

Socialization in School Settings

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Most American children over the age of 6 spend a minimum of 108 days each year in formal educational settings. Many younger children also spend significant portions of their lives in day care or preschool settings. Although the objectives of schooling are primarily academic in nature, preschools as well as later school settings also represent social worlds of major importance and significance to children. In many respects, schools provide social experiences that are highly similar to and overlap with those provided by families, the broader community, and the peer group. However, children are required to use specific skills on a routine basis if they are to be successful at school. For instance, schoolchildren spend significant amounts of time in large groups, engaged in activities that require the coordination of personal goals and abilities with those of others. The abilities to engage in prosocial interactions, regulate behavior to complement that of others, and delay personal gratification are essential for this task. In addition, children's relationships with teachers are less personal and intimate than their relationships with parents. Therefore, children at school must be more independent and self-reliant and more dependent on other children for social support than would be required in most family settings. Finally, evaluations of children's academic and behavioral competencies are ongoing, necessitating goal-directed, planful, and self-monitoring skills in response to feedback.

In essence, the value systems of schools focus on a relatively small set of characteristics and abilities central to children's future roles as citizens and workers, including those related to being socially responsible and responsive to group goals, and to behaving in prosocial, cooperative ways with peers. While accomplishing these socially integrative tasks, children also are expected to assert themselves academically by competing successfully with others or by developing mastery in specific areas of interest. If these outcomes

reflect the primary objectives of educators and nonfamilial caregivers, how might their achievement be accomplished? Rarely have scholars attempted to align school-based objectives with specific socialization processes to identify what might promote the development and achievement of such outcomes. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to describe what is known about the process of socialization within school contexts and to offer suggestions for future theory development and research in this area.

In this chapter, socialization is defined with reference to contextual affordances, that is, supports and opportunities (e.g., staff and setting characteristics such as teacher:child ratios and class size, the nature and quality of relationships with teachers and peers) that facilitate the development of children's school-based competencies. We consider schools to be complex systems that can provide students with multiple affordances, as a function of the school itself as well as through social interactions and interpersonal relationships that are embedded in the educational process. Based on a competence perspective, our discussion of outcomes of socialization in schools is focused primarily on social outcomes rather than academic achievements (see Eccles, Chapter 26, this volume). Toward this end, we begin with a consideration of how to define competence within the social context of schools. We then review the literature on the processes of socialization, including those associated with structural characteristics of schools as well as more proximal social and interpersonal processes that might support competence development. We consider children's experiences in preschool and child care as well as in K-12 schools. Finally, we end with a discussion of remaining issues and challenges to the field.

DEFINING SOCIAL COMPETENCE AT SCHOOL

In the social developmental literature, social competence has been described from a variety of perspectives ranging from the development of individual skills, such as effective behavioral repertoires, social problem-solving skills, positive beliefs about the self, and achievement of social goals, to more general adaptation within a particular setting as reflected in social approval and acceptance. In addition, central to many definitions of social competence is the notion that contextual affordances and constraints contribute to and mold the development of these outcomes in ways that enable them to support the social good (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). In other words, social contexts are believed to play an integral role in competence development by providing opportunities for the development of intrapersonal outcomes (e.g., the achievement of social goals to make friends), but also in defining the appropriate parameters of social accomplishments such that individual skills and attributes can contribute to the social cohesion and smooth functioning of the group (e.g., establishing friendship groups that are socially inclusive rather than exclusive). In this chapter, therefore, social competence at school is defined as a balance between students' achievement of positive outcomes for themselves and adherence to school-specific expectations for behavior.

Support for this definition can be found in the work of Bronfenbrenner (1989), who argues that competence can only be understood in terms of context-specific effectiveness, being a product of personal attributes such as goals, values, self-regulatory skills, and cognitive abilities, and of ways in which these attributes contribute to meeting situational requirements and demands. Bronfenbrenner further suggests that competence is facilitated by contextual supports that provide opportunities for the growth and development

of these personal attributes as well as for learning what is expected by the social group. Ford (1992) expands on this notion of person-environment fit by specifying dimensions of competence that reflect personal as well as context-specific criteria: the achievement of personal goals and those that result in positive developmental outcomes for the individual, and the achievement of goals that are situationally relevant, using appropriate means to achieve these goals.

The application of this definition to the realm of schooling results in a multifaceted description of children who are socially competent. First, competent students achieve goals that are personally valued as well as those that are sanctioned by others. Second, the goals they pursue result in social integration as well as in positive developmental outcomes for the student. Socially integrative outcomes are those that promote the smooth functioning of social groups at school (e.g., cooperative behavior) and are reflected in levels of social approval and social acceptance. Student-related outcomes reflect healthy development of the self (e.g., perceived competence and feelings of self-determination) and feelings of emotional well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Ford, 1992). Therefore, social competence is achieved to the extent that students accomplish goals that result in personal satisfaction and psychological well-being as well as social approval and acceptance. Achieving these positive personal and social outcomes is accomplished not just by one student's efforts but often as the result of compromise or conflict resolution with classmates and teachers.

