



Research Brief

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The Impact of SRCD's Sociocultural Policy on *Child Development*

Background

The Data Tracking Initiative (DTI)¹, funded by grants from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), aimed to evaluate the impact of the Sociocultural Policy (SCP) in SRCD's flagship journal, *Child Development* (CD). As a subcommittee of the SRCD Publications Committee, the members were tasked with assessing the impact of the SCP, which the team operationalized as coding relevant data reported in eligible² CD

publications from 2014 (volume 85) - 2022 (volume 93).

The mission of the SCP³ is to address diversity and replicability in SRCD's publications. Given the role of culture and context in human development and the global nature of developmental science, it is critically necessary that published science provides relevant details about individual characteristics as well as the "socioeconomic and cultural place" of participants to inform generalizability of developmental science.

¹ The DTI members include Drs. Dawn Witherspoon, Miao Qian, and Tiffany Yip; advisory board members are Drs. Gilda Morelli, Alaina Brenick, and Lauren Bader; and graduate students Tiyyobista Maereg and Shelbi Matlock.

² Included articles were empirical reports or articles in regular or special issues with human participants. Excluded articles were meta-analyses, non-human participants, case studies, and articles with 'no participants' (e.g., literature reviews, theoretical/conceptual papers)

³ <https://www.srkd.org/news/new-sociocultural-policy-enacted-across-all-srkd-journals>

The SCP was first enacted in *Child Development* during the editorship of Cynthia García Coll⁴, Ph.D., but adopted across all of the Society's publications in 2020. The policy indicates that manuscripts submitted to SRCD's journals include the following information, when relevant:

1. Dates of data collection;
2. Theoretically relevant characteristics of the participants studied (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, native language, gender identity, religion);
3. Place(s) from which the participants were drawn, including country, region, city, neighborhood, school, etc. and all other context variables that are relevant to the focus of the publication, except when it violates expectations of privacy and confidentiality; and
4. selection and recruitment procedures.

Research Aims

Three aims guided the DTI project: (1) describe the inclusion of SCP information in published articles, (2) describe SCP compliance within the abstract and method and (3) identify the drivers of compliance within the abstract and method. SCP impact was assessed in multiple ways. The DTI examined compliance by assessing inclusion of relevant information within the abstract and method sections at three

timepoints⁵— pre-SCP (2014-2015), early SCP implementation (2016-2020), and later SCP implementation (2021-2022). The two post-SCP implementation timeframes (early SCP and later SCP) were included to allow for the delay from policy implementation to publication and to disentangle *Child Development* implementation from the SRCD society-wide adoption of the SCP.

Method

Two teams of coders assessed 1477 articles ($K_{\text{Mean}} = 0.82$, $SD = 0.10$) and coded various article components (see Table 1 for substantive coding elements). We measured compliance with the SCP in two ways. First, compliance to the SCP was measured by the count of the SCP categories (0 – 4) included in published articles. These categories include the dates of data collection, the theoretically relevant characteristics of the participants, the place(s) from which the sample was drawn, and selection and recruitment procedures. Second, compliance was measured as the average number of coded factors within each category. See Table 1 for a list of categories and factors. In the results section, we report findings related to count compliance for Aim 2 and average compliance for Aim 3.

⁴ Coll, C. G. (2015). Editorial: Continuity and Change in Child Development. *Child Development*, 86(1), 7–9.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24696109>

⁵ These timeframes were selected to consider publication lag and were finalized based on personal communication with past editor, Cynthia García Coll, and review of SRCD publication committee minutes.

Results

To address Aim 1, we examined trends in the reporting of SCP factors in all published articles' abstract and method sections (for more information about trends, see Table 2). Almost all articles included age, whereas very few articles included sexual orientation, religion, native language or immigration status information. Surprisingly, gender was only reported in a quarter (abstract) to one-third (method) of the articles. For race, less than a quarter of articles reported this information in the abstract, whereas almost half reported it in the method section. Less than 10% of articles reported SES in the abstract, and almost 60% reported it in the method. For place-characteristics and research design details, the majority of this information was provided in the method section.

To address Aim 2, describing compliance (i.e., count) with the SCP at different time intervals, there was a significant increase in SCP elements after the society-wide implementation of the SCP in the abstract, $F(2, 1474) = 55.68, p < .001$. Results indicated that significantly more SCP categories were reported in later SCP implementation ($M = 1.76, SD = .79$) compared to pre-implementation ($M = 1.31, SD = .55$) and early SCP implementation ($M = 1.4, SD = .56$). When examining the method section, there is a significant increase in SCP elements post-implementation $F(2, 1474) = 86.32, p < .001$. Articles published prior to the SCP implementation ($M = 3.11, SD = .66$) included fewer SCP categories compared to articles in

early ($M = 3.64, SD = .57$) and later SCP implementation ($M = 3.57, SD = .62$).

To address Aim 3, identify drivers of SCP adherence, we found several factors that predicted SCP compliance (i.e., average) in both the abstract and method sections of published articles. First, time (i.e., volume) of the implementation of society-wide SCP yielded increased reporting of SCP categories in the abstract. More specifically, articles published in 2021-2022 (later SCP implementation) reported more SCP categories than articles published in pre-SCP (2014-2015) and early SCP (2016-2020) SCP ($\beta = .36, p < .001$) implementation. Second, article type and authorship team location predicted higher compliance. Articles in special sections reported more SCP categories than empirical articles ($\beta = -.12, p = .002$) and empirical articles reported more SCP categories than empirical reports ($\beta = .071, p = .015$). Mixed location (i.e., both US and non-US) author teams reported more SCP categories than non-US author teams ($\beta = -.073, p = .026$).

Similar to the abstract section, time (i.e., implementation of society-wide SCP), article type, and the location of the authorship team were related to SCP compliance in the method section of published articles. More specifically, post-society-wide implementation of the SCP [i.e., early ($\beta = .4, p < .001$) and later $\beta = .31, p < .001$] articles reported more SCP categories than pre-implementation articles. Also, empirical articles included more SCP categories than empirical reports ($\beta = .091, p = .002$).

Articles with US only author teams included more SCP categories than non-US only author teams ($\beta = .08, p = .004$).

Summary

The DTI addresses SRCD's strategic plan goals⁶. This work demonstrates that the SRCD Sociocultural Policy (SCP) had a positive impact on the reporting of sociocultural information in *Child Development* articles. The most consistent drivers of compliance with the SCP were time (i.e., implementation of the policy),

article type, and author type. Longer articles provided more SCP information, suggesting that with fewer page limitations, authors have the opportunity to more holistically describe their participants and their context. Also, author-team composition matters, suggesting the complex macrosystem influences on author team. For example, countries have different policies regarding reporting of personal characteristics. The SCP should take this complexity into account given the global nature of developmental science.

⁶ <https://www.srcd.org/about-us/mission-scientific-vision>

Table 1: Categories and factors coded⁷

Category	Factors	Factor Range
1. Date	Date	1
2. Theoretically-Relevant Characteristics	Age, race, gender, household composition, disability status, SES, native language, religion, sexuality orientation, immigration status	10
3. Place	Country, region, local context, formal learning	4
4. Selection & Recruitment	Inclusion/exclusion criteria, recruitment, primary data, secondary data	Abstract: 2 Method: 4

⁷ The Sociocultural Policy may be viewed online: <https://www.srcd.org/news/new-sociocultural-policy-enacted-across-all-srcd-journals>

Table 2: Percentage of articles that included factors in Abstract and Method

Category	Factor	Abstract	Method
1. Date	Dates of Data Collection	9.7%	63.1%
2. Theoretically-Relevant Characteristics	Age (%)	98%	93.8%
	Race (%)	22.7%	49.5%
	Gender (%)	22%	31.6%
	Disability Status (%)	3.5%	18.5%
	Household Composition (%)	10.2%	30.9%
	SES (%)	7.6%	59.1%
	Native Language (%)	5.1%	35.8%
	Religion (%)	14%	1.9%
	Sexual Orientation (%)	.6%	1.4%
	Immigration Status (%)	2.5%	10.2%
3. Place	Country	27.8%	67.4%
	Region	5.5%	48.3%
	Local Context	8%	52%
	Formal Learning	10.5%	49.4%
4. Selection & Recruitment	Recruitment	1%	64.7%
	Inclusion & Exclusion	0.1%	62.7%
	Data Source (Primary)	N/A	83.8%
	Data Source (Secondary)	N/A	18%

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