, 1980) and in constructs such as intentions and causal attributions (e.g., Dodge, 1986; Dweck, 1986). Growing attention to biological processes and related constructs (e.g., temperament) led to greater focus on regulation of behavior, including coping, inhibition, and attention (Eisenberg, 2002; Rothbart & Bates, 2006). Research on social behavior gradually shifted attention to dyadic interactions as regulatory contexts, and constructs of relationship became more central. Rather than focusing on issues of dependence and anxiety alone, researchers also attended to parents' sensitive responding, signs of emotional security, and measures of relationship quality (Hartup & Laursen, 1999; Thompson, 2006).

Changes in economic and social patterns relevant to development and child rearing exerted further pressures on research questions. The preoccupation with assuring independence and emotional control seemed less relevant when more than half of the mothers in the United States were in the labor force. Public concerns shifted toward the prospect that increasing numbers of children might experience insufficient parental affection and sensitivity toward the child, thus giving issues of attachment, the quality of out-of-home care, and the emotional life of the child considerable currency in the public arena as well as in social development research. Concerns about the greater likelihood of parental inattention also extended to fears of less supervision and monitoring of children, which in turn focused widespread attention to developmental problems of poor regulation and psychopathology (Beatty et al., 2006; Kagan, 1992).

Transformations in Social Development Research

The breadth of social development research today cannot be subsumed easily by a few common themes. Yet most of the activity in the field reflects four intellectual and empirical transformations during its first century. These include increasing interest in specifying

developmental processes and intraindividual processes, understanding the nature and significance of interpersonal contexts in development, identifying the dynamics of interpersonal experience, and recognizing the significance of variations in extrafamilial social contexts.

Specifying developmental processes

The maturationist assumptions of researchers stemmed both from a naïve psychology of natural endowments and from an interest in the practical ramifications of "child study" (Hartup et al., 2002). Hall, for example, emphasized that the study of children was valuable for gaining insights that might eventually inform efforts to enhance their development (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; White, 1992). Careful description was a useful first step, and the descriptive work of the middle period was generally more rigorous than in the early period. This later work was facilitated by substantial investment in research by funding agencies like the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial and the Payne Fund, which shared the goal of improving the lives of children (e.g., Senn, 1975). Diverse scientists contributed to the advances of this period. Bühler (1927, 1930) conducted compelling observational studies demonstrating the truly social nature of infants' behavior; Goodenough (1929, 1931) studied children's emotional upset during testing and fears by children of different ages; and Shirley (1931, 1933) published a three-volume report of a pioneering short-term longitudinal study of motor, intellectual, and personality development in the first 2 years of life. In perhaps the most striking empirical advance of the period, two scholars of religion, Hartshorne and May (1928–1930), produced a series of experimental observational studies showing that moral behavior was highly situation specific.

The search for developmental processes The essential work of developing sound research methods preempted the energies needed for developing and testing theories during the middle period (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; White, 2002). Bühler's (1931) review of studies of children's social behavior, barely 35 years after the first published work on social development, culminated in her judgment that these early studies failed because of "the lack of a systematic point of view" (p. 392). In neglecting theoretical development, social development researchers fell behind other developmental psychologists of the middle period. With the challenges to naïve maturationist views from behaviorism and psychoanalytic concepts, researchers finally shifted focus to rigorous testing of hypotheses regarding the nature and processes of changes in social behaviors, attitudes, and values.

The most theoretically innovative researchers in this period were Watson and Gesell. Watson's (1913) conviction that conditioning accounted for the acquisition of all behaviors had inspired many social developmentalists to grapple with mechanisms of growth and change. Other able psychologists tested key implications of Watson's ideas with respect to infant behavior (e.g., Jones's [1931] rigorous demonstration of the counterconditioning of learned fear).

