



**Macrosystem Challenges to Lifespan Human Development:  
*Advancing Conceptualizations, Methodologies, and Strategic Responses***

**Society for the Study of Human Development 2021-22 Conference Series**

## **Program Details by Month**

### **NOVEMBER DETAILS (Monday & Tuesday Nov. 1-2, 2021)**

#### **Conference Organization**

Individuals' developmental trajectories and outcomes are affected by personal characteristics, behaviors, and experiences. These individual qualities do not emerge in isolation, however. They are co-created as part of a dynamic system which involves the distal, overarching macrosystem, described by Bronfenbrenner (1994) as "a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture [including] belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options." Macrosystems provide contexts for development, and do so differently across history, lifespans, and social groups.

Our contemporary macrosystem seems especially replete with threats. Some (like COVID) are newly emerging; others (like racism and environmental injustice) are long-standing, but increasingly visible to greater swaths of humankind. The theme of the SSHD 2021-22 Conference Series is designed to share and encourage scholarship that advances conceptualizations of macrosystem challenges; the methodologies that may be used to study them (e.g., new methods for data collection, analysis, or communication); or strategies that may be used to respond to such challenges (e.g., societal interventions, policies, or personal practices aimed at eliminating, reducing, or at least sidestepping negative consequences of a macrosystem threat).

#### **Conference Organization**

The conference series is distributed across four months each having a Monday-Tuesday pair of events (Nov 1-2, Feb 7-8, April 4-5, June 13-14). Mondays contain Invited Keynote Sessions focused on a particular theme; Tuesdays provide SSHD-sponsored events plus accepted symposium and poster submissions addressing the theme or SSHD interests more generally. Themes for Keynote Sessions are the following:

- **NOVEMBER:** Conceptualizing Macrosystems
- **FEBRUARY:** Community Macrosystems
- **APRIL:** Attitudinal Macrosystems
- **JUNE:** Existential Challenges to the Macrosystem

This document contains **NOVEMBER MONDAY AND TUESDAY DETAILS**. An **abbreviated version of the entire Conference Series** is [here](https://sshdonline.org/21-22-series-program-at-a-glance/) (or paste this URL into a browser: <https://sshdonline.org/21-22-series-program-at-a-glance/>). All events are via Zoom.

**Monday, November 1, 2021, 12:00 pm – 3:30 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

## **Invited Keynote Session**

### **Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Macrosystems**

*What are macrosystems? Why do they matter? How do conceptualizations and methodologies used to examine and understand macrosystems affect the study of human development? How can resulting scholarship be used to generate, implement, and evaluate policies and programs?*

In the opening Keynote Session, the conference organizer, **Lynn Liben**, will overview the purpose and structure of the SSHD 2021-22 Conference Series and will then host a conversation about the conference theme with two leaders in the field of human development—**Lawrence Aber** and **Cynthia Garcia Coll**. Drawing on their decades of experience in human development, Aber and Garcia Coll will reflect on the evolving ways that macrosystems or contexts have been conceptualized, ignored, measured, and used in the study of human development. They will share how they have thought about and incorporated macrosystems and contexts in their own work, and offer suggestions for how scholars can respect and build on the diversity of people and contexts in future research and action.

Part II of the keynote event will include “illustrations and extensions” to showcase projects in which macrosystems or contexts have played a central role. First, **Dana Townsend** and **Mark Cummings** will describe a longitudinal project of youth in Northern Ireland. They will focus their presentation on youth’s emotional-security outcomes in relation to the political macrosystem—a context in which levels of tension and unrest are constantly changing. In addition to presenting substantive findings about emotional development, the speakers will discuss methodological challenges in international, longitudinal research, and the challenges and rewards of creating a new way to assess the political macrosystem.

The second presentation will be given by **Kim Bard**, a comparative developmental psychologist who studies social and cognitive phenomena, including the process of joint attention (JA). Recognizing that conclusions are incomplete and distorted if data are drawn exclusively from “WEIRD” societies (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, see Henrich 2020). Bard and colleagues study JA in multiple and diverse samples of social partners (humans and chimpanzees), interacting in their everyday (and highly diverse) socio-ecologies, and using culturally inclusive definitions of key constructs. Bard will share methods and findings, and discuss both rewards and challenges of studying phenomena inclusively.

Following the conversations and empirical presentations, the session will close with additional discussions with input from both presenters and those in attendance during the Keynote Session. **Michael Cole**, a longstanding champion of studying development within ecological and cultural settings, will begin by offering some comments about the prior presentations and about some of his approaches to the context of human development, including his thinking about the importance of addressing the context of historical and ontogenetic time scales.

