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Developmental Review

Volume 9, Issue 1, March 1989, Pages 64-100

Social competence in the schools: Toward an integrative developmental model for intervention

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297\(89\)90024-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297(89)90024-5)

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Abstract

The promotion of social problem-solving skills in school-age children has been only partially successful in improving their social adjustment. The design and evaluation of training programs has been hindered by the inadequacies of most current models of social competence and its relation to social cognition. In this paper, we delineate the necessary components of a coherent model and review the shortcomings of previous approaches. We then describe a model of the development of a specific form of social competence—namely, *interpersonal negotiation strategies* (INS)—and its social-cognitive underpinnings. The INS model embodies several conceptual advances compared to previous models linking social cognition to social behavior: It integrates functional (information-processing) and structural (cognitive-developmental) approaches, specifies a linkage between social cognition and action within a particular

domain of social interaction, and provides for developmental, individual, and contextual variations in the expression of behavior in that domain. The implications of the INS model for social problem-solving training in the schools are reviewed, together with an example of the implementation of the model in a specific educational context. The INS model may help provide a more coherent basis for the school-based delivery of developmentally appropriate interventions designed to foster children's social skills.



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This paper was begun while the first author was supported by a National Institute of Mental Health postdoctoral research fellowship under the Research Training Program in Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard Medical School. Both authors now are supported in part by grants from the Spencer Foundation and the William T. Grant Foundation.

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