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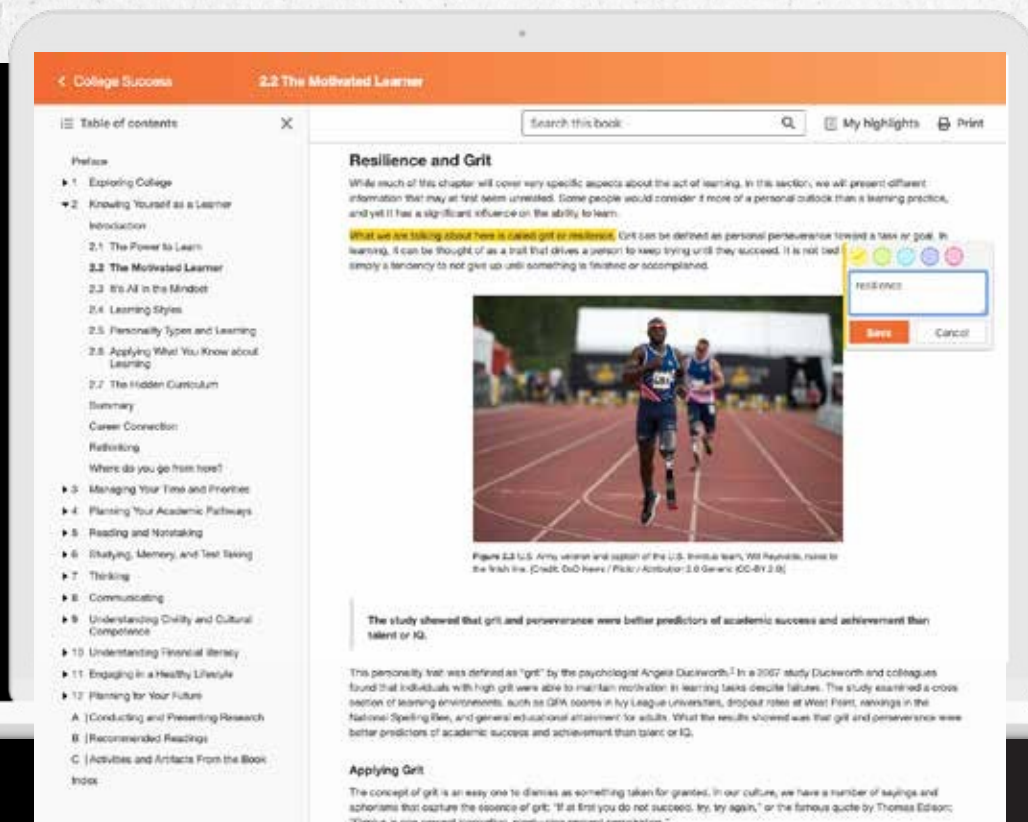


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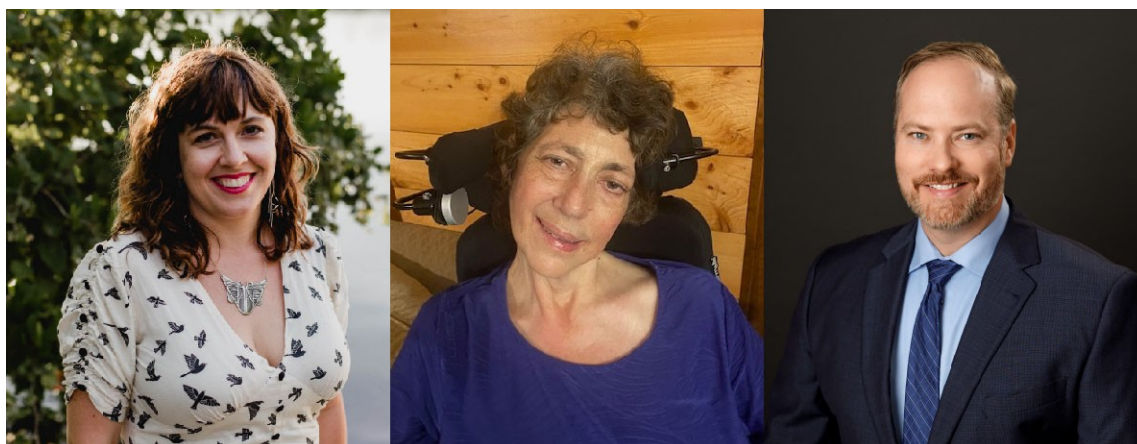


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About the Authors

Senior Contributing Authors



Senior contributing authors: Diana Riser (left), Rose Spielman (center), David Biek (right).

Diana K. Riser, Catawba College

Diana K. Riser holds a PhD in Developmental & Biological Psychology with a Minor in Women's & Gender Studies from Virginia Tech. She is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Catawba College. Her teaching and scholarly work are focused on developmental psychology, risk and protective factors in human development, promoting resilience in survivors of child trauma, and promoting healthy parent-child relationships. In addition to her research in developmental psychology, she also does research on best practices in teaching and learning and has worked in various non-profit and public health areas to apply psychology to promoting healthy development. Diana is passionate about using the science of developmental psychology to improve lives and parent-child relationships. She currently is enjoying her own lifespan development with her spouse and two children.

Rose Spielman, Connecticut State Community College

Rose Spielman was the content lead for the OpenStax Introduction to Psychology textbook. She has worked as a licensed clinical psychologist for over 30 years, with the last ten years at the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services. She has also taught for decades, most recently at CT State Community College. She has a husband, two young adult children, and two rescue dogs. While working on Lifespan Development, Dr. Spielman was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a rare, fatal neurodegenerative disease, which attacks the body's motor neurons. Prior to her ALS symptoms, Dr. Spielman enjoyed bicycling, camping, and hiking with family and friends.

David Biek, Middle Georgia State University

David Biek is the Dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences at Middle Georgia State University. David earned his doctorate in developmental psychology at Cornell University and completed his master's work at Columbia. His scholarly and applied work is focused on understanding the informal factors behind academic achievement in adolescents and young adults. David has served as co-chair for MaconAIM, a human service collaborative, as a board member for Carlyle Place – Atrium/Navicent Health in Macon, and he has organized a community-wide Thrive Summit in the middle Georgia region. He also serves on the statewide Executive Council for AARP Georgia. David lives in Forsyth, Georgia, with his wife and three children.

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Lifespan Psychology and Developmental Theories

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FIGURE 1.1 Where are each of these travelers in Grand Central Station headed? What hopes and dreams fuel their day? What experiences and responsibilities shape that day? The underpinnings of those answers lie in the study of lifespan development. (credit: modification of work “Grand Central Terminal, Midtown, Manhattan” by Jeffrey Zeldman/Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1.1** Psychology and Human Development
- 1.2** Themes of Development
- 1.3** Major Theories and Theorists
- 1.4** Contexts and Settings of Development
- 1.5** Lifespan Development as a Science: Research Methods

WHAT DOES PSYCHOLOGY SAY? You’ve been looking forward to your trip to New York City. Upon landing at JFK airport, you take the subway to reach Midtown Manhattan. The train accelerates and you watch the platform disappear as you find a seat and take your first look around the car. There is life here, rocketing through the underground tunnels, and a broad cross-section of human experience. You steal glimpses of your fellow riders’ physical appearance, belongings, interactions, and facial expressions. You wonder where each of them is going and what they hope to accomplish today. At each station, the train stops, and some people exit and even more board, the crowd growing as it nears Manhattan.

Like many students studying lifespan development, you likely share a curiosity about the people around you. You may wonder:

- What are the ideal environments for people to develop and flourish in? How and why are these different for different people?
- How straightforward is the path through life’s journey? Are there twists and turns, detours, and backtracking?
- What kinds of changes can we typically expect across the lifespan?

- Are there particular points in time during the lifespan where certain experiences are essential to development?
- How does an individual perceive and respond to expectations from their social and cultural environments at different points in their life?
- How much variation should we expect to see—from person to person, group to group, culture to culture—as we attempt to uncover patterns of development across the lifespan?

In this course, you can explore questions like these, contemplate what answers can be found through psychological research, and learn more about your own life journey.

1.1 Psychology and Human Development

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the differences, similarities, and intersections between the fields of psychology, lifespan development, and human development
- Identify major questions of interest and topics of research within the field of lifespan development
- Differentiate between the various domains within the field of lifespan development

Hosea's eighteen-year-old son, Landon, is about to graduate from high school. The family has taken several road trips to visit various colleges around the region, touring each campus and attending a football game with a particular interest in each school's marching band, given Landon's dedication to the trombone. So far, Landon has only expressed interest in two of the schools—both have more than 30,000 students, an exciting campus atmosphere, and large marching bands. Hosea knows his son, though. Landon is quite capable of accomplishing just about anything he sets his sights on, but often needs prodding and a bit of time to get started on a new goal. Hosea worries about the size of the two campus communities. Will Landon get lost among the crowd? Who will keep him on track? And then there's the fact that Landon doesn't know what he wants to study. Hosea also wonders how his own role as a father will change and what the right level of support to provide his son will be. What will he do for a new exercise hobby now that Landon, his best disc golf partner, is moving farther away? All these thoughts flood Hosea's mind as he navigates the morning commute.

Hosea is grappling with various worries and uncertainties related to Landon's impending graduation and transition to college. The study of lifespan development is focused on uncovering the psychological processes behind transitions like this. These processes help us to understand and explain an individual's situation and concerns at a moment in time, as well as in all humans across the entire arc of the lifespan. As we seek to identify those connections and commonalities, we also find differences based on the wide variety of individual experiences, environmental conditions, and cultural backgrounds that make up the varied tapestry of human experience. We begin our journey into lifespan developmental psychology by defining the field, including its scope and relationship to other areas of science, outlining the major questions the discipline is concerned with studying, and previewing the components of an individual's psychological development.

Lifespan Development as a Field of Study

In studying lifespan development, you'll encounter several related scientific areas, often referred to as fields or disciplines, that are sometimes discussed nearly interchangeably. Let's first situate lifespan psychology within the broader science of psychology, and then examine the meanings of the different terms for the field of study.

Psychology

The scientific study of the mind and all the behavior it produces is **psychology**. That is a short and simple definition, but it covers nearly the entire range of human experience. It recognizes that the mind plays a central role in human functioning and is the origin of all behavior and the center of all our responses to our environment.

Our mind, believed to be located within our brain, helps us to both shape and react to the world around us