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Child Development
Theory and Practice 0–11
Chapter 12

The Social and Moral World of the Child

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Introduction

In the last chapter we learned that although the basic emotions – such as fear and happiness – appear ‘hard-wired’ and culture-resistant, all babies very quickly learn much more complex feelings associated with their first important attachments. Moreover, young children begin to understand the feelings and the behaviour of others; key ideas in the development of their temperament and personality. Where emotional development is distorted then we can predict with some confidence that children will exhibit elements of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Such difficulties inhibit opportunities to ‘enjoy and achieve’, ‘make a positive contribution’ and ‘achieve economic well-being’ – three of the five outcomes for children in the Every Child Matters approach launched by the UK Government in the 2004 Children Act that we introduced in the first chapter. It is to the complex social and moral world of the child that we now turn for the final chapter in Child Development: Theory and Practice 0–11. As usual we begin with a story.

Lin Yan is just about to begin her first day in Meadowbank Junior School. Her parents have recently moved into the area and have found a school that they believe will be ideal for their rather shy daughter. Meadowbank is known for its friendly ethos and for the value it places on children ‘getting along well’ with one another. The class teacher makes Lin Yan feel very welcome. She has a place for her coat with her name above it and the children have made her a special welcome card. During the morning, the teacher encourages her to join Hannah and Seetal at the computer. They soon invite Lin Yan to have a go. She is a little anxious at first but soon uses the mouse to click and drag icons on the screen with considerable skill, and together they answer all the on-screen questions correctly! The other children are very impressed and tell others that ‘Lin is great at maths’.

At break-time, other girls come over to meet Lin Yan. They have been watching her across the classroom and want to know more about her. They are full of questions and soon find they have some common interests, including dance. Lin Yan shows the girls some basic moves of Chinese classical dance and everybody is impressed with her grace and balance. The girls try to copy and there is a lot of laughter and smiles. On the first day at her new school, Lin Yan has made new friends and learned that being good at something can be helpful in starting and building relationships with others.

In this story Lin Yan wanted to make friends with other children in her new class and they were keen to get to know her and be her friend too. Humans desire to be with other humans – we are curious about others and seek the interest and security of being part of a family, a group, and a wider society. It is through being in groups that children learn about the practices and values of the society in which they live. Experiences in childhood in various social groups play an important part in making us who we are and who we become. Through this enculturation process, children acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours so that they can ‘enjoy and achieve’, ‘make a positive contribution’ and ‘achieve economic well-being’. For Lin Yan, the experiences on her first day at school were positive, and knowledge and skills gained on this important occasion will stand her in good stead in making new relationships in the future.

Social development is linked to other aspects of development: early sensory and cognitive development being especially closely connected. A newborn infant
is unable to differentiate between strangers and friends and not yet ready to com-
municate with others by smiling and gesturing – skills reliant upon interpreting
the signals of other people. Yet 2 years on, the same child is capable of showing
deep attachment towards others, can communicate with others in quite sophis-
ticated ways, and shows the beginnings of prosocial behaviour. Initial social
experiences are principally those determined by immediate family members, but
as social beings children seek out other people, form relationships and engage
with them in various social activities.

The achievement of important mobility milestones such as crawling and walk-
ing combined with early utterances, gestures and facial expressions enables
a child to come into contact with more people and be understood by those
immediately around. An increasing ability to communicate with different people
becomes vital for a child as they form a social nexus of peers and other adults
that they meet in their steadily expanding social world.

This chapter begins by charting social development, from the close relation-
ships with those in the immediate environment to starting school and beyond.
It stresses the importance of play experiences in fostering social skills and beha-
viours, introducing the concept of play as ‘social chess’. Issues connecting social
and cognitive development – social cognition – which incorporates personal
feelings, notions of self and self-identity, theory of mind and social identity are
explored and discussed in the context of three main social influences of family,
peers and school. In the final section we discuss moral development, largely
through pro- and antisocial behaviours common in school contexts.

By the time you have completed this chapter you should be able to answer the
following questions:

- What are the main theories of social development?
- What is the role of play in socialisation?
- How do we come to understand the motives and intentions of others?
- What is the social influence of family, peers and schools?
- How do children develop a sense of right and wrong?
- What are prosocial behaviours and how do we promote them in schools?
- How should we deal with forms of aggressive behaviour including bullying?

The early social world of the child – first relationships

Young children are already part of a social system before they are born. Remember in
Chapter 10 how a baby is capable of discriminating its mother’s voice in the womb? This
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means that fairly soon into life outside of the womb babies can orientate themselves – sense and know that others are separate to them – to social situations and to other people. Of course physical bonding in the first moments after a child is born is important but bonding and the first indications of attachments also includes reacting to the sound of mother’s voice and excited by other voices too. Babies’ social development is much more sophisticated than just meeting their primary needs of warmth, hunger and security alone and much more than just physical contact.

Although early reflexes such as those used in grasping and rooting link babies immediately to their carers, it is the rapidly developing sensory capabilities that provide information to assist in recognising aspects of other people that are different. The perceptual systems of babies are already geared up to orienting themselves to others; differentiating by smell, sound and look. We have already said how important faces are for babies (Chapter 8), even to newborns and that we appear to be hard-wired to make sense of facial structures and symmetrical patterns. Developmentalists Mark Johnson & John Morton (Johnson, 2000; Johnson & Morton, 1991) believe that as a species we are pre-wired to process faces. They propose we are born with a conspecific face recognition system (CONSPEC mechanism) which is a brain system that passes on information about the structure of the human face to the brain cortex for further analysis; sufficient to direct the infant’s gaze to another person’s face for the purpose of comparison. After 2 months babies take interest in other babies, and we can observe children of this age gazing at each other (Rubin et al., 1998). In Chapter 11 we discussed the infant smile as perhaps the first and most potent form of early communication. Young children smile and look towards others around them and use smiling as an important social signal looking for clear responses: others respond to the babies’ smiles, motherese, babbling, cooing and returning smiles. Interaction is further promoted through adult-baby games and helps with the child’s understanding of turn-taking. A baby also learns (as we have argued from Chapter 2 and throughout) by imitation, e.g. clapping hands, and sticking tongues out in simple games which contribute to an infant’s growing repertoire of social actions. Psychologist Giannis Kugiumutzakis (1999) suggests that the reason why babies can imitate is precisely for the purpose of communication; mouth opening, blinking and tongue protrusion are all part of a desire even in 45-minute-old newborns to communicate with others.

Psychologist Alan Fogel (Fogel & Garvey, 2007; Fogel, 1993) describes this interaction between child and adult as coregulation, which includes the many ways in which individuals change their actions anticipating or responding to those of another. This interaction can be best thought of as a verbal and non-verbal conversation (with nods, eye contact, etc.). It is frequently seen in feeding rituals where the mother engages with her baby’s natural rhythms in a synchronised way. The use of language, for example speaking in higher pitch, exaggerating tone, speaking slowly, length of pauses, using questions and directives and repetition allows a mother to adjust to her baby’s specific needs. During the first 6 months, mother and child begin to respond to each other in what is termed primary intersubjectivity. This is a response by an infant to the carer’s intention to communicate sensitively, as is shown when infants look up intently at the face of carers and respond with movements of face and hands in rhythmical using a book as an object—secondary intersubjectivity—in a joint action format. Mother is scaffolding her child’s experience and learning, because the child cannot do this alone. Source: © Pearson Education Ltd 2004 / Jules Selmes

CONSPEC mechanism
A brain system that passes on information about face processing to the cortex and directs an infant’s gaze to the human face.

Connect and Extend

Coregulation
Continuous unfolding of individual action modified by the continuously changing actions of the partner.

Primary intersubjectivity
A response by an infant to a carer’s intent in communication and a sensitivity of the carer to the infant.
Secondary intersubjectivity
Later recognition by an infant that objects and events can be shared between the child and the adult.

Joint-action formats
Simplified action sequences created by the mother involving objects that are repeated.

Person permanence
Understanding that a person still exists even when no longer in view.

Egocentric (2)
The self is not yet constructed as something separate from others – commonly thought of as a self-centred view of the world.

Concordance. Later, when these mutual exchanges involve objects or toys, it is termed secondary intersubjectivity (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). This is an advance in understanding; recognition by an infant that objects and events can be shared between the child and the adult. The role of the adult is crucial in promoting this and can be understood in terms of scaffolding discussed earlier in Chapter 9; the more experienced adult tutoring the novice in the rules of such interchanges. Joint-action formats (also referred to as synchronised routines in Chapter 11) are simplified action sequences created by the mother used as topics for first language development; sharing a book, feeding and dressing routines (Smith & Fluck, 2000; Bruner, 1975).

A relevant aspect of an infant’s development is person permanence: the idea previously mentioned that a person still exists even when no longer in view. This is a significant development in beginning to form relationships (connected to advances in cognitive capacity), such that if mother is not in the room she can be looked for, called for, and once she returns, welcomed back. Research into social referencing (Chapter 11) tells us that after 7 months a child will look to the mother/parent and check their reaction, to guide their actions and reactions to strangers. This is becoming a thinking, reasoned response to the social environment and such advances in social development during the first year are rapid. Simple relationships with parents (usually the mother) are immensely important for developing social skills as is much greater awareness of other children. By 2 years self-conscious emotions are evident and language development allows verbal expressions of emotions although, as noted in Chapter 11, temper outbursts in the ‘terrible twos’ period may be the result of frustration; an inability to express more complex emotions. What happens next?

Increased language skills in the preschool years open up new communication opportunities with others, greater mobility allows exploration of a larger environment and cognitive advances enable children to view others as separate to themselves, with interests and intentions that might be different from their own. By 3 years, an infant starts to accommodate to the mother’s and other’s needs. This is not an overnight process and young children can appear very egocentric. However by school age, a child has built
abstract models of the adult-child and child-child relationships using an internal schema based on (hopefully) trust and approval, the social experiences of being cared for by grandparents, fathers and older siblings. Between 3 and 5 years, social participation increases outside of the family as well. Beginning nursery school exposes them to a larger circle of others of their age than previously, and activities connected with nursery school and other outside interests such as beginner swimming, gym and dance clubs foster social interactions in a range of new settings and locations.

Children can and do take lead initiating interactions with others and are therefore less dependent on adults to structure experiences for them. They have an understanding of the rules of simple games and shared activities. This is a time when prosocial behaviours such as turn-taking and sharing with others become very evident based on early joint-action formats, so that in nursery school and other play settings you might observe children waiting for their turn on the climbing frame or sitting with friends and sharing a jug of juice at break times. Indeed, progress in children’s social development is perhaps most obvious when watching them play together; play, an important topic to which we now turn with another short story.

Children’s play and social experiences

In the playgroup Anna, aged 4, has arranged some red plastic cups, saucers and plates. She carefully and thoughtfully put them on a tablecloth on the floor with the help of one of the play workers. Are there enough plates and cups? Is the pattern of plates and cups the same for each place setting? It is a tea party and Anna has invited her best friends to come for tea. A few moments later we can see the children happily chattering away, pouring cups of tea for themselves and pretending to eat the plastic cakes that are neatly set on the plates.

Outside the classroom in the playground, Mo and Jon Paul are engaged in what appears to be wrestling. Mo has hold of Jon Paul’s shoulders, while Jon Paul has his arms locked tightly around Mo’s waist. There is much tussling, some pushing and shoving but all good-natured and part of a shared make-believe game. Jon Paul is swung around and spins off before he sets off, chasing Mo across the playground.

Both scenes describe typical children’s play behaviours and neither is a scene of children engaged in formal classroom learning – yet who could not argue that learning is taking place? Imagine the language associated with both situations. Conceive of what the children are learning about relationships with the other children and about themselves: physical skills, language and the self-regulation of their emotions. Most certainly both episodes are powerful learning experiences. Other common early years play activities such as sand and water play and play on large outdoor apparatus promotes creativity, social skills and language development.

Traditional views have linked the functions of play with survival through the development of hunting and building skills (Biben & Suomi, 1993) and caring behaviours (Wentzel, 2003). Lev Vygotsky viewed play as important in building up mental structures using culturally specific tools, such as language. Albert Bandura saw play as rehearsal and preparation for skills in later life. Jean Piaget allied play to the development of cognition, as an activity that only higher mammals can participate in. The combined view that play can advance intellectual skills is one supported more by Dorothy and Jerome Singer (2001) through the association of play with the development of problem-solving and symbolic thinking. Imagine two children in school trying to finish a puzzle. The children are learning together and having fun. Their social development is enhanced by taking turns, sharing the pieces and working in tandem using trial-success-and-error and other heuristics to solve the puzzle. The sharing of ideas – sometimes in argument – and explanations require metaphors and connected thinking to be used: ‘it’s a bit like . . .’ and ‘don’t you remember . . .?’ are often heard when older children are
Part 3 Cognitive and Social Development

Functional play
Play that is accompanied by a high level of engaged interest in the relationship between 'what I do' and 'what happens'.

Physical activity play
Active play that combines early body movements, exercise play and rough and tumble play. Others (e.g. Pellegrini & Smith, 1998) have identified three phases of physical activity play beginning with leg kicking and arm waving of babies, to the exercise play involving running and jumping, and finally the rough and tumble play that becomes apparent from age 3 through adolescence, and involves children in friendly play-fighting and chasing games with peers. Play-fighting and chasing is common in playgrounds, and despite views of playground supervisors, it does not generally lead to genuine fights (Gartrell & Sonsteng, 2008). A mitigating plea 'It's just a game, Mrs Peters. We're only playing!' is usually accurate.

Constructive play
Play using objects in order to construct.

Symbolic play
Play involving imaginary situations or people. Also called fantasy, dramatic or pretend play.

Decentration
The ability to focus simultaneously on several aspects of an activity.

Formal games
Play that takes the form of any game with a rule structure.

Sociologist Mildred Parten in the first systematic study of children's play behaviours in nursery (1932) identified a hierarchy of six categories of social participation play, which underscore some forms of play as a social experience (in brackets below are the age ranges associated with the play preferences in Parten's original sample):

1. Unoccupied behaviour – perhaps sitting and thinking.
2. Onlooker behaviour – where the child attends to something interesting in what other children are doing but does not join it.
3. Solitary play – takes place alone and is play that is different from that of others around (most 2–2½-year-olds).

4. Parallel play – where children play alongside but not with another child. There is little or no verbal interaction but children playing alongside each other often use imitation as an effective way of showing interest in what the other child is doing (most 2½–3½-year-olds).

5. In associative play children may share materials or resources but there is no adoption of alternate roles in the scenario or working collaboratively (most 3½–4½-year-olds).

