

5/13/16

REFLECTIONS ON MY LEGACY AS A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FACULTY

MEMBER:

WHAT I NEVER TOLD THAT YOU PROBABLY SHOULD KNOW NOW

Diana Slaughter Kotzin, PhD

It is a pleasure to see former students from Human Development in the audience. I'm looking forward to speaking with you, as well as former faculty colleagues. My undergraduate degree from Chicago's college was in Human Development, and by fall 1962, I was a first year student in HD's graduate program. I did my Master's degree in aging, working on a research project focused on the effects of being institutionalized on the aged, a cooperative effort between HD and the Department of Psychiatry.

Therefore, in the summer 1963, I did not go to the March on Washington. I was coding data for this, my first, research project. I think Dr. Morton Lieberman was a p.i. of that project, and that Dr. Sheldon Tobin, who supervised me, was a co-p.i. The idea of development during the entire life span was then very special and uniquely defining of HD. I credit the late Bernice Neugarten and her mentor, Dr. Robert Havighurst, for these insights into the aging process and its effects on human development.

You can imagine that, as I will be 75 later this year, my early background in aging has finally become very handy! For example, I remember well the finding

that if one can survive the stress of the first 6-8 weeks in transition to a nursing home, one can adjust and actually live quite a bit longer...

I did a double major in the interdepartmental clinical psychology program because at the time I thought I would become a clinical psychologist. However, Chicago pushed research as the vehicle for the solution of social and individual problems and, very impressed, I decided to (1) complete my clinical training, but (2) be the best researcher I could. I subsequently found that nexus while doing research with the first summer 1965 Evanston Head Start program under the supervision of Dr. Robert Hess.

I chose not to begin my graduate research with Bob Hess, but after I completed my MA with Shelley and doctoral prelims, I did choose to conduct research in the broad area of societal inequality, child and family poverty, and educational implications. That research, for which my dissertation later won an award, became the basis of my subsequent career and lifelong interest as a university professor until I retired in 2011 as the Constance E. Clayton Professor Emeritus in Urban Education at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Bob Hess, himself, had been one of two students in HD of one of the Committee's co-founders, Dr. Allison Davis. Dr. Lee Rainwater, critic and analyst of the infamous "Moynihan report" was the other. Allison received his doctorate from Yale in anthropology. He was the first African American to have graduate faculty status at any U.S. elite university, publishing his famous Harvard lecture on the impact of poverty on children's educability in 1948. He, and his colleague at Chicago, the late Benjamin Bloom, worked on "culture-fair" tests, and Bob

Hess, graduate student, assisted them. As Hess' student, I inherited this legacy, but it was one that neither he nor others in HD personally spoke of. Hess did tell me that he admired Allison very much, and that he had named one of his sons after him. However, I pieced together the other details after attending Chicago's Festschrift for Allison Davis years later.

I'm still fascinated by this academic area. For example, right now in retirement I am reading into Dr. Robert Gordon's book, entitled *THE RISE AND FALL OF AMERICAN GROWTH: THE U.S. STANDARD OF LIVING SINCE THE CIVIL WAR*. Gordon, an economic historian at Northwestern University where I was a professor for 20 years before going to Penn, argues that the US, and the Western world have passed their peak of growth and productivity, facing "headwinds" that offer little hope of return to the "golden age" experienced between 1890 on up to about 1972. The New Deal contributed to innovative reorganization of business and, after WWII, the nation saw a surge in labor productivity that was unprecedented and most importantly, permanent. According to Gordon, despite the recent rise of the entertainment industry and the important innovation of telecommunications and the Internet, our overall economic trajectory is downward, in comparison to this earlier period of unprecedented U.S. innovation, growth, and productivity. Further, Gordon believes this time period to be unprecedented in world economic history.

At Northwestern University, in the interdisciplinary Human Development and Social Policy Program that I co-founded in the early 1980s with Professors Bernice Neugarten, Fay Cook, and Dan Lewis, we agreed that we needed to have an economist as part of the faculty to broaden the discussion of social context

and its impact on the processes of human development. Our first hire was Dr. Ann Meier (sp), our second, Dr. Rebecca Blank, and our third, Dr. Greg Duncan.

In spring 1993, the Early Education/Child Development Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, published a "Tribute to Robert D. Hess", since Bob had co-founded this group in AERA and was afflicted with Lou Gehrig's disease. Irving Sigel, the distinguished research scientist emeritus at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey spoke and indicated that Hess "...deserves to be acknowledged as one of the significant figures in developmental and educational research..." Sigel reported he had "...known Bob since our student days at the University of Chicago where we both were involved in the Human Development program..."

Students of Bob Hess, including the late Jere Brophy and myself, offered reflections and tributes in this special issue. My tribute included these words:

"...As an ethnic minority graduate student, I was not an 'easy' graduate student, a fact that any of my mentors, including my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Robert D. Hess, could probably say. I was a very young, for graduate work, urban-born African American woman from a working class background with no family members who had prior college educations. Many times during the five years of my graduate work, I felt especially poor and naïve, invisible, alienated, and even openly hostile, just as some younger scholars have described.

Fortunately, my mentors, in those graduate years...as well as subsequent mentors in the first five years of my beginning professional life, were able to look past that persona to see my love of reading and of study in the social and

psychological sciences, to see my growing commitment to the field of child and family studies, even my developing “love” of research. Fortunately, they found a way to include me in their ongoing research, to give me something to do... (that) articulated with my community and family of origin in a way that I thought it worth doing, or at least attempting... Fortunately, they let me see them as real people, with academic and scientific interests, aims, and goals. Fortunate for me indeed, for if they had not, I would not be here...today. Thank you, Bob Hess, for being at the forefront of those to give me the opportunity to have the professional life of my young dreams...”

These words apply equally to my other beloved human development mentors, Sheldon Tobin, Robert LeVine, who introduced me to cross-cultural studies of psychology and human development particularly in Africa, Bernice Neugarten, and my husband, Joseph Kotzin, whom I first met in fall 1962 in Larry Kohlberg’s Child Development class!

(Show photo of Joe and I at the Spring 1965 graduate student party)

Many thanks to Rick (Shweder) and Margaret (Beale Spencer) for the opportunity to share these thoughts with *my* former Human Development students and colleagues at the University of Chicago in this setting in the year of the 75th anniversary of Human Development and of my life.