A consideration of self-enhancing as well as socially integrative outcomes as dual components of social competence is important because the achievement of personal goals and social acceptance are not always compatible. For example, gaining teacher and peer approval might be a personal goal. In this case, a student would be competent if his or her social approval goal is met. A competent student might also view demonstrations of personally valued behavior (e.g., sharing) and social acceptance as multiple and interrelated goals and might use goal coordination skills to achieve both (e.g., sharing in acceptable ways). However, a student might have goals to engage in behavior without concerns about social approval. For this student, social competence would be achieved only if personal goals and social expectations happen to be similar, with social incompetence being a negative consequence if they are incompatible. For example, a child who achieves personal goals by engaging in potentially harmful acts such as bullying or breaking classroom rules would not be considered to be socially competent if others disapprove of such behaviors. Alternatively, a student might try to gain social approval for ulterior motives such as to enhance feelings of self-worth or to decrease anxiety associated with fear of punishment or social retribution. This student would not be socially competent if maladaptive outcomes for the self such as social anxieties or fears remain despite social approval from others.

Finally, an ecological perspective reminds us that the ability to be socially competent at school is contingent upon opportunities and affordances that allow students to achieve a balance between socially integrative and self-assertive outcomes. In this chapter we review work on several aspects of school contexts that have the potential to provide such supports: structural characteristics, social interactions with teachers and classmates, and interpersonal relationships with teachers and classmates. First, however, we describe the goals that teachers, peers, and students themselves value within school contexts. This section is followed by a discussion of processes by which school contexts might support the achievement of these goals.

GOALS FOR STUDENTS AT SCHOOL

The notion that schools provide children with unique socialization experiences has been acknowledged since the beginning of public schooling in the United States. Indeed, public schools were initially developed with an explicit function of educating children to become healthy, moral, and economically productive citizens. Since then, social behavior in the form of moral character, conformity to social rules and norms, cooperation, and positive styles of social interaction has been promoted consistently as a goal for students to achieve (see Wentzel, 1991c, for a review). Given these overarching social goals for education, are there specific goals that are valued more than others in school settings? Do teachers and peers have goals for students concerning what they value and believe should be accomplished within the classroom? In the following sections, research on teachers', peers', and students' goals for themselves is reviewed.

Teachers' Goals for Students

Researchers rarely have asked teachers about their specific goals for students. In preschool and child-care settings, researchers typically identify desirable outcomes of care, often with an implicit assumption that such arrangements might in fact be detrimental to children's social development in comparison to parental care (e.g., Belsky, 2001). As a result, the focus of empirical investigations has been on outcomes that reflect developmentally appropriate milestones for young children, such as secure attachments to mothers and cooperative interactions with peers (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), rather than on specific outcomes that teachers would like children to achieve. In contrast, K-12 teachers have been asked what they think well-adjusted and successful students are like. Elementary school teachers (typically first through fifth grades) report preferences for students who are cooperative, conforming, cautious, and responsible rather than independent, assertive, argumentative or disruptive (e.g., Brophy & Good, 1974). Similarly, in the middle school grades (sixth through eighth graders ranging in age from 11 to 14) teachers describe their "ideal" students as sharing, helpful, and responsive to rules, as persistent, and intrinsically interested, and as earning high grades (Wentzel, 2003).

Researchers also have documented social values and expectations that teachers communicate to their students, including appropriate ways to respond to requests, appropriate contexts for different types of behavior, and expectations for impulse control, mature problem solving, and involvement in class activities (e.g., Shultz & Florio, 1979; Trenholm & Rose, 1981). Teachers also communicate expectations for students' interactions with each other. Preschool teachers tend to focus on the development of prosocial behavior by modeling and encouraging prosocial interactions, discouraging social exclusion, and creating cooperative activities (e.g., Doescher & Sugawara, 1989; Hagens, 1997). Elementary and secondary teachers focus on establishing norms for sharing, working well with others, and adherence to rules concerning aggression, manners, stealing, and loyalty (Hargreaves, Hester, & Mellor, 1975; Sieber, 1979).

Students' Goals for Each Other

The classroom goals that students would like each other to achieve are not well documented. However, it is reasonable to assume that students also communicate to each

other expectations concerning valued forms of behavior. For instance, approximately 70% of adolescents from three predominantly middle-class middle schools reported that their peers expected them to be cooperative and helpful in class either sometimes or always, and approximately 80% reported similar levels of peer expectations for academic learning (Wentzel, Looney, & Battle, 2006). Moreover, these perceptions did not appear to differ as a function of middle school grade level. Therefore, at least in some schools, peers actively promote the pursuit of positive social and academic outcomes.

Insights concerning peer expectations and values also can be gleaned from research on social characteristics and outcomes related to peer approval and acceptance at school. Researchers typically have defined children's involvement in peer relationships in three ways: degree of peer acceptance or rejection by the larger peer group, peer group membership, and dyadic friendships. Correlates of each of these types of relationships, however, are similar with respect to school-related outcomes. For example, socially accepted students tend to be highly cooperative, helpful, sociable, and self-assertive, whereas socially rejected students are less compliant, less self-assured, and less sociable, and more aggressive, disruptive, and withdrawn than many of their classmates (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Similarly, children with friends at school tend to be more sociable, cooperative, prosocial, and emotionally supportive when compared to their classmates without friends (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004).

Of additional interest are findings that being socially accepted and enjoying popular sociometric status is related to successful academic performance and rejected status and rejection to academic difficulties. Results are most consistent with respect to classroom grades (e.g., Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Wentzel, 1991a), although peer acceptance has been related positively to standardized test scores (Austin & Draper, 1984) as well as to IQ (Wentzel, 1991a). These findings are robust for elementary school-age children as well as adolescents, and longitudinal studies document the stability of relations between peer acceptance and academic accomplishments over time (e.g., Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). Other indices of social acceptance such as the ability to establish close friendships also have been related positively to grades and test scores in elementary school and middle school (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Wentzel et al., 2004).

Students' Goals for Themselves

Research on students' social goals also has not been frequent (see Eccles, Chapter 26, this volume for work on students' achievement-related goals). However, students consistently express interest in forming positive relationships with their classmates (Allen, 1986; Wentzel, 1989, 1991b). Although children are interested in and even emotionally attached to their peers at all ages, establishing rewarding relationships with peers becomes increasingly important for students in middle school and high school. One reason for this growing interest in peers is that many young adolescents enter new middle school structures that necessitate interacting with larger numbers of peers on a daily basis. In contrast to elementary school classrooms, the relative uncertainty and ambiguity of having multiple teachers and different sets of classmates for each class, new instructional styles, and more complex class schedules often result in middle school students turning to each other for information, social support, and ways to cope.

Establishing positive relationships with teachers is also of concern to most students. However, clear developmental trends are evident. Whereas elementary school-age chil-

Children often describe teachers as being important sources of support (Reid, Landesman, Treder, & Jaccard, 1989), adolescents rarely mention relationships with teachers as having importance in their lives (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992). Finally, when given a list of possible social and academic goals to pursue at school, high school students indicate frequent attempts to achieve a range of social goals, with having fun, making friends, being dependable and responsible, and being helpful ranking as the most frequently pursued goals (Wentzel, 1989).

Summary

Although teachers' and students' goals for education have not been studied extensively, it is clear that a core set of competencies are valued by teachers as well as students. In addition to academic accomplishments, positive forms of behavior that are reflected in compliance to classroom rules and norms and that demonstrate cooperation and caring for classmates also are related to social approval and acceptance by others. Students themselves also mention trying to achieve these same outcomes although they also mention more personal goals such as to have fun. Given these multiple goals, how might a consensus among the various constituents (i.e., teachers, classmates, and individual students) concerning which goals should be pursued at school be achieved? It is clear that schools can play a powerful role in defining socially valued outcomes for students to achieve and that teachers and students actively promote these outcomes in their day-to-day interactions with each other. In the following section, we discuss processes by which schools as well as teachers and students might influence individuals to pursue these outcomes.

PROCESSES OF SOCIALIZATION WITHIN SCHOOL SETTINGS

Although children try to achieve multiple goals for many reasons, the question of what leads them to willingly engage in the pursuit of goals that are valued by others lies at the heart of research on socialization (e.g., Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). If schools promote the adoption and pursuit of socially valued goals, how then does this influence occur? Models of socialization at school are not well developed. However, models of family socialization suggest at least three general mechanisms whereby social resources and experiences might influence competent functioning. First, the structure and general features of social contexts afford opportunities and resources that can directly support or hinder competence development. Second, ongoing social interactions teach children about themselves and what they need to do to become accepted and competent members of their social worlds. Within the context of these interactions, children develop a set of values and standards for behavior and goals they strive to achieve (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Third, the qualities of children's social relationships are likely to have motivational significance. When their interpersonal relationships are responsive and nurturant, children are more likely to adopt and internalize the expectations and goals that are valued by others than if their relationships are harsh and critical (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Ryan, 1993).

When considered with respect to educational settings, these mechanisms reflect the nested quality of children's experiences at school. Structural features of schools, such as school and class size, teacher:student ratios, and funding, can influence the amount and quality of resources and opportunities available to students. Social interactions and

dyadic relationships with teachers and peers describe the more proximal contexts that can influence student adjustment. In the following sections, we review research on each of these mechanisms.

Structural Characteristics of Schooling

Processes of social influence are rarely discussed with regard to structural features of schools. However, numerous studies have documented significant differences in student outcomes as a function of the structural features of the schools they attend, at the preschool level as well as in elementary and secondary school settings.

Preschool and Child Care

Out-of-family care of preschool children takes place in a diversity of arrangements and settings. However, there is general agreement that structural aspects of quality care are reflected in specific characteristics of staff and settings (e.g., Brooks-Gunn, Fuligni, & Berlin, 2003; Fitzgerald, Mann, Cabrera, & Wong, 2003). Staff characteristics include staff:child ratios, amount and type of staff education and training, years of experience, turnover, and wages. Setting features include type and availability of developmentally appropriate curricular materials, cleanliness, safety, and group size. Researchers also have examined the amount of time children spend in child-care settings in relation to child outcomes.

In general, research has documented significant relations of staff characteristics to a range of social and cognitive outcomes in children across a variety of child-care settings (see Lamb, 1998; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, for reviews). Few studies have examined these features while taking into account other important predictors of child outcomes such as family characteristics or the quality of caregiver-child relationships (Fitzgerald et al., 2003). However, results of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Early Child Care Study in which a range of child care, home and family (structural, quality, and parent characteristics), and child characteristics have been assessed (see Brooks-Gunn et al., 2003) are beginning to shed light on the combined impact of these multiple factors on child outcomes over time.

A sampling of these findings indicates that child-care factors by themselves do not predict young children's adjustment (as indexed by attachment classifications) unless mothers' characteristics also are taken into account; time spent in child care is related to young children's increased risk for insecure attachment at 12 and 36 months only if maternal sensitivity also is low (NICHD, 1997, 2001). The more time young children spend in nonmaternal care also predicts externalizing problems and conflict with adults at 54 months and in kindergarten, but not in first grade (NICHD, 2003a, 2003b). In general, these findings are robust, even when quality of caregiver-child interactions, type of setting (e.g., center and home-based), instability of child-care arrangements, and maternal sensitivity, level of education, and depression are taken into account. However, levels of problem behavior (e.g., disobedience and aggression) exhibited by children who spend the most time in child care are not at clinical levels and the effect sizes are relatively small. In addition, significant effects often differ depending on who is rating child behavior (mothers or caregivers), making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions (see, e.g., NICHD, 2003a).

More systematic intervention studies have documented the effects of preschool programs such as Head Start on young children. These studies have documented that in the short term, participation in high-quality preschool programs can have significant, positive effects on cognitive and school readiness outcomes (e.g., Love et al., 2003), especially for children living in poverty (e.g., Farran, 2000). These programs also appear to have short-term and long-term effects on social outcomes such as aggression. These latter effects have been found, however, only when interventions also focus on changing parent behavior (Schweinhart, Barne, Weikart, Barnett, & Epstein, 1993). Therefore, the direct effects of participation in preschool programs on young children's social behavior independent of parental influence have not yet been established. Conclusions concerning preschool effects also must be tempered given that researchers typically cannot randomly assign children to control and intervention groups; comparison groups that are comparable with respect to subject and program characteristics are rare.

Formal Schooling

In contrast to research on day care and preschool settings, research on structural effects of elementary and secondary schooling has been guided by specific goals for enhancing the academic and social skills that form the basis of public education policy. For example, policy-driven work in the 1960s (e.g., Coleman et al., 1966) led to conclusions that physical features and administrative structures of schools such as school size, funding, space, class size, teacher:child ratio, and curricular resources explained minimal variance in student outcomes relative to nonschool variables such as family and demographic factors. Subsequent research has confirmed these findings in that the strength of school effects relative to nonschool factors is typically small, except when comparing schools at the two extremes of quality continua (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). However, other research has documented the positive effects of small school size on academic outcomes and staying in school, even when teacher characteristics and teacher-student relationships are taken into account (Lee & Burkam, 2003; Lee & Loeb, 2000).

School climate, as defined by students' sense of school community and school belonging, also has been related positively (albeit modestly) to social behavioral (Anderman, 2002; Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003) and academic (Anderman, 2002) outcomes, with effects often being moderated by students' sex, race (e.g., Kuperminc, Leadbetter, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997), school size (Anderman, 2002) and poverty levels of the schools' community (Battistich et al., 1995). To illustrate, beliefs that their schools are cohesive, responsive, and caring communities predicts young adolescents' decreased drug use and delinquency, even when accounting for within-school differences and the poverty level of the schools' communities (Battistich & Hom, 1997). Similarly, significant negative relations of school climate to young adolescents' externalizing behavior have been documented, even when controlling for race, socioeconomic status, stress levels, and self-concept, with the greatest effects of positive climate shown for African American and single-parent students (Kuperminc et al., 1997). Intervention studies designed to enhance the quality of school climate also have demonstrated that when students begin to experience a greater sense of school community they also display more positive social skills (e.g., Watson, Solomon, Battistich, Schaps, & Solomon, 1989).

The effects of school structures on student outcomes also can be gleaned from school

transition studies in which students move from one school level to another, each level being marked by somewhat unique characteristics. Research on transitions of preschool children entering into kindergarten and then into elementary school is rare. However, in contrast to elementary schools, middle schools tend to be larger, require students to interact with larger numbers of peers on a daily basis, and to adjust to new instructional styles (Brophy & Evertson, 1978; Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The transition into high school is associated with similar changes, as the focus on academic accomplishments becomes even more demanding, peer groups are once again disrupted, and the school environment becomes even more impersonal. Predictable changes associated with transitions to middle school are student perceptions that teachers are less caring (Feldlaufer, Midgley, & Eccles, 1988; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989) and that they become more focused on students earning high grades, promoting competition between students, and maintaining control (Harter, 1996) than in elementary school. The transition to high school is associated with predictable declines in academic performance, attendance, participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., Alspaugh, 1998; Felner, Aber, Primavera, & Cauce, 1985), and in a perceived loss of teacher and school social support (e.g., Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994) for many adolescents. Students who do not display these declines often report higher levels of self-esteem and perceived support from teachers and peers than those who do not.

In summary, a number of features that characterize school settings at the preschool and K-12 level appear to be related to children's overall social and academic adjustment to school. For the most part, however, the effects are small, especially when family characteristics are taken into account. Moreover, specific processes that might explain these relations are rarely examined. However, several researchers have demonstrated that classroom-level processes can explain associations between school-level features and student outcomes (e.g., Finn, Pannozzo, & Achilles, 2003). These processes entail teacher and peer communications of goals and expectations for specific behavioral outcomes and creation of interpersonal contexts that motivate students to achieve them (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994).

Social Interactions: Transmitting Values and Providing Help, Advice, and Instruction

How might students learn what is valued by their teachers and peers? Here we review research on ways in which teachers and peers communicate specific values concerning what it means to be competent, and on interactions with teachers and peers that provide help, advice, and instruction with respect to socially valued outcomes.

