



Contents

Preface iv
Correlation Guide xv
Introduction xvii

UNIT 1 GENERAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT 1

Issue 1. Does the Cultural Environment Influence Lifespan Development More than Our Genes? 2

YES: Paul Ehrlich and Marcus Feldman, from “Genes and Cultures: What Creates Our Behavioral Phenome?” *Current Anthropology* (February 2003) 4

NO: Gary Marcus, from “Making the Mind: Why We’ve Misunderstood the Nature-Nurture Debate,” *Boston Review* (December 2003/January 2004) 13

Stanford University professors of biology Paul Ehrlich and Marcus Feldman argue that human behavior exhibits such complexity that genetic programs simply can’t explain the way people develop. Psychologist and researcher Gary Marcus asserts that research clearly demonstrates how a relatively small number of genes influence our environmental learning by “cascading” to determine the paths of our behavioral development.

Issue 2. Are Peers More Important than Parents during the Process of Development? 24

YES: Judith Rich Harris, from “How to Succeed in Childhood,” *Wilson Quarterly* (Winter 1991) 26

NO: Howard Gardner, from “Do Parents Count?” *New York Times Book Review* (November 5, 1998) 35

Developmental psychology writer Judith Rich Harris presents a strong and provocative argument suggesting that parents do not influence child development to any significant degree, while peers and social groups have a primary influence. Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner reviews Harris’s work and suggests her argument is overstated and misleading—parents do matter.

Issue 3. Do Significant Innate Differences Influence the Career Success of Males and Females? 47

YES: Steven Pinker, from “The Science of Gender and Science: Pinker vs. Spelke: A Debate,” *Edge: The Third Culture* (May 2005) 49

NO: Elizabeth Spelke, from “The Science of Gender and Science: Pinker vs. Spelke: A Debate,” *Edge: The Third Culture* (May 2005) 60

After the Harvard president controversially suggested innate gender differences may play a role in men's disproportionate representation in science careers, cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker suggested that research does find clear innate differences between men and women in some basic cognitive abilities relevant to success. Harvard psychologist Elizabeth Spelke draws on research into cognitive development to suggest that the major reasons for any differences in career success lie in social, rather than genetic, forces.

UNIT 2 PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFANCY 73

Issue 4. Is Drinking Alcohol While Pregnant an Unnecessary Risk to Prenatal Development? 74

YES: Phyllida Brown, from "Drinking for Two," *New Scientist* (July 1, 2006) 76

NO: Julia Moskin, from "The Weighty Responsibility of Drinking for Two," *The New York Times* (November 29, 2006) 81

Science writer Phyllida Brown reviews contemporary research about the effects of alcohol exposure during prenatal development and concludes that total abstinence from drinking is the smart option during pregnancy. Journalist Julia Moskin finds the evidence against light drinking lacking, and argues that women should be allowed to decide for themselves if an occasional alcoholic beverage is harmful.

Issue 5. Is There a "Myth of the First Three Years"? 87

YES: Gwen J. Broude, from "Scatterbrained Child Rearing," *Reason* (December 2000) 89

NO: Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, from "Zero to Three: Response to *The Myth of the First Three Years*," <http://www.zerotothree.org/no-myth.html> 93

Gwen J. Broude, who teaches developmental psychology and cognitive science at Vassar College, reviews, supports, and augments John Bruer's idea that a "myth of the first three years" has falsely used neuroscience to claim that infancy is the only critical developmental period. Zero to Three, a national organization devoted to promoting healthy infant development, contradicts Bruer's idea by asserting that a great deal of diverse research supports the idea that the first three years are critical to development and success in adulthood.

Issue 6. Are There Good Reasons to Allow Infants to Consume Electronic Media, Such as Television? 99

YES: Victoria Rideout, Elizabeth Hamel, and the Kaiser Family Foundation, from "The Media Family: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers and their Parents" A Report from the Kaiser Family Foundation (May 2006) 101

NO: Ellen Wartella and Michael Robb, from "Young Children, New Media" *Journal of Children and Media* (Issue 1, 2007) 120

Victoria Rideout, Elizabeth Hamel, and the Kaiser Family Foundation find that television and electronic media allow families to cope with busy schedules and are of value to parents of infants. Ellen Wartella and Michael Robb, who are scholars of children and the media, describe limitations on infant's ability to learn from electronic media and note concerns about the diminishing of direct infant to parent interactions.

UNIT 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD AND MIDDLE CHILDHOOD 133

Issue 7. Is Advertising Responsible for Childhood Obesity? 134

YES: **The Kaiser Family Foundation**, from "The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity," *Issue Brief* (February 2004) 136

NO: **The Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Economics Staff**, from "Children's Exposure to Television Advertising in 1977 and 2004: Information for the Obesity Debate," *Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Economics Staff Report* (June 1, 2007) 150

In a review of research on media exposure and childhood obesity, the Kaiser Family Foundation concludes that exposure to advertising, more than inactivity, best explains the increasing rates of childhood obesity. In contrast, the Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Economics Staff specifically evaluated television advertising to children and found that increasing rates of childhood obesity do not correspond with increasing exposure to food advertising.

Issue 8. Does Emphasizing Academic Skills Help At-Risk Preschool Children? 159

YES: **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, from *Strengthening Head Start: What the Evidence Shows* (June 2003) 161

NO: **C. Cybele Raver and Edward F. Zigler**, from "Another Step Back? Assessing Readiness in Head Start," *Young Children* (January 2004) 173

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services argues that preschool programs can help young children most by emphasizing academic and cognitive skills. Professors C. Cybele Raver and Edward F. Zigler argue that overemphasizing academic and cognitive skills at the expense of social, emotional, and physical well-being is a mistake dependent on misguided efforts to make the entire educational system focused on concrete assessment.

Issue 9. Is Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD/ADHD) a Legitimate Medical Condition That Affects Childhood Behavior? 182

YES: **Michael Fumento**, from "Trick Question" *The New Republic* (February 2003) 184

NO: **Rogers H. Wright**, from "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: What It Is and What It Is Not," in Rogers H. Wright and

Nicholas A. Cummings, eds., *Destructive Trends in Mental Health: The Well-Intentioned Path to Harm* (Routledge, 2005) 191

Science journalist and writer Michael Fumento suggests that despite the extensive political controversy, it is clear that ADHD is a legitimate medical condition disrupting childhood. Psychologist Rogers Wright argues that ADHD is a transitory condition and fad diagnosis rather than an enduring disease.

UNIT 4 ADOLESCENCE 201

Issue 10. Should Contemporary Adolescents Be Engaged in More Structured Activities? 202

YES: Joseph L. Mahoney, Angel L. Harris, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, from "Organized Activity Participation, Positive Youth Development, and the Over-Scheduling Hypothesis," *Social Policy Report* (August 2006) 204

NO: Alvin Rosenfeld, from "Comments on 'Organized Activity Participation, Positive Youth Development, and the Over-Scheduling Hypothesis'," 212

Psychologist Joseph Mahoney and colleagues recognize the concern about "over-scheduling" but present research suggesting that the benefits to structured activities outweigh any costs. Child psychiatrist Alvin Rosenfeld asserts that all of the data suggest that most youth and adolescents need less structured activity and more balance.

Issue 11. Does the Adolescent Brain Make Risk Taking Inevitable? 219

YES: Laurence Steinberg, from "Risk Taking in Adolescence: New Perspectives From Brain and Behavioral Science," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* (April 2007) 221

NO: Michael Males, from "Does the Adolescent Brain Make Risk Taking Inevitable?: A Skeptical Appraisal," *Journal of Adolescent Research* (January 2009) 227

Although adolescent risk-taking has proved difficult to study and explain, psychology professor Laurence Steinberg claims brain science is now demonstrating that basic biological changes explain much about the issue. Sociologist Michael Males rejects "biodeterminism" as an oversimplification that exaggerates the effects of brain age and ignores the realities of social and economic differences.

UNIT 5 YOUTH AND EMERGING ADULTHOOD 239

Issue. 12 Is There a "Narcissism Epidemic" Among Contemporary Young Adults? 240

YES: Jean M. Twenge and Joshua D. Foster, from "Mapping the scale of the narcissism epidemic: Increases in narcissism 2002–2007 within ethnic groups." *Journal of Research in Personality* (December 2008) 242

NO: M. Brent Donnellan, Kali H. Trzesniewski, and Richard W. Robins, from “An emerging epidemic of narcissism or much ado about nothing?” *Journal of Research in Personality* (June 2009) 247

Jean M. Twenge and Joshua D. Foster present evidence from surveys of college students that reinforces their claim of a “narcissism epidemic.” Research psychologists M. Brent Donnellan, Kali H. Trzesniewski, and Richard W. Robins take the evidence used by Twenge and colleagues and draw different conclusions, arguing claims of an epidemic are greatly exaggerated.

Issue 13. Are College Graduates Unprepared for Adulthood and the World of Work? 256

YES: Mel Levine, from “College Graduates Aren’t Ready for the Real World,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 18, 2005) 258

NO: Frank F. Furstenberg et al., from “Growing Up Is Harder to Do,” *Contexts* (Summer 2004) 263

Professor of pediatrics, author, and child-rearing expert Mel Levine argues that contemporary colleges are producing a generation of young adults who are psychologically “unready” for entering adulthood and the world of work. Sociologist Frank Furstenberg and colleagues assert that major social changes have extended the transition to adulthood, and college graduates are the group most apt to cope with these social changes.

Issue 14. Is There Such a Thing as “Emerging Adulthood”? 270

YES: Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, from “Emerging Adulthood: What Is It, and What Is It Good For?” *Child Development Perspectives* (December 2007) 272

NO: Leo B. Hendry and Marion Kloep, from “Conceptualizing Emerging Adulthood: Inspecting the Emperor’s New Clothes?” *Child Development Perspectives* (December 2007) 280

Developmental psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett has earned wide acclaim among scholars for defining an “emerging adulthood” as a distinctly modern stage of the life-span. Life-span research scholars Lew B. Hendry and Marion Kloep argue that defining emerging adulthood as a discrete stage provides a misleading account of the age period between the late teens and the mid- to late twenties.

UNIT 6 MIDDLE ADULTHOOD 291

Issue 15. Is the Institution of Marriage at Risk? 292

YES: Andrew J. Cherlin, from “The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* (September 2004) 294

NO: Frank Furstenberg, from “Can Marriage Be Saved?” *Dissent Magazine* (Summer 2005) 308

Sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin suggests that the institution of marriage is losing its preeminence and may become just one of many relationship options for couples. Frank Furstenberg, on the other hand, proposes that the institution of marriage will persist with appropriate government policies and support to families.

Issue 16. Is Religion a Pure Good in Facilitating Well-Being during Adulthood? 316

YES: David G. Myers, from "Wanting More in an Age of Plenty," *Christianity Today* (April 2000) 318

NO: Julie Juola Exline, from "Stumbling Blocks on the Religious Road: Fractured Relationships, Nagging Vices, and the Inner Struggle to Believe," *Psychological Inquiry* (vol. 13, 2002) 327

Psychologist and author David Myers asserts that religion is an antidote to the discontent many adults feel despite incredible relative material wealth. Professor of psychology Julia Juola Exline asserts that research suggesting religion to be a pure good for adult development neglects to account for the fact that it can also be a source of significant sadness, stress, and confusion.

Issue 17. Are Professional Women "Opting Out" of Work by Choice? 339

YES: Linda Hirshman, from "Homeward Bound," *The American Prospect Online* (November 21, 2005) 341

NO: Pamela Stone, from "The Rhetoric and Reality of 'Opting Out,'" *Contexts* (Fall 2007) 351

Scholar Linda Hirshman identifies as a feminist, but is frustrated with findings suggesting that successful and well-qualified women have put themselves in situations where it makes sense to prioritize parenthood over work. Sociologist Pamela Stone interviewed a different but also very successful sample of women who sacrificed careers for parenthood and found that while they perceived themselves to be making a choice, in fact they were tightly constrained by traditional gender roles and inflexible workplaces.

UNIT 7 LATER ADULTHOOD 363

Issue 18. Is More Civic Engagement Among Older Adults Necessarily Better? 364

YES: Sheila R. Zedlewski and Barbara A. Butrica, from "Are We Taking Full Advantage of Older Adults' Potential?" *Perspectives on Productive Aging* (Number 9, December 2007) 366

NO: Marty Martinson, from "Opportunities or Obligations? Civic Engagement and Older Adults," *Generations* (Winter 2006–2007) 375

Urban Institute researchers Sheila R. Zedlewski and Barbara A. Butrica, writing as part of a broader project to investigate the changing nature of retirement, argue that promoting civic engagement is good for both individuals and society. Critical gerontologist Marty Martinson acknowledges that promoting civic engagement in old age can be useful, but suggests that

it also serves to shift attention away from broader social problems and responsibilities toward individuals who may or may not benefit from conventional civic engagement.

Issue 19. Is “Mild Cognitive Impairment” Too Similar to Normal Aging to be a Relevant Concept? 384

YES: Janice E. Graham and Karen Ritchie, from “Mild Cognitive Impairment: Ethical Considerations for Nosological Flexibility in Human Kinds,” in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* (March 2006) 386

NO: Ronald C. Petersen, from “Mild Cognitive Impairment Is Relevant,” in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* (March 2006) 395

Philosophers Janice E. Graham and Karen Ritchie raise concerns that rigidly defining Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) as a disorder associated with aging artificially creates the harmful impression that the conditions of old age are merely biomedical problems. Medical doctor and researcher Ronald C. Petersen has been a prominent proponent of defining MCI as an intermediate stage between normal aging and Alzheimer’s disease. In this selection he counters Graham and Ritchie by emphasizing the usefulness of MCI as a diagnosis.

Issue 20. Should the Terminally Ill Be Able to Have Physicians Help Them Die? 402

YES: Richard T. Hull, from “The Case for Physician-Assisted Suicide,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 2003) 404

NO: Margaret A. Somerville, from “The Case against Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 2003) 408

Philosopher Richard T. Hull claims that allowing physician-assisted suicide will appropriately give control over dying to patients and families rather than medical professionals. Ethicist Margaret Somerville instead asserts that allowing euthanasia oversimplifies the complex issues at the end of life, and allows people to ignore the imperative of providing appropriate care.

Contributors 414