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Edited by Adam Rutland, Drew Nesdale, and Christia Spears Brown
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Children from infancy develop attachments to significant others within their social environment (e.g., parents and siblings, as well as other relatives and friends). Over time, they also become increasingly aware of various social groups or categories within their social world. They are born into some social groups (e.g., gender, age, ethnic/racial groups); they are assigned to other groups, such as classroom or school groups, by adults and others in authority; and they choose to join other groups, at least partially because they share attitudes, beliefs, interests, and activities with the other group members (e.g., religious groups, sports or fan clubs).

Research shows these groups form an integral part of a child’s expanding social world. Children's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are significantly shaped by their group memberships and this influence increases through childhood into adolescence. With age, research suggests that children acquire an increasing understanding of the processes underpinning how groups operate, including, for example, intergroup discrimination, social exclusion and inclusion, social group identification, prejudice and stereotyping, socialization, and cross-group friendships. These group processes involve both social relations between groups (i.e., relations between members from different social groups) and within social groups (i.e., relations between members of the same group). These two types of group processes are typically labeled as intergroup and intragroup, respectively. They almost always occur together and should not be considered in isolation.
Handbook of Group Processes in Children and Adolescents

Until the present volume, there has been no single book that brings together the extensive and diverse research and scholarship on how these group processes develop within childhood and adolescence. This Handbook fills that gap. It is published as part of the Wiley-Blackwell Handbooks of Developmental Psychology Series, and the research presented in it represents a considerable extension of the family and peer-relations research, typically focusing on interpersonal relations within the family and peer groups, that has been traditionally conducted within developmental psychology. This Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of the research that has addressed group processes in childhood and adolescence, the main theoretical approaches that have been proposed, methodological issues that have been identified and addressed, and interventions that have been developed to improve group processes.

The focus of this Handbook is certainly reflective of research conducted within social developmental psychology over the last 20 years. In addition, it has drawn from the extensive literature in social psychology on adult group processes and intergroup relations, but recognizes there are important developmental processes that should be studied when examining how children and adolescents relate to social groups. To truly understand any psychological phenomenon, such as group processes, there is a need to examine and appreciate how it originates in childhood and develops in later life. Only then can the important social-cognitive, emotional, psychological, and contextual factors that underlie the operation of group processes be comprehensively understood.

We first discussed the possibility of this Handbook at the Biennial Meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) in Montreal (2011) and Seattle (2013), when it became clear to us that, at these conferences and other international meetings throughout the world, innovative new research was increasingly being presented into how children and adolescents are influenced by, and develop an understanding of, group processes. We strongly felt that this burgeoning body of research needed to be represented in a Handbook that would bring together the scope and excitement of recent research in an accessible and precise form, acting both as a source within libraries and research centers and as an everyday handbook for individuals wanting to know more about, and further their interest in, this fast developing field of study.

Chapter authors

With one editor based in Europe, one in Australia, and one in the United States, we have sought to identify chapter authors who are active international researchers within the field and have acknowledged theoretical and empirical expertise that qualifies
them to write with authority about their area of study. We are delighted that the final group of authors includes distinguished senior researchers along with “rising stars” within the field, who together bring vigor and gravitas to the Handbook. Within the Handbook we also aimed to reflect the increasing international nature of research into developmental group processes and social development generally within the psychological and behavioral sciences. Although many of the contributors are based in the United States, we also have contributors from the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, Singapore, and South Africa.

Readership of the handbook

The Handbook is aimed at those wishing to know more than would be covered in a standard textbook, including advanced undergraduates in psychology and behavioral sciences, postgraduates studying for master’s degrees, or engaging in independent research leading to a postgraduate degree (e.g., PhD), as well as teaching staff and researchers seeking a respected and reliable update of the field. We believe the Handbook should also be extremely useful for policy makers and practitioners (e.g., educators, social workers, counselors, policy advisors to decision makers), who are trained in the behavioral sciences and are interested in the implications of research for professional practice and policy, in addition to the merely curious.

Structure of the handbook

It is somewhat of an overwhelming task to provide an engaging and informative introduction to a volume comprising a diversity of chapters from world-leading researchers within the field of group processes in childhood and adolescence. We considered providing a brief summary of what is written in each chapter, yet all chapter authors presented much better summaries than we could imagine providing. Instead, we will briefly outline the seven parts into which we have organized the 23 chapters within the Handbook.