Social Interactions with Teachers

In the classroom, teachers play the central pedagogical function of transmitting knowledge and training students in academic subject areas. However, during the course of instruction, teachers also promote the development of behavioral competencies by way of classroom management practices (see Doyle, 1986), and by structuring learning environments in ways that make social goals more salient to students (Cohen, 1986; Solomon, Schaps, Watson, & Battistich, 1992). For example, cooperative learning activities can be

designed to promote the pursuit of social goals to cooperate and help each other, to be responsible to the group, and to achieve common objectives (Cohen, 1986; Solomon et al., 1992). Indeed, students report stronger levels of social satisfaction when given the opportunity to learn within cooperative learning settings (Slavin, Hurley, & Chamberlain, 2003). Direct instruction of social skills also has been related to decreases in students' aggressive and victimizing behavior toward each other (e.g., Aber, Brown, & Jones, 2003).

Teachers also can convey expectations about ability and performance differentially to students. In this regard, researchers have documented that many teachers hold negative stereotypes of minority and low-achieving students, expecting less competent behavior and lower levels of academic performance from them than from other students (Weinstein, 2002). Of particular importance is that teachers' false expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies, with student performance changing to conform to teacher expectations (Weinstein, 2002). Although the effects of these expectations tend to be fairly weak (e.g., Jussim, 1991), self-fulfilling prophecies tend to have stronger effects on African American students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and low achievers (Smith, Jussim, & Eccles, 1999). Moreover, teachers who communicate high expectations can bring about positive changes in performance: Teachers' overestimations of ability seem to have a somewhat stronger effect in raising levels of achievement than teachers' underestimations have on lowering achievement, especially for low-performing students (Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997).

Social Interactions with Peers

Interactions with peers also can lead directly to resources and information that help students to be socially competent. Even in preschool settings, peers can create beneficial (as well as risky) contexts for the development of self-regulatory skills (Fabes, Hanish, & Martin, 2003). At older ages, peers provide information and advice, modeled behavior, or specific experiences that facilitate learning social expectations for behavior (Sieber, 1979). Students frequently clarify and interpret their teacher's instructions concerning what they should be doing and how they should do it and provide mutual assistance in the form of volunteering substantive information and answering questions (Cooper, Akers-Lopez, & Marquis, 1982). Classmates also provide each other with important information about themselves; information concerning social self-efficacy and skills can be gleaned by observing social competencies and skills demonstrated by peers (Bandura, 1986; Price & Dodge, 1989).

Other evidence suggests that peer expectations have the potential to provide the most proximal input concerning whether doing something might be important or fun. For instance, middle school students who perceive relatively high expectations for prosocial behavior from their peers also pursue goals to behave prosocially for internalized reasons, or because they think it is important; in contrast, perceived expectations from teachers are associated with prosocial goal pursuit in order to stay out of trouble or to gain social approval (Wentzel, Filisitti, & Looney, 2006). Therefore, peers who communicate a sense of importance or enjoyment with regard to specific types of behavior are likely to lead others to form similar attitudes (Bandura, 1986). This is especially true if students are friends; strong emotional bonds associated with friendships tend to increase the likelihood that friends will imitate each other's behavior (Berndt & Perry, 1986). This latter point highlights the quality of students' interpersonal relationships as an additional,

potential influence on their social and academic functioning. This aspect of socialization in school settings is discussed next.

Interpersonal Relationships: Providing Responsive and Emotionally Supportive Contexts

Systems concepts, such as attachment and models of person–environment fit (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003) are used most often to discuss the motivational effects of children’s interpersonal relationships at school, especially those with teachers. Similar to parent–child relationships, interpersonal relationships at school are believed to provide children with responsive and nurturing environments that promote personal growth as well as adaptive social functioning. In particular, feelings of relatedness and belongingness at school are expected to contribute directly to positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Pianta et al., 2003). In turn, levels of emotional well-being are believed to contribute to social as well as academic competence (e.g., Harter, 1996).

Perspectives on children’s interpersonal relationships at school tend to differ according to the age of the child. Using a developmental systems approach, Pianta and his colleagues (e.g., Pianta et al., 2003) argue for the centrality of teacher–student attachments in the lives of preschool and elementary students. They describe qualities of the teacher–child relationship in terms of three features: closeness (e.g., warmth and open communication), conflict, and dependency. Research on middle childhood and adolescence has focused more often on specific qualities of teacher–student interactions. These qualities correspond closely to parenting styles reflecting consistent enforcement of rules, expectations for self-reliance and self-control, solicitation of children’s opinions and feelings, and expressions of warmth and approval (see Wentzel, 2002). In general, these qualities of teacher–student attachments and interactions reflect broad-level relationship provisions of responsiveness (e.g., safety, structure, and autonomy–support) and warmth (e.g., emotional and social support).

Although these aspects of teacher–student relationships have been the focus of most research in this area, relationships with peers also appear to play an important role in creating responsive and emotionally supportive contexts at school. Next we describe research on provisions of responsiveness and warmth from teachers and peers.

Responsive and Warm Relationships with Teachers

During the preschool years, changes in the quality of child–teacher attachments as children move to new child-care settings are related to changes in various aspects of their social functioning (Howes & Hamilton, 1993). Secure attachments to teachers appear to have some positive compensatory effects on the prosocial behavior of preschool children who are insecurely attached to their mothers (Mitchell-Copeland, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997). Findings from the NICHD Early Child Care Study have demonstrated that close relationships with teachers (as perceived by teachers) are related positively to children’s social behavior concurrently in kindergarten and 2 years later, with stronger effects for children with less-well-educated mothers (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001). However, in observational studies of quality of caregiver–child relationships, emotionally supportive in-

teractions with caregivers are not related significantly to child outcomes when family and child characteristics (e.g., child sex and maternal sensitivity) are taken into account (NICHD, 2003b, 2003c).

Over time, preschool children who enjoy emotionally secure relationships with their teachers also are more likely to demonstrate prosocial, gregarious, and complex play and less likely to show hostile aggression and withdrawn behavior toward their peers (e.g., Howes & Hamilton, 1993). Young children's reports of caring teachers also have been related to positive attitudes about school (Valeski & Stipek, 2001). Following children from kindergarten through eighth grade, Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that kindergartners' relationships with teachers marked by conflict and dependency predicted not only lower grades and standardized test scores but fewer positive work habits and increased numbers of disciplinary infractions through eighth grade, especially for boys (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Similarly, Birch and Ladd (1998) found teacher-child closeness to be associated positively with children's academic performance, school liking, and self-directedness, whereas relationships marked by conflict and dependency were associated with less than positive outcomes, including declines in children's prosocial behavior over time.

In the elementary school years, student reports of close and supportive teacher-student relationships predict low levels of aggression, especially for African American and Hispanic students (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). This latter finding is especially important in that African American students at this age tend to enjoy less positive relationships with teachers than do white children (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Meehan et al., 2003). In late elementary school, students' reports of negative relationships with teachers also are related to externalizing behavior problems, anxiety, and depression (Murray & Greenberg, 2000) and positive relationships to identification with teachers' values and positive social self-concept (Davis, 2001).

In older students, much research has documented significant, positive relations between teacher provisions of structure, guidance, and autonomy and various aspects of academic motivation, engagement, and performance outcomes (e.g., Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wentzel 2002). Studies relating responsive teaching to social outcomes have been far less frequent. However, Wentzel (2002) documented significant relations of perceived high expectations and low levels of criticism on the part of teachers to students' pursuit of goals to be prosocial and socially responsible. Schoolwide interventions in which teachers are taught to provide students with clear expectations for behavior, developmentally appropriate autonomy, and warmth and support result in increased levels of students' sense of community and displays of socially competent behavior (Watson et al., 1989).

Adolescents' perceptions that teachers are emotionally supportive and caring have been related most often to positive motivational outcomes, including the pursuit of goals to learn and to behave prosocially and responsibly; academic interest; educational aspirations and values; and positive self-concept (e.g., Harter, 1996; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Wentzel, 1994, 1997). Having supportive relationships with teachers also appears to predict in part, whether students at this age drop out of school (Rumberger, 1995). In a study of perceived support from teachers, parents, and peers (Wentzel, 1998), perceived support from teachers was unique in its relation to students' interest in class and pursuit of goals to adhere to classroom rules and norms.

Responsive and Warm Relationships with Peers

Researchers have not adapted parenting models to the study of peer relationships (cf. Wentzel, 2004). However, it is reasonable to assume that when peers create responsive and emotionally supportive interpersonal contexts, students will benefit in positive ways. In young children, high levels of peer acceptance and positive friendships have been linked to academic and socioemotional adjustment in school, including positive affect, academic and social engagement, and positive attitudes toward school (e.g., Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996). Older students (in middle childhood and adolescence) who are accepted by their peers and who have established friendships with classmates are more likely to enjoy a relatively safe school environment and less likely to be the targets of peer-directed violence and harassment than their peers who do not have friends (Hodges, Bovin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999). In contrast, children who are rejected by their peers tend to be bullied and victimized more frequently than others (Olweus, 1993). Even among young children, rejected children are treated more negatively by their peers than are their more socially accepted classmates (Buhs & Ladd, 2001).

During adolescence, students also report that their peer groups and crowds provide them with a sense of emotional security and a sense of belonging (Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986). In contrast, adolescents without friends or who are socially rejected are often lonely, emotionally distressed, and depressed and suffer from poor self-concepts (Guay, Boivin, & Hodges, 1999; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). Perceived social and emotional support from peers has been associated positively with prosocial outcomes such as helping, sharing, and cooperating and negatively to antisocial forms of behavior (e.g., Wentzel, 1994). Perceived support from peers also has been related to pursuit of academic goals and interests; in contrast, students who perceive little peer support tend to be at risk for academic problems (see Wentzel, 2003).

