

HANDBOOK OF CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

SIXTH EDITION

Volume Two: Cognition, Perception, and Language

Volume Editors

DEANNA KUHN and ROBERT SIEGLER

Editors-in-Chief

WILLIAM DAMON and RICHARD M. LERNER



WILEY

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In memory of Paul Mussen, whose generosity of spirit
touched our lives and helped build a field.

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Preface to Handbook of Child Psychology, Sixth Edition

WILLIAM DAMON

Scholarly handbooks play several key roles in their disciplines. First and foremost, they reflect recent changes in the field as well as classic works that have survived those changes. In this sense, all handbooks present their editors' and authors' best judgments about what is most important to know in the field at the time of publication. But many handbooks also influence the fields that they report on. Scholars—especially younger ones—look to them for sources of information and inspiration to guide their own work. While taking stock of the shape of its field, a handbook also shapes the stock of ideas that will define the field's future. It serves both as an indicator and as a generator, a pool of received knowledge and a pool for spawning new insight.

THE HANDBOOK'S LIVING TRADITION

Within the field of human development, the *Handbook of Child Psychology* has served these key roles to a degree that has been exceptional even among the impressive panoply of the world's many distinguished scholarly handbooks. The *Handbook of Child Psychology* has had a widely heralded tradition as a beacon, organizer, and encyclopedia of developmental study for almost 75 years—a period that covers the vast majority of scientific work in this field.

It is impossible to imagine what the field would look like if it had not occurred to Carl Murchison in 1931 to assemble an eclectic assortment of contributions into the first *Handbook of Child Psychology*. Whether or not Murchison realized this potential (an interesting speculation in itself, given his visionary and ambitious nature), he gave birth to a seminal publishing project that

not only has endured over time but has evolved into a thriving tradition across a number of related academic disciplines.

All through its history, the *Handbook* has drawn on, and played a formative role in, the worldwide study of human development. What does the *Handbook's* history tell us about where we, as developmentalists, have been, what we have learned, and where we are going? What does it tell us about what has changed and what has remained the same in the questions that we ask, in the methods that we use, and in the theoretical ideas that we draw on in our quest to understand human development? By asking these questions, we follow the spirit of the science itself, for developmental questions may be asked about any endeavor, including the enterprise of studying human development. To best understand what this field has to tell us about human development, we must ask how the field itself has developed. In a field that examines continuities and changes, we must ask, for the field itself, what are the continuities and what are the changes?

The history of the *Handbook* is by no means the whole story of why the field is where it is today, but it is a fundamental part of the story. It has defined the choices that have determined the field's direction and has influenced the making of those choices. In this regard, the *Handbook's* history reveals much about the judgments and other human factors that shape a science.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

Carl Murchison was a scholar/impresario who edited *The Psychological Register*; founded and edited key psychological journals; wrote books on social psychology,

politics, and the criminal mind; and compiled an assortment of handbooks, psychology texts, autobiographies of renowned psychologists, and even a book on psychic beliefs (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini were among the contributors). Murchison's initial *Handbook of Child Psychology* was published by a small university press (Clark University) in 1931, when the field itself was still in its infancy. Murchison wrote:

Experimental psychology has had a much older scientific and academic status [than child psychology], but at the present time it is probable that much less money is being spent for pure research in the field of experimental psychology than is being spent in the field of child psychology. In spite of this obvious fact, many experimental psychologists continue to look upon the field of child psychology as a proper field of research for women and for men whose experimental masculinity is not of the maximum. This attitude of patronage is based almost entirely upon a blissful ignorance of what is going on in the tremendously virile field of child behavior. (Murchison, 1931, p. ix)

Murchison's masculine allusion, of course, is from another era; it could furnish some good material for a social history of gender stereotyping. That aside, Murchison was prescient in the task that he undertook and the way that he went about it. At the time Murchison wrote the preface to his *Handbook*, developmental psychology was known only in Europe and in a few forward-looking American labs and universities. Nevertheless, Murchison predicted the field's impending ascent: "The time is not far distant, if it is not already here, when nearly all competent psychologists will recognize that one-half of the whole field of psychology is involved in the problem of how the infant becomes an adult psychologically" (Murchison, 1931, p. x).

For his original 1931 *Handbook*, Murchison looked to Europe and to a handful of American centers (or "field stations") for child research (Iowa, Minnesota, the University of California at Berkeley, Columbia, Stanford, Yale, Clark). Murchison's Europeans included a young "genetic epistemologist" named Jean Piaget, who, in an essay on "Children's Philosophies," quoted extensively from interviews with 60 Genevan children between the ages of 4 and 12 years. Piaget's chapter would provide American readers with an introduction to his seminal research program on children's conceptions of the world. Another European, Charlotte Bühler, wrote a chapter on children's social behavior. In this chapter,

which still is fresh today, Bühler described intricate play and communication patterns among toddlers, patterns that developmental psychology would not rediscover until the late 1970s. Bühler also anticipated the critiques of Piaget that would appear during the sociolinguistics heyday of the 1970s:

Piaget, in his studies on children's talk and reasoning, emphasizes that their talk is much more egocentric than social . . . that children from 3 to 7 years accompany all their manipulations with talk which actually is not so much intercourse as monologue . . . [but] the special relationship of the child to each of the different members of the household is distinctly reflected in the respective conversations. (Bühler, 1931, p. 138)

Other Europeans included Anna Freud, who wrote on "The Psychoanalysis of the Child," and Kurt Lewin, who wrote on "Environmental Forces in Child Behavior and Development."