Part I (four chapters) examines children’s social group memberships directly: how children develop identifications with these groups, how these social group memberships relate to the intergroup context, and how they have been measured. This is followed by a second part (three chapters) which shows that, with development, intergroup and intragroup processes become intrinsically interconnected when we study phenomena such as social exclusion, resource allocation, and communication within social groups. Part III (four chapters) focuses on how the process of social
categorization in childhood is related to the development of explicit and implicit intergroup biases or prejudice and stereotyping. The fourth part (three chapters) focuses on the process of intergroup discrimination in childhood and adolescence, and its relationship to socialization and essentialist thinking. The fifth (two chapters) considers how understanding the interaction between group and interpersonal processes can improve our knowledge of how bullying emerges in childhood and also how it can be reduced. Part VI (three chapters) looks at when and how the process of intergroup and student–teacher contact can reduce intergroup bias and prejudice amongst children and youths. The seventh and final part (three chapters) describes various specific educational interventions which, to varying degrees, draw from contact theory within psychology, and are aimed at promoting more positive relations and social inclusion between groups. A commentary chapter from Kevin Durkin, which highlights important themes running throughout the Handbook and important issues to be taken up by the field in the future, rounds off the work.

The central purpose of this Handbook is to provide (for the first time) a comprehensive, authoritative, and international compilation of psychological theory and research related to group processes in children and adolescents. We hope that this has been achieved and that the Handbook proves invaluable to the growing number of researchers interested in how group processes based upon social category membership develop in children and adolescents.

Adam Rutland, Drew Nesdale, and Christia Spears Brown
(November 2015)
PART I

Social Group Membership: Intergroup Context and Methodological Issues
Whereas considerable research has focused on children’s dyadic relationships (Bradford Brown & Dietz, 2011), comparatively little attention has been given to the intra- and intergroup processes involved in children’s experiences in groups, as well as issues relating to the structure and organization of children’s groups (Cairns, Xie, & Leung, 1998). This lack of attention is surprising given the extent of children’s involvement in groups, which commences prior to formal schooling and increases throughout the middle childhood years, reflecting the considerable importance of group membership to them (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Indeed, the evidence suggests that if there is a possibility of being accepted by, and belonging to, a social group, children will seek to be included (Nesdale, 2007). Moreover, their social interactions occur increasingly within their social groups during the elementary school years (Rubin et al., 2006).

Given the limited, albeit rapidly increasing, research attention given to children’s social groups, it is perhaps unsurprising that theory development in this area has also been limited. However, the aim of the present chapter is to provide an outline of one theory, social identity development theory (SIDT; Nesdale, 2004, 2007),
that has sought to provide an account of children's involvement in social groups. SIDT is a developmental model that describes a number of phases through which children pass as their experience with social groups increases. The theory encompasses children's early awareness of social groups, the basis of their desire for group membership, and the impact of group membership on their attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral responses relating to in-group members, as well as towards others outside their group. Although SIDT was originally formulated to account for the emergence of intergroup prejudice and discrimination (Nesdale, 2004, 2012), it has also been applied to other social behaviors, including children's aggression and bullying (Duffy & Nesdale, 2012), as well as peer group rejection (Nesdale, 2008).

**Clarifications and qualifications**

There are several points concerning this chapter that are worth noting. First, it relates to children from birth to 12 years of age, recognizing that the foundations of children's social relationships appear shortly after birth and continue their inexorable development from that point onwards. That said, the emphasis of the chapter is primarily on children in middle childhood (from 6 to 12 years) because the emergence and consolidation of many of their intra- and intergroup processes occur during that period.

Second, the term, “group,” is used inclusively in this chapter. Whereas the term is typically used to refer to collections of three or more interacting children who share something (or things) in common (e.g., attributes, interests, behaviors, tasks, etc.), children are assigned by nature to some groups or categories that have been accorded a degree of social significance (e.g., gender, ethnicity), or assigned by adult authority to other groups (classroom teams, religion), but they may also elect to join others (groups of playmates, special interest groups). In the present discussion, the critical issue is whether the child identifies with, commits to, or sees him/herself as a member of, a particular group. This is typically indexed by children's greater liking for their in-group compared with other groups (see also Bradford Brown & Dietz, 2011; Kinderman & Gest, 2011). Thus, whereas a group of playmates/friends would generally meet this identification criterion, membership of a school class or an ethnic minority might meet the requirement for some children, but not others.

Third, as several writers have noted, there are significant difficulties involved in seeking to measure group membership, as well as the intra-group dynamics of a membership group, and the dynamics of their relationships with other groups (e.g., Cairns et al., 1998). This is especially true of friendship and interaction groups which can have a short life span and, moreover, it is difficult to disentangle changes due to member turnover from those due to member convergence; that is,