Summary

The extant literature supports the notion that structural features, social interactions with teachers and peers, and the provisions of responsiveness and warmth have the potential to provide tangible resources, opportunities, and experiences that support competence development at school. In this regard, children's experiences at school, whether in preschool or K-12 settings, appear to support the pursuit and achievement of goals that are espoused by teachers and peers, as well as the development of positive outcomes for students themselves. In the following section, we offer remaining questions and challenges for continued work in this area.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this chapter, we have described social competence at school as the achievement of personal goals that include healthy developmental outcomes, such as emotional well-being, in balance with the achievement of socially valued goals, such as displays of prosocial forms of behavior. Further, we have argued that the socialization of these competencies within school settings can be understood as a function of the amount and quality of

structural-level resources of schools as well as interpersonal contacts with teachers and peers that support students' efforts to achieve personal as well as socially valued goals. Social interactions are likely to teach students what they are expected to accomplish and how to achieve it. In turn, the transmission of values and knowledge is more likely to occur if students enjoy supportive and caring relationships at school. In conclusion, we would like to raise several general issues that require additional consideration and empirical investigation if the field is to make progress in understanding the socialization functions of schools. These issues concern the nature of social competence at school and how it is socialized, the unique role of schools in promoting the development of competent outcomes, and the need for more sophisticated research methods and designs that can test theoretical models relevant for school settings.

Social Competence at School

Although we are beginning to understand the basic social outcomes that most teachers and students value at school, we know little about how and why students come to learn about and to adopt these goals as their own. For instance, it is clear that teachers communicate their expectations and goals to students on a daily basis. However, less is known about factors that predispose students to accept or reject these communications. The family socialization literature suggests that parental messages are more likely to be perceived accurately by children if they are clear and consistent, are framed in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the child, require decoding and processing by the child, and are perceived by the child to be of clear importance to the parent and as being conveyed with positive intentions (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Adapting this work to the realm of the classroom might provide important insights into effective forms of teacher and peer communication that lead to the adoption of socially valued goals.

Similarly, a greater focus on understanding student characteristics that facilitate their acceptance of teachers' communications is needed. Factors such as students' beliefs regarding the fairness, relevance, and developmental appropriateness of teachers' goals and expectations (e.g., Smetana & Bitz, 1996) and aspects of social-cognitive processing, such as selective attention, attributions, and social biases and stereotypes (Price & Dodge, 1989) are likely to influence students' interpretations and acceptance of social communications. Other individual characteristics such as attachment security and family functioning (e.g., Fuligni, Eccles, Barber, & Clements, 2001), racial identity (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998), and the extent that students are oriented toward gaining social approval also are likely to influence the degree to which they are influenced by teacher and peer expectations.

Consideration of student characteristics also must take into account age-related capabilities. For example, primary developmental tasks of young children under age 6 involve basic self-regulatory skills (managing physiological arousal, emotions, and attention), executive functions such as the ability to monitor and plan behavior, language and communication skills, and peer interaction skills (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). As they make their way through school, children are challenged with school transitions requiring skills related to social integration, flexible coping, and adaptation to new environments. In part, these successful adaptations require the development of positive self-perceptions of autonomy, competence, and personal identity (Grolnick, Kurowski, & Gurland, 1999).

In general, mastery of these developmental tasks as they relate to children's understanding and adoption of socially valued goals and objectives of teachers and peers needs to be incorporated into models of school success. A developmental focus also is necessary for understanding the demands of teachers on students of different ages. A few researchers (e.g., Brophy & Good, 1974; Eccles & Midgley, 1989) have observed that teachers treat students differently and focus on different tasks and goals depending on the age of their students. For example, teachers of early elementary (i.e., first grade) and junior high school students tend to spend more of their time on issues related to social conduct than do teachers at other grade levels. However, little else is known about these differences. Therefore, a critical look at the normative requirements for competent classroom functioning also is necessary for knowledge of school socialization processes to advance.

An additional issue concerns what it is that develops or is changed on the part of students as a result of exposure to supportive teacher and peer contexts. In part, responsive and warm relationships are likely to promote a sense of emotional well-being and corresponding desires to contribute to the smooth functioning of classroom activities. Continued research that focuses on additional psychological mediators might be particularly fruitful in determining specific ways in which students' social interactions and interpersonal relationships at school ultimately influence their social competence at school. For example, an additional area for consideration is the influence of social relationships on self-regulatory processes that promote goal pursuit, such as positive beliefs about ability, personal values, and attributions for success and failure (see Wentzel, 2004). The role of these intrapersonal processes in mediating relations between aspects of socialization and competent functioning has not been studied extensively. The differential impact of teachers and peers in contributing to these outcomes also deserves further study (see e.g., Wentzel, 1997).

Schools as Unique Socializing Contexts

One of the enduring issues with respect to school-related influence concerns the possibility that school experiences mainly afford the practice, refinement, and reinforcement of skills and values learned at home. If so, continuity across home and school settings might explain children's competence at school more so than experiences unique to schools. This notion is supported by findings that family socialization models are useful for describing socialization processes at school (Wentzel, 2002). In addition, family factors are typically strong predictors of school outcomes (e.g., Rumberger, 1995) and often completely explain variance predicted by school variables when they are taken into account (e.g., Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000). Research that examines core socialization processes that are common across multiple settings and domains of functioning is a natural extension of this work. An additional question, however, concerns the extent to which exposure to socialization processes at school might influence children for whom experiences at home and at school are not highly similar. It is likely that school effects might be most noticeable for these children, with degrees of home-school continuity moderating the effects of schooling on child outcomes.