Gesell, best known for normative descriptive studies of physical and mental growth (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; Thelen & Adolph, 1992), also advanced the view that human infants were endowed with a "pre-eminent sociality" or impulse to seek connection with

others. He regarded development as a transactional process: "Growth … is a historical complex which reflects at every stage the past which it incorporates … a continuous self conditioning process, rather than a drama controlled" (Gesell, 1928, p. 357). Gesell's speculations about his findings implied a developmental theory much like that of Baldwin (1897) before him and many more recent theorists.

Not until the 1930s and 1940s, however, did compelling theory-testing research appear in the literature. Of particular note were the efforts of a group of young psychologists at Yale University to reinterpret psychoanalytic predictions in terms of Hullian theory learning mechanisms. Soon organized as the Institute of Human Relations, they first reconstrued Freud's view of aggression by treating aggressive behavior as a learned response to being thwarted in efforts to reach a goal (frustration; Dollard et al., 1939). Two members of the group then reexplained identification as imitation reinforced by the experience of similarity to a valued other (secondary reinforcement; Miller & Dollard, 1941). The best known among the few longitudinal studies of the middle period incorporated similar constructs to these pioneering process-oriented efforts (Baldwin, 1949; Kagan & Moss, 1962), as did other large-scale studies (e.g., Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957; Sears, Rau, & Alpert, 1965; Sears, Whiting, Nowlis, & Sears, 1953) and laboratory experiments (e.g., Hartup, 1958; Hartup & Coates, 1967). The empirical fallout lasted for more than 2 decades.

The theoretical hybridizing of the Yale group proceeded in parallel to tests of predictions from other formulations, such as operant learning (e.g., Gewirtz & Baer, 1958). An extensive body of findings accumulated around these behaviorist conceptions of social processes, evident in Stevenson's (1965) influential analysis of social reinforcement. By testing the theories that then occupied others in psychology, social developmental researchers finally moved into the mainstream of the discipline (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; White, 2002).

The mechanistic core processes of social-learning theory, however, eventually quailed under accumulating evidence from infant studies, showing that abilities commonly thought to require conditioning were present very early and that children did not react identically to the same stimuli or the same reinforcers (Kagan, 1992; Maccoby, 1992a). Responses to such findings stimulated a search for intraindividual factors in behavioral and conceptual change. Following Bandura and Walters's (1963) classic volume on social learning and personality development, Mischel (1973) and Bandura (1986) proposed cognitive social-learning formulations, in which such basic processes as reinforcement were reinterpreted as having informational, as well as emotional, significance (Grusec, 1992).

Mediational processes in social development Buttressed by the "cognitive revolution" in psychology, with its focus on such processes as memory, attention, and inferential thought, and in particular by the influx of Piagetian concepts (Flavell, 1963; Maccoby, 1992a), social development researchers moved toward change processes based on notions of structural reorganization of thought and action. Baldwin (1897) had proposed similar dynamic structural processes in his writing at the turn of the twentieth century, and his ideas were echoed in the thought of Dewey and Gesell, among others (Cahan, 2003). Piaget's formulation fell on more fertile ground than the previous views had.

Advanced primarily to account for intellectual development, Piaget's theory depicted the child as trying to reconcile an expectation, or cognitive schema, and incompatible information from the environment. The resulting intrapsychic conflict motivated the child to adapt the schema to the new experience, thus enlarging his or her capacity to grasp new instances. Development occurred as the child inevitably confronted and adapted to a wide range of experiences.

A social dimension was implicit in this formulation, because many of these conflict-inducing instances inevitably involved other persons. In contrast to the emphasis of learning theorists on parental socialization, Piaget gave special credence to interactions with peers. He reasoned that children encountering a discrepancy between their own schemata and the views of a parent would simply adopt the parent's view, a change that would not necessarily require cognitive change. With persons of equal power, children would be more likely to engage fully in grappling with discrepant viewpoints and inconsistent events; this effort to adapt to more socially challenging circumstances in turn would foster cognitive growth. Piaget's explicit description of how and why children's actions were essential to growth and especially his linking of this process to peer social interactions concretized the notion for researchers accustomed to the "social molding" accounts of social-learning theorists (Hartup et al., 2002; Hsueh, 2004). Kohlberg's (1969) classic essay elaborated the social ramifications of cognitive change, identifying equilibration following cognitive conflict as a fundamental process of social development.

The Piagetian Kohlbergian account received most direct research attention in connection with stage-related hypotheses. However, researchers working on a wide range of developmental problems today, some of them drawn from alternative theoretical models (e.g., information processing), invoke transactional accounts of social development. An example is formulations identifying cognitive biases, such as the tendency to misattribute the causes of behavior in instances of provocation or failure, accounts of aggression (e.g., Dodge, 1986), or lack of persistence in difficult tasks (e.g., Dweck, 1986). Such cognitive biases result when children form schemata of events from repeated experiences interpretable as confirming existing social scripts. Moreover, homeostatic notions such as equilibration following conflict and transactional accounts of behavioral development suffuse the literature in fields such as parent–child relations, peer relations, stress and coping, and the development of prosocial behavior (e.g., Collins, 1995; Furman & Wehner, 1994; Gunnar, 1994).

Expanded views of regulatory processes

Socialization, the dominant concern of social development research throughout the middle period (Hartup et al., 2002), implies that individuals are "induced in some measure to conform to the ways of [their] society or of the particular groups to which [they] belong" (Clausen, 1968, p. 4). In social-learning formulations, regulation processes almost uniformly implied "other" regulation, whereas theories like Piaget's implied that children were collaborators in socialization. Moreover, research on language development and attachment implied that many developmental outcomes could not be explained by top-down influences; and studies of reinforcement and observational learning pointed to

the likely variability in children's cognitive processing of, and inferences about, events, learning history, and other subjective intrusions into supposedly fixed, externally controlled processes (e.g., Maccoby, 1992a).

In the era of the active child, efforts to understand self-regulation have commonly focused on children's capacities for balancing internal and external demands to minimize disruptions of optimal functioning. Studies of regulation subsume diverse contexts, processes, and aspects of behavior and emotion. Among the salient topics have been attentional control and cognitive structuring of control tasks in delay of gratification (e.g., Eisenberg & Fabes, 2006), coping strategies in stressful or anxiety-arousing conditions (Compas, 1987), and the relation between behavioral strategies and physiological "dampening" processes in response to stressors (Gunnar, 1994).

The interest in responses to stress, like numerous topics before it, reflects the widespread assumption – and considerable empirical evidence – that technological advances, social changes, and economic and political pressures well beyond the immediate sphere of child and family make coping with multiple stressors an essential competence in modern life (Compas, 1987). Integral to research on this topic is the psychological task of regulating emotions. Evidence of emotional self-regulation is abundant. For example, children "manage" their emotional displays in accord with societal expectations and the demands of their parents (Saarni, 1990); and hormonal reactivity spikes under conditions of fear or novelty for some children, but typically returns to ambient levels following self-soothing activities of various kinds (Gunnar, 1994). Moreover, children vary in their typical emotion regulation, partly as a function of the socialization of emotion in families (Dunn, 1992; Eisenberg, 2002).

Interest in emotion regulation significantly influenced a renascence of research on temperament. The construct of temperament had languished for 3 decades. Contributing to this neglect were political and popular resistance to implications of fixed qualities in individuals (Kagan, 1992), few convergent definitions of key constructs, and the inadequacy of measures of temperamental differences (Rothbart & Bates, 2006). With advanced instrumentation and sophisticated biological indicators, combined with behavioral profiles (Kagan, 1992), it is now more feasible to examine the regulatory patterns of infants and children who differ along common dimensions of temperament (e.g., Kagan, 1994). Moreover, evidence is growing of interactions between temperament and socialization (e.g., Kochanska, Aksan, Knaack, & Rhines, 2004).

Interest in self-regulatory processes also contributed to a resurgence of research on personality development. Personality development had quavered under attacks from behaviorists (e.g., Mischel, 1968), but recent evidence from longitudinal studies and new techniques of combining research results across studies have provided stronger evidence of long-term continuity and change than previously was available (for reviews, see Caspi & Shiner, 2006; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000).

