DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

DENNIS THOMPSON, JOHN D. HOGAN,
AND PHILIP M. CLARK

WILEY-BLACKWELL

Contents

Developmental Psychology in Historical Perspective

Dennis Thompson, John D. Hogan,
and Philip M. Clark

WILEY-BLACKWELL
A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2012

© 2012 Dennis Thompson, John D. Hogan, and Philip M. Clark

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007.

Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Offices

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

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Dennis Thompson, John D. Hogan, and Philip M. Clark to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this title

Hardback: 9781405167475

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This book is published in the following electronic formats: ePDFs 9781444355246; Wiley Online Library 9781444355277; ePub 9781444355253; Mobi 9781444355260

Preface

Human development has been a subject of interest since the beginning of recorded history. There are references in the Old Testament to the development of children, including their immature thinking and need for discipline. The writings of the two great ancient Greek philosophers of the classical period, Plato (427–347 BCE) and Aristotle (384–322 BCE), discuss developmental milestones and other special characteristics of children. Even Confucius (551–479 BCE), the ancient Chinese philosopher and educator, addressed stages of development, a concept that is usually thought to be modern. Most of these early references were to child development, but there are references to later development as well.

In fact, it can be said that the phenomenon of development has achieved a kind of historical and international ubiquity. Comments on it are present not only throughout all of history, but also among all cultures. That should come as no surprise. Early development has an almost magical quality to it, as the newborn undergoes a metamorphosis, from a helpless undifferentiated infant to an independent and fully developed person with a unique look and personality. Even the years of decline hold a certain fascination and practical interest. Despite the pervasiveness of interest in the phenomenon, however, it would be a mistake to think that the same views of development and children have existed across time and culture.

For thousands of years, the prevailing view of children in the Western world was a relatively static one. Most people did not move far from the place of their birth during their entire lifetimes. Social roles were limited and clearly defined. Children were expected to enter adult life relatively quickly, usually to make an economic contribution. Adults did not experience a great deal of

mobility – socially, economically or geographically. For most people, development had a level of predictability.

The world has gone through enormous changes in recent decades. International travel is increasingly common, communication throughout the planet is virtually instantaneous, and new occupations are constantly being created. This new world is far from static. Does the new and rapidly changing world have an impact on the course of development? Unquestionably – just as the old world did.

We now recognize that the very definitions of childhood and development are embedded in the larger social fabric and historical period in which they appear. What people of one period may have seen as commonplace knowledge, about children for example, may be contradicted by people of a different period, even within the same geographic region. Because our view of children is so dependent on its time and place, contemporary writers have begun to refer to the child as “a cultural invention” (Kessen, 1979). Such a view does not deny that there may be some common characteristics shared by children in general, including physical characteristics. Rather it points to the immense power of culture and of the historical moment in determining the assumptions that will be made about children, as well as the methods that will be used to study them.

Understanding the history of development, then, necessarily requires some understanding of the time and place in which the development unfolds. And, since different cultural and historical contexts can produce variable definitions of the child, a complete history should recognize the potential for differing views of the child that exist across geography, culture, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs and myriad other variables. To add to the complexity, there is another fundamental question that

needs an answer: Who owns the history of development? It is of interest to many specialties, but particularly to medicine, education, sociology, anthropology and psychology – each of them with its own questions and methods of study, and sometimes with overlapping agendas. It would be almost impossible to write a history from all these points of view.

This history, then, is a selective history of developmental psychology in the Western world, mostly in Europe and in the United States. For the most part, it addresses themes that have emerged in the modern era, that is, themes that have appeared in the era of science. Its greatest emphasis is on children because that has been the historical emphasis, but discussions of later development are also addressed. It makes no pretense to represent a genuine cross-national and cross-cultural history of development. Its goal is to highlight some of the major figures and trends in the study of development rather than to produce a fully comprehensive history. It begins with a discussion of some of the underlying beliefs and other background features that provide for the later emergence of a more scientific developmental psychology. It also has, as a goal, a desire to demonstrate the degree to which the discipline of developmental psychology was created and shaped by forces in the external environment. Finally, it attempts to provide a foundation for the understanding of contemporary developmental psychology.

Reference

Kessen, W. (1979). The American child and other cultural inventions. *American Psychologist*, *34*, 815–820.

