

Cambridge University Press

0521533600 - Developmental Psychology and Social Change: Research, History and Policy
Edited by David B. Pillemer and Sheldon H. White

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Developmental Psychology and Social Change

What is the unique mission of developmental psychology? How has it evolved historically? What are its current challenges? The chapters in this collection present the view that research, history, and policy are essential and interlocking components of a mature developmental psychology. Patterns of human development differ markedly across historical epochs, cultures, and social circumstances. Major societal changes examined by contributing authors – the advent of universal compulsory schooling, the adoption of a one-child policy in China, U.S. policy shifts in healthcare, welfare and child care – present “natural experiments” in social design. Authors challenge the idea of a clear distinction between basic and applied developmental research. In sharp contrast with the view that science is value-neutral, developmental psychologists have from the outset pursued the betterment of children and families through educational, child-care, and health initiatives. An historical perspective reveals the beneficial, if sometimes contentious, interplay between empirical research and social programs and policies.

David B. Pillemer is the Dr. Samuel E. Paul Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of New Hampshire. His research specialty is autobiographical memory across the life span. He has studied memory development in children, memories of adolescence, “flashbulb” memories of momentous events, and memories of educational experiences.

Sheldon H. White is John Lindsey Professor of Psychology Emeritus at Harvard University. A developmental psychologist, he has done research on children’s learning, attention, and memory. He has chaired committees concerned with the development of a research program for Head Start. He also has been chair of the Board on Children and Families of the National Research Council.

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Edited by

DAVID B. PILLEMER

University of New Hampshire

SHELDON H. WHITE

Harvard University



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Preface

As Professor Sheldon (Shep) White approached retirement from his position as William James Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, his colleagues and students began organizing an event in his honor. Barbara Rogoff and Alex Siegel were especially active in pursuing this idea. When I approached Shep for his input, he stated clearly that he did not want a traditional festschrift. Rather, he preferred to co-organize a lively, substantive conference and to co-edit an accompanying book that would concentrate on the three main foci of his life work: research, history, and policy in developmental psychology, and especially their intersections. The conference, titled *Developmental Psychology and the Social Changes of Our Time*, was held at Wellesley College, June 20–22, 2002. We adopted the more personal title, “Three Faces of Shep Conference,” because Shep has represented and promoted each and all of these faces – research, history, policy – throughout his career. Connections between the three faces of his work provide the foundation for a new way of thinking about developmental psychology and the lives of children. Contributors were asked to write chapters that addressed the intersection of at least two of the three faces.

In addition to the chapter authors, conference participants included Alex Siegel, Edward Zigler, Emily Cahan, Jack Shonkoff, Tami Katzir, Robert Lawler, Julia Hough, Ruby Takanishi, and Bob Granger. Conference assistants Susan Camuti and Kate Collins were invaluable to this project. We are deeply grateful to the Foundation for Child Development and the William T. Grant Foundation for financial assistance, and to Cambridge University Press for producing an excellent book. Special thanks to Rachel Gooze and Zorana Ircevic for editorial assistance, to Julia Hough and Phil Laughlin at Cambridge

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David B. Pillemer

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Contributors

Barbara Beatty

Department of Education
 Wellesley College
 Wellesley, MA

Stephen L. Buka

Department of Maternal and Child
 Health
 Harvard School of Public Health
 Cambridge, MA

Michael Cole

Laboratory of Comparative Human
 Cognition
 University of California, San Diego

Maricela Correa-Chávez

Department of Psychology
 University of California,
 Santa Cruz

Marta Navichoc Cotuc

Department of Psychology
 University of California,
 Santa Cruz

Wolfgang Edelstein

Max Planck Institute for Human
 Development
 Berlin, Germany

Ron Haskins

Brookings Institution
 Washington, DC

Aletha C. Huston

Department of Human Ecology
 University of Texas at Austin

Alex Kozulin

International Center for the
 Enhancement of Learning
 Potential and Hebrew University
 Jerusalem, Israel

Michelle D. Leichtman

Department of Psychology
 University of New Hampshire

Lewis P. Lipsitt

Department of Psychology
 Brown University
 Providence, RI

Kathleen McCartney

Harvard Graduate School of
 Education
 Cambridge, MA

Deborah Phillips

Department of Psychology
 Georgetown University
 Washington, DC

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David B. Pillemer

Department of Psychology
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH

Barbara Rogoff

Department of Psychology
University of California, Santa Cruz

William McKinley Runyan

School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley

Sidney Strauss

School of Education
Tel Aviv University
Israel

Charles M. Super

School of Family Studies
Division of Health and Human
Development
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT

Jaan Valsiner

Department of Psychology
Clark University
Worcester, MA

Qi Wang

Department of Human Development
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Sheldon H. White

Department of Psychology
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA