

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00885-4 - Cultural and Contextual Perspectives on Developmental Risk and Well-Being

Edited by Jacob A. Burack and Louis A. Schmidt

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## CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENTAL RISK AND WELL-BEING

Developmental risk refers to conditions, characteristics, experiences, or situations with potentially deleterious effects that lead to outcomes later in life that do not meet societal expectations. While risk is typically framed as the statistical probability of a problematic outcome in relation to the general population, the converse notion of well-being is considered in relation to the level of functioning at a given developmental stage. The contributors to this volume provide insight into developmental well-being by examining cultural and contextual perspectives and influences on development and developmental outcomes associated with various types of risk, such as those related to oppression, academic failure, problematic family and life experiences, and psychiatric conditions. Although certain outcomes may seem inevitable in cases involving harmful environments, diseases, and disorders, they are virtually all influenced by complex transactions among individuals, their families, communities, and societies.

Jacob A. (Jake) Burack is Professor of School/Applied Child Psychology and Human Development in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University, a researcher at Hôpital Rivière-des-Prairies, and the founder and Director of the McGill Youth Study Team. Along with his students and colleagues, he studies and works with a variety of populations, including First Nations adolescents, persons with autism spectrum disorders, and persons with Down syndrome.

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(continued after the index)

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Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

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# Cultural and Contextual Perspectives on Developmental Risk and Well-Being

Edited by

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107008854](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107008854)

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First published 2014

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

Cultural and contextual perspectives on developmental risk and well-being / [edited by]  
Jacob A. Burack, McGill University, Louis A. Schmidt, McMaster University.  
pages cm. – (Interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge and development)  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-00885-4 (hardback)

1. Developmental psychology. 2. Well-being. 3. Developmental psychology – Social aspects.  
4. Well-being – Social aspects. I. Burack, Jacob A. II. Schmidt, Louis A.

BF713.C847 2014

155–dc23 2014001776

ISBN 978-1-107-00885-4 Hardback

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Series Editor's Preface</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xix</i>
 1 Introductory Remarks: Cultural and Contextual Perspectives on Developmental Risk and Well-Being <i>Jacob A. Burack and Louis A. Schmidt</i>	   1
 PART I: CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENTAL RISK AND WELL-BEING	
 2 Using Multicultural Research to Expand the Scope of Developmental Psychopathology <i>Thomas M. Achenbach</i>	   7
 3 Cultural Perspectives on Shyness-Inhibition <i>Xinyin Chen, Siman Zhao, and Fan Yang</i>	   39
 4 A Sociocultural Analysis of High-Risk Native American Children in Schools <i>Stephanie A. Fryberg and Peter A. Leavitt</i>	   57
 5 Developmental Perspectives on the Role of Cultural Identity in Well-Being: Evidence from Aboriginal Communities in Canada <i>Jacob A. Burack, Amy Bombay, Heidi Flores, Jillian Stewart, and Vladimir Ponizovsky</i>	   81

PART II: CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENTAL RISK AND WELL-BEING		
6	Peer Victimization: Understanding the Developmental Correlates of At-Risk Children and Youth <i>Jennifer M. Knack, Tracy Vaillancourt, Amanda Krygsmann, Steven Arnocky, Irene Vitoroulis, Jennifer Hepditch, and Christine Blain-Arcaro</i>	107
7	The Potential Risks and Adaptive Contributions of Elite Social Status to Youth Development <i>Wendy Troop-Gordon</i>	127
8	Culture and Context Modify Neural Correlates of Adolescent Risk-Taking Behavior <i>Christine L. Lackner and Sidney J. Segalowitz</i>	158
PART III: CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON ATYPICALITY		
9	Prematurity as a Context of Development at Risk <i>Lauren Drvaric, Jordana Waxman, Ryan J. Van Lieshout, and Louis A. Schmidt</i>	183
10	Maternal Depression and Children's Behavioral and Emotional Outcomes: A Review of Contextual and Individual-Level Moderators and Mediators <i>Matilda E. Nowakowski, Louis A. Schmidt, and Tracy Vaillancourt</i>	204
11	Fragile X-Associated Disorders: How the Family Environment and Genotype Interact <i>Marsha Mailick, Jan S. Greenberg, Leann E. Smith, Audra Sterling, Nancy Brady, Steven F. Warren, and Jinkuk Hong</i>	221
12	Developmental Approaches to Understanding and Treating Autism <i>Tony Charman</i>	254
	<i>Index</i>	287



Figures

2.1. Profile of syndrome scores from ratings of a 15-year-old boy by his father	<i>page 14</i>
2.2. Cross-informant comparisons of item ratings for a 15-year-old boy	16
2.3. Cross-informant comparisons of syndrome scores for a 15-year-old boy	18
2.4. Cross-informant Q correlations for a 15-year-old boy	19
2.5. Range of CBCL/6–18 Total Problems scores from the 5th to the 95th percentile for each society	26
2.6. CBCL Aggressive Behavior syndrome scores by gender and age for 24 cultures ( <i>N</i> = 47,987)	27
2.7. CBCL Internalizing scores by gender and age for 24 cultures ( <i>N</i> = 47,987)	28
2.8. YSR DSM-Oriented Affective Problems scores by gender and age for 24 cultures ( <i>N</i> = 27,206)	28
2.9. Cross-informant comparisons of Richard’s scores on DSM-oriented scales in relation to Society J norms for the CBCL, Society K norms for the TRF, and Society J norms for the YSR	32
8.1. Triadic Model patterned after Ernst, Pine, and Hardin (2006)	163
8.2. Topographic maps and waveforms depicting the FRN found in Segalowitz et al. (2012)	170
8.3. A proposed integration of the interactive nature of social and biological variables that contribute to risk-taking activity in adolescents	172
9.1. Relations among exposure to early adversity, stress vulnerability substrates/measures, and psychopathology	197

x	<i>Figures</i>	
11.1.	The impact of maternal responsivity on child expressive language: number of different words produced by child in interactional contexts	229
11.2.	Number of behavior problems by the son or daughter with FXS and log of awakening cortisol on the following morning for mothers with low (1 SD below the mean) and high (1 SD above the mean) activation ratios	240
11.3.	Curvilinear association between number of CGG repeats and depressive symptoms for premutation carrier mothers who experienced low (1 SD below the mean), average (at the mean), and high (1 SD above the mean) numbers of negative life events in the previous year	243
12.1.	Context and assessment of Preschool Autism Communication Trial (PACT) intervention	271

Tables

2.1 Societies that have provided data for multicultural norms	<i>page</i> 23
12.1 Early signs of autism in infancy from home movie studies	257
12.2 Early signs of autism in infancy from prospective screening studies	260
12.3 Early signs of autism in infancy from high-risk sibling studies	262
12.4 Summary of recent RCTs targeting social communication for under 5s with ASD	272

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-00885-4 - Cultural and Contextual Perspectives on Developmental Risk and Well-Being  
Edited by Jacob A. Burack and Louis A. Schmidt  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

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978-1-107-00885-4 - Cultural and Contextual Perspectives on Developmental Risk and Well-Being  
Edited by Jacob A. Burack and Louis A. Schmidt  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

xiv

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Series Editor's Preface

In 1970, Jean Piaget participated in a workshop that instigated vigorous discussion in higher education circles about the importance of traversing the boundaries across the disciplines. The workshop, entitled “L’interdisciplinarité – Problèmes d’enseignement et de recherche dans les universités,” was held in Nice, France, in September, and the proceedings were published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1972 as a monograph entitled *Interdisciplinarity: Problems of Teaching and Research in Universities*. This workshop and the book that resulted from it set the stage for ongoing debates about how best to view work going on at the intersection of disciplinary boundaries. Piaget’s remarks made clear that new conceptual frameworks were needed, frameworks that underscored the importance of augmenting disciplinary knowledge in order to address enduring challenges of our times. Whether to do so from multi-, trans-, or interdisciplinary bases and what precisely each of these constructs adds to disciplinary discussions has been hotly debated for the ensuing four decades. What Piaget was wrestling with in 1970 and many others have been pursuing since then are two enduring issues: the complexity of knowledge and the importance of viewing knowledge construction as a process embedded in real time. Piaget understood early on what has become more obvious now, namely the importance of going beyond disciplinary limitations both theoretically and methodologically. This insight has shaped modern thinking on knowledge and development in significant ways.

Around the same time Piaget spoke at the OECD workshop, a new society was formed. In 1970, the Jean Piaget Society (JPS) was founded and has since provided an internationally recognized forum for inquiry and advances about significant problems in the developmental sciences. The Society has had a long-standing commitment to developmental perspectives

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

and has been deeply concerned with theories and conceptualizations of development and the ways developmental perspectives connect to and influence research. Since renamed The Jean Piaget Society for Knowledge and Development, the Society has organized and sponsored a book series, an annual meeting of plenary addresses and scholarly presentations, a scholarly journal (*Cognitive Development*), and a website (<http://www.piaget.org>). Across venues, participating scholars come from a range of disciplines, including departments of psychology, anthropology, linguistics, sociology, biology, philosophy, and education.

The Society has had a long-standing dedication to the publication of a book series that addresses core problems in the developmental sciences. For more than 30 years, Lawrence Erlbaum Press (currently Psychology Press/Taylor and Francis) published the series. Each of the volumes in the Jean Piaget Symposium Series engages well-recognized scholars on a set of themes that bring together divergent disciplinary perspectives. The series, which has included nearly 40 published volumes, has dealt with topics such as human understanding, developmental psychopathology, concept formation, and relations between learning and development.

In a time when there appears to be a proliferation of edited volumes, one can ask what makes this series thrive. The high regard for these volumes has been due to the careful way interdisciplinary thinking has shed light on enduring issues with which scholars interested in human development are grappling. To a large measure, the rigorous system of cultivation and review plays a significant role in arriving at cutting-edge thinking that goes beyond juxtaposition of new ideas. Careful attention is given to taking a theme at the center of developmental science (e.g., epigenesis of mind; culture, thought, and development; social development and social justice; developmental social cognitive neuroscience) and weaving scholarship from neighboring disciplines into discussions in ways that hold the potential to significantly shape ongoing scientific discourse.

Each of the JPS series volumes emanates from the Society's themed annual meeting that includes plenary addresses and invited symposia, a meeting structure that itself is the outcome of a long and rigorous academic review process. Typically, several revisions are made in the proposal before it obtains approval from the full board of directors. The annual meeting organizers also serve as editors of the volume. To supplement chapters by the five or six plenary speakers, the volume editors typically invite other contributors to the volume. The editors also inform contributors about the requirements with regard to the volume's theme and scope. Finally, the



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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Series Editor's Preface*

xvii

editors engage in a thorough evaluation of each contribution, providing extensive feedback and soliciting revisions until it is of the required quality. This process ensures that extraordinary scholars will contribute to the volumes. In summary, we believe the book series has provided a distinctive intellectual contribution to the study of knowledge and development by focusing on developmental inquiry from an interdisciplinary perspective. Further information about the series can be found at <http://www.piaget.org/Series/series.html>.

This volume is the third in our new book series – Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Knowledge and Development: The Jean Piaget Symposium Series with Cambridge University Press. This volume continues to exemplify the strong interdisciplinary approach that has been central to all of our prior volumes. Edited by Jacob A. Burack and Louis A. Schmidt, *Cultural and Contextual Perspectives on Developmental Risk and Well-Being* continues the JPS series' tradition of providing a recognized forum for advancing inquiry about both enduring and emergent problems in the developmental sciences. The focus on both adaptive development and a holistic perspective on development as part of the study of development at risk provides an extremely important lens on human development. The authors in this volume also raise important questions by adopting a nuanced view of culture and context as they consider normative development. The volume not only stretches our thinking about what typical development and psychopathology look like when considered in tandem, but also provides insights into how the integration of theory and research about these important themes can translate into usable knowledge. As such, this newest volume continues to represent the goals of the series in important ways by paving the way for further interdisciplinary scholarship at the frontiers of new knowledge about human development.

Nancy Budwig  
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April 2013

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the invited keynote and symposia speakers along with the many attendees at the Jean Piaget Society meeting in Park City, Utah, in June 2009. We thank the Jean Piaget Society, and especially Eric Amsel, for inviting us and helping us organize the meeting. We thank Nancy Budwig, also from the Jean Piaget Society, and Adina Berk, Bhavani Ganesh Kumar, Eve Mayer, Alexandra Poreda, David Repetto, and Robert Swanson from Cambridge University Press and affiliate companies for their assistance in the preparation and publication of this volume. We thank Rhoda Inukpuk and her family for allowing us to use the artwork on the cover, Mark London from Galerie Elca London (Montreal) for providing the photograph, and Richard Murdoch from Art Nunavik, La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec for contacting the artist's family and obtaining the copyright. We thank all the authors for their wonderfully compelling and innovative contributions to the volume. We hope that this volume helps at least in some small way in promoting well-being among different groups of young people and their families.