Acknowledgments

The authors and the publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce the copyright material in this book:

Chapter 4

Frank, L. K. (1923). The status of social science in the United States. Rockefeller Archive Center: Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives and the Spelman Fund of New York Collection. Tarrytown, NY

Frank, L. K. (1924a). Child study and parent training (October 20). Rockefeller Archive Center: Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives and the Spelman Fund of New York Collection. Tarrytown, NY

Frank, L. K. (1924b). Training personnel and preparing teaching material. Rockefeller Archive Center: Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives and the Spelman Fund of New York Collection. Tarrytown, NY

Frank, L. K. (1925a). L. K. Frank to F. J. Kelly (May 5). Survey Associates Records, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries. Minneapolis, Minnesota

Frank, L. K. (1925b) L. K. Frank to L. D. Coffman (February 21). Rockefeller Archive Center: Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives and the Spelman Fund of New York Collection. Tarrytown, NY

Frank, L. K. (1926). Child study and parent education (December 23). Rockefeller Archive Center: Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives and the Spelman Fund of New York Collection. Tarrytown, NY

Frank, L. K. (1929). Appropriations made by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial in the field of child study and parental education (January 14). Frank papers, National Library of Medicine. Washington, DC

Ruml, B. (1922, October). General Memorandum. Rockefeller Archive Center: Spelman Fund of New York Collection

Chapter 5

Frank, L. (1933). Memorandum of interview with Myrtle McGraw (March 13). Rockefeller Archive Center: General Education Board, Record Group 1, Series 1.3, Box 370, Folder 3858. Tarrytown, NY

Chapter 7

Beck, H. W. (1929). Letter from Harry W. Beck. Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Papers (October 23). Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Miles, W. R. (1928a). Letter to Professor Robert S. Woodworth (August 18). Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Miles,W. R. (1928b). Stanford later maturity research project, Communication to the Social Science Research Council, Hanover Conference, Hanover, New Hampshire (August 16). Walter and Catharine Cox Miles papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Mitchell, W. C. (1928). Letter to Lewis Terman (September 21). Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Miles Papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Ruch, F. (1929, April 26). Letter from Floyd Ruch to Walter Miles. Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Miles Papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Terman, L. & Miles, W. (1928a, October 24). Letter to F. P. Keppel. Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Terman, L. & Miles, W. (1928b). A program of psychological research on the later period of maturity (April 4). Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Wechsler, D. (1932, March 9). Letter to Walter Miles. Walter and Catharine Cox Miles Papers. Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron

Chapter 8

Canady, H. G. (1930). Letter from Herman Canady to John W. Davis dated January 29, 1930. Herman G. Canady Collection, West Virginia State University Archives

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. The publisher apologizes for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

Chapter 1

Establishing a Background for Developmental Psychology

One of the earliest beliefs about the development of children was called “preformationism.” From ancient times until the birth of modern biology, a commonly held assumption was that a fully formed individual (usually referred to as a homunculus, or “little man”) was created at the moment of conception, simply growing inside the mother until expelled in the birth process. Such an individual would need only increased size and bulk to qualify as an adult. The notion of a natural unfolding of qualitatively different capacities within the fetus was largely unknown. It took the emergence of modern science to dispel completely these notions on a physical level.

Even those who did not hold strongly to a biological belief in the homunculus nonetheless adopted a social approach to children that viewed them as only quantitatively different from adults. An example of this kind of thinking was documented by Aries (1962), who compiled a social history of children in France and England. He argued that in medieval times, for example, the modern concept of childhood did not exist. Once children were beyond the dependency of their earliest years, they entered adult society and were treated as adults. Childhood was not important enough to demand much interest or special attention. It wasn't until the 1700s that a different view of children began to emerge,

one that addressed the different qualities of children, including the difference in their cognitive and emotional capacities.

Some of the arguments of Aries are compelling. For instance, his reference to paintings in which children are portrayed as physically adult, differing only in body size, is a visually strong one. Aries' position has been criticized by several writers who find his views to be extreme and highly speculative. They argue that there is ample documentation – including medical, legal and pictorial sources – to demonstrate that children were treated differently from adults long before the period he suggests. Nonetheless, the general thrust of his argument has been accepted – views of children are a reflection of their socio-historical time and place.

A Changing Society

One of the most important social changes to take place in the Western world in the last two centuries was the result of the movement from an agrarian economy to an industrial one. Increasingly, families left the farms and their small-town life and moved to cities where life was very different for them. Social supports that had previously existed in the smaller community disappeared, and problems of poverty, crime, sub-standard housing and disease increased. For the poorest children, childhood could be painfully short, as additional income was needed to help support the family and young children were forced into early employment. Children as young as 7 might be required to work full-time jobs, often under unpleasant and unhealthy circumstances, from factories to prostitution. Although such a role for children has disappeared in most economically strong nations, the practice of childhood employment has hardly

disappeared entirely and remains a staple in many undeveloped nations.

Children and the Law

For the bulk of human history, children have had little legal protection; most were viewed as property. Historical records offer many cases of young children being harshly punished for crimes that in a different period would be seen as trivial. Because there was often no one to speak up for the children, and the children themselves had no legal rights, the punishment could sometimes be horrific.