6. Finally, co-operative play which becomes more frequent after age 5 includes playing games or model making together.

The first four of these categories are more non-social participation play. Parten’s work clearly showed how children’s activity appears to become more social as they get older and that their play becomes more interactive and more likely to involve others. The latter two categories of associative and co-operative play are considered as social play and Parten found these types of play were most frequently displayed by age 5, a finding supported by more recent research (Howes & Matheson, 1992). However we think caution should be adopted if attempting to use the original modal values (in brackets above) in a normative fashion. Remember from Chapter 3 that normative values can be applied to all children but there is little evidence in this case for practitioners in play settings to look for similar age ranges irrespective of the sample chosen. Casual observation over many years leads us to expect to see a good deal of solitary and parallel play in many groups of 4-year-olds. Also, contemporary researchers tend to view these categories as too simplistic and have turned their interest to reasons why children play alone (Rubin et al., 1998) and the educational attainments of children engaging in solitary and parallel play (Coplan et al., 2004).

Reflect

Parten’s modal values for associative and co-operative play would lead us to expect most children to be engaging in social participation play by the age of 5. We’re not so sure. We observe children happily playing side-by-side but generally ignoring each other. From your experience or research do you think that most 5-year-olds engage in social participation play?

Despite our reservation about Parten’s modal values, her work is a splendid starting point for many practitioners when observing young children at play. The notion of a social play hierarchy has supported the work of other pioneers of childhood education in the last century such as Froebel, Isaacs and Steiner, all of whom influenced the position of play in the early childhood curriculum today. The importance of play in the early years curriculum today is also vehemently defended by contemporary advocates (Moyles, 2005; de Boo, 2004; Bruce, 2001; Lindon, 2001). However, research into play has tended to focus on its cognitive outcomes (interesting that it is an activity that only
higher mammals and humans can participate in) and the benefits of sociability and social competence are less studied; a situation that is beginning to change through more recent work (e.g. Kordt-Thomas & Lee, 2006; Broadhead, 2001). It is obviously a prime medium for creating social networks among children, allows a child to learn about themselves, to explore relationships with others, to express their emotions, act out social roles and learn cultural values (Bernstein & Tamis-Lemonda, 2007).

Building on the work of Mildred Parten, Professor of Playful Learning (what a splendid title!) Pat Broadhead’s social play continuum (2001) proposes that play moves from associative through social, highly social and on to co-operative play. In this progression, Broadhead’s observations of children in nurseries reveals that play becomes both socially and cognitively more demanding. Regarding the relationship between the cognitive and affective dimensions of play, she states, ‘Social and co-operative interactions provide emotional outlets and individual satisfaction along with intellectual challenge, hence their inherent attraction to children’ (2001, p 33). A recent publication by Bailey which considers play as children’s ‘social chess’ is presented in the Focus on Theory feature.

Focus on Theory

Play as children’s social chess

Richard Bailey’s paper (2002) draws on research from developmental and evolutionary psychology, primatology (study of primates) and studies of autistic children. It is a form of meta-research; a commentary (originally a contribution to a symposium on children’s play) drawing on connected ideas from a number of different fields. He begins with the assertion that we live in complex social environments and as such it is not unreasonable to use the label of ‘social chess’ (Humphrey, 1984) in describing our very complicated social interactions.

In chess, a good player will not only plan several moves ahead for himself but tries to anticipate the other person’s moves. Success is dependent upon how many future moves a player can anticipate. A chess master will also be able to dissemble their intentions and see through their opponent’s attempts to hide their intentions. In social interactions, the extent to which children can correctly guess what is coming up, and can see through attempts to hide others’ intentions is a good test of social development.

Chess as a metaphor for children’s social interactions is attractive as their social interactions involve both co-operative and competitive transactions and the creation and recreation of friendship networks. However, it may be also inadequate in capturing the intricacies of childhood social exchange for two reasons (Baron-Cohen, 1995). Firstly, not all of children’s social interactions are competitive and, secondly, the game of chess demands an intensity of thinking and effort which contrasts with the ease with which children’s social exchanges take place. On entering primary school, most children have mastered the skills of being able automatically to interpret the behaviour of others in terms of what they are thinking and planning. They are well on the road to being masters of social chess.

As suggested earlier, at the heart of much social interaction lies the ability to work out the other person’s mental states – a kind of mind reading. Without such ability one would be blind to the thinking, desires and intentions that underlie other people’s behaviour. This condition, suggests psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen (1995), is
'mindblindness', or the inability to mind read. Children's psychopathologist Peter Hobson (2002) further contributes to the status of mindreading in cognition while others (Harris & Leevers, 2000) highlight its role in pretend play.

In pretend play children create imaginary conversations with make-believe characters and play out fictional roles in their play. These behaviours have led Richard Bailey to believe that play is a precondition for the development of mindreading skills. His argument is that through play children distinguish what is real from what is unreal, develop skills of self-awareness and are discerning of the intentions of other children; abilities which underpin the development of mindreading skills. Evidence is cited (Perner et al., 1994) that children whose social play is more frequent and of high quality progress more quickly to a mature theory of mind than children who do not. This is the key point of the paper.

In concluding the paper, Bailey recognises the pivotal place of mindreading skills in enabling children to develop social expertise. He argues that at every stage of an infant's development, social intelligence is unmatched by any other facet of cognitive development. Although he does not categorically state that play alone can prompt mindreading skills, he argues that play provides an activity dimension for children that is not replicated anywhere else in their lives. He cites Nicholas Humphrey (1986) who argues that all kinds of play allow children to experiment with their feelings and identities, in ways that extend an inner knowledge of what it is to be human.

The previous section and the Focus on Theory feature discuss how play contexts provide children with many opportunities to foster social development. Now it is time to explore how children think about their own motives and those of other people. This is what is known as social cognition (mentioned in Chapter 11 in the context of emotional development) and it bridges both social and cognitive development. Let us now consider the aspects of social cognition.

Reflect

This activity will take you 10 minutes to complete. How would you describe yourself? Write down your 20 answers to the question, 'Who am I?' Afterwards, reflect on your answers. What do they say about your personality, temperament, behaviour, interests and values? Is this really who you think you are? Perhaps you might like to show the list to somebody else and see if your idea of who you are is the person they think you are.

Self and self-concept

Perhaps you found the above Reflect activity difficult, or relatively straightforward. Nevertheless, doing the activity will help in getting you to explore and make judgements about your own identity. Part of social cognition is concerned with how we think of ourselves. The subjective 'I' implies an understanding of one's personal qualities and characteristics, our individual skills, beliefs and values. The psychologist William James, writing over a century ago, drew our attention to a notion of 'self' which had two complementary features: 'I self' - that I am separate from others around me and in control of my own actions and thoughts - this is self-awareness; 'me self' - self as object.
recognising the individual traits and characteristics we hold true about ourselves that make us special. The notion of 'self' in this chapter embodying these two elements proposes an early awareness of self that gradually develops from concrete into a more organised abstract view of personal and social characteristics and capabilities.

A sense of self is an important milestone in children's social development. Children reaching this developmental marker show that they think of themselves as distinct from other people around them. It is linked to person permanence through an infant understanding that another person exists in time and space beyond that which the infant can perceive (discussed earlier in this chapter) and more importantly, that the infant recognises their own continuing existence despite another person not being present at that moment. I can interact with myself, control what I do and think, think through what I am doing, and decide to carry on or do something different. (We will return to this notion later when discussing the moral world of the child.)

The idea of self as an active observer of oneself may be an appropriate one to begin with in exploring the course of social development in relation to social cognition. Early researchers such as sociologist Charles Cooley at the beginning of the nineteenth century used the metaphor of a looking glass to describe the notion of self, believing that what was shown in the mirror reflected the inner self outwardly. He and others believed that self is built up through the social interactions babies encounter; through observing themselves interacting with those around them.

You may remember that babies are incapable of recognising themselves when looking in a mirror, yet within several months, they can be seen smiling and noticing how what they do is reflected back in the mirror. Being able to do this is a milestone in human social development – interesting that no other species apart from several primates have the perceptual and cognitive abilities for this! If at around 12 months you were to show a child a picture of themselves they would look at it for a slightly longer time than if shown a picture of another of the same age. In a few more months, many will be able to attach verbal labels like their own name to make this distinction greater. By 2 years, they perceive themselves as distinct from others and the sense of self-recognition is established. At this age, their sense of possessing something that is definitely theirs is strong enough to express a claim on a toy or favourite book with a vocal 'mine!' This is a further stage on, signalling an elementary understanding of things permanent – things remaining the same over time.

In early childhood, children's perceptions of who they are rests predominately on external representations, i.e. what they look like, what they can do, where they live, etc. Researchers have capitalised on methods that involve young children looking into mirrors such as in the 'rouge test' – mentioned in Chapter 11 – and at photographs, in order to assess this self-recognition (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). To recap this test, infants from 9-24 months were placed in front of a mirror and a dab of rouge placed on each child's nose. Each child was then placed in front of the mirror again and observed. Findings were that most children smiled and pointed to the mirror but the effect varied with age. The results of the mirror test indicated that infants of 20 months had a growing sense of self-recognition: there was recognition that what a child of this age saw in the mirror was a representation of themselves. Later studies with video representations and photographs (Povinelli et al., 1996) show that young children have some understanding of self in an immediate sense, but their capacity to connect an earlier image of themselves with the one currently presented is limited. As they get older and their cognitive capacities increase, they define themselves more through abstract internal representations. The Twenty Statements Test (which is the one we asked you do earlier) supports this empirically.

This test requires 20 answers to the 'Who am I?' question, and highlights the relationships between self-concept and developing cognitive abilities. Children of 8 will give answers about their name, age, where they live and describe their physical characteristics.
They articulate their competencies in positive terms, 'I am good at maths' as well as negatively, 'I am not very good at speling.' Eleven-year-olds, in addition, make more evaluative statements about how well they perform in activities such as sport and music, what their likes and dislikes are and their popularity among peers. Between 8 and 11 years the ability to make social comparisons increases where children judge their own abilities and appearance against others. Understanding of self accelerates forward rapidly in the middle childhood years, at a time when they interact with many more people than previously. This is a time when membership of particular groups assumes much greater importance, for example sports clubs, music groups and so on (Damon, 2000). As this is a time for comparing themselves with others, this is also the time when they find out how their own worth is decided – their self-esteem.

Self-esteem

The term is concerned with comparing ourselves with others in an evaluative way. The relationship between the image of who we are (real self) and who we would like to be (ideal self) was the basis of psychotherapist Carl Rogers' pioneering work on self-esteem (1961). If both images are compatible, then one has good self-esteem. Compatibility is reliant upon both unconditional positive regard from others and self-actualisation or being able to fulfil all that we are capable of achieving. Both are interrelated. With younger children, it might be argued that their perceptions of themselves are unrealistic and exaggerated: 'I am the best runner ever' or 'I am the best reader in the whole school'. As their cognitive capacities increase, children in middle childhood are more able to more finely differentiate their self-image.

Rogers further argued that self-esteem is crucial for general wellness and that parenting is important in developing children’s self-esteem. This latter point is also made in a classic study The antecedents of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967) studying self-esteem in 9–10-year-old boys. Psychologist Stanley Coopersmith found that positive regard for parents was a key factor in the development of self-esteem and that clear boundaries laid down by parents were high predictors of positive self-esteem in their children. A close relationship between parent and child fosters high self-esteem and links between positive parenting styles and high self-esteem in children is borne out across cultures (Bagley et al., 2001). Good self-esteem is found in children who have experienced involved and loving parenting, whereas those with low self-esteem are found in children with authoritarian or rejecting parents.

Judgements about self are important for current and future psychological adjustment. Imagine when 3-year-old Jenna finishes her jigsaw and proudly looks to her mum to comment on the achievement. The way in which her mother reacts (hopefully all smiles, words of praise and encouragement) will have an impact on the development of Jenna's self-esteem. Research by Herbert Marsh and colleagues (1991) found 5–7-year-olds made judgements about themselves related to their physical appearance, physical ability, peer and parents relationships, reading, maths and overall school attainment. Interestingly, self-esteem is generally high in early childhood but takes a slight downslide for many children temporarily in middle childhood. There are various factors that account for this trend. Firstly earlier self-judgements are likely to be unrealistic. No comparisons are made when little Jenna gets all that praise and smiles. As far as Jenna is concerned she is the master puzzler of the world, and quite right too! However, when comparisons are made – much more common in middle childhood – with other children, and when the outcome is deemed to be negative, this often has an adverse effect on levels of self-esteem that can last for some time. Such social comparisons provide immediate 'mirrors' to reflect the worth of what you can do and how well you are doing it, in comparison with others. Hence, we come to evaluate our own abilities and values.
Other factors of course affect the perception of self-esteem. Studies on academic achievement (e.g. Chapman & Tunmer, 1997, on reading ability and self-concept in 5-year-olds) have shown children who are academically successful at school have a positive self-image. Psychologists Kathryn Guiney and Nancy Furlong (1999) questioned 8–13-year-old girls and found positive correlations between satisfaction about their body image and their self-concept. Studies reveal clear distinctions between the sexes. Girls report higher self-concept scores on general academic performance and reading in particular, while boys are more positive in physical ability (Tannenbaum, 2008) and maths (Marsh et al., 1991). There are cultural variations in the notion of self. Henriette Van den Heuvel and colleagues from the University of Amsterdam (1992) asked Moroccan, Turkish and Dutch children to describe themselves. Responses showed a greater emphasis was placed on family and community by the Moroccan and Turkish children than on the individual. It is easy to think of self-concept as something which ‘belongs’ to the holder, whereas it actually represents a relationship between the person and the expectations of the culture in which they are raised.

Low self-esteem is associated with difficulties in children with loneliness (Cava et al., 2007) and depression (Plunkett et al., 2007). An outcome of having low self-esteem that emerges in middle childhood is learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). This is a belief that one can do little to affect one’s control over one’s environment. Helpless children are resigned in their belief that success is due to ability and not effort, and they believe their own ability is low either generally or in a particular area, and fixed for them. It is a kind of self-perpetuating prophecy and as a consequence such children often perform poorly in school tests. In contrast, children who believe in themselves are persistent in their efforts in meeting difficulties and believe that with effort they will be successful (Zimmermann, 2000). They focus on learning goals and seek out strategies to attain goals, and to capitalise on their ability by making greater effort. One interesting and regrettable example is how helplessness and gender affect attainment in mathematics. Earlier findings from Jacquelynne Eccles and colleagues (1991) were that girls do not achieve as highly as boys and were less confident in their own abilities – a finding subsequently established in many recent studies (e.g. Bloomfield & Soyibo, 2008; Ojala & Talts, 2007; Elias et al., 2007). Parental expectations of girls’ lower achievement in maths may again result in a self-fulfilling prophesy that results in girls not achieving their potential in this subject.

Understanding others

A second key aspect of social cognition is being able to understand what other people think, i.e. perceiving their mental states. By age 2 children see themselves as being part of a large social world and understand that they play definite roles in this. A developing theory of mind allows those self-conscious emotions to be developed which are linked to understanding of how others perceive us. In the previous chapter we saw how the primary emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, surprise and anger) are followed by
secondary emotions of guilt, embarrassment, envy and empathy. An interesting early study by Doris Bischof-Kohler at the University of Zurich (1988) featured a researcher who was ‘sad’ because teddy’s arm had fallen off and this ‘tragic’ event was used to assess the empathy of infants from 16 to 24 months. This study and others (Roth-Hanania et al., 2000; Stipek et al., 1992) found close links between the level of self-recognition and the expression of empathy. Between ages of 3 and 4 preschool children reach an important milestone in their development and acquire a developed theory of mind. This term describes how our mental state – our desires, beliefs and intentions – explains our behaviour. The importance of theory of mind in relation to social development lies in enabling children to understand the social world in which they live. It also develops sharing and co-operating with others and these behaviours closely mirror the development of self as an active chooser of appropriate behaviour. Let’s take a closer look at this idea, focusing on earlier work done in the 1980s and 1990s.

According to Henry Wellman (1990) theory of mind for children of 2 years of age can be termed a desire theory since by this age children have a simple understanding of other people’s desires and base their reactions to others on this new perceptive proficiency. By 3, a child can add a perception of beliefs to their desire theory and so can make more sophisticated predictions. However children do not yet understand that beliefs can also be false, but by 4 they understand that beliefs held might also be untrue. This means that children can now act on their own representations of reality, rather than reality itself. This is an important step forward since it means that children are aware of deceptive behaviour.

Psychologist Joan Peskin’s study (1992) using a friendly and a mean puppet found that children under 4 have little understanding of deceit. This new and important understanding is a representational theory of mind. Testing it involves the classic false-belief task (Wimmer & Perner, 1983). This involves a child watching a friendly puppet place a toy into a blue box. The puppet then goes away. A second mean puppet is seen to take the toy from the box and put it elsewhere (e.g. into a basket). The friendly puppet returns. The researcher then asks the child to state where the friendly puppet will look for the toy. Findings indicated that most 3-year-olds chose wrongly, while most 4-year-olds answered correctly. The researchers argued this was due to 3-year-olds’ beliefs about reality which differed from the 4-year-olds who understood the friendly puppet held a false belief and acted on this belief. Other researchers have found similar results using dolls and marbles in what is known as the ‘Sally-Anne task’ (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985) and with sweets on the ‘Smarties task’ (Perner et al., 1987).

What are the implications for such findings in understanding how children make sense of their social experiences? Firstly, that significant advances are made in theory of mind between the ages of 3 and 4 as stated. Secondly, other research (Perner et al., 1994) shows that children from large families tend to be more advanced in their development of theory of mind. It is not unreasonable to speculate that this may well be due to increased social interaction among siblings, therefore that ‘only’ children may require additional socialisation at this key stage. A third implication is the importance of the role played by parents in advancing this development (Dunn et al., 1991) not only in providing for family socialisation but making provision for their children to have a rich and varied social life in the wider community. In summary then, what research does exist in this area points to a symbiotic relationship between the positive influence of theory of mind on children’s socialisation, helping them to form relevant mental images of themselves, and socialisation promoting the development of a healthy theory of mind essential for important social situations such as forming friendships (Keenan & Harvey, 1998). Do these processes work in the same way for everybody? Are there individual and cultural identities that make a difference? In the next section we move to the concept of social identity.
Part 3 Cognitive and Social Development

Before moving on, let's summarise what we have learned so far:

- Young children smile and look towards others around them and use smiling as an important social signal looking for clear responses: adults and siblings respond to the babies' smiles, babbling and cooing with motherese and by returning smiles.
- Interaction between child and adult is coregulation, which includes the many ways in which individuals change their actions anticipating or responding to those of another.
- Joint-action formats or synchronised routines are simplified action sequences created by the mother.
- Lev Vygotsky viewed play as important in building up mental structures. Albert Bandura saw play as a rehearsal of, and preparation for skills in later life. Jean Piaget allied play to the development of cognition. Mildred Parten identified a hierarchy of six categories of social participation play – playing (or not) with others.
- Social cognition includes two key aspects: knowing yourself and knowing others. "Knowledge of 'self' has two components: I self – that I am separate from others around me and in control of my own actions and thoughts – this is self-awareness; me self – recognising the individual traits and characteristics that make us special. It is the who of who we are.
- Our self-esteem is how we are in comparison with others, how we evaluate ourselves in comparison to others and learned helplessness is a belief that one can do little well or effectively. Helpless children believe that success is due to ability, that their own ability is fixed.
- We develop a theory of mind which, among other abilities, allows us to predict what others are going to do. The false-belief task is a test that infants have formed a theory of mind.

Theories of social identity

Two of the strands of research into social identity are ethnic identity and gender identity. Ethnic identity is described as 'an awareness of being a member of a specific ethnic group combined with a sense of belonging to that group' (Schaffer, 2006, p 84). H. Rudolph Schaffer argues that ethnic identity has four components:

1. Salience refers to the extent to which ethnicity is perceived as being important in one’s self-concept.
2. Ideology refers to how the people in that ethnic group are regarded.
3. Centrality refers to how individuals define themselves according to their ethnicity.
4. Regard refers to positive and/or negative feelings in relation to ethnicity.

Under 2 years of age children show little understanding of differences between ethnic groups. By age 4 children are able to label pictures of individuals of different skin colour.
and by age 5 have a sense of their identity according to a particular ethnic group. Between 5 and 7, children show ethnic preferences and constancy – in that they believe a person’s ethnicity will not change or become influenced by physical appearances (Schaffer, 2006).

Gender identity refers to an individual’s perception of their own gender. Appreciating our own gender is a major part of understanding who we are. Behavioural differences can be apparent as early as the first 2 years. This is seen at home, in playgroup or school settings through children’s preferences for same sex companions and preferences for particular toys and activities (Serbin et al., 2001).

Research in this area, as we shall see, indicates the existence of some psychological differences between boys and girls, but we should avoid making over-generalisations; it is necessary to be aware of pseudo-differences due to popular beliefs and cultural myths. Differences in self-esteem are socially constructed – ‘an invented idea within a particular society or culture’ – but other perceived differences, say in cognition, are often the result of applying stereotypical attitudes to learning settings. For example, notions that abilities of boys outweigh those of girls in mathematics are refuted by many studies over the past 20 years (Marks, 2008; Berube & Glanz, 2008; Opynene-Eluk & Opolot-Okurut, 1995; Hyde et al., 1990) and Kathleen Keenan and Gary Shaw (1997) found no gender differences existed in the results of IQ tests.

There is, however, some evidence of differences in specific abilities. Girls have better perceptual speed (Gilbert, 2008), fine motor skills and do better on verbal tests (Strand et al., 2006). Boys are better on spatial (Reynolds et al., 2008) and abstract mathematical tests (Liu et al., 2008) and these differences are evident in the early school years (Penner & Paret, 2008). Girls walk, talk and generally reach most developmental milestones earlier than boys and do better at school. Regarding differences in emotional expressiveness, this was found to be greater in emotions stereotypically associated with each gender. Females showed greater warmth and more fear while males displayed greater anger and pride (Brody and Hall, 1993). Yes, there are some differences between the sexes but to what extent are these differences in social behaviours the result of ‘hard-wired’ sex differences in the brain?

There are differences between sexes in terms of brain structure and Dr Louann Brizendine in her book The female brain (2006) details the differences and the possible causes. Areas in the brain responsible for language (mentioned in Chapter 10), namely the Broca’s and Wernicke’s regions are more active in females, giving girls advantages in communication over males. The corpus callosum, which bridges left and right brain hemispheres in females is thicker, allowing them to co-ordinate both brain hemispheres well. Higher levels of oestrogen in females encourage girls to manage social situations much more calmly and fairly while boys are more aggressive and seek social dominance through their higher levels of testosterone. Before we get too carried away with the notion that the female brain and physiology are very different from those of males, it might be helpful to consider the extent to which gender identity is more a consequence of many learned differences in social behaviours. What do the theories tell us about acquired gender identities? There are two sets to consider: cognitive learning theories and social learning theories.

Cognitive-developmental theories such as that proposed by Kohlberg (1966) argue that gender concept is gradually acquired over time. Gender identity comes first and is followed by the construction of other schema. In the first 3 years gender labelling takes place where children become aware of their own gender. They attach labels to other people such as Mummy, Daddy, boy, girl. Gender stability and consistency, which can take up to age 7, is the stage in which the permanency of gender takes place where children understand that even if one changes physical appearance through clothes or hairstyles, this does not change the gender. This has been extended into gender schema theory (Martin, 1991; Bem, 1985) which proposes that children come to understand about gender by

Gender schema
The mental structures that organise information relevant to gender.
Constructing a schema or in other words a cognitive structure that informs them about the world. They build this up by seeking out information about their own sex first – an own-sex schema that is the basis for how they behave in gender-typical ways, e.g. boys play gun fights and girls play with dolls. Such schemas provide children with powerful ways of organizing their social world. It shows children prefer other children to show gender-stereotypical behaviour that conforms to their own view or schema (Albers, 1998) apparent in any decision a child takes to choose one playmate rather than another in a group.

**Social learning theories** (learning by imitating others – Bandura, 1986) of gender concept reject stages of cognitive development in favour of knowledge acquired through increased opportunities for learning experiences. To explain, an 8-year-old boy at his first football match watches dad cheer on Manchester United. The child will replicate this behaviour. Social cognitive theory (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), which expands the original theory of Albert Bandura (see Chapter 2) emphasises that multiple social factors impact on a child’s identity. Psychodynamic theories stress the importance of the family context. For example, Sigmund Freud’s theory of personality development proposed that social development was affected by relationships with important others and at different stages of development.

No single approach adequately explains gender socialisation. Elements of each approach hold true. What is certain is that there are a number of factors that influence it: advertising, television, books, peers, experiences in schools, all encourage such categorisation. Play research shows the importance of peer attitudes and behaviours. Play is clearly more social with children of the same sex than with children of the opposite sex (Colwell & Lindsey, 2005). Girls are more passive when playing with boys and boys often ignore instructions from girls, and become more dominant and competitive (Manwaring, 2008; Tulviste & Koor, 2005). As preschoolers, both sexes are more likely to continue with behaviour if there is a positive reaction from a same-sex peer, and to discontinue a behaviour if the reaction is negative (Nakamura, 2001). With preschool children the tendency to play with peers of the same sex is striking and their tendency to form same-gender groups (Benenson et al., 1997). Psychologist Eleanor Maccoby in her research made these observations about same-gender differences in children’s play:

*Boys play in somewhat larger groups on the average and their play is rougher . . . and it takes up more space. . . . Girls tend to form close, intimate friendships with one or two other girls, and these friendships are marked by sharing of confidences. . . . In male groups there is more concern with issues of dominance.*

(Maccoby, 1990, p 516)

Certain academic subjects are viewed by teachers and parents as either masculine (mathematics) or feminine (reading) (Marks, 2008; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). Boys dominate classroom interactions (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2008) and are the cause of most classroom disturbances. Teachers give boys more attention (Beaman et al., 2006). They ask boys more questions and in return receive more in-depth feedback (Aukrust, 2008). Girls are the cause of fewer discipline problems and are much less likely to drop out of school early (Cook, 2006). They follow rules more readily and tend to get more acceptance from teachers, who certainly in primary schools tend to be mostly female (Carrington & McPhee, 2008; Carrington et al., 2007). It can be argued that the culture of schools is very much in favour of those who conform to rules, study hard and cause minimum disturbance, rather than those who are boisterous, independent and who appear unmotivated and uninterested in lessons (Myhill & Jones, 2006). There are huge implications for children (and especially boys) about schools as gender (in)appropriate places of learning. If the differences between the sexes at school are so apparent and from such an early age, then the causes of such differences must lie elsewhere; perhaps the family.
Chapter 12 The Social and Moral World of the Child

It is important to note here that parents do have a persuasive influence upon gender identity. Parental attitudes are influenced by their own beliefs about masculinity and femininity, and messages given to children are both explicit and implicit. Parents – fathers in particular – play more roughly with boys and talk to them differently (Roopnarine & Talukder, 1990). Typically girls are given domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning and boys mow lawns, take out rubbish and mend things (Penha-Lopes, 2006). A study by family researcher Susan McHale and colleagues (2001) found that boys prefer to explore their surroundings, sports and construction while girls showed preferences for writing and dance. In the past parents have been observed to pressurise and reward both boys and girls when they play with gender-appropriate toys and even punish when they play with cross-gendered toys (Tauber, 1979). Is this typical today? In the section to follow we look at the influence of the family on a child’s socialisation in more depth.

The social influence of the family

Families are social networks of relatives providing protection and increased survival chances for members of the group. The family also fulfils important social functions – providing emotional support for those in the network, establishing and maintaining culturally appropriate social order and educating the young to be competent members of that community. From the beginning of a child’s life, the family exerts a tremendous and enduring effect upon a child’s social development. The experiences that families have together are much more lasting than those a child will have with others and influence all aspects of a child’s development: language, cognition, gender identity and emotional development. The family is the prime instrument for socialisation in childhood and parents’ influence on the socialisation, of their children will reflect their own attitudes and values, social class, education, religious beliefs and their individual adult personal traits.

Socialisation is the process by which parents ensure that their children conform in attitudes and behaviours to those expected within their own society – and this is a
two-way process: the family actively shapes the child, and children actively shape the family’s beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. Overheard during a radio interview was the following neat turn of phrase: ‘Before my wife and I started our family we wrote down six principles of child-rearing to guide our future behaviour. I now have six children and no principles!’ Seriously, families change over time and these changes come to be reflected in each member.

Furthermore, families do not exist in isolation but are influenced by the wider social, cultural and physical environments and events within them. **Systems theory** provides an extremely useful way of understanding the complex structure of the family and is relevant to this discussion for two reasons. Firstly, it centres the child in the network of interacting relationships initially of the family and later the wider community and economic, educational social and political influences. The word interacting is key as it implies a reciprocal interaction which is mutually beneficial to parent and child. Secondly, it views the family as a dynamic and self-regulating group of individuals that require the child to adapt to newness and change. A systems model referred to earlier in this book (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) proposed ecological development as a series of concentric circles.

In Figure 12.1, the innermost circle contains the *microsystem*: people with which the child has immediate early contact such as parents, grandparents and siblings. The second layer, the *mesosystem*, is the child’s own developing system of social contacts at school,
the family, and other friends. The *exosystem* is usually the parents’ own network of friends and neighbours that influence the child due to their direct involvement with the family. Next comes the *macrosystem*, referring to the wider social and cultural influences of the neighbourhood, schools within which both *micro* and *exosystems* are embedded. Beginning with parents and moving outward through Urie Bronfenbrenner’s concentric circles – or social systems – is a good way of describing children’s social development.

How do parents socialise the young child? At the heart of the relationship between child and parent is attachment, the topic discussed in the previous chapter. This is the bond that exists between the two even before birth and the cornerstone for subsequent relationships. Early attachment means that from the earliest moments parents, grandparents and siblings hold, cuddle affectionately and praise the child’s smallest achievement. Their use of praise extends through the many milestones in development – sitting up, the first step, holding a cup and the first word. Language is a powerful medium for shaping desirable social behaviours. Praise is used to reward what is seen to be socially acceptable and commands used to check behaviour with an emphatic ‘No!’ So the first way that parents help to socialise children is through the reinforcement of behaviour. A second way is through modelling the kinds of behaviour that parents wish to see replicated by their children. Modelling is a powerful medium for learning. A 5-year-old observing a parent preparing a meal will see the social significance of meals for the family, will note the gender behaviour of the parent, witness positive behaviours such as turn-taking in the kitchen and share in the grateful and positive comments (hopefully) made to the meal provider. If the same child observes a display of aggression and verbal abuse when a parent is watching a football match on television, resultant connected child behaviour is less likely to be socially desirable.

Attachment operates as a two-way system. The children of parents who are loving and show genuine warmth are secure in themselves, develop high self-esteem (mentioned before) and know how to give and return affection. They understand their parents’ behaviours towards them and can internalise parental standards more easily than those of inconsistent or rejecting parents. Tense environments and harsh physical punishment are confusing for children and make the learning of socially accepted norms difficult. In families with weak parents, it is the child who often takes control and the family becomes dysfunctional (Martin & Martin, 2000; Baumrind, 1993). Subsequent direction of the child to self-regulation behaviour and to adopting socially responsible behaviour is compromised. In contrast, when parents are consistent in their own behaviour and behaviour towards their children and to the disciplining of their children, children are more likely to internalise the standards of these parents (Holden, 1997). Over time, successful shaping of social behaviour becomes less directive and parents engage the child in more discussion and active reasoning about behaviour and decision-making. There is more ‘behaviour bargaining’ between parent and child in later childhood as social and intellectual skills develop. The style of parenting adopted influences children’s socialisation and so it would be helpful at this point to think about parenting styles. An early and influential typology describing different styles of parenting is provided by Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin (1983), extending an original model (Baumrind, 1973) and is shown in Table 12.1.

As Table 12.1 shows, *authoritative* parenting – built upon love and respect for the child – results in children usually having higher self-esteem and is linked to greater social competence. Authoritative parenting is firm but fair, and features willingness to listen to children and respect their viewpoint. Children in these relationships tend to comply and are likely to do so again in the future. Studies of this parenting style show high degrees of competence in task persistence, co-operation, achievement motivation and academic success in childhood through to adolescence (Aunola et al., 2001; Mackey et al., 2001).
Table 12.1 Parenting styles and their relations to behaviour outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of parenting</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Parents in control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>Emphasis on control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>Indulgent parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uninvolved</td>
<td>Neglecting</td>
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Reflect

Imagine you are in a supermarket. What goes through your mind when you see a parent smacking a crying child? In the next aisle is an ‘I want ...!’ child — how did that happen? And where are the children of the parents chatting in the groceries aisle?

Within the family, it is not only parents who have a socialisation role to play. In modern White British cultures few grandparents live with the main family, but in many others such as Swedish, Spanish, Greek and Italian, Japanese and Korean cultures, grandparents are very much part of the family home. Interaction with grandparents provides many opportunities for intergenerational learning. They transmit information, inform about family histories and past times. They provide emotional and often financial support, and can offer the kind of consistent authoritative style of ‘parenting’ that hassled and stressed working mums and dads find difficult.

Time spent with brothers and sisters also provides opportunities for learning appropriate family – social – behaviour. We know that order of birth has an effect here. For a time, first-born children enjoy their parents’ complete attention but, on the downside, expectations from parents tend to be higher for first-borns and there is more pressure for them to achieve academically. The eldest child in a family uses parents as a model for social behaviour and younger children use both their parents and older siblings. Relationships with siblings provide an important context for helping children learn to resolve personal conflicts in the comparatively safe environment of the home (Harwood, 2008; Katz et al., 1992). Sibling rivalry – resentment and competition is natural – is less of an issue when parents have good relationships with each other and with each of the children. However, life-changing episodes such as divorce and bereavement in families also impact on children’s social development and, as we will soon discuss, the type of child-care they experience outside the home. We now move on to look at how peers can also be important agents in the socialisation process.
The social influence of peers

Although the influence of parents is typically the most influential in the socialisation of children, relationships with peers are also important. Peer friendships are powerful influences on children's conformity (Keddie, 2004). In contrast to the hierarchical relationship that exists between parent and child, peer relationships tend to be on a more equal footing and provide opportunities to acquire and refine social skills and understanding with more give-and-take. Piaget argued children's interactions with peers help reduce a child's natural egocentricism by requiring them to accept and work with the views of others. Remember Lev Vygotsky also talked about scaffolding by more experienced peers thereby enabling the child to internalise a new level of thinking through this form of social interaction. The point is that children who are sociable – with developed social skills – make friends easily and enjoy school. Let's first focus on this point. Friendship among peers is central to children's social development and competence. We know that the time children spend with peers and their understanding of friendship alters with age. In early childhood less than 10% of time is spent in the company of peers, yet by the time they begin school this percentage rises to approximately 30%.

What does it mean to be a 'friend'? Selecting from a large volume of research and drawing upon the work of Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) we have identified four features of friendship:

1. **Reciprocity.** Young children learn to call play companions 'friends' because a 3-year-old considers a friend is someone to spend time with and share your toys or an activity.

2. **Intense social activity.** Children of school age look for qualities in a friend that are less transitory than when they were very young. They play for longer and their co-operative play shows more complex levels of engagement than before. Friendships for older children become more lasting and can be taken up after a period of no contact.

3. **Conflict resolution** is the third feature. Friends help each other to work out problems between them – they share and take turns – and to respect the differences.

4. **Effective task performance** is the fourth identified feature of friendship. Friends plan joint actions, co-operate and collaborate to solve problems more accurately and work together to reason things out presenting a joint outcome.

Relationships with peers begin early. Infants are genuinely interested in others even though interactions with others are limited by their intellectual, physical and language capabilities for the present. At 2 months, infants seeing another child of approximately the same age react in a different way from that observed in contact with the mother. By 6 months, there is an increase in non-verbal communication between two children. They lean towards each other, smile and even touch. Bolder children in a matter of a few months will even crawl towards a peer, curious to find out more about this strange person with similar features, shape and size. By 18 months they show preference for those children they wish to play with (Beaver et al., 1999).

As children mature and their intellectual, language and physical development advances, their sphere of involvement increases to include a larger network of peers. They are beginning to understand rules of social intercourse. The microsystem (Bronfenbrenner's model, referred to earlier) operates as the first level of interaction with others providing opportunities for peer contact as well as with parents and siblings. Between 2 and 3 years peer interactions become longer and more frequent due to advances in development. Most friendships will be with a peer of the same sex. Although not having the intensity of later relationships, these early friendships are still important for experiencing and learning sharing, turn-taking and co-operating. Children of this age imitate others and recognise when others imitate them. At the end of this preschool period, social dominance
hierarchies (Rubin & Coplan, 1992) are evident. These rank an individual in term of their dominance in a group and are particularly important for boys’ one-to-one and group friendships (Geary et al., 2003). While many social skills are acquired in this period, it is predominately parents who control the social opportunities of children in the early childhood years.

In middle childhood, there is a definite increase in desire to play with peers and be in their company. The focus for developing relationships with others changes from the aim of playing with others in early childhood to being accepted ‘as one of the gang’ in the years from 7 to 11. Gossiping about others is a common form of communication and provides one way of becoming accepted socially. Friends of school age are reported to be more attentive, relaxed and mutually responsive to each other (Field et al., 1992) than during preschool years. Common interests such as cinema, television programmes, sport, music and clothes continue to dominate relationships and form the basis for creating friendship groups and groups become much larger as children make contact with a greater and more diverse group of peers.

Children become involved in a range of social activities in and out of school that expand this social exposure even further, but separation of the sexes continues. Girls play with girls and boys play with boys, a pattern that crosses cultures. Boys’ drive to dominate and desire to compete physically (Maccoby, 1990) may discourage male–female friendships. As we have discussed, girls construct their own rules and social codes and listen to each other’s suggestions about these, whereas boys avoid talking about relationships. The commonly heard ‘She’s my best friend’ signals friendship pairs called reciprocal friendships. This close friendship with one other, usually a peer, gradually extends in the school years to children counting five or so peers as close friends (Hartup, 1992). Sex differences are evident here too. Whereas girls show preference for one or two close friends, boys develop more friendships but these tend to be less intimate. As children prepare for the next stage of education in secondary schools, displaying friendships in public becomes important (Griswold, 2007) although displays of friendship are practised during the preschool years (Hruska, 2007).

Sharing, co-operating, dealing with conflict, listening to worries and curbing aggressive behaviour are some of the ways in which peers are socialising agents. According to social learning theory – you may remember from earlier – parents use the tools of modelling and reinforcement to socialise children, and so do peers. Social comparison provides an immediate way of forming self-image and a ‘yardstick’ for children to compare themselves with others. This is important to help children understand that others share their problems too and that their experiences are normal and a natural part of growing up. Imitating appropriate behaviours is most common in early childhood and occurs in a number of ways. Often a younger child will imitate the behaviours modelled by an older peer in preference to an adult, viewing these behaviours as more relevant, for example sharing a toy with a child of the opposite sex. It is a powerful means of learning new skills and about different social rules. Later, children quickly learn the unwritten rules of the classroom and the playground. Whilst this behaviour can be positive, it is not always the case. Children observing aggressive behaviour on the part of an experienced and older peer will copy what is seen (and we come to this later in the chapter). This has implications for the reasons that make one child popular, and therefore likely to be a happy, resilient learner and another child not popular with all the likely outcomes of that sad circumstance. So why are some children popular and others unpopular?

Let’s talk about measuring popularity first. A common way to gauge popularity is by using sociometric techniques. These are used by researchers as tools to measure status within peer groups and teachers are now finding them very useful in the classroom. Rubin and Coplan (1992), using this technique, have identified five categories of peer acceptance:
1. **Popular** children are those rated as most liked and who hold high status in a
   group.

2. **Controversial** children can either be liked or disliked depending on the circum­
   stances and the personalities making up a group.

3. **Rejected** children are least liked and include sub-groups of aggressive rejected
   and non-aggressive rejected.

4. **Neglected** children score low on being the most liked most but tend to score low on being liked least too.

5. **Average** children are middle of the road. They are not as well accepted as popular children nor disliked as much as rejected children.

Peer popularity is the result of a number of factors – even children’s names are a con­
ideration here and seem to have been for some time (McDavid & Harari, 1966)! There
is also a strong correlation between physical attractiveness and peer acceptance. The
factors of attractiveness, sporting abilities, prosocial behaviours (we come to these later),
and personal possessions are important, because children associate these factors with
friendliness and social competence (Meisinger et al., 2007; Babad, 2002). Children in
the **Popular** category have more opportunities to acquire even more social skills – a
kind of win-win situation. They display greater prosocial skills and use strategies that
indicate their willingness to be friendly. A phrase like ‘Do you want to play too?’ invites
others to join in. Communicating and instigating social interactions are important skills
of social acceptance (Coie et al., 1990).

Even **Average** children who can manage their emotions and control their behaviours
tend to be more positive and as such their interactions with others are on the whole
also positive. Pope and Bierman (1999) found that children excluded others who were
easily irritated or got upset when things went wrong. Thus **Popular, Controversial** and
**Average** children have the kinds of social-emotional skills that unpopular classmates do
not have. **Popular** children (and in the right circumstances **Controversial** and **Average**
children) are those who are friendly, co-operative and helpful. They have high self-esteem,
are socially competent, and successful academically and in outside school activities
(Chen et al., 2001). **Rejected** children display inappropriate social behaviours such as
aggression in a behaviour-rejection cycle (Pettit et al., 1996). Typically these are the chil­
dren arguing with others or engaging in rough and tumble fighting in the playground
although it should be noted that researchers have recently identified more complex
configurations of popularity: aggressive-unpopular; aggressive-popular; and prosocial-
popular (Estell, 2007) so it would be unwise to always associate aggressive behaviour
with unpopularity. We will come back to the idea of the **popular-aggressive** configura­tion
later. Ignored children display least aggression and engage in solitary play and other
inconspicuous activities. In general, unpopular children – those who have difficulties
in socialising with others – can struggle academically, are likely to play truant, be
depressed and to drop out of school (Estell et al., 2008; Hartup, 1992).

Parents play an important role in helping their child form relationships with peers.
Many studies confirm that children who form successful early attachments with their
parents or carers are those who will form good relationships with other children (Stroufe
et al., 1999; Booth et al., 1995). This is in no small way due to the opportunities provided
in early relationships to learn social skills of communication, turn-taking and sharing,
etc. and for parents to model social competence. Popular children with good prosocial
behaviours have parents who are authoritative (as we have discussed earlier), who
involve children in discussion and respond to them in caring ways. Parents are able to
influence their children’s social development through the types of social and family
activities in which they engage. These can include eating meals together as a family, get­
ing together with friends who have children of a similar age, involving children from
an early age in regular wider family events, enrolling children in play groups, crèches and daycare settings, and local organisations and clubs in later childhood years. Such involvement provides multiple opportunities to develop a range of social skills with a range of age groups, to elicit positive responses from others and provide effective models of behaviour in social situations.

**Reflect**

You may have noticed children who have few or no friends and appear very shy and withdrawn. There could be a number of reasons for children being ignored. What indicators can you list that identify a 'shy' child? How is this type of child particularly disadvantaged? What could you do to help?

The social influence of schools and the media

Among other determinants, two more sets of factors influence the social development of children: schools and the media – and we begin with schools. Cross-cultural studies show that schools influence how children organise their thinking and are therefore a vehicle for how children understand the world (Salmon, 2008; Prokop et al., 2007; Kazlauskiene, 2007). Schools are important influences in extending children's social networks because schooling places many demands on children that affect all aspects of their development: how children communicate, how they behave, how they make progress in learning in different subjects. Schools also influence moral and social development (Woolfolk et al., 2008) as we explore in the next section.

Socially the transition from preschool to school is significant and one that impacts upon future school experiences. Making a successful transition requires being able to cope with being separated from parents for longer periods of time, becoming more independent and self-controlled, and acquiring many new social skills. Here the earlier experiences within the family and with peers are highly influential. Certain aspects of the school environment can help ease this transition in and through school, socially and intellectually. For example, smaller schools can offer a stronger sense of personal identity and more chance of children being given positions of responsibility (Tajalli & Opheim, 2005). When class sizes are also small, teachers report having more time for pupils and that having fewer pupils in class facilitates group work more easily, discourages bad behaviour and fosters individual learning (Englehart, 2007). However, there is evidence gathered over the past 30 years that, within the range of about 25-34 pupils, class size seems to have little, if any, decisive impact on the academic achievement of most pupils (Januszka & Dixon-Krauss, 2008; Education Digest, 1978). Perhaps it is a matter of age. It could be argued that younger children in smaller teaching groups may get more individual help with the basic skills needed for success at school. Early successes in the 'basics' of reading, writing and mathematics allow pupils to express themselves more freely and be seen by their peers to engage fully with the curriculum (Leopold, 2008; Eldridge, 2008). That is the point perhaps; being seen in positions of responsibility and being seen to succeed in the abilities and skills that schools emphasise in the activities they offer, provides a context in which healthy social development can be encouraged.

Teachers also act as agents of social development. Social development is fostered when teachers link academic achievement to the emotional climate in classrooms, involving pupils continually in the learning process, setting clear learning goals matched to individual needs, with regular personalised feedback (Tomlinson, 2005). Teachers
should have high expectations (more recently termed being a ‘warm demander’) of all pupils since this is connected with motivation, success and achievement (Ross et al., 2008). Young children pay little attention to the achievements of others, and judgements from parents and teachers influence how they feel about themselves, their feelings about their academic competency and about their self-worth. **Achievement motivation** is when pupils desire to be successful and want to feel pleasure in performing well, and this impacts directly on self-esteem. Pupils who are mastery-oriented, in other words who have clear learning goals which they have set for themselves (Sungur, 2007) and who focus on improving their skills and knowledge, tend to be successful. In contrast, helpless children (remember the idea of learned-helplessness) have performance goals rather than learning goals, are over concerned with how they appear to others and try to avoid negative judgements on their ability by not engaging with the learning activities – ‘This is boring’ – or by disrupting the class.

Teachers can also plan for teaching and learning strategies that have a high degree of social involvement. **Co-operative learning** strategies are where pupils are placed in small groups and work together on a common goal; found to have a positive impact on self-esteem, attitudes towards peers and to school generally (Gillies & Boyle, 2008; Woolfolk et al., 2008; Slavin, 1996). **Peer collaboration** is similar but generally involves two students working together. **Peer tutoring** is a method of teaching in which a more experienced child tutors a less experienced pupil. Both participants benefit from this technique and the more experienced pupil particularly gains from the experience of ‘being the teacher’ and helping others. The use of peer tutoring can impact positively on the social behaviour, academic achievement and self-esteem of pupils with behavioural problems. These strategies involve pupils in active learning in the classroom, promote autonomy, give pupils responsibility and foster feelings of self-worth and mastery (McMaster et al., 2008, 2006; Cochran et al., 1993).

There are other factors that influence children’s socialisation. The content and tone of a good deal of children’s literature influence role divisions, stereotyping men as assertive and independent, and women as dependent and passive (Turner-Bowker, 1996). Popular television programmes will often portray men as decisive and strong and women as gentler and more emotional. Stereotyping effects of television are significant and occur from an early age. How early? Well babies of 6 months can attend to television, although consistent and focused viewing does not usually occur under 1–2 months of age and patterns of viewing are less led by the content of programmes and more by visual features, patterns, faces, music and animation. What is surprising perhaps is how early patterns of television viewing are established. In a study published in 2005, Darcy Thompson and Dimitri Christakis found the following using data from 2068 children under 3 years of age. Mean hours of television viewing per day were as follows: 0.9 hours a day for children under 12 months of age, 1.6 hours a day for children 12 to 23 months of age, and 2.3 hours/day for children.
Part 3 Cognitive and Social Development

Table 12.2 Possible social and cognitive effects of television viewing on children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible positive effects of television</th>
<th>Possible negative effects of television</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivates and helps with reading development through programmes specifically targeted at young children</td>
<td>Too much viewing can impede reading progress; there is no time for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased language development through vocabulary, alphabet letters, simplified language</td>
<td>Can produce negative attitudes towards certain ethnic groups particularly if children watch television outside of ‘safe’ periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps with mathematical development, e.g. numbers, counting and problem-solving shown in real-life contexts</td>
<td>Can influence the formation of gender roles and stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists with children’s sharing and turn-taking abilities. Modelled in children’s programmes</td>
<td>Can produce negative attitudes towards sexual relationships such as aggressive sexual behaviour particularly if children watch television outside of ‘safe’ periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of good television role models can be used to educate children in prosocial behaviour</td>
<td>Can increase aggressive behaviour even if watching during ‘safe’ periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent co-viewing with parents and other siblings is productive social time—a common experience</td>
<td>Certain advertisements may create poor life choices that impede normal healthy development (e.g. fast food, cost and types of toys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of programme content and meaning by parents or older siblings helps with developing positive social values</td>
<td>Produces a false sense of ‘reality’ about the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items in Table 12.2 are only a small selection of possible effects, but nevertheless they serve to characterise television as a mixed blessing. The variety of television programmes that children watch including educational and family programmes, cartoons and children’s films can have both positive and negative influences on their social development. Serious breaches of ‘safe periods’—programmes with adult themes—are far more worrying and may possibly warp normal social development. There are some more subtle concerns as well. For example, how much of the programmes they watch do children of different ages actually understand? Can children distinguish truth from fiction, in what is known as magic window thinking (Denman, 1952) and does it matter? Does television watching inordinately impact on time available for playing with friends or engaging in other social activities? Despite these concerns and a number of other potentially negative influences, opportunities to co-view television with parents and significant others can encourage critical and evaluative communication skills and enhance social-cognitive development.

Nowadays in the United Kingdom, computers are almost universally a part of homes and schools, and many children from an early age have access to them in their bedrooms. Schools and parents will willingly invest in programs to enhance their children’s education, and yet practitioners and parents alike are anxious about the content of some programs and games. And, in particular the Internet. As with television viewing, there are possible social detriments to unregulated access to computers and the Internet, but there are also many potential cognitive and social benefits. Computer-aided learning (CAL)
Chapter 12: The Social and Moral World of the Child

Allies educational possibilities of technology with children's specific needs. Important benefits have been shown in higher-order thinking for computer-based work in schools. Skills of reflection, metacognition and enhanced creativity are claimed and academic gains are especially evident with young children and children with learning difficulties (Yang et al., 2007; Fletcher-Finn & Gravatt, 1995). Aids to communication have potential benefit for many children in their social development.

In classrooms or computer suites it is common to observe pairs or small groups of children clustered around a computer, happily chatting away about what they are doing and pointing to something on the screen. Working in pairs and in small groups is a powerful vehicle for learning when collaborative activities engage children in the task and with each other. There is evidence across the primary age range of greater collaboration when using computers than with other school tasks (Svensson, 2000). However, it should be noted that educationalist Pat Broadhead's research shows highest levels of collaboration in open-ended activities, e.g. playing with sand and water (Broadhead, 2004). Perhaps it is the nature of well-designed open-ended activities using computers that provokes high quality collaboration. Children discuss, collaborate, solve problems and co-construct knowledge by engaging in exactly the type of social interactions consistent with Vygotsky's theory of 'scaffolding' learning (Schraw, 2007; Wood & Wood, 1996). Children working with a peer in this way show persistence and positive attitudes to learning (Miller et al., 2006; Weinstein, 1991) and it encourages helpful ways of conflict resolution (Hubal et al., 2008; Nastasi & Clements, 1993).

At home and in school children communicate with others in chat rooms, synchronous messaging systems and through email. This may seem like a very social activity but research with adolescents has found substantial use of the Internet in this way can have negative effects on emotional and social development by displacing face-to-face social activity with family and friends (Young, 2008; Kraut et al., 1998). Many parents harbour deep anxieties about unsupervised access their children might have to the Internet and the potential for cyberstalking and bullying (Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007). Children also play interactive games with friends. Some of these simulation games although
fostering spatial skills and attention, have violent plots that involve shooting and fighting enemies, appealing mostly to boys, and have negative outcomes associated with racial stereotyping and aggression (Kassis, 2007; Eastin & Griffiths, 2006). However, it is these play contexts and more traditional games of the playground and nursery that raise important matters of right and wrong. Learning the difference between right and wrong and understanding the effects of our actions on others form an important part of our social development, and it is to the moral world of the child that we now turn.

SUMMARY 2

Before moving on, let's summarise what we have learned in the middle section of this chapter:

- Two strands of social identity were considered: ethnic identity and gender identity.
- Ethnic identity is important in one's self-concept, and depends on how the ethnic group are defined and regarded.
- Gender identity refers to an individual's perception of their own gender. Behavioural differences can be apparent as early as the first two years.
- There is however some evidence of differences in specific abilities. Girls walk, talk and generally reach developmental milestones earlier than boys and do better at school.
- Language regions are more active in females giving girls advantages in communication over males.
- Cognitive-developmental theories are about construction of schema – the basis for behaviour in gender-typical ways, e.g. boys play gun fights and girls play with dolls.
- Knowledge of gender is acquired through increased opportunities for children to observe others and imitate them – social learning theory.
- With preschool children the tendency to play with peers of the same sex is striking.
- Boys dominate classroom interactions and are the cause of most classroom disturbances. Girls are the cause of fewer discipline problems and are much less likely to drop out of school early.
- The family is the prime instrument for socialisation in childhood and parents' influence on the socialisation of their children will reflect their own attitudes and values, social class, education and religious beliefs.
- Beginning with parents and moving outward through Urie Bronfenbrenner's concentric circles – or social systems – is a good way of describing children's social development.
- Children's social skills and self-esteem are a function of parenting style with the authoritative style coming out on top.
- Peer friendships are powerful influences on children's conformity and tend to provide opportunities to acquire and refine social skills with more give-and-take.
- Schools are important influences in extending children's social networks and forming how children communicate, how they behave, and how they make progress.
- Co-operative learning strategies such as peer collaboration and peer tutoring have a positive impact on self-esteem, attitudes towards peers and to school generally.
- Children's literature, television, video games and the Internet can affect children's social and moral development but not always positively.
Chapter 12 The Social and Moral World of the Child

In assembly the headteacher, Mrs Tranter, was telling the children a story. It was about a boy who had stolen a large loaf of bread from a shop to give to a friend whose family had very little money, and who were hungry. The headteacher showed the school a large and appetising-looking loaf. She then told another story about a girl who stole a small biscuit from a bakery because she liked cream biscuits. The girl was not hungry but she did like to eat cream biscuits. Mrs Tranter showed the children a small biscuit and asked the children which of the two children was most naughty. All the young children in the Reception class (aged 4-5) agreed that it was wrong to steal and since the loaf was large compared with only one small cream biscuit, they thought that the boy was the naughtiest.

When the older children (9-11) in the school were asked, their answer was different. Their view was that the act of stealing for selfish gains was worse than stealing to give to someone else, even if what was stolen was not as large.

This story illustrates the difference in moral thinking between young and older children; in this case the fine moral judgements involved in appreciating the notion of doing the wrong thing for the right reason. In this section, we will further explore the moral thinking of young children in the Piagetian pre-operational stage and see how it differs to older children who have acquired operational thought. From the outset we can establish that moral and social development are closely connected since the relationships we have with other people influence how we act, and how we act is very often determined by social contexts. But how best to define what we mean by moral development? One concise definition of moral development is ‘the process by which children adopt and internalise the rules and expectations of society and develop a sense of right or wrong’ (Dwyer and Scampion, 1995, p 254).

We begin this section with the theoretical frameworks underpinning the development of right and wrong, with particular emphasis on the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg.

Each society has rules and standards of behaviour it deems as acceptable for its citizens. Although these vary according to culture, there is universal consistency in the belief that standards of behaviour should be communicated to children so that they will learn and practise these as they get older. Messages and expectations about what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ are initially communicated by parents – those who first shape children’s moral views and standards of behaviour. Later early years professionals and teachers become powerful influences on children’s moral behaviour and development. As children grow older, they acquire a greater knowledge and understanding of self, and become more able to self-regulate their actions and thinking. They move from depending upon external controls to their own internal control of their behaviour. Child psychologist Jenny Lindon views children’s understanding of right and wrong as a combination of three aspects of their development (2005, p 206):

1. **Social relationships.** Babies are born as social beings so their understanding of rights and wrongs – their sense of morality – is grounded in relationships with other people.
2. **Moral behaviour.** Young children have no concept of adult moral judgements but do recognise adult disapproval.
3. **Moral reasoning and judgement.** Older children come to understand – related to increased cognitive ability – ‘why’ something should be done and that good behaviour is a related series of making the ‘right’ decisions. Let us now turn to the theories to find out what they can contribute to our understanding of moral development.

**Theories of moral development**

In his *psychodynamic theory*, Sigmund Freud (1935) emphasised internalising standards of moral behaviour. His account combines both social factors – largely through the
influence of parents – and biological factors though an inbuilt natural desire to act in certain ways. A focus in psychodynamics is the connection between emotional states in a child’s unconscious mind (see Chapter 2) as they relate to early childhood developments and processes. According to Freud’s theory the super-ego at age 3–5 (the phallic stage) drives an attraction towards a parent of the opposite sex (the Oedipus complex in boys and the Electra complex in girls). This leads to a perception of the other parent as a rival and to associated feelings of guilt, hostility and a fear of being punished if the attraction is discovered.

A process of identification is used to maintain parents’ affections, and this leads to the development of conscience embracing the moral standards of the identified parent or ego ideal. This process of identification accounts for the regard of children for those who establish moral standards by the correction of wrongdoings – the ‘punishing parent’. It also accounts for the bond that exists between an assertive parent and child and associated feelings of pride when behaviours are displayed in accordance with parental moral values – the ‘rewarding parent’ – almost always, according to Freud, the same-sex parent.

Freud’s claims are now generally considered as unrealistic. For instance his claim that boys have stronger superegos than girls and as such are less likely to behave inappropriately is unsubstantiated and probably refuted by parents and teachers everywhere! Another example is Freud’s claim that children learn moral standards from the same-sex parent. How is it then that children raised in one-parent families can and often do exhibit appropriate moral behaviour? And his focus on guilt as a primal driver of conscience receives little support nowadays. Although guilt is important in motivating moral actions, it is not the sole force in encouraging appropriate and acceptable behaviour. Children are capable of internalising rules much earlier than Freud proposed (by age 2 in some cases and by 3 many will comply with requests from parents and carers to put away toys and tidy up) and rather than his notion ‘Children’s conscience was observed at 45 months (moral emotion) and at 56 months (moral conduct and cognition)’. Read Kochanska, G., Forman, D. R., Aksan, N., & Dunbar S. (2005). Pathways to conscience. Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 46, 19–34.

In his social learning theory, Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura placed emphasis on moral behaviours. These he believed were the acquired internal standards of how to behave and are developed through cognitive representations of what children observe and process. Moral behaviours are built on explanations of moral conduct from parents and other figures in authority. He proposed, therefore, that values can be learned just as other behaviours and skills can, largely through the processes of modelling and imitation. Like Freud, Bandura believed that parents serve as powerful models of influence, for children’s moral development. The use of reprimands shapes children’s behaviour as they respond to these and other punishments administered by adults. Reinforcements through praise, demonstrations of approval and tangible rewards increase the frequency of desirable behaviour reoccurring. A major criticism of his work was that behaviours such as sharing or helping another child do not happen frequently enough to be reinforced so are not powerful enough to explain adequately the scope and rapid development of moral behaviours in childhood.

Both social learning theory and psychodynamic theory help us to understand that moral development is a gradual process of conforming to societal standards and norms. This process progresses from a focus upon the self to a focus on others and with increased maturity, moves from external rewards or punishments to internal standards of morality. Today, by far the most commonly accepted theories of moral development are those offered by Piaget and by Kohlberg, which we will now consider.
The cognitive-developmental perspective

Psychologist Jean Piaget was the first to develop an account of moral development in a systematic manner (1932). He applied his theory of cognitive development, which we have already met, to developing his theory of moral development. In this theory he stressed the importance of moral reasoning, or an ability to think through answers to questions such as 'Should I take these sweets if my friend wants me to?' Such a question requires considerable reasoning ability (and hence closely linked to cognitive maturity) and a capacity to consider another’s feelings and perspectives.

His theory arose in the main from his observations of children playing a formal game, for example marbles, and how the game prompted questions about the rules. What are the rules? Where did they come from? Have the rules changed? In marbles, children construct and monitor their rules away from adult influences and, Piaget believed, games like marbles are important in the development of moral knowledge. His theory has two stages and proposes that children pass through recognisable and qualitatively different stages.

Stage 1 is the heteronomous stage. This pre-moral stage covers the period from birth to the end of the preschool years. During this time there is little understanding of rules. For example, in attempting to play a simple board game like draughts, a child of this age would be more concerned with finding out how the pieces could be used in different ways than with systematically playing to rules. In the game of marbles, preschool children while enjoying a fun activity, are often unaware of the existence of rules for the game. At the concrete operations stage at 7 years, they become aware of rules but not in conventional terms in that children believe the rules are unchangeable. Actions are only evaluated in terms of the consequences and morals are deemed the property of heteronomous others in authority ('hetero' meaning by others) which must be obeyed. A child of 5 will be often heard to say, 'My mum says that . . .', or a child coming home and announcing, 'My teacher says . . .'. In these cases the child is adamant that what the parent or teacher says is definitely not to be questioned!

By age 9 and in the second stage, that of autonomous morality, children realise that rules can be altered and are arbitrary. Actions are judged by intentions (feeding a hungry family with a stolen loaf of bread) rather than consequences and an adherence to authority figures is now seen to be no longer necessary. Of course in the real world, rule breaking is not always wrong or punished. By 9 or 10 years and beyond, children’s thinking becomes much more flexible. They can focus attention in a number of different directions which allows them to evaluate the application of rules and intentions of transgressors in particular situations. Remember from the last chapter that children are able at this age to empathise with others. In the cups story, which is coming up shortly, accidents are not judged with the same severity as intentional acts. The child who, as part of a deliberate act, breaks one cup deserves a greater punishment than the child who accidentally breaks several cups. Young children would consider both breakages 'naughty'.

A second way Piaget developed his theory was by listening to children’s responses to short stories containing a moral dilemma – like the one we told at the beginning of this section. In these stories, a main character commits an act of transgression. The story of John (A) and the story of Henry (B) illustrate the moral dilemmas behind the stories and are taken from the account of his investigations published as *The moral judgment of the child* (1932):

A. *A boy called John* is in his bedroom and is called down for dinner. He goes into the dining room where there is a chair behind the door. On the chair is a tray with 15 cups on it. John could not have known that the tray was behind the door. He goes into the room and knocks over the tray, breaking all the cups.

B. *A boy called Henry* tried to get some jam from a cupboard one day while his mother was out. He climbed onto a chair and reached out. The jam was too high and he was not able to reach it. While he was trying, he knocked over a cup. The cup fell down and broke.
The moral dilemma is this: Henry broke a cup while stealing jam. By accident, John broke 15 cups, but is this worse? Young children in the moral realism stage judge that the more things are broken, the naughtier the act and the more severe the punishment should be. John broke more cups, therefore young children would think he committed the naughtier act. For children in this stage, the fact that Henry tried to deceive his mother, is less important. By ages 8–9, in the autonomous morality stage, children’s views change. The child who broke the cups by accident should not be punished because they now believe that the act was an accident – no fault is attributable – and that the child who broke the cup whilst engaged in an act of deceit is worse than the one who broke 15 by accident. Their moral development has moved on and in short the punishment should fit the crime.

**Kohlberg’s stage theory**

Kohlberg’s stage theory of moral development (1969) was heavily based on Piagetian theories and was linked to children’s moral reasoning abilities. He too allied a child’s cognitive capacity with the capacity for moral thinking, yet was more concerned with reasoning than children’s understanding of right and wrong. It is a theory more about moral principles than moral behaviours. It is based on his observations of how children solve hypothetical problems, i.e. the ‘what if’ type questions, and proposes that the reasons children give for their moral decisions change with age. Lawrence Kohlberg identified six stages that span three levels of moral reasoning (see Table 12.3) which, he argued are common to all, but are not presented as age specific. He recognised that there would be individual differences as to when children pass through each stage and that some people, even as adults, never reach the highest level.

Most children up to the age of 10 have preconventional morality; Stages 1 and 2 of the six stages. At the first level, Stage 1 is obedience and punishment orientation. Children respond to rules, imposed by authority figures. They submit to authority. So the child being reprimanded by a teacher in school for a misdemeanour will generally accept this telling-off. They obey rules to avoid being punished and decide if it is wrong then it

**Table 12.3 Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1:</th>
<th>Level 1: Preconventional morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obedience and punishment orientation</td>
<td>Makes moral decisions purely on the basis of self-interest. Will disobey rules if he thinks he can do so without getting caught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2:</td>
<td>Level 2: Conventional morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic and instrumental orientation</td>
<td>Recognises that others have needs, but prioritises her own needs over those of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3:</td>
<td>Level 3: Postconventional morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good boy/good girl</td>
<td>Makes decision on the basis of what will please others and is very concerned to keep friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Law and order</td>
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<td>Stage 5:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal ethical principle</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
should be punished. Stage 2 is *hedonistic and instrumental orientation*. Children now seek rewards for their actions. They can behave well for their own gains and judge rightness if it benefits them. They also engage in negotiation, so a school-age child might be heard to say, ‘I will learn my spellings for tomorrow if I can watch the television programme afterwards’.

Like Piaget, Kohlberg made extensive use of story-telling to investigate moral reasoning, exemplified in his famous story of Heinz who buys drugs for his dying wife (Kohlberg, 1984). A précis of the story is that a woman is near to death but there exists a drug that could save her life. It is very expensive in the town. The local chemist has a supply but is charging ten times the correct price for it. The woman’s husband, Heinz, tried to borrow money from people he knew, but could not raise enough cash to buy it. He even pleaded with the chemist to let him pay some money in advance but the chemist refused. Heinz then considered breaking into the store to steal the drug for his dying wife.

If we take this story and apply it the children under 10, i.e. in the first two stages of Kohlberg’s theory, what dilemmas would we find? Children in *obedience and punishment orientation* of Stage 1 would say that Heinz should steal the drug because to let his wife die is wrong but also he should not steal it because he would be sent to prison. At this level of preconventional morality, children believe strongly that stealing is wrong because those in authority say it is. Right and wrong are determined by what will or will not be punished. At Stage 2, *hedonistic and instrumental orientation*, children would say that Heinz should steal it because his wife needs it to live but also he should not steal it because if he got caught he could go to prison and his wife would die anyway. At this second level of preconventional morality, right and wrong is determined by the rewards it brings and by what other people want if there is a reciprocal relationship.

**Reflect**

How would you apply Stages 3–6 of Kohlberg’s model to Heinz and the drugs? Kohlberg’s theory places emphasis on being able to view the world from another’s perspective. Think back to Chapter 11. Does Kohlberg’s stage theory fit with what you learned about the development of empathy?

The theories of Piaget and Kohlberg make influential contributions to our understanding of moral development. We now know that children act as moral beings in search of ‘truths’ of right and wrong and that new moral understandings are built from experiences in various social encounters. These understandings have also led current researchers to explore moral reasoning in new dimensions such as gender and culture (Reinke et al., 2008; Turiel, 1998; Gilligan, 1982) through the observation of children’s behaviour in nurseries and schools. It is to the topic of pro- and antisocial behaviour that we now turn.

**Pro- and antisocial behaviours**

It seems that each generation bemoans the moral standards and low levels of social behaviour of the previous one. Certainly children’s behaviour today is a major concern for class teachers and by far the most consistent reason why trainees on the university teacher training course that I [M. H.] lead fail their examination of professional practice. While writing this chapter I am also currently engaged in gathering the results from
Prosocial behaviour
Intentional, voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another person for which there is no reward expectation.

Empathy
The attribute of being able to understand different emotions, to take another person's perspective or to respond similarly.

Altruism
Acting with a selfless concern for others.

Schooled for my trainees' final teaching practice. All too often in the last few days I have been told by teachers, 'I'm sorry, Mr Hughes, but he can't pass. He just can't control the class.' A 'difficult' class can make lessons a tiring ordeal for any teacher, whether a trainee or not, and constantly having to deal with incidences of disruptive behaviour can ruin even the best planned lessons. Fortunately the majority of children do behave well in schools. The inspectors of the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) rated classroom behaviour as good or excellent in 92% of primary schools in England (Steer, 2005). What kind of personal behaviours lead to good or excellent classroom behaviour?

Prosocial behaviour is defined as 'intentional, voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another' (Eisenberg, 1992, p 3). Prosocial interactions are important for all societies and it is not surprising that promoting prosocial behaviour is of concern to educators, politicians and to policy makers in many countries. Of course, the family provides a significant learning context for developing prosocial values and behaviours: relationships within the family, parenting styles, sharing in home chores and helping to look after siblings are all important foundations for moral development and it can begin early in life.

Reflect
There is some evidence that overall, girls do not show significantly any more prosocial behaviours than boys (Persson, 2005). For some people this might be difficult to believe. What are the reasons for such disbelief and what do you think?

As observed in the last chapter infants under 12 months use gestures and expressions to communicate with others, including sharing interesting objects with others. Infants notice that other children nearby are distressed and when mobility allows will approach another child or adult and share some of the distress. By 3 years children will offer specific help, perhaps a sticking plaster to an adult with a cut finger. They may also offer a favourite toy or blanket as a comfort, demonstrating some understanding about how others are feeling. A 3-year-old will pat the hand of his sad mother and can be heard to say, 'Mummy sad. Need tea!'

In the first 3 years there are many other examples of prosocial behaviours to be seen: children sharing toys and food, offering verbal assistance, and involving others in helping like directing an older brother to fetch a younger sibling's rattle. Expressions of prosocial behaviour change with age. In general children engage in more prosocial behaviours as they get older (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). The pattern of prosocial behaviour is also stable over time; thus a child who shows abundant examples of prosocial behaviours at age 3 is likely to continue as an adolescent and adult and, if anything, increases as perceptive abilities improve with age. As children more accurately understand what is happening around them, they respond to situations less aggressively and with more prosocial behaviours. There appears to be little gender difference, although girls have a slight edge in tending to others, and in their comfort-giving and instrumental helping. Girls in the main consistently show a little more empathy – see below – than boys (Dadds et al., 2008; Eisenberg et al., 1992), but one does need to view such findings with some caution since expectations and gender stereotyping make it a complex area.

Two elements of prosocial behaviour can be identified. These are empathy and altruism. Empathy has been discussed previously: to recap, it is defined as a willingness to
tune into the feelings of others and having a sensitivity to other people’s feelings. It is therefore a vicarious response requiring an appreciation of how others are feeling and a sympathetic response to their needs. Altruism is defined as acting with a selfless concern for others. Altruistic behaviour is behaviour intended to help someone else, without any expectation of reward and sometimes at some cost to the ‘giver’. Altruistic children can regulate their own feelings well, tend to be the most popular children, display better social skills and are more self-assured. Neither empathy nor altruism develop naturally but arise out of positive early experiences as we have described. One important contributor to how children develop altruistic natures is through prosocial moral reasoning.

Psychologist Nancy Eisenberg details a progression in children’s prosocial reasoning which begins with a preoccupation about their own needs in what she called hedonistic orientation. This is ‘help only if it benefits self’. Let’s consider an example of a child being asked to visit an elderly neighbour to deliver some cake for tea. Through this example we can explore Eisenberg’s different stages in prosocial moral reasoning. In the first category of hedonistic orientation, a child might think to herself, ‘I won’t visit old Mrs Evans because I want to play at my friends’. This stage is followed in middle childhood by the needs-of-others orientation stage where concerns for others are shown although these may conflict with a child’s own feelings. A child in this stage of reasoning might think, ‘I need to visit Mrs Evans because I have been asked to, though her house smells funny’. There then follows an approval and interpersonal orientation stage which is associated with seeking approval from others. An older child might say to herself ‘I have done a good job in taking the cake around to see Mrs Evans. She’s old and lonely’. A final stage of internalised values orientation is included and applicable to adolescents whose justification for helping is also based on values and responsibilities – to ignore these would undermine one’s own self-respect: ‘It is right to take the cake around and stay for a visit. We should judge our society by how well we treat the elderly and vulnerable’.

There are a number of reasons why some children demonstrate more prosocial behaviours than others and therefore move more smoothly through the stages of prosocial moral reasoning. An emphasis on genetic determinants in general receive little support although we have already seen how temperament is integral to how children respond emotionally to others. Social learning theory tells us that reinforcement is important, i.e. giving rewards for sharing – sweets, money and verbal praise – all increase the likelihood of these behaviours being replicated. Social learning theory also points to other factors: the importance of modelling and imitation (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998), parenting styles and child-rearing practices, secure attachments and warm supportive families, where assertive parents (warm demanders) are less inclined to use controlling techniques to discipline children (Strayer & Roberts, 2004).

When parents, carers and teachers express disappointment with antisocial behaviours, explain why such behaviour is wrong and give reasons why other behaviours are preferable, it is likely to lead to more positive moral behaviour. As an example, when 5-year-old Jemma hits out at her friend Lucy a reaction like ‘Don’t do that Jemma (assertive)! That makes me very sad (seeking empathy). That really hurt Lucy and you wouldn’t like it if she did that to you, now, would you (moral reasoning)? Now say sorry and the two of you go and help Martin with the toys’ (preferable behaviours) is likely to be an effective teacher intervention. Induction techniques like this are really convincing and powerful. I [M. H.] encourage my trainees to practise them, but you might judge, from my earlier statement about failing to manage a classroom adequately, that some of my trainees quite obviously don’t practise enough.
Reflect

Try a few situations like that of Jemma and Lucy above. Think through some situations of antisocial behaviour that you have observed. Now try and formulate interventions that use the induction technique of assertion – seeking empathy – moral reasoning – preferable behaviours. I [M. H.] used it recently in a psychology lecture when one young man was trying to draw on the hand of his girlfriend (yes, that’s right and they were 20-somethings!). It works with all age groups but you have to practise!

Connect and Extend


One way of understanding the development of prosocial and antisocial behaviours is the social development model (Catalano & Hawkins 1996), which suggests that similar paths lead to both prosocial and antisocial behaviours. The model is shown in Figure 12.2.

The pathways model suggests that factors such as sex, race, age and socioeconomic status determine the social opportunities that are available. Children recognise that some activities are available and become involved with positive or problem behaviour related to those activities. Importantly children also interact with either ‘good’ people or ‘bad’ people related to those activities. So a child who

Figure 12.2 Positive and negative pathways for social development
is coerced into shoplifting begins to practise an antisocial behaviour and to interact with petty criminals, while another who is invited to sing in the church choir begins to practise a prosocial behaviour and to interact with church members. How can schools engage children in prosocial behaviours and so set them on the positive path?

Promoting prosocial behaviour in schools

In UK schools the development of prosocial behaviour is more usually seen as being part of citizenship skills. Until recently attention to citizenship in the curriculum was uneven and systematic planning to ensure pupils are adequately prepared for their social, political, economic and cultural place in modern society was not common. This situation is changing rapidly. Since 1998 when the first commissioned study into citizenship began (Kerr, 1999), there have been rapid advances in policy and practice of citizenship education. From 2000, primary and secondary schools in England had to teach citizenship as part of the statutory National Curriculum – supported by subsequent governmental guidance on how to encourage young people to become involved in decision-making processes (DfES, 2004). Schools in England are expected to prepare their young people to take an active role in society and become ‘good citizens’. Children are also expected to learn about citizenship by experiencing it in action, by the ways in which they are taught and the ways in which their school lives are organised. Education for democratic citizenship became a goal of education policies in Europe (Birzéa et al., 2004) and a study (EURYDICE, 2005) found components of citizenship learning in the legislation of the majority of European countries. 2005 was designated as the European Year of Citizenship through Education and the European Commission has a planned programme entitled Citizens for Europe to run from 2007 to 2013. What, then, is citizenship education for young people? The term, originally proposed by Crick et al. (1999), has been interpreted in broad terms that range from including children in the decision-making of the school, to debating issues and making a contribution to the local community through activities such as volunteering. The Theory in Action feature now explains how the concept of citizenship education is currently being addressed in schools across the United Kingdom.

**Theory in Action**

Promoting active citizenship in UK schools

It is required by law that schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland offer pupils a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes their spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development and prepares them for the opportunities and experiences in adult life.

In 1997 a government advisory group recommended that for schools in England this should be developed around the three strands of social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. In September 2000 it was introduced via the framework of Personal, Social and Health Education for children aged 5–11. In Wales a personal and social education framework seeks to make pupils active, informed and responsible citizens aware of their own rights and committed to practices of a participative democracy. In Northern Ireland, core values of pluralism, the pursuit of social justice, an acceptance of rights and responsibilities and democracy are the core values at the heart of its curriculum for citizenship. In Scotland, there are four strands of *A curriculum for excellence: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.*
Although there is much published about policy, there is to date little empirical evidence of the impact on behaviour. Drawing upon the review by the Citizenship Education Review Group (CERG) (2004) the following are suggested for teachers:

- Listen to pupils.
- Encourage pupils to pose their own questions.
- Give coaching in ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ questions.
- Create opportunities for pupils to share personal stories and histories.
- Ensure that all pupils are included in ways that suit their learning needs.
- Organise the classroom to indicate the value of every voice.
- Build in reflection time.
- Involve learners in structured self-evaluation.
- Inform on rights and responsibilities of citizenship, that include justice, ethics, equality, social formation and political and economic awareness.
- Practise articulating pupils own social vision and values.
- Encourage a critical, questioning response to questions.
- Encourage learners to develop their own criteria for validating beliefs and attitudes.
- Practise reflective self-evaluation with the help of professional critical friends.

More empirical research is needed into the practical implementation of citizenship education in schools. The CERG review has already formed a powerful agenda for further review and action. Its findings indicate a need for a shift to a new culture where interactions and processes are given at least as much time and credence as content and outcomes. It is also clear that an approach is needed that places learners at the centre and create conditions for sustaining and developing citizenship in schools (2004, p 10).

Remember from Chapter 1 that Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004) is a new approach in England to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. Every Child Matters defines the outcomes for children and therefore the rights of children to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being. As making a positive contribution is one of the important outcomes for children, this establishes citizenship education as a core requirement in the curriculum of our schools.

**Reflect**

Review the suggestions for teachers in the nearby Theory in Action feature. For each bulleted suggestion think through how you might do that for children of different ages or in different contexts. Some are easier than others. Political and economic awareness is tricky in preschoolers!

**Aggressive behaviour in children**

In contrast to the aspirational outcome making a positive contribution, many children exhibit behaviours such as aggression and bullying that are antisocial and certainly not part of being a good citizen. Aggression includes name-calling and acts of physical
violence intended to harm another person. Aggressive children tend to become adults with criminal records for antisocial behaviours: criminal damage, assault and so on. This is not a new thought. Work with boys in inner-city London described by criminologist David Farrington (1995) identified troublesome behaviour in young childhood as one of seven potential risk factors for adolescent delinquency.

What are the causes of antisocial behaviour? The answer is again a combination of nature and nurture. On the nature side is increased testosterone (which males have more of), which is associated with increases in physical activity and aggressiveness. Temperament has a role to play too. A New Zealand study (Caspi et al., 1995) in a large sample of children from 3 to 9 years found that early problems with temperament and emotional control strongly correlated with later behaviour problems.

Social learning theory tells us that children learn how they deal with people and events that frustrate them through observing adults. Parents who are aggressive serve as similar models for their children, and a lack of emotional warmth and insufficient monitoring of children’s activities – ineffective discipline – increases the likelihood of children behaving aggressively at home and in school. Smacking or verbally abusing children as a punishment is not a long-term solution – and serves only as an instant expression of parental frustration and anger. Children who experience parental violence are likely to repeat the behaviour away from their parents’ view and likely to replicate this behaviour as parents. The now famous Bobo doll experiment in social learning conducted by Albert Bandura and colleagues (1963), where children viewed violent behaviour towards a clown doll on a video and then replicated this behaviour while playing with the doll shortly afterwards, is an excellent example of such imitation. Children who use aggression to get their own way will continue to do so again and again, and such behaviours are reinforced by scenes of violence, damage, and mayhem on the media (Villani, 2001). As children spend more time in front of televisions and games consoles, the greater the influence these have on children, particularly in middle childhood when children are specially able to ‘absorb’ violent and antisocial behaviour and often view it as acceptable. The relationship between television and aggressive behaviours is well documented (Anderson et al., 2003; Huesmann et al., 2003; Coie & Dodge, 1998).

There are two forms of aggression: instrumental aggression is used to achieve an end, for example gaining possession of a toy that someone else has hold of and hostile aggression is intended to hurt a person or group deliberately, for example through name calling and inflicting physical pain. Aggression can be reactive when children and adults act in self-defence to an attack; or it can be proactive, where force is used to dominate another, such as in bullying. There are developmental trends to it. By age 2, we can see instrumental aggression towards objects. There is also kicking out at another person, for example as part of a refusal to share toys. This type of early aggression is instrumental in the sense that its intention is to stop another from getting what they want and is not intended to hurt. By age 4, there is a much greater verbal aggression with taunting and name-calling. Around this age boys are more physical in their aggressive displays while girls tend to gossip and exclude others from their play – a culture-transferable phenomenon (Innes, 2006).

Between the ages of 6 and 11 energies are channelled into sport and physical activities and children are by now more able to resolve their disputes by sharing with others. Physical aggression declines but is often replaced by verbal abuse. In schools, children learn the rules of acceptability of displaying aggression. The difference between a preschool child and a school-age child is the preschooler will display hostile aggression to get back the ball from another child; the schoolchild directs aggression to someone he or she does not like (Coie & Dodge, 1998).

Fortunately not all of what appears to be aggressive behaviour in school (and in particular in school playgrounds) is what it appears to be. Mechthild Schafer & Peter Smith (1996) showed children and teachers videos of play fights. The teachers estimated a
third of the interchanges would turn into real fights. In fact most fights were play, and few turned into real fight situations. What was interesting is that many teachers generalised from a small number of aggressive pupils. They worried that what they saw might turn into real fights. Children, on the other hand, knew the behaviour was not typical of everyone and that only a small minority of children demonstrated real hostile aggressive behaviours. As we said before, playground play fights and rough and tumble play is seen as having a positive side; it is an important way that some children form and learn about relationships. Vivien Paley (2004) in a study on superhero play in the kindergarten reported that she came to realise from her observations that what she saw was not aggressive behaviour, rather they were conflict resolutions over issues mostly about space. But aggressive behaviour should not be ignored because it is a typical trait of the school bully and, yes, it is time to address a form of social behaviour that dominates the school life of far too many of our children and – if we take the views of many social commentators seriously – the offices and workplaces of the adult world. Acts of physical hostility, taunting and teasing are for some children in schools almost a part of the daily school ritual and influence how and with whom they form relationships. The ethos of any school is negatively affected by bullying with both bullies and victims perceiving the schools to be a non-safe place to be (Nansel et al., 2003). So what is bullying?

Bullying is a form of antisocial behaviour that emerges in the behaviours of some school-age children. It is the predominant form of peer group aggression in school years. Particular children are targeted to become victims of physical and/or verbal assaults. Bullying is an unemotional use of force on another person and in most cases the force is never countered or challenged. This idea is reinforced by a definition from Barry Schneider, Professor of Psychology that bullying is ‘aggression directed repeatedly and specifically towards a specific victim who, in most cases, is weaker than the bully’ (2000, p 106). Bullying is also psychological when a child is deliberately excluded from a peer group, or threatening when demands are made for money or other possessions.

The bullies are usually unpopular children, and it is generally agreed that they have a deficiency in some aspect(s) of normal social development. This is not to suggest that these children are coarse and unintelligent. Bullies soon realise that using physical and/or verbal threats on others can be an easy means of getting their own way. As Jon Sutton and colleagues show – from the Department of Psychology at Goldsmiths College, the University of London (1999) – many bullies are skilled at manipulating the emotions of others and possess a well-developed theory of mind in being able to cajole others to carry out the bullying upon others and avoid detection themselves. As to the victims, consequences can be far reaching. Lack of confidence and self-worth, guilt, further alienation from peers, anxiety attacks and truancy and relationships problems in later life are common. Again, genetics and factors in a child’s environment account for ‘victimness’. Victims of bullying are singled out because they are easy targets: usually physically inferior, often rejected by peers and not disposed or likely to defend themselves against the bully’s attacks.

Advances in technology may have led to increased opportunities for communication but they have also led to another and modern form of bullying known as – as we mentioned before – cyber bullying. One form of this, ‘happy slapping’, is a craze where young people use cameras on their mobile phones to video physical attacks on their victims. The extent of this new phenomenon, involving older children, has led to a number of incidents of younger children being assaulted in school playgrounds, or on their way to or from school. Mobile phone-related bullying can take other forms as well, including threats by instant messaging, anonymous text messages and even web links to Internet sites advertising personalised abuse. Playground taunts are one thing – a reprehensible phenomenon and one to be challenged and expunged – but when the insult is sent far and wide, the level of humiliation for the victim is inestimable.
Can bullying be stopped by punishing those responsible or are there better solutions?

The complexities of bullying in schools mean that occurrences of teasing and name-calling, even some forms of physical abuse like pushing and punching, are often reported as isolated incidents, and this can mask the scale of systematic bullying. Subsequent punishments of those incidents often fail and this leads to an escalation of the occurrence, and even greater levels of fear and humiliation for the victim. Revenge attacks and making the victim known to a much wider community are not uncommon. Victims are not capable of stopping the abuse so it is to other methods that we must look for solutions to this escalating problem.

In response to media publicity, schools in England are now compelled to have a policy in place that identifies how they keep their pupils safe and the strategies they use. The publication of a resource and information pack *Bullying – don’t suffer in silence* (DfEE, 2000) provides a useful source of practical ways for teachers to stop bullying. Let’s be clear. It is the responsibility of teachers and other care professionals to stop bullying and not to claim that they are powerless or that this is some kind of socially normal behaviour. Anti-Bullying Week (UK), taking place in November each year, raises the awareness of the problem and sends a very clear national message that bullying is unacceptable. An accompanying website called *Checkpoints* is a guide for parents to ask questions and receive answers to frequently asked questions about bullying and violence. Small-scale school projects managed by pupils themselves are another effective strategy for regional awareness. One example is *Bully Free Zone*, a peer-support programme operating in schools in the North East of England. *Bully Free Zone* offers training and support for children, parents and teachers in primary and secondary schools. To counter cyber bullying, various software packages have been developed that identify key words associated with abuse and can block messages on school servers. Other schools have set up confidential telephone numbers so that bullying can be reported by text message. It is again worth bringing to mind that one of the five outcomes for children as part of the *Every Child Matters* agenda is to ‘stay safe’, which itself has five aims:

- Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation.
- Safe from accidental injury and death.
- Safe from bullying and discrimination.
- Safe from crime and antisocial behaviour in and out of school.
- Have security, stability and are cared for.

To ensure safety for children from bullying, discrimination and antisocial behaviour, schools have adopted a range of whole-school policies and practices. For example, anti-bullying practices include counselling, mentoring schemes with older pupils, circle time sessions for younger children, mediation and peer support. Talking to an adult, walking away and talking to the bully are further strategies that have received much support from children. Intervention strategies such as teaching children to respect other’s rights, establishing clear rules about acceptable behaviour in class, explicitly teaching negotiating skills, providing praise to reward positive behaviour from children, adults setting good examples by being good role models and enlisting parental help to change bullies and victims’ behaviour are all ways to solve this problem. A number of intervention programmes exist, all of which incorporate...
strategies as those outlined and have all shown a reduction in bullying through them. Punishing the bully is not a long-term solution; positive action is.

However, there is an argument that we are all over-reacting. It could be said that it is human nature for some individuals to be more extrovert than others, and that bullying is showing a form – some might argue, a distorted form – of leadership. We need leaders to show the weaker ones what to do and to keep them out of trouble. How are we going to recognise individuals with stronger personalities if they are not allowed to show any signs of leadership? By identifying some people as ‘victims’ we establish them as victims, label them as victims and make them feel like victims. It could also be argued that some teachers physically and psychologically bully pupils and that these are the successful classroom disciplinarians. Military discipline is based upon bullying (although service chiefs would deny this). Isn’t it precisely because bullying in some form or another is so widespread in schools, social groups and businesses that it should be considered a social norm to be checked in its more extreme forms? Of course some individuals can take this too far – bullying in the extreme is always frightening – but we shouldn’t over-react.

What do you think? Is it the responsibility of teachers and other care professionals to stop bullying and not to claim that this is some kind of socially normal behaviour? Vote on the Companion Website at www.pearsoned.co.uk.doherty

**SUMMARY 3**

We now summarise what you have learned in the final section of this chapter:

- Moral (understanding of right and wrong) and social development are closely connected.
- There is universal consistency in the belief that standards of behaviour should be communicated to children so that they will learn and practise these as they get older.
- Psychodynamic theory (Freud) emphasises internalising standards of moral behaviour by combining the influence of parents and biological factors through an in-built natural drive to act in certain ways.
- Social learning theory (Bandura) emphasises moral behaviours built on personal explanations of moral conduct from parents and other authority figures.
- The cognitive-developmental perspective (Piaget) stresses the importance of moral reasoning, a capacity to consider another’s feelings and perspectives.
- Lawrence Kohlberg constructed six stages that span three levels of moral reasoning which, he argued are common to all but are not presented as age specific.
- Prosocial behaviour has two elements: empathy and altruism.
- Empathy is a willingness to tune into the feelings of others – a sensitivity to other people’s feelings. Altruism is defined as acting with a selfless concern for others.
- In our schools prosocial behaviour is more usually termed citizenship skills.
- Schools in England are expected to prepare their young people to become ‘good citizens’ by how they are taught and the ways in which their school lives are organised.
- Aggressive children tend to become adults with criminal records for antisocial behaviours: criminal damage, assault and so on.
Parents who are aggressive serve as similar models for their children, and ineffective discipline increases the likelihood of children being aggressive at home and in school.

Bullying is a form of antisocial behaviour that is the predominant form of peer group aggression in school years.

Anti-bullying practices include counselling, mentoring schemes with older pupils, circle time sessions for younger children, mediation and peer support.

Remember the story of Lin Yan at the start of this chapter, who wanted to make friends with other children in her new class, and they too were keen to get to know her and be her friend. Lin Yan was an example of one person's desire to be with other people—we are curious about others and seek the interest and security of being part of a family, a group, and a wider society—it is part of what makes us human. Being successful at being part of a family or a group takes practice and we have to learn prosocial behaviours which are the key to popularity and acceptance.

Even before they are born, children are part of a social system. Their brains are 'hard-wired' to want to be with others and this is established through early bonding with the mother/carer in a relationship that is much more than feeding and protection. Important social signals are given off that a child readily responds to and builds upon—imitating facial expressions, hand gestures and cooing and giggling are all part of the desire to communicate with others. By school age, the child builds up more abstract models of the adult–child relationship based on trust and approval. Play is an important means for children to explore their surrounding world through first-hand experiences and provides a platform to rehearse future roles, act out personal agendas and experiment with new physical, social, emotional and intellectual skills.

Social cognition is the term referring to thinking about personal feelings and those of other people. The first of these includes an understanding of 'self': the I self and the me self and of self-esteem, concerned with comparing ourselves with others in an evaluative way. We learn to comprehend others by understanding their desires, beliefs and intentions through developing a theory of mind—the term describing how our mental states explain our behaviour. Being able to understand oneself and others is also related to social identity which embraces ethnicity and gender.

Identified and discussed in the chapter were three main influences upon children's socialisation—chiefly the family. Authoritative parenting in which there was fairness and clear boundaries, results in children developing high self-esteem and social competence. Friendship among peers is central to children's social development and competence. In early childhood less time is spent in the company of peers, yet by the time they begin school the percentage of time is sharply increased. A third agent of socialisation is the school. Although the priority is the development of cognitive skills, there is no doubt having a supportive school ethos is increasingly important. Peer tutoring and collaborative learning are examples of strategies with a high degree of social involvement that have been proven to be effective for learning.

Although the rules and standards of behaviour deemed acceptable vary according to culture, there is consistency in the belief that standards of behaviour must be communicated to children. Prosocial behaviours begin early, largely influenced by the socialisation experiences provided by parents and carers. Children who show good prosocial behaviours
tend to be the most popular children, display better social skills and are more self-assured. Social difficulties experienced in childhood predict similar difficulties in adulthood and bullying as a form of antisocial behaviour which, though emerging in the behaviours of some school-age children, often continues into adolescence and beyond. Evidence suggests that interventions such as counselling and mentoring schemes, pupil mediation and peer support are more effective in preventing bullying than punishing offenders.

Will Lin Yan grow up to be a bully? I don’t think so. Even on our momentary acquaintance through the story at the beginning of the chapter, she seems to have all that it takes to develop successful prosocial behaviours, display impressive social skills and be self-assured even when meeting new people. Supportive and attentive parents have placed her carefully in a school with a caring ethos that places high value on children’s social and emotional development and she can dance beautifully, which is one of the most important socialising activities and social mood changers. Will Lin Yan grow up to be a bully? She doesn’t seem the type.

This is not only the conclusion of Chapter 12 but also of our book. In the Preface we commended you to the study of children, childhood and child development and we trust you have taken every opportunity to follow the Connect and Extend features and to access the Companion Website.

In the last 7 months we have all come a long way. *Child Development: Theory and Practice 0–11* has brought us from the very beginning of Niamh’s life when she was just a few hours old, to the marvellous picture below taken by her swimming teacher, Helen Whittle. Gaze a few moments at the miracle of what Niamh has already become and consider the complexity and completeness of her physical, perceptual, cognitive, emotional and social development to date, and marvel at what is to come for her. She is well on her way to being confident, capable and self-sufficient, in what is just the beginning of her journey through life. During our journey in writing this book she has been a source of wonder and an inspiration.

What is equally wondrous is the potential there is for you, the reader, not to think ‘job done’ — no — take every opportunity to further enhance and enrich your understanding of the theory and practice of child development so that, no matter what role or roles you fulfil later, *Child Development* has been a good beginning for you to becoming an expert in children and childhood. There is no finer aspiration.

Here’s Niamh putting it all together, and at just 7 months, look what she can do! Source: Edward and Ella Hogan

### Human sociability and the need for nexus (pp 378–390)

The early social world of the child — first relationships (pp 378–381)

Fairly soon after birth infants can socially orient themselves to social situations and to other people. Young children smile and look towards others around them and use smiling as an important social signal. Adults and siblings respond to babies’ smiles, babbling and cooing with motherese and by returning smiles. Interaction between child and adult includes joint-action formats or synchronised routines — simplified action sequences created by the mother such as sharing a book, feeding and dressing routines.

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**SUMMARY TABLE**

The Social and Moral World of the Child

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<tr>
<th>Human sociability and the need for nexus (pp 378–390)</th>
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Children's play and social experiences (pp 381-385)
Lev Vygotsky viewed play as important in building up mental structures. Albert Bandura saw play as a rehearsal of, and preparation for skills in later life. Jean Piaget allied play to the development of cognition and identified five types of play:
1. Functional play – banging a brick.
4. Symbolic play – pretend play by imitating.

Mildred Parten identified a hierarchy of six categories of social participation play – playing (or not) with others:
1. Unoccupied behaviour – perhaps sitting and thinking.
2. Onlooker behaviour – where the child attends to what other children are doing.
3. Solitary play – takes place alone and is different from that of others.
4. Parallel play – where children play alongside but not with another child.
5. Associative play – children may share materials or resources.
6. Co-operative play – includes playing games or model making together.

Self and self-concept (pp 385-387)
Social cognition includes two key aspects: knowing yourself and knowing others. Knowledge of 'self' has two components: I self – that I am separate from others around me and in control of my own actions and thoughts – and the me self – recognising the individual traits and characteristics that make us special.

Self-esteem (pp 387-388)
Our self-esteem is how we are in comparison with others, how we evaluate ourselves in comparison to others, and learned helplessness is a belief that one can do little well or effectively. Helpless children believe that success is due to ability, that their own ability is low and fixed for them.

Understanding others (pp 388-389)
We develop a theory of mind which allows us to predict what others are going to do. The false-belief task is a test that infants have formed a theory of mind.

Social identity and influence (pp 390-404)
Two strands of social identity currently exist: ethnic identity and gender identity. H. Rudolph Schaffer argues that ethnic identity has four components:
1. Salience – the extent to which ethnicity is important in one's self-concept.
2. Ideology – how the people in that ethnic group are regarded.
3. Centrality – how individuals define themselves.
4. Regard – positive and/or negative feelings in relation to ethnicity.

Gender identity refers to an individual's perception of their own gender. Behavioural differences can be apparent as early as the first two years. Girls walk, talk and generally reach developmental milestones earlier than boys and do better at school. Furthermore, language regions are more active in girls giving them advantages in communication over boys. Girls use more parts of the brain, which accounts for their being better at multi-tasking.

Theories of social identity? (pp 390-393)
There are two sets of acquired gender identities to consider: cognitive learning theories and social learning theories. Cognitive-developmental theories argue that gender identity comes first and is followed by construction of schema – the basis for behaviour in gender typical ways, e.g. boys play gun fights and girls play with dolls. Social learning theories is knowledge of gender acquired through increased opportunities for observing others and imitating them. With preschool children the tendency to play with peers of the same sex is striking. Boys dominate classroom interactions and are the cause of most classroom disturbances. Girls are the cause of fewer discipline problems and are much less likely to drop out of school early.

The social influence of the family (pp 393-396)
The family is the prime instrument for socialisation in childhood and parents' influence on the socialisation of their children will reflect their own attitudes and values, social class, education and religious belief. Beginning with parents and moving outward through Urie Bronfenbrenner's concentric circles – or social systems – is a good way of describing children's social development. Children's social skills and self-esteem comes from parenting style with the authoritative style coming out on top.
The social influence of peers (pp 397–400)

Peer friendships are powerful influences on children's conformity and tend to provide opportunities to acquire and refine social skills with more give-and-take. Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) have identified four features of friendship:

1. Reciprocity – someone to spend time with and share your toys or an activity.
2. Intense social activity – children of school age look for specific qualities in a friend.
3. Conflict resolution – friends help each other to work out problems between them.
4. Effective task performance – friends plan joint actions, co-operate and collaborate to present a joint outcome.

Rubin and Coplan have identified five categories of peer acceptance:

1. Popular children are those most liked and who hold high status.
2. Controversial children can either be liked or disliked depending on the circumstances.
3. Rejected children are least liked and include sub-groups of aggressive rejected and non-aggressive rejected.
4. Neglected children score low on being the most liked but tend to score low on being liked least too.
5. Average children – not accepted as popular children nor disliked as much as rejected children.

The social influence of schools and the media (pp 400–404)

Schools are important influences in extending children's social networks and forming how children communicate, how they behave and how they make progress. Co-operative learning strategies such as peer collaboration and peer tutoring have a positive impact on self-esteem, attitudes towards peers and to school generally. Children's literature, television, video games and the Internet can affect children's social and moral development but not always positively.

Moral development: right or wrong? (pp 405–419)

Moral (understanding of right and wrong) and social development are closely connected since the relationships we have with other people influence how we act, and how we act is very often determined by social contexts. There is universal consistency in the belief that standards of behaviour should be communicated to children so that they will learn and practise these as they get older.

Theories of moral development (pp 405–409)

Psychodynamic theory (Freud) emphasises internalising standards of moral behaviour by combining the influence of parents and biological factors though an in-built natural drive to act in certain ways. Social learning theory (Bandura) emphasises moral behaviours developed through cognitive representations of what children observe and process, and built on personal explanations of moral conduct from parents and other authority figures. The cognitive-developmental perspective (Piaget) stresses the importance of moral reasoning, requiring considerable reasoning and a capacity to consider another's feelings and perspectives.

It is in two stages:

1. Heteronomous – a pre-moral stage from birth to the end of the preschool years. There is little understanding of rules – consequences and morals are deemed the property of heteronomous (others) in authority.
2. Autonomous morality – rules can be altered and are arbitrary; actions are judged by intentions rather than consequences. Adherence to authority figures is now seen to be no longer necessary.

Lawrence Kohlberg constructed six stages that span three levels of moral reasoning which, he argued, are common to all but are not presented as age specific:

1. Makes moral decisions purely on the basis of self-interest.
2. Recognises that others have needs, but prioritises her own needs.
3. Makes decision on the basis of what will please others.
4. Looks to society as a whole for guidelines about moral decisions – laws and rules.
5. Recognises that rules are social constructions – that can be changed or ignored.
6. Answers only to her inner conscience – a small number of universal abstract principles.
Pro- and antisocial behaviours (pp 409–413)

Prosocial behaviour is defined as ‘intentional, voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another’ (Eisenberg, 1992, p 3) and has two elements: empathy and altruism. Empathy is a willingness to tune into the feelings of others – a sensitivity to other people’s feelings. Altruism is defined as acting with a selfless concern for others.

Promoting prosocial behaviour in schools (pp 413–414)

In UK schools prosocial behaviour is more usually termed citizenship skills. Schools in England are expected to prepare their young people to take an active role in society and become ‘good citizens’ by experiencing it in action, by the ways in which they are taught and the ways in which their school lives are organised.

Aggressive behaviour in children (pp 414–418)

Aggressive children tend to become adults with criminal records for antisocial behaviours: criminal damage, assault and so on. This is not a new thought. Parents who are aggressive serve as similar models for their children, and a lack of emotional warmth and insufficient monitoring of children’s activities – ineffective discipline – increases the likelihood of children behaving aggressively at home and in school. Instrumental aggression is used to achieve an end, for example gaining possession of a toy, and hostile aggression is intended to hurt a person or group deliberately. Bullying is a form of antisocial behaviour that is the predominant form of peer group aggression in school years. Anti-bullying practices include counselling, mentoring schemes with older pupils, circle time sessions for younger children, mediation and peer support. Punishing the bully is not a long-term solution; positive action is.

Going further


Useful website

www.bullying.co.uk
Online bullying website.