Another intriguing issue concerns the role of peers in the school socialization process. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, a fairly unique aspect of schooling is the requirement that students learn to cooperate and get along with each other. Although this implies that socializing children to function well in formalized peer groups might be a

central function of schools, the development of cooperative, prosocial behavior is often attributed to interactions with peers rather than with adults (Younnis, 1994). Few researchers have documented ways in which teachers and school settings might influence the development and quality of peer interactions independently of the influence that students exert on each other. However, teachers' verbal and nonverbal behavior toward certain children has been related to how these children are treated by their peers (Harper & McCluskey, 2003; White & Kistner, 1992). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the development of positive forms of behavior might be due in large part to systematic regulation of peer interactions in formal school settings. We suggest that this is an important area of inquiry for developmental as well as educational psychologists to pursue.

Theory, Methods, and Designs

Most of our conclusions concerning socialization in school settings are based on findings from nonexperimental correlational studies. These correlational strategies have resulted in a wealth of data that can serve as a strong foundation for further theory building and research. Descriptive designs also are useful for developing profiles of behavior that characterize competent students. However, more extensive research that can identify variations in these characterizations across classrooms and schools requires in-depth conversations with and extensive observations of students and teachers as they carry out their day-to-day lives at school. In addition, correlational designs typically have focused on a limited number of variables at one point in time. As a result, it is rare that process-oriented variables such as teacher-student interactions are included in studies of structural effects, or familial and nonschool predictors in studies of classroom processes. It also is likely that schools can have effects on children by way of their positive impact on the economic (Sederberg, 1987) and political (Reynolds, 1995) life of communities; school-to-work and service learning programs are good examples of school-based resources that have the potential to provide positive benefits to communities and families. The notion that community and family effects might mediate the impact of schools on children is intriguing but rarely studied in systematic fashion. Therefore, a necessary next step is the development of conceptual models that consider ways in which children and the various social systems in which they develop, including home, peer groups, communities, and schools, interact to support the development of school-related competence.

In addition, correlational research cannot advance understanding of causal influence or direction of effects. Indeed, is it that responsive and supportive teachers and peers have the potential to influence the development of competencies and skills they value, or is it that competent students influence teachers and peers to interact with them in specific ways? Although the answer is likely that both are true, identifying ways in which teachers and peers actively promote the development of social competencies at school requires systematic longitudinal and experimental research. Large-scale longitudinal studies have begun to document school-based predictors of young children's competence over time (e.g., NICHD Child Care Study). Others have begun to document correlates of change related to qualities of older students' relationships with teacher and peer relationships (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997).

Experimental studies designed to examine processes that support social competence development in schools are rare (cf. Solomon et al., 1992). Unfortunately, most school reform efforts focus on improving achievement test scores and other academic outcomes

(e.g., No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), without consideration of the social and psychological consequences of these efforts. However, given the strong interrelations among qualities of relationships with teachers and peers, forms of classroom behavior and academic outcomes (see Wentzel, 2003), it seems essential that reform initiatives involving experimentation in schools and evaluation of student progress incorporate assessments of outcomes across multiple social and academic domains.

Our current understanding of school socialization also is based primarily on studies of white middle-class children. Therefore, more diverse samples with respect to race and socioeconomic status also are needed in this area of research. For instance, in response to findings reported by the NICHD Child Care Study, researchers have argued that when child-care variables are assessed in more diverse samples that include a broader range of socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnicity, different results are obtained (e.g., Sagi, Koren-Karie, Gini, Ziv, & Joels, 2002). Researchers of older children also have found that race moderates relations between dropping out of school and features of schools and families, such that the SES of families and schools predicts dropping out for white and Hispanic adolescents but not for African American students (Rumberger, 1995). Some studies also have demonstrated differential teacher treatment of students as a function of student gender, race, (Irvine, 1986), and behavioral styles (Chang, 2003), with these differences sometimes attributed in part, to teachers' own race and gender (Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Although it is likely that the underlying psychological processes that contribute to school adjustment are similar for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or other contextual and demographic variables, the degree to which these latter factors interact with psychological processes to influence adjustment outcomes is not known. Achieving a better understanding of such interactions deserves our full attention. To illustrate, goal coordination skills, such as planning, monitoring, and regulation of behavior, that support the achievement of multiple objectives might be more important for the adjustment of children from minority backgrounds than for children who come from families and communities whose goals and expectations are similar to those of the educational establishment (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Peer relationship skills might be especially important for adjustment in schools in which peer cultures are particularly strong or in which collaborative and cooperative learning is emphasized. Similarly, beliefs about how to characterize a competent student are likely to vary as a function of race, gender, neighborhood, or family background. The fact that many results concerning child outcomes and schooling differ as a function of who provides the assessments of behavior (e.g., parents, teachers, or students themselves) attests to this possibility (e.g., NICHD, 2003a; Toro et al., 1985). Expanding our database to include the voices of underrepresented populations both as research participants and as researchers can only enrich our understanding of how and why children make successful adaptations to school.

In conclusion, we have argued that being a competent student requires children to achieve positive developmental outcomes and personal goals while meeting social objectives that are imposed externally by teachers and peers. Identifying the precise socialization experiences that lead to a healthy balance between personal growth and social integration remains a significant challenge to the field. However, we have gained some initial insights into students' experiences within school settings as they relate to social approval and acceptance as well as the development of personal competencies and interests. Socialization of these outcomes within school settings can be understood in part, as a function of the amount and quality of structural-level resources of schools as well as interpersonal

contacts with teachers and peers. Ideally, these insights can serve as a foundation for continued research on the social antecedents of children's competent functioning at school.

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