In Victorian England, for instance, it was not unusual for children to be convicted and imprisoned for petty theft, perhaps for stealing an apple or some other piece of fruit. In the early to mid-1800s there are reports of children as young as 7 being convicted of capital crimes and being subject to prison sentences or “transportation” to Australia. Even more extreme examples exist – for example that of a boy of 9 being hanged for setting fire to a house, or that of another boy of 9 being hanged for stealing from a printer's shop (Duckworth, 2002). Often the sentence was at the discretion of local judges, and their pronouncements would differ widely. Multiple offenses, no matter how slight the infraction, might be the cause of harsh punishment. While some recognized the limited resources of children, which were often exacerbated by poverty and parental absence, other judges saw the punishment of these children as a way to protect the future of society. Such punishments were almost always confined to the poorest of children and typically emerged in the big cities.

The Role of Religion

Religious beliefs have played an important role in establishing the underlying philosophy for child rearing in many cultures. Despite the birth of modern science, their influence is still strongly felt today. Religious doctrine may hold that the child is pure and pliable, a fertile ground for laying the foundation for later adherence to doctrine. Conversely, the child may be seen as a storehouse for potentially sinful behavior, requiring strict upbringing to escape the temptations of the devil. Christianity, the dominant religion in Europe and in the United States, has displayed both of these attitudes toward children at various times and in various places.

In many parts of Europe the growth of Christianity often resulted in beliefs that not only downplayed preformationist ideas but also argued against harsh treatment for children, emphasized their malleability and viewed them as valuable beyond their economic role in providing for the family. Children had souls to be saved for the glory of God, and parents could play an important role in leading their children on the correct path to God. Some Christian religious workers developed institutions to care for abandoned and orphaned children when parents could not perform this important duty.

On the other hand, in colonial America, a Calvinist interpretation of Christianity became a strong guide to another way of viewing the child. In this belief system all mankind was corrupted by original sin, and children were especially vulnerable to its evil. The role of the parent and educator was to suppress childlike beliefs and spontaneous expression. Control was the key to healthy development, and belief in God was central to any educational scheme.

These positions were tempered by the times, so that in the U.S. the more extreme position of the Calvinists eventually evolved into the more romantic position of the

Europeans. In many ways the romantic position remains today, if not so much in the need to save souls for the glory of God, then at least in the argument for the fundamental purity of children. Children are generally seen today as requiring protection from the corrupting forces of society, at least until their development has progressed to a more mature stage. Other religions present differing views of the child, some of them in marked contrast to each other as well as to the prevailing societal view.

The Rise of the Expert

As the Western world began to reshape itself after the Middle Ages, new thoughts started to emerge about the rights of individuals and their role in society. Religious beliefs were no longer accepted without question. The role of science became stronger. Children and their development began to receive significant attention from some of the most prominent thinkers of the era. Among them were the philosophers John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). These philosophers of the Enlightenment valued the power of reason and took note of the advances made by scientists such as Galileo and Newton. Their thinking would help to lay the foundation for modern democracies, but their ideas can also be found in their approach to understanding the development and care of children. Despite their status as philosophers and social commentators, Locke and Rousseau established a background against which many of the modern advances in developmental psychology can be understood.

John Locke

John Locke was one of the most influential writers of his period. His writings on the role of government are seen as foundational to many political movements and activities, including the American Revolution and the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. His ideas are equally foundational to several areas of psychology. As the father of “British empiricism,” Locke made the first clear and comprehensive statement of the “environmental position” (Crain, 1992) and, by so doing, became the father of modern learning theory. His teachings about child care were highly regarded during the colonial period in America.

Locke was born in a country town in England, into a family of Puritans; his father was a lawyer. He himself studied at Christ Church, Oxford, where his interest in philosophy grew. Later he also received a degree in medicine. He made a strong impression on Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, who invited Locke to serve as his personal physician and secretary. It was while living in Shaftesbury's London home that Locke first began to develop his political ideas. He fled England under suspicion of being involved in a plot against King James II, although there was little evidence to support that charge. Eventually he returned to England, where he died in 1704.

Locke never married nor had children, but he exhibited a great deal of concern for the proper upbringing of children. While in exile, he wrote a series of letters to a friend, offering advice on child care. These letters would eventually form the basis of *Some thoughts concerning education* (1964), his major publication on children. Locke rejected the notion of innate ideas, that is, the belief that some ideas already exist in the mind, without the benefit of experience. Instead he promoted the idea that the child's mind is a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) at birth.

If the child is largely a “blank slate” at birth, he argued, many implications follow. Most importantly, the environment becomes critical to a child's development and the role of the parent becomes more than that of a caretaker. Instead, parents become crucial determinants for the future well-being of the child. Since Locke also believed that the mind of the child was unusually pliant in the early years, childhood was the best time to establish good habits for life-long living.