The Americans whom Murchison chose were equally notable. Arnold Gesell wrote a nativistic account of his twin studies, an enterprise that remains familiar to us today, and Stanford's Louis Terman wrote a comprehensive account of everything known about the "gifted child." Harold Jones described the developmental effects of birth order, Mary Cover Jones wrote about children's emotions, Florence Goodenough wrote about children's drawings, and Dorothea McCarthy wrote about language development. Vernon Jones's chapter on "children's morals" focused on the growth of *character*, a notion that was to become lost to the field during the cognitive-developmental revolution, but that reemerged in the 1990s as the primary concern in the study of moral development.

Murchison's vision of child psychology included an examination of cultural differences as well. His *Handbook* presented to the scholarly world a young anthropologist named Margaret Mead, just back from her tours of Samoa and New Guinea. In this early essay, Mead wrote that her motivation in traveling to the South Seas was to discredit the views that Piaget, Levy-Bruhl, and other nascent "structuralists" had put forth concerning "animism" in young children's thinking. (Interestingly, about a third of Piaget's chapter in the same volume was dedicated to showing how Genevan children took years to outgrow animism.) Mead reported some data that she called "amazing": "In not one of the 32,000 drawings (by young 'primitive' children) was there a single case of personalization of animals, material phenomena, or

inanimate objects” (Mead, 1931, p. 400). Mead parlayed these data into a tough-minded critique of Western psychology’s ethnocentrism, making the point that animism and other beliefs are more likely to be culturally induced than intrinsic to early cognitive development. This is hardly an unfamiliar theme in contemporary psychology. Mead also offered a research guide for developmental fieldworkers in strange cultures, complete with methodological and practical advice, such as the following: Translate questions into native linguistic categories; don’t do controlled experiments; don’t do studies that require knowing ages of subjects, which are usually unknowable; and live next door to the children whom you are studying.

Despite the imposing roster of authors that Murchison assembled for the 1931 *Handbook of Child Psychology*, his achievement did not satisfy him for long. Barely 2 years later, Murchison put out a second edition, of which he wrote: “Within a period of slightly more than 2 years, this first revision bears scarcely any resemblance to the original *Handbook of Child Psychology*. This is due chiefly to the great expansion in the field during the past 3 years and partly to the improved insight of the editor” (Murchison, 1933, p. vii). The tradition that Murchison had brought to life was already evolving.

Murchison saw fit to provide the following warning in his second edition: “There has been no attempt to simplify, condense, or to appeal to the immature mind. This volume is prepared specifically for the scholar, and its form is for his maximum convenience” (Murchison, 1933, p. vii). It is likely that sales of Murchison’s first volume did not approach textbook levels; perhaps he received negative comments regarding its accessibility.

Murchison exaggerated when he wrote that his second edition bore little resemblance to the first. Almost half of the chapters were virtually the same, with minor additions and updating. (For the record, though, despite Murchison’s continued use of masculine phraseology, 10 of the 24 authors in the second edition were women.) Some of the authors whose original chapters were dropped were asked to write about new topics. So, for example, Goodenough wrote about mental testing rather than about children’s drawings, and Gesell wrote a general statement of his maturational theory that went well beyond the twin studies.

But Murchison also made some abrupt changes. He dropped Anna Freud entirely, auguring the marginalization of psychoanalysis within academic psychology. Leonard Carmichael, who was later to play a pivotal role

in the *Handbook* tradition, made an appearance as author of a major chapter (by far the longest in the book) on prenatal and perinatal growth. Three other physiologically oriented chapters were added as well: one on neonatal motor behavior, one on visual-manual functions during the first 2 years of life, and one on physiological “appetites” such as hunger, rest, and sex. Combined with the Goodenough and Gesell shifts in focus, these additions gave the 1933 *Handbook* more of a biological thrust, in keeping with Murchison’s long-standing desire to display the hard science backbone of the emerging field.

Leonard Carmichael was president of Tufts University when he organized Wiley’s first edition of the *Handbook*. The switch from a university press to the long-established commercial firm of John Wiley & Sons was commensurate with Carmichael’s well-known ambition; indeed, Carmichael’s effort was to become influential beyond anything that Murchison might have anticipated. The book (one volume at that time) was called the *Manual of Child Psychology*, in keeping with Carmichael’s intention of producing an “advanced scientific manual to bridge the gap between the excellent and varied elementary textbooks in this field and the scientific periodical literature” (Carmichael, 1946, p. viii).

The publication date was 1946, and Carmichael complained that “this book has been a difficult and expensive one to produce, especially under wartime conditions” (Carmichael, 1946, p. viii). Nevertheless, the project was worth the effort. The *Manual* quickly became the bible of graduate training and scholarly work in the field, available virtually everywhere that human development was studied. Eight years later, now head of the Smithsonian Institution, Carmichael wrote, in the preface to the 1954 second edition, “The favorable reception that the first edition received not only in America but all over the world is indicative of the growing importance of the study of the phenomena of the growth and development of the child” (Carmichael, 1954, p. vii).

Carmichael’s second edition had a long life: Not until 1970 did Wiley bring out a third edition. Carmichael was retired by then, but he still had a keen interest in the book. At his insistence, his own name became part of the title of the third edition; it was called, improbably, *Carmichael’s Manual of Child Psychology*, even though it had a new editor and an entirely different cast of authors and advisors. Paul Mussen took over as the editor, and once again the project flourished. Now a two-volume set,

Child psychology is more complex than it may seem. That's why it's essential to understand the needs hiding behind certain behaviors, how their emotions work, and how their brains mature at each stage of their development. One thing we're all aware of is that just having title of father, mother, or teacher doesn't necessarily mean we automatically have the skills we need to raise and educate children. In this book, Boris Cyrulnik gives a very interesting vision of child trauma. He teaches that the tapestry of relationships and, later, the expression of our emotions, enables us to activate a kind of biopsychic "reserve" to help us keep going. 3. The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind (Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson).