

Special Topic: Jerome Bruner – Construction of a Scientist¹

Human Development 1990:33:325–326

© 1990 S. Karger AG, Basel
0018-716X/90/0336-0325\$2.75/0

Introduction

Patricia Greenfield

University of California, Los Angeles, Calif., USA

In the articles that follow, a group of former students and colleagues of Jerome Bruner divide up his scientific and biographical selves, both chronologically and geographically: Greenfield, representing Bruner's Harvard students, covers the Cambridge years; Gopnik, representing Bruner's Oxford students, covers the subsequent Oxford years, and Olson, involved with Bruner's current work on narrative and autobiography, covers the most recent period, the New York years. Together, the papers comprise a chronologically ordered intellectual biography, leading to Bruner's own article, itself paradigmatic of Bruner's New York years.

Thus, Jerome Bruner is more than the passive recipient of tributes for past work. In line with his active, exploratory character (as depicted in Gopnik's essay), Bruner provides the central paper in this special-topic section, one that takes on no less a task than to characterize the state of developmental psychology. It is, in fact, his own, very personal vision of where the field *should* go, not necessarily where it is today or will be tomorrow. As the reader will learn from the paper

by Greenfield, this approach to his own work is consistent with Bruner's emphasis on the role of goals and intentionality in human development and action, a theme that has permeated his scientific work. From Olson, the reader learns how Bruner's constructivism, a common thread traced by Gopnik throughout Bruner's career, has, in the New York years (and particularly with the present article), been extended to the construction of mind and self.

For Bruner, autobiography is the means by which the self is constructed. It is, therefore, probably not coincidental that Bruner's own autobiographical self is very closely linked to his scientific and intellectual con-

¹ Earlier versions of the papers in this special-topic section were presented in an invited symposium, 'The Contributions of Jerome S. Bruner to the Study of Child Development', at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, Kans., USA, April 1989. Thanks are due to John Wright, another Bruner student, for organizing the symposium and to Patricia Marks Greenfield for her work in organizing and revising the papers for publication.

cerns. Gopnik's contribution explicitly traces the connections between Bruner the psychologist and Bruner the person. In addition, important elements in Bruner's scientific biography are his own intellectual roots and the web of influence he has had on others. Greenfield focuses on the former, while Gopnik especially considers the latter. Because the New York years are not yet a his-

torical period, but still in progress, Olson was able to distill their essence into a discussion of Bruner's intellectual trajectory, still under construction.

Patricia Greenfield
Department of Psychology
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90024 (USA)