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Member Spotlight: Nancy E. Hill, Ph.D.

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What interested you in becoming a developmental scientist?

I grew up as the youngest of 8 children in a highly diverse community and schools. As an introvert and good observer, I noticed the different values and beliefs people held—religious, cultural, and others. I knew what

my own family believed and was curious about others. More than what people believed and valued, I wondered *why* they believed. As a teenager, chasing the question of "why," I became interested in the subconscious as it related to these beliefs and values and started reading theorists like Jung and Freud. I was hooked! The unconscious, dreamlife, values, persuasion—all of it. I wanted to study psychology. There were no psychology courses in my high school. I couldn't wait until college to take my first psychology course. I drank it in. After intro psychology, I took courses in all areas of psychology—social, cognitive, developmental, experimental, and industrial-organizational. I was a research assistant in experimental labs working with rats and primates and in developmental psychology labs with human 3rd and 6th graders doing Piaget tasks. I was in search of the human mind and its values. It became clear to me that the first beliefs and values one takes on are the most salient. This led me to want to understand parents, parenting, and family as the first "shapers" of values and beliefs. As I took developmental and social psychology courses, it became clear to me that developmental stage matters, and that adolescence is a sensitive period for the internalization of values and beliefs. Finally, coming full circle, beyond the family, it was clear to me that race, ethnicity, and culture provide defining and connecting values. I wanted to understand these broader racial, ethnic, and cultural narratives as they related to the values families instill and children internalize, especially among African American families. Developmental science was the only field where I could bring all of these pieces together in the study of the individual in context.

Do you have a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental to your career and, if so, whom and how?

There are so many mentors. It is impossible to name them all. I like to think of mentors in three ways: mirrors, windows, and guiding lights (Hill & Redding, 2021). Mirrors are those who remind you of who you are and your talents. *Mirrors provide affirmation*. I will name just a few *mirrors* in my life. Hiram Fitzgerald (MSU) took me under his wing and mentored me through my dissertation and the completion of my Ph.D. Although I did not work directly on his research projects, he affirmed the significance of my research interests on upward mobility, social class, and African Americans and affirmed my place as a scholar when I was in doubt. The members of the Study Group on Race, Culture and Ethnicity are mirrors, including Velma McBride Murry, Emilie Smith, Ellen Pinderhughes, Diane Hughes, Deborah Johnson, Howard Stevenson, Paul Spicer, Rosie Ceballo, Hunh-Nhu (Mimi) Le, Ruth Chao, and Nancy Whitesell. The Study Group, not only affirmed the idea that we could study culture, race, and ethnicity in deeper ways across ethnic groups and disciplines, had been a source of immense support and affirmation across my career path.

Windows are those who show you all that is possible. Mentors helped me dream big—bigger than I imagined. Among the windows are Mark Roosa (ASU) and George Knight (ASU), who were my mentors when I was a postdoctoral fellow. They helped me to dream bigger about how to link research and practice, to think carefully about measurement and conceptualization across cultures and ethnicity, and how to disentangle race, socioeconomic status, and marginalization. Linda Burton and Ana Mari Cauce are role models and windows that helped me dream big about collaborative research on race, culture, and ethnicity and about my career path. Of course, The members of the Study Group are significant windows in dreaming big about research and colleagueship.

Finally, *guiding lights show you the pathway to your goals.* There are so many people who showed me how to do this work. Many have already been named. I will add two more here. Ray Montemayor (Ohio State) was my undergraduate honors thesis advisor. He taught the very first course on adolescent development that I took. It set everything in motion. He guided me in conducting my very first research project and showed me the pathway from undergraduate to graduate school. It is that first leap that makes all the difference. Also, I cannot forget Lerita Coleman (Agnes Scott) is a *guiding light*. Through a few timely and unexpected conversations, she drew back the curtain and unpacked the tenure process so wholly, openly, and honestly that I felt prepared to embark on the uncertain journey of an assistant professor. I will never forget those conversations because I 'didn't know what I didn't know.'

What words of wisdom might you pass on to someone on their very first day after deciding to get a Ph.D. in developmental science or related?

Stay true to your goals both your reason for embarking on a Ph.D. and your interests. In doing so, stay open to new ideas, methodologies, and theories. Innovation often happens at the intersection of your own interests and someone else's. The path to the Ph.D. can be a lonely one at times, nurture your friendships in the field. The friendships and collaborations you make during graduate school will last a lifetime.

What's your favorite aspect of SRCD membership?

I love the conferences. The Biennial Meeting is so intellectually stimulating and full of life. I love reconnecting with old friends and meeting new friends. I love being able to learn about research outside of my area and learning about the newest research of my colleagues. I love the celebration of developmental science. It is one giant party. I love the special topics meetings but for a different reason. I love gathering with people who share my intellectual interests and space in order to dig deep into the research and nurture deep friendships

and collaborations.

What does the Black Caucus mean to you?

In my undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral training I never had an African American professor. Every single class I took, lab I worked in, was led by a White professor. I am grateful to them and the ones with whom I worked most closely understood me. However, the absence of seeing my own likeness and culture represented in my training loomed. Discovering the Black Caucus at my very first SRCD Biennial Meeting in 1993 in New Orleans and meeting African American scholars studying African American children and families were game changing for me. I wasn't alone. There was a place where my whole existence belonged. The Black Caucus pre-conferences not only focus on research but there is a since of community and shared culture. I blended in and exhaled. Over the years, I have shared my best work and best ideas in the context of the Black Caucus preconference and discussed them with Black Caucus members. I benefited from insights on theoretical and methodological topics from people with a deep and nuanced understanding of African American children and families. I also benefited from the sense of family and belonging that is central to the Black Caucus. The Black Caucus has given me a deep sense of belonging in the field.

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