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## **WELCOME AND CONFERENCE OVERVIEW**

**Monday, November 1, 2021, 12:00 pm – 12:15 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

### **Lynn S. Liben**

Evan Pugh University Professor of Psychology, Human Development, and Education  
The Pennsylvania State University  
[liben@psu.edu](mailto:liben@psu.edu)

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## **PART I. KEYNOTE CONVERSATION**

**Monday, November 1, 2021, 12:15 pm – 1:15 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

### ***Reflections on Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Macrosystems: Looking Back, Sideways, and Ahead***

### **Lawrence Aber**

Willner Family Professor of Psychology and Public Policy; and University Professor  
New York University  
[lawrence.aber@nyu.edu](mailto:lawrence.aber@nyu.edu)

### **Cynthia Garcia Coll**

Charles Pitts Robinson and John Palmer Barstow Professor Emerita, Brown University  
Adjunct Professor in the Pediatrics Department at the University of Puerto Rico Medical School  
[cynthia.garciacoll@upr.edu](mailto:cynthia.garciacoll@upr.edu)

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## **PART II. ILLUSTRATIONS AND EXTENSIONS**

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### **ILLUSTRATION #1**

**Monday, November 1, 2021, 1:30 pm – 2:00 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

### ***Measuring and Studying the Impact of the Political Macrosystem: A Longitudinal Study of Youth in Northern Ireland***

### **Dana Townsend**

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Specialist  
Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) Foundation, Washington, D.C.  
[dtownsend@sams-usa.net](mailto:dtownsend@sams-usa.net)

and

### **Mark Cummings**

William J. Shaw Center for Children and Families Professor of Psychology  
University of Notre Dame  
[cummings.10@nd.edu](mailto:cummings.10@nd.edu)

### **Abstract**

45 years after the introduction of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, empirical research incorporating the macrosystem remains scarce. In many contexts, however, macro-level dynamics can have a profound impact on human development. This is especially the case within politically divisive and volatile settings where intergroup tension and threatening rhetoric can heavily influence one's experience of the world. This study integrates five years of coded news reports (N=2,797) from Northern Ireland with five years of survey data among families in Belfast (N=999) to assess the interrelation between the sociopolitical climate, direct exposure to sectarian violence, and adolescents' emotional insecurity. Multilevel moderation analyses showed that adolescents' emotional response to violence exposure varied based on what was happening in the macrosystem, their identification as Catholic or Protestant, and their cumulative level of violence exposure throughout the study period. A thematic analysis of the news articles further highlighted how major events during the study period might explain these findings. This study advances empirical and methodological knowledge of process relations between individuals and their macro-environment.

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## **ILLUSTRATION #2**

**Monday, November 1, 2021, 2:00 pm – 2:30 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

### ***Contextualizing Infant Social Cognition: Rewards and Challenges in Decolonizing the Study of Joint Attention***

**Kim Bard**

Professor of Comparative Developmental Psychology  
Psychology Department, University of Portsmouth, UK  
[Kim.bard@port.ac.uk](mailto:Kim.bard@port.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

Joint attention, an early form of triadic connectedness among infants, social partners, and shared topics, is an important developmental milestone. Developmental theories link joint attention with language and theory of mind, while evolutionary theories suggest it is the beginning of human unique social cognition. The vast majority of studies, however, have prioritized the behavioral manifestations and belief systems of WEIRD settings where infants are expected to initiate visual engagements with parents about objects. Our big challenge was to develop a culturally-inclusive scheme for describing joint attention that allows for all types of engagement experiences (e.g., touch in proximal caregiving practices), all types of shared topics (e.g., social activity), and the many varieties of belief systems that infants experience around the world (e.g., expectations that infants obey and fit in) that could be applied to our multiple and diverse samples of human and chimpanzee infants. We accomplished this by merging a top-down perspective (i.e., triadic connectedness) with bottom-up contextualization. The joy was to observe the many behavioral variations of joint attention by infants in their everyday settings. Triadic connectedness was very common in all groups of human and chimpanzee infants, suggesting that a decolonized definition captures normativity. There was significant variation in the behavioral forms of joint attention, highlighting the extent to which social cognition is contextualized, already at 1 year of age. We found no indication that joint attention was unique to humans. We suggest that current evolutionary and developmental theories of social cognition require more inclusive and diverse databases that captures contextualized joint attention in humans and other great apes.