Expanded units of social experience

The concept of an active child also fed a growing conviction that many of the most significant socializing experiences took place in interactions with others in which the child

was an active partner. Sears (1951), in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association, had contended, "A diadic unit is essential if there is to be any conceptualization of the relationships between people" (p. 479). Two decades later, Bell's (1968) article, "A Reinterpretation of the Direction of Effects in Studies of Socialization," and Rheingold's (1969) elegant essay, "The Social and Socializing Infant," again set forth the argument for child as well as parental effects. Another decade passed, however, before proposals for a science of relationships began to take hold in developmental and social psychology (Hinde, 1979; Kelley et al., 1983; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). New lines of research both bolstered the earlier argument for dyadic formulations and expanded research in the area.

The dominant line of research stemmed from Bowlby's (1958) theory of attachment. Writing in reaction to earlier secondary-drive formulations (e.g., Freud, 1910/1957; Sears et al., 1957), Bowlby argued that initial bonds between infants and their caregivers result from evolved tendencies to maintain proximity to assure the infant's safety and survival. Such themes converged nicely with the interest in security as a social motive suggested by the discovery that young rhesus monkeys deprived of social interaction sought contact comfort, rather than gravitating toward a source of food (Harlow & Zimmerman, 1959). Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) theoretical works spurred systematic empirical studies of childhood attachment and numerous theoretical elaborations and refinements that continue unabated today.

Among the historically most important empirical sequelae of these activities are the following. First, the emergence of a bond between child and caregiver in the second half of the first year of life appears to be normative and universal (Ainsworth, 1967; Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). Second, both members of the caregiver–child dyad contribute to these attachments (for reviews, see Marvin & Britner, 2008; Thompson, 2006). Third, the functional significance of attachment is underscored by evidence from nonhuman species that even minor deprivation of contact with responsive others results in abnormal neuroanatomical structures and impaired endocrinological sensitivity related to stress and coping (e.g., Ginsberg, Hof, McKinney, & Morrison, 1993). Studies of human children adopted from orphanages, some having impoverished opportunities for human interaction, also reveal neurohormonal sequelae of restricted social contact (Chisholm, 1998; Gunnar, Morison, Chisholm, & Schuder, 2001; Rutter and English and Romanian Adoptees [ERA] Study Team, 1998). Fourth, research on the long-term significance of early attachments has yielded some compelling findings of continuity with relationships in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, but many instances of null findings as well (for a review, see Thompson, 2008). Fifth, the process by which relationships are linked to behavior patterns at a much later time is thought to be one instance of the more general process of expectancies being applied to new situations. Few researchers now espouse a simple "early determinism" model, embracing instead multivariate accounts that acknowledge the sometimes overlapping contributions of multiple kinds of dyads and that also attempt to explain discontinuities (e.g., Belsky, Campbell, Cohn, & Moore, 1996; Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999).

Studies of peer relations also rest heavily on assumptions of bidirectional influence and the dyad as a unit of analysis (Hartup & Laursen, 1999). A compelling example comes from findings that, when two toddlers or school-aged children interact, the qualities of

their interactions are a joint function of their respective early relationships (Pastor, 1981). Thus, "[I]t is not simply that children behave differently depending on the relationship histories of their partners, but that relationships with different partners themselves vary in quality" (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986, p. 59).

Developmentalists face several unique challenges in research with dyadic units of analysis. One is that both developmental and power differentials contribute to the unique functioning of a dyad composed of individuals of different ages. Moreover, different rates of change in two partners of different ages make it difficult to determine which partner is contributing more to the ongoing adaptations between the two persons (Hartup & Laursen, 1991). A second challenge is the need to shift from viewing developmental outcomes in terms of only individual traits or habit patterns toward thinking of outcomes as competences for participating in social life (e.g., security, effective conflict resolution, commitment, involvement, and hostility; see Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999; Maccoby, 1992a). Although contemporary researchers have devised more compelling ways of specifying and analyzing relationships than were available before 1980, scholars continue to grapple with questions regarding the methods and statistical strategies appropriate for research with dyads (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000).

Incorporating contextual variations into social processes

The fourth and final transformation in social development concerns the significance of aspects of the contexts in which relationships and interactions occur. Until the 1970s, the term *environment* implied varied sources of stimulation, from the proximal social models or social reinforcers encountered by a child to other, unspecified sources of influence. Psychological researchers were bent toward demonstrating generality in the effects of certain environmental influences, not appreciating the distinctions among them (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Modell & Elder, 2002).

An early challenge to this environment-neutral stance came from Lewin (1931), who argued that the individual's psychological environment, as opposed to the physical or objectively determined environment, was composed of both intraindividual forces and external ones. Children's perceptions of the stimuli specified by the researcher had to be assessed and included in both design and statistical analyses. Both Lewin's conceptual prediction and his empirical findings (e.g., Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1938) have influenced generations of research on the effects of parenting behavior (Baldwin, 1949; Baumrind, 1973; Maccoby, 1992b) and teachers' classroom behavior (e.g., Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998), and the dynamics of peer groups (Hartup, 1992).

Lewin's emphasis on context has reappeared in a variety of formulations in the ensuing decades. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) germinal volume, *The Ecology of Human Development*, provided an organizing framework for diverse potential environmental influences, including those of historical period and cohort. In his now famous concentric levels diagram, aspects of the environment that the child did not experience directly were pictured as distal, but possibilities for indirect influences were clearly apparent. Research examples of these indirect influences are increasingly familiar (e.g., Elder, 1974; McLoyd, 1998). Another post-Lewinian manifestation came from developmental anthropologists, many

of whom provided reminders of the potency of the experienced, not the presumed, environment (e.g., Super & Harkness, 1986).

The impact of contextual variables is felt today not only in social development but also in other subfields of developmental psychology and psychology generally. Many psychologists now believe that constructs and reports of empirical findings should be labeled to specify the contexts to which they apply (Kagan, 1992). An example in social development is peer gender segregation (Maccoby, 1990), which refers specifically to the tendency for children to affiliate with same-gender peers in mixed-gender settings. Nevertheless, social developmentalists, like other psychologists, face continuing challenges in fully incorporating contexts into studies of development and the developmental process (for critiques, see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993; Modell & Elder, 2002).

The Search for Method

The earliest methods in social development research were observation and survey questionnaires. Studies reported between 1890 and 1920 rarely reported more than frequency counts of behaviors, attitudes, or values. Although description is an essential phase of any natural science, early samples were too restricted and the administration of measures too error ridden to serve this purpose for the emerging field of social development (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; White, 1992). Early studies of children's social judgments (Schallenberger, 1894) and peer relations (Barnes, 1896–1897, 1902–1903; Monroe, 1899) were similarly descriptive and drawn from questionnaire responses. Observational and experimental methods were few. One notable exception was Triplett's (1897) landmark experiment showing that children wound fishing reels faster when working with other children than when working alone. Not until more rigorous descriptive studies became the standard in the 1930s did compelling observational work appear. Methodological improvements increased relatively quickly. Innovations came less rapidly, however, in studies of very early social development. Leading the way on controlled experimental observations of infants, Charlotte Bühler observed the babies of poor families at a milk station in Berlin and documented simple social coordinations in the exchanges of 6-month-old infants. Similar advances in the study of infant social behavior did not appear for another 30 years.

Careful observational studies of nursery school children in the United States, though, showed age-related patterns during early childhood. For example, coordinated interactions of many different kinds increased with age (e.g., Parten, 1932–1933); physical aggression increased and subsequently declined across ages (Goodenough, 1931); and verbal aggression initially increased with age, but then stabilized (Jersild & Markey, 1935). Similar methods also revealed that children's relationships with one another moderated conflict instigation and management (Green, 1933).

