

12-2-2021

## Beyond the Social Determinants of Learning™ A Walden University Position Paper

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### Recommended Citation

Lindell, Andrea; Morgan, Ann; Sugarman, Barry H.; Tervala, Debra J.; Westermann, Jorg; Strang, Kathy P.; Costner, Kelly L.; Ingram, Maléka N.; Powell, Marilyn; McCune, Nina M.; Jobe, Rebecca L.; Dixon-Saxon, Savitri; Subocz, Sue; and Schulz, Wiilam, "Beyond the Social Determinants of Learning™ A Walden University Position Paper" (2021). *White Papers*. 3.  
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Beyond the Social Determinants of Learning™

A Walden University Position Paper

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### **Background: Social Determinants of Health and Social Determinants of Learning**

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), presented by the World Health Organization (WHO) and a cross-organizational global commission in the early 2000s, provide an understanding of health status of individuals and communities. SDOH consider societal forces and conditions such as housing, work conditions, environment, and education (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014; WHO, 2021). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.) launched a “Healthy People 2030” initiative, addressing five key social determinants of health and offering a framework from which organizations can build strategy:

1. Healthcare access and quality
2. Education access and quality
3. Social and community context
4. Economic stability
5. Neighborhood and built environment

As leaders in preparing provisioners of healthcare, Walden’s nursing and healthcare programs operate from the Social Determinants of Health & Healthcare (SDOH&H) framework (emphasizing both health and healthcare) and address the SDOH&H in every course.

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[Walden’s core faculty member in the MSN Nurse Practitioner program, Dr. Toby Turner, will present “Introducing Health and Public Policy Driven by Social Determinants of Health to Academic Preparation for Health Professions” at the American Public Health Association’s 2021 Annual Meeting and Expo in October.](#)

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Walden recognizes how education and support across all programs contributes to healthy individuals, communities, and society. As such, diversity throughout and within a highly accredited and high-quality portfolio, an inclusive curriculum, and strong academic and student affairs programming contribute to a more just education system for our students -- and produce the scholar practitioners who further contribute to healthier communities through positive social change.

Developed by Sanderson et al. (2021) on behalf of Chamberlain University as “an actionable model to address learning disparities and expand learning opportunities to support nursing student diversity, equity, and inclusion,” (p. 7) the Social Determinants of Learning™ (SDOL) theory includes the following “socially imposed forces which are causative factors that influence learning and life” (p. 7):

1. Physical health
2. Psychosocial health
3. Economic stability
4. Physical environment/community
5. Social environment/community
6. Self-motivation

### **Social Determinants of Health and Health Care (SDOH&H) as a Foundation for Adtalem Portfolio, Curriculum, and Academic and Student Affairs Programming**

Walden's broad access admissions policies and practices attract a wide variety of students, including those who are historically underserved and often marginalized. Walden fosters increased diversity with an array of resources to support students and guidelines to ensure programs are mission driven. One of our university outcomes is to "support diversity and multiculturalism within their [students'] profession, communities, and society" (Walden University, n.d.a, para 7). By seeking diverse perspectives, Walden has drawn more than 48,000 students from all 50 states and from more than 160 countries around the world.

The desire to "solve key societal challenges" (Walden University, n.d.b, para 1), is foundational to Walden University and one way we do that is through a well-rounded portfolio. Healthy communities and individuals rely on quality pre-K-12 teachers, antiracist policing policies and practices (Durden & Warren, 2021), and the development of leaders and organizations in government, NGO-nonprofit, benefit corporation, and traditional for-profit businesses. Walden's program portfolio ensures a community of practice in all relevant areas contributing to community health (Healthy People 2030, n.d.).

The Walden portfolio, curriculum, academic and student affairs support, and advising address the needs identified in the SDOH&H for every student and stakeholder. Health and provisioning of healthcare is a result of individual efforts and results from key societal components. Such components include access to and quality of healthcare, education access and quality, social and community context, economic stability, and neighborhood and built environment. The key societal components are all considered carefully by outcomes within Walden's curriculum portfolio:

- Business & Management
- Communication
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Health & Health Sciences
- Information Technology
- Nursing
- Psychology and Counseling
- Public Policy & Administration
- Social Work & Human Services

## Curriculum and Programming for Healthy Communities and Educational Equity

Walden has long held the value of meeting students where they are. We recognize every student is not the same. We seek, across our portfolio, to provide a culturally responsive curriculum. We consider all the issues and barriers students bring to their education as well as the rich experiences that prepare students to make the connections between “academic work and community engagement” (Bassey, 2016, p. 3). Walden’s Inclusive Teaching and Learning Strategic Plans sets out a clear objective to, “Ensure our community knows that we value the inherent worth, the humanity, and the dignity of every individual engaged in the learning process.”

While the health and healthcare-focused portions of the University curriculum explicitly addresses health equity, the University actively addresses intentional curricular design across the portfolio to enable a more just/inclusive/equitable educational experience. Curriculum is designed according to the Walden University Hallmarks and quality indicators, which require that learning is collaborative, inspiring, diversity-oriented, and conducive to positive social change. Faculty subject matter experts and Walden’s Product Strategy Innovation and Design (PSID) department infuse positive social change activities throughout the curriculum. Social change components are integrated with the development of courses; alignment with the social change mission is tracked in all programs.

Programs in the Riley College of Education and Leadership address gun violence on P-12 and higher education campuses. The Walden programs, with the focus on social-emotional health, address all student, teacher, higher education professional, and leadership needs in these environments. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, Walden supported schools, teachers, and education leaders as emergency online teaching took root across the country. Walden offered pro bono support to schools and colleges for at-home, distance instruction. Walden has also developed additional program support, tools, and curriculum to make sure the next generation of educators are ready with the latest instructional delivery and technology. These educators will be able to transform education rapidly and in ways that keeps students on track with learning, irrespective of the reason for shifting to online learning.

The College of Education also connects social-emotional learning (SEL) concepts to the social determinants of health framework. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identified five areas of competence (CASEL 5; <https://casel.org/selected-framework/>) that align with the Riley College of Education’s Conceptual Framework. The framework serves as the College’s philosophical foundation and guide for decision making and curriculum development.

In the College of Management and Technology, sincere and targeted efforts occur to focus on the economic health of individuals, families, companies, and communities. The college provides bachelors, masters, and doctoral training in business management and leadership, training those who want a seat at the table. Student will be equipped to lead, grow, and care for

organizations (both for and nonprofit) to support a healthy workforce and economy. The goal is to provide access to housing, recreation, education, and healthcare. Walden-educated business managers and leaders learn early and often about the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) framework. The College espouses the values of the framework including purpose, values, methods, research, partnership, and dialogue (see <https://www.unprme.org/walden-university>). The College has been recognized by and teaches the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The curriculum abides by these principles internally, focusing on achieving excellence through leadership, strategic planning, evaluation, measurement, optimizing workforce, streamlining operations, and focusing on customers to create maximum performance.

In March of 2021, Walden University and the National League of Nursing announced its plan to partner for the Institute for SDOH&H and Social Change. The Institute will advance research and education related to all aspects of SDOH&H. The Institute is designed and run by national leaders and expert organizations to serve with people from all walks of life.

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[The NLN, in announcing the Walden-NLN partnership notes, “Social determinants of health—factors such as food security, fresh air and water, adequate housing, and educational opportunities—have been proven to substantially impact the health and well-being of individuals, families, and entire communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted this phenomenon most starkly, with vulnerable populations being at the greatest risk for illness and death. Remediating unsafe and unhealthy conditions and environments has become a global public health concern.”](#)

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### **Expanding the Reach of the Social Determinants of Learning**

The work of Sanderson and colleagues is based on literature involving “nursing or college students” (p. 207). It is our recommendation that the SDOL be expanded and further detailed to address justice and equity, globally, across the educational lifespan to reflect an emphasis that Adtalem contributes to health and healthcare equity through a broadened portfolio and a clear emphasis on creating educational equity and justice.

There is a breadth of literature relating to the call for educational justice (Lazar, 2020; Levin, 2009; Warren, 2014), and the United Nations Education Steering Committee’s goals for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all (UNESCO, 2015). The call provides a framework for strategic planning and action. The United Nations enables globally attuned partnerships for education equity in the same way WHO commissioned collaborative efforts toward addressing health equity.

A broadened and deepened SDOL framework that aligns with and supports the UN’s Education 2030 goals could be applied more fully. It could incorporate, where possible, areas where we

can rethink some of our portfolio, curriculum, and academic or student affairs operations, policies, and resources to meaningfully meet the needs of students and communities. We recommend the framework acknowledge and include Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems work (Flynn, 2020; Hamilton-Hinch et al., 2021; Joseph et al., 2021) and align with the decades of worldwide collaboration addressing the 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals (United Nations, n.d.).

Walden’s diverse portfolio, creation of an online higher education retention risk model, Success-by-Degree support, “Real World Solutions to Real World Problems” collaborations, “While You Wait” support, research and interventions for student and faculty wellbeing, field experience site search support, peer mentoring (including *Tapestry* and *Conscious Black Men* mentoring and support groups), and Inclusive Teaching and Learning deepens and broadens the scope for the SDOL. Walden University students, alumni, employers, staff, and faculty address social determinants in education across the lifespan, from a global perspective. Walden stakeholders meaningfully contribute to societal improvements through education, business, criminal justice, social and behavioral sciences, public policy, and healthcare.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that approximately 10.5% of the population in the United States was food insecure in 2019 (Economic Research Service, n.d., para 2). If 1 in 5 people in the U.S. is food insecure, we can assume it impacts our students similarly. To this end, we recommend additional detail be included in the SDOL framework by Sanderson and colleagues (2021) identifying nutritional status (physical or psychosocial health) and food insecurity (under economic stability); housing (physical environment/community); technological infrastructure (physical environment/community); and climatological issues like wildfires, hurricanes, floods (either as an additional determinant or under Physical Environment/Community). All of these create disruption and disparity in learning. Climatological and other geographically specific emergencies pose a particular issue for online learners who may be in geographically disparate situations from their colleagues and faculty, making it difficult to develop a coordinated response.

The SDOL framework serves to inform and support learners and educators in building relationships and interventions that mitigate risks through portfolio, curricular, and academic and student affairs engagements. We believe that Walden’s mission, