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978-0-521-33771-7 - The Roots of Prosocial Behavior in Children

Nancy Eisenberg and Paul H. Mussen

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What kinds of childrearing practices foster the development of helping, sharing, and other prosocial behaviors? What roles do biology and culture play in the development of prosocial behavior? In this book, Nancy Eisenberg and Paul Mussen review and summarize scholarly research that has been devoted to the development of prosocial behavior in children, and examine the variety of influences that contribute to children's prosocial development, including the media, parents, peers, biology, culture, personal characteristics, as well as situational determinants. The authors argue that prosocial behavior can be learned and is modifiable, and they suggest ways that parents, teachers, and others can enhance prosocial development.

In addition, the authors attempt to communicate the advances in the study of prosocial development that have taken place over the last decade. The book highlights questions that have not yet been addressed adequately by researchers, and suggests areas for future work.

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Preface

In 1976 we wrote the book *Caring, Sharing, and Helping: The Roots of Prosocial Behavior in Children*, which was published in 1977. The purpose of that book was to organize the limited work concerning the development of prosocial behavior, with the hope of stimulating further research in this nascent field. Now 12 years later, we have reviewed and organized this body of work again. In doing so, it has become strikingly clear how much the field has progressed in little more than a decade. Many issues about which there were few data in 1977 have become foci of interest for researchers; in addition, thinking about the development of prosocial behavior has become more complex and better differentiated in recent years. Thus, it has been exciting and rewarding to see how far the field has come in a relatively short period of time.

Our goals in writing this book are to communicate the advances in the study of prosocial development over the last decade, as well as to pinpoint areas in which more thinking and research are needed. As in 1977, it is our hope that this book will serve to attract attention to the study of prosocial development and will serve as a catalyst for further work. In addition, given the importance of prosocial behavior for interpersonal and intergroup harmony, we hope that this book will provide useful information regarding the enhancement of prosocial proclivities for students studying social development and for parents, teachers, and other potential socializers of children.

Numerous institutions and people contributed to the completion of this book. Support for the first author's efforts was provided by grants from the National Science Foundation (BNS-8509223) and the National Institute for Child Health and Development (KO4 HD000717), as well as by the Max Planck Institute in Berlin (Paul Baltes, director). We are

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