The social behavior of older children demanded still more creative techniques. Group behavior, both normative and antisocial, was studied through participant observation (e.g., Thrasher, 1927). Field experiments, such as Lewin et al.'s (1938) classic work on

group atmospheres, anticipated later equally classic studies of groups like the Robbers Cave experiment (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). Still later, ethnographic studies expanded the study of individuals and groups in context (e.g., Bryant, 1985). The most influential strategy to date has been comparing the behavior of children who vary in peer group status. Sociometric methods, derived from Moreno's (1934) method for studying institutionalized adults, has undergone important refinements and has yielded significant clues to meaningful variations in social skills and behavior (e.g., Coie, Dodge, & Copotelli, 1982).

Despite the relatively greater rigor of later studies, studies of peer relations in the middle period were scarcely more theoretically motivated (Cairns & Cairns, 2006). Only after 1960 were theoretically driven studies of behavior with peers conducted extensively. Contemporary studies draw from a range of theoretical formulations, such as those of exchange theory, Sullivan's (1953) theory of interpersonal relations, attachment theory, and an array of newer formulations (Hartup & Laursen, 1999).

Work on parenting generally has trailed these efforts in sophistication, despite the longer history of sustained interest in, and the larger number of, studies of parental effects and child outcomes. Questionnaire studies and self-report inventories dominate research on parenting behavior even today. Observational studies (e.g., Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1999; Patterson, 1982) and laboratory analogs (e.g., Kochanska et al., 2004; Kuczynski, 1984) are relatively rare. Reliance on self-report methods and correlational statistics has weakened the contributions of these studies. Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, and Bornstein (2000) identified several more rigorous types of designs that have been used to specify parental contributions to social development. Among these are behavior–genetics designs augmented by specific measures of environment; studies distinguishing among children varying in genetically influenced predispositions in terms of their responses to different environmental conditions; experimental and quasi-experimental studies of change in children's behavior as a result of their exposure to parents' behavior, after controlling for children's initial characteristics; and research on interactions between parenting and nonfamilial environmental influences and contexts.

Many methodological innovations of the modern era followed changes in relevant technologies. Video recorders greatly facilitated progress in early studies of infant affect and mother–infant interaction (e.g., Cohn & Tronick, 1987). Digital and computer technologies, combined with video, have enhanced specificity in observational and laboratory studies of social interaction in families and peers. Techniques to measure brain electrical activity, heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, cortisol, and blood chemistry have contributed to studies of temperament and are likely to be even more widely applied in the decade ahead (Kagan, 1992, 1994; Rothbart & Bates, 2006).

Longitudinal studies, though more numerous in social development than in other subfields of developmental psychology, were understandably rare in the first 6 decades of the history of social development. The exceptions were noteworthy for their scope and impact. The Berkeley and Oakland surveys (e.g., Clausen, 1993), Baldwin's study of parenting styles (1949), and the Fels longitudinal study (e.g., Kagan & Moss, 1962) all provided significant descriptive data on key constructs. The same can be said of pioneering short-term follow-ups of infants (e.g., Shirley, 1933). Today, the relatively numerous longitudinal efforts in the United States and Europe are all the more remarkable because

of their size and scope. These efforts permit researchers to address heretofore intractable issues, such as the duration of the impact of significant social experiences, trajectories of change, the significance of timing of social experiences, and so forth (e.g., Grossmann, Grossmann, & Waters, 2005; Pulkkinen & Caspi, 2002).

Conclusion

The first century of research on social development is a story of evolution, rather than revolution. Shifts of strategy and method are more apparent than shifts of interest or focal questions. The interests underlying the canonical work in the field are present today in more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated forms. For example, the best work on parental influences today takes account of the nature of the child and the possibility of bidirectionality, as well as the strong likelihood of other socializing influences such as peers, schools, and the mass media (Collins et al., 2000). Research on peer relations acknowledges contextual effects and qualitative variations among peer companions, as well as child temperament, familial relationship history, and quantitative differences in the nature of the relationship. Studies of individual differences in behaviors (e.g., aggression) and behavioral orientations (e.g., gender) draw broadly on knowledge of social, biobehavioral, cognitive, and emotional processes to formulate hypotheses and interpret research results. The first century has been a promising start on the next one.

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