

The Developmental Sciences: State and Fate of Research Funding

AAAS Symposium
27 December 1970
Chicago



One of our critical needs today is that of maximizing each person's individual potential. In order to do this, it is necessary to achieve a better understanding of man's biobehavioral development. This must include an understanding of man's genetic endowment, of the developmental processes involved in prenatal and postnatal growth, and of the influence of experiential factors, both before and after birth. There are complex interdependencies among these factors that act to shape and structure one's biobehavioral destiny.

The investigation of developmental processes and the manner in which these processes are influenced and affected by biological and behavioral factors is not the domain of any one discipline. Instead, researchers from many areas have been studying developmental events within the framework of their own science.

During the past 15 years there has been a rapid rise in the number of studies investigating developmental processes and their underlying mechanisms. Researchers from various fields of biological, behavioral, and social sciences have been interested in and have made contributions to our understanding about development. These contributions range from studies of embryogenesis and early postnatal development to investigations concerning how best to rear children in day-care centers and nursery schools, and how

best to educate them in public schools. One broad generality which has emerged from these researches, and which encompasses both human and nonhuman subjects, is that the appropriate manipulation of biological or experiential factors during early development, including prenatal development, may have far-reaching effects on the subsequent behavioral and physi-

ological characteristics of the subject.

One of the difficulties of doing work in the area of development is that the researcher must be willing to make a long-term commitment of himself and his facilities. Thus, it is necessary that the researcher be assured of long-term stable financial support so that he can accomplish his objectives. With the general reduction of federal funding for research, it seems appropriate to assess the status of funding within the developmental sciences since the necessity of a long-term commitment represents a rather unique situation.

Two of the principal speakers will review the substantive contributions of developmental research. The first will deal primarily with human studies and their contributions to the understanding of human development, while the second will be concerned with the advances to knowledge from developmental studies with animals. The other two main speakers are administrators who represent agencies which fund research, one is a public agency, the other is private. They will describe and discuss the funding policies of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and of the Sloan Foundation. The discussants represent the areas of child psychiatry, developmental psychobiology, and research administration.

VICTOR H. DENENBERG
*Department of Behavioral Sciences,
University of Connecticut, Storrs*

Speakers and Topics

27 December (morning)

Arranger: Victor H. Denenberg
(University of Connecticut).

Opening Remarks, Victor H. Denenberg.

Human Research and Human Affairs, Sheldon White.

Animal Research and Human Affairs, Seymour Levine.

Discussants, Leon Eisenberg and Gilbert Meier.

27 December (afternoon)

Funding of Developmental Research by NICHD, Gilbert Woodside.

Funding for Multidisciplinary Basic Research by a Private Foundation, Kenneth Klivington.

Discussant, Richard Louttit.