Locke discussed many items familiar to parents and child-care personnel, such as toilet training, the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment and styles of parenting. Surprisingly for someone who is so well known for an emphasis on the power of learning, he was well aware of individual differences in temperament among children and of the need for parents to take those differences into account in dealing with children. For instance he discusses how the child's learning schedule should be created to fit the child's mood and inclinations. He also notes the adventurous nature of children and how parents and teachers can take advantage of that energy to help children to develop in appropriate ways.

His discussion of learning has a surprisingly modern ring to it. Among the possible ways in which he believed that learning could take place, he discussed association, repetition and imitation, all mainstays of modern learning theories. He was also impressed by the power of rewards and punishments to shape behavior, and he cautioned against the use of corporal punishment, since it might teach the wrong lesson to children. His overarching belief that parents, educational institutions, and society in general have an enormous impact on determining the future behavior of children is central to most modern systems of parenting and education.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

The influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau on issues in child development was equally important to that of Locke, but it had a different emphasis. Although Rousseau is sometimes characterized as holding an extreme position in favor of “nature” regarding development, that is, its biological basis, he approved of many parts of Locke's work. Rousseau believed in the power of early learning and placed particular importance on the role of a father-figure or tutor for the child. He held controversial positions on traditional schooling and on the use of punishment – he was against both. In his view, the child did not learn to reason until the age of 12 or so, and before that age traditional methods of instruction were useless. Much of his reputation in psychology rests on his stage theory of development, parts of which can still be found in the literature today. His focus on maturation, or the natural unfolding of the organism, is a concept that would later influence several important psychologists, including Maria Montessori, Arnold Gesell, Jean Piaget, and even – to a degree – Sigmund Freud. Because of his emphasis on an underlying timetable for development, he is sometimes identified as the father of developmental psychology.

Rousseau was born in Geneva, Switzerland, and was raised by his father and an aunt after his mother died during his birth. He was a shy child, who spent much of his spare time reading. By the age of 16 he had become something of a wanderer, supported largely by older women. At the age of 37, he successfully entered an essay contest and continued writing thereafter. His most important book regarding child development and education was the 1762 novel *Émile* (1979), concerning a fictitious boy whom he planned to educate according to “nature's plan.” By his early thirties, Rousseau had

established a life-long relationship with an illiterate young woman with whom he had five children, all of whom were placed in a state-run facility. He later said he regretted doing this, but he simply could not provide for them.

Like Locke, Rousseau was a revolutionary thinker. Rousseau observed children and adolescents extensively and spoke of children's individuality, but he based much of his developmental theory on observation and on the memories of his own childhood. In *Émile*, Rousseau contrasts children to adults and describes age-specific characteristics. Rousseau believed in freedom of expression, allowing children to develop their talents, which he saw as necessary for proper development and education. He even emphasized freedom in their clothing. For instance he wrote:

> Do not suffer the child to be restrained by caps, bands, and swaddling-clothes; but let him have gowns flowing and loose, and which leave all his limbs at liberty, not so heavy as to hinder his movements, nor so warm as to prevent him from feeling the impression of the air. (Rousseau, 1979, p. 25)

Rousseau was among the first to describe child development as taking place in specific stages. He felt there was a natural plan for a child, and in order for that plan to take shape, the child needed to progress through interrelated stages. Rousseau defined the developmental stages as: infancy (from birth to age 2); childhood (from 2 to 12); adolescence (from 12 to 15); and young adulthood (from 15 to 25).

Rousseau had theories of intellectual development in children as well, believing nature to be their teacher and parents and instructors to act as nature's assistants in helping children prepare for the next stage in their life. He wanted parents and teachers to encourage children to maintain their spontaneity and simplicity. Rousseau was

passionate about his positions and had a great impact through his writings. His ideas form the backdrop for much of the beginnings of modern developmental psychology.

Feral Children and Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron

The period of the Enlightenment was a time for new thoughts about the nature of man. The Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus (Charles Linnée 1707–1778) had introduced the notion of feral humans or “wolf men” as part of his system of classification of plants and animals, questioning the strong division between man and animal. Through the years, cases had been reported of children “raised in the wild” – so-called “feral children” – whose study, it was hoped, would shed some light on the nature of the child. Whether any child ever truly grew up in these circumstances is a matter of debate, but the energy that has been expended trying to study and understand them is a measure of how seriously they were once taken. Could feral children be civilized? Could they be taught to speak? If they spoke, what ideas would they have about God?

One of the best documented cases of all the so-called feral children concerned a young man who was captured in a small town in the south of France in 1800, and who was later named Victor. The young man had been seen in the area for months before his final capture – pre-pubescent, mute, and naked, perhaps 11 or 12 years old, foraging for food in the gardens of the locals and sometimes accepting their direct offers of food. Eventually he was brought to Paris, where it was hoped that he would be able to answer some of the profound