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978-0-521-02806-6 - Culture and Human Development: The Selected Papers of John Whiting

Edited by Eleanor Hollenberg Chasdi

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John Whiting is a leading figure in psychological anthropology and one of the pioneers in the development of systematic cross-cultural research. His work is interdisciplinary and he draws mainly upon the fields of anthropology, psychoanalysis, and learning and behavior theory. This book includes some of his most influential articles on culture and human development, as well as a comprehensive autobiographical essay. Roy D'Andrade's introduction assesses the unique contributions of John Whiting and locates his work within the contemporary currents of psychological anthropology.

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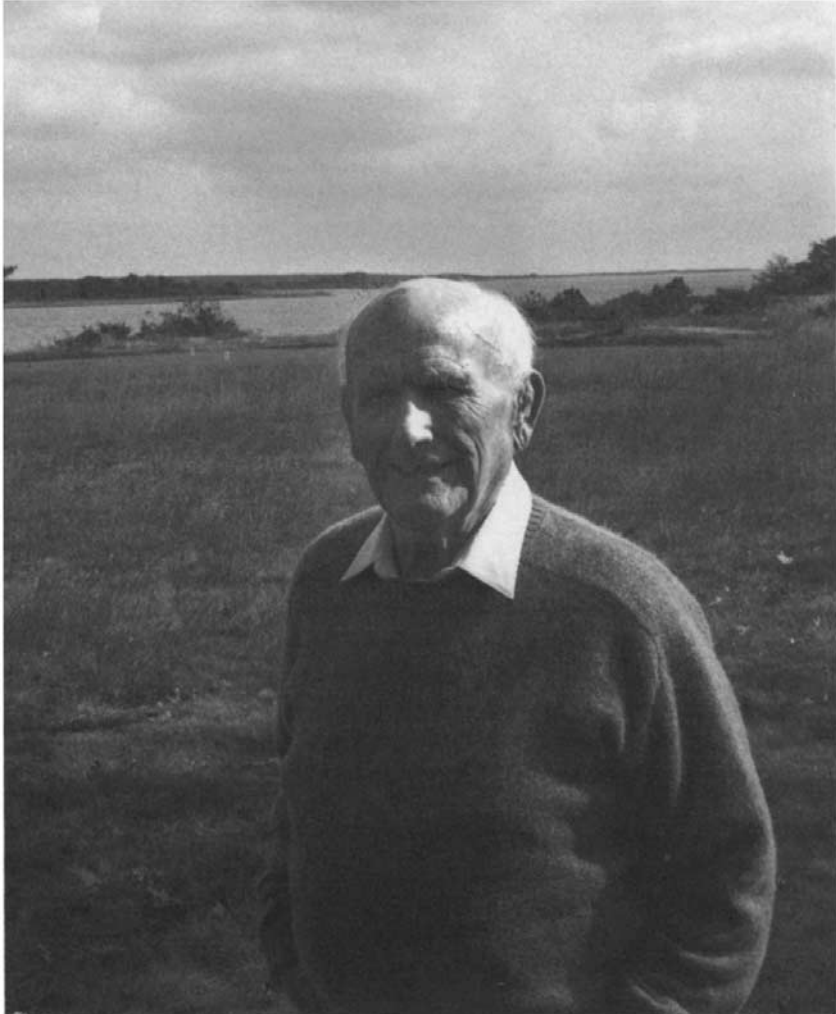
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Preface

This volume contains selections from the work of John W. M. Whiting, an important anthropologist of our time, a leading figure in the field of psychological anthropology, and one of the pioneers in the development of systematic cross-cultural research. At the core of his work is a commitment to the search for general principles to help explain human behavior. In this endeavor, he draws mainly upon the disciplines of anthropology, psychoanalysis, learning and behavior theory, and human development. In addition to his interdisciplinary approach, he is committed to the scientific method of testing hypotheses. He believes that hunches, generalizations, and explanations about human behavior can arise from many sources, but in order to establish their validity, they must be evaluated according to commonly accepted scientific criteria. And lastly, John Whiting is a firm believer in the positive value of collaborative research. An examination of his publications reveals that more than half of them have been written jointly with colleagues.

The idea for this book came to me a few years ago when I was asked to teach a new graduate course at Wheelock College dealing with human development in cross-cultural perspective. As I outlined the topics and began to gather suitable readings, I had a difficult time locating John Whiting's work. One of his books was in my bookcase; only a few of his reprints were in my files. I realized that his work was widely scattered. There were studies reported in diverse journals and numerous articles in edited collections, some in volumes that are now out of print. Fifty years of publication, outstanding recognition for creativity and innovation in his field, a coherent point of view that I wished to introduce to my students, and no organized materials or book with which to work.

Consequently, this volume was created. It begins with an introductory essay by the anthropologist Roy D'Andrade, who assesses the contributions of John Whiting and attempts to locate his work within the currents and the context of the field of anthropology. This is followed by the reflections of John Whiting himself, "Fifty years as a behavioral scientist: autobiographical notes." In this piece, he discusses the development of his

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ideas over the course of his career, including some of his relevant personal experiences. As can be seen in the Table of Contents, these Notes are followed by thirteen of his articles, divided into five thematic sections. These articles were chosen because, (1) they represent major areas of Whiting's research, (2) they lend themselves to thematic groupings, and (3) they would appeal to scholars, graduate students, and advanced undergraduate students in fields such as psychological or cultural anthropology, child or life-span development, psychology, cross-cultural studies, comparative family studies, and related areas in the social sciences.

The thematic sections are: (1) Theory and methods, (2) Environment and history, (3) Moral development, (4) Gender development, and (5) The development of social behavior. For each section, I have written a short introduction for the reader, briefly describing the articles included, emphasizing the main issues discussed, and, when feasible, relating the articles to each other.

At the end of the book there is a complete bibliography of John Whiting's work. It contains about one hundred items in chronological order and reflects both his style of collaborative research and the diversity of his interdisciplinary publications. All of his work is on file at the Tozzer Library of the Peabody Museum of Anthropology at Harvard University.

I would like to thank: my husband, Shimon Chasdi, who, from the outset, encouraged me to proceed with this project; Robert A. LeVine of Harvard University and Richard A. Shweder of the University of Chicago for their enthusiastic support and valuable help throughout my endeavors; George W. Goethals of Harvard University for excellent advice at critical points; Roy D'Andrade of the University of California, San Diego, who generously agreed to write the introductory essay; Wheelock College for the support of my work particularly during a sabbatical leave; Amy Raffety for her skill and enormous effort in the technical preparation of the manuscript; and, most important, John and Beatrice Whiting, my intellectual mentors and good friends since my beginning days as a graduate student.

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