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**PART III. CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS**

**Monday, November 1, 2021, 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

***Past Lacuna, Insights, Solutions, and Contemporary Challenges***

Discussant:

**Michael Cole**

Emeritus Distinguished Professor, Department of Psychology  
University of California, San Diego  
[mcole@ucsd.edu](mailto:mcole@ucsd.edu)

Speakers' Panel:

**Lawrence Aber, Kim Bard, Michael Cole,  
Cynthia Garcia Coll, Mark Cummings, Dana Townsend**

Attendees:

Comments & Questions via Zoom

Chair:

**Lynn Liben**

Moderator:

**Kingsley Schroeder**

Springfield College  
[kschroeder@springfield.edu](mailto:kschroeder@springfield.edu)

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**Tuesday, November 2, 2021, 12:30 pm – 3:50 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**  
**Society-Sponsored and Submitted Programs**

**DIVERSITY SCIENCE INITIATIVE (DSI) ROUNDTABLE**  
**Tuesday, November 2, 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

***Can We Talk? Social Justice, Culture, and Race in  
Lifespan Developmental Inquiry***

*Co-Organizers & Co-Chairs:*

**Deborah J. Johnson**, Michigan State University

**Yoko Yamamoto**, Brown University

*Panelists:*

**Mona Abo-Zena**, University of Massachusetts Boston

**Alan Meca**, The University of Texas at San Antonio

**Yoko Yamamoto**, Brown University

**Kristine Ajrouch**, Eastern Michigan University

**Emilie P. Smith**, Michigan State University

**Abstract**

“Can we Talk?” is a program echoed in the work of Howard C. Stevenson and his colleagues (2014; 2019) about protective developmental mechanisms for managing discrimination and microaggressions in daily life and confronting antiracist sentiment where it stands. Using “can we talk” as a metaphor, this roundtable aims to facilitate a community conversation about the application of diversity science to life - course research and lifespan development to advance inclusiveness, equity, and social justice in intellectual inquiry. The roundtable brings together a panel of national scholars for brief insightful commentary on this topic. Their research emphasizes identities, socialization, psychological and educational processes of racially, ethno-religiously, culturally, and/or linguistically minority children, adolescents, and adults. Topics discussed in this roundtable will include discrimination, marginality, power, racism, and inequality, and contexts shaping them. Methodological issues, as well as unique and innovative research methods that help to promote diversity science, will also be examined.

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**SSHD BIENNIAL BUSINESS MEETING**

**Tuesday, November 2, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

Chair:

**Carolyn Aldwin**

*President of SSHD*

*Oregon State University*

Participants:

*Officers & Members of the Steering Committee*

## **Agenda**

**Reports on 2019-2021:** Conference (President-Elect Lynn Liben); Finances (Treasurer Loriena Yancura); Operations (Executive Secretary Monika Ardelt); Membership (Chair Noah Webster); Journal (Editor Michael Cunningham and Publications Committee Chair, Joseph Fitzgerald); Website (Webmaster Anthony Dick); Emerging Scholars (Chair Jen Agans); Activities (Chair Jen Urban); Publicity (Chair Yoko Yamamoto); Diversity Science Initiative (Deborah Johnson)

**Announcement of SSHD Awards:** Co-Chairs, Toni Antonucci & Rose DiBiase

**Announcement and Introduction of the President-Elect:** Election Co-Chairs Willis Overton & David Henry Feldman

**Closing Remarks; Passing the Gavel:** Outgoing President Carolyn Aldwin and Incoming President Lynn Liben

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## **NETWORKING FOR ALL CONFERENCE ATTENDEES**

**Tuesday, November 2, 3:00 pm – 3:50 pm (EDT: UTC– 05:00)**

*Co-Organizers & Co-Chairs:*

*Jen Agans, The Pennsylvania State University*

*Kingsley Schroeder, Springfield College*

## **Abstract**

The SSHD Emerging Scholars Committee welcomes both emerging and established conference attendees to a networking event to meet other SSHD conference attendees and members, discuss research, get and give career advice, or just hang out. This event will feature two rounds of themed breakout rooms, each co-hosted by an emerging and established scholar. (**Note.** Once in the Zoom room, you will be able to move freely among breakout rooms within each session.)

### **3:00 pm – 3:25 pm Breakout Rooms for Research-Interest Topics**

- Infancy through middle childhood (Hosts: Deepti Gupta and Megan McClelland)
- Adolescence and young adulthood (Hosts: Barrett Scroggs and Jen Urban)
- Adulthood and gerontology (Hosts: Shelbie Turner and Monika Ardelt)
- Diversity Science in domestic and cross-cultural research (Hosts: Aura Mishra and Deborah Johnson)
- General chat (Hosts: Jen Agans and John Geldhof)

### **3:25 pm – 3:50 pm Breakout Rooms for Career-Related Topics**

- Early career (Hosts: Shelbie Turner and Lori Yancura)
- Tenure / mid-career (Hosts: Jen Agans and Mike Cunningham)
- Data collection & analysis (Hosts: Aura Mishra and John Geldof)
- Grant writing & securing funding (Hosts: Barrett Scroggs and Carolyn Aldwin)
- Writing & publishing (Hosts: Deepti Gupta and Jen Urban)
- Alternatives to academic careers (Hosts: Kathy Sias and Elizabeth Day)
- General chat (Hosts: Noah Webster and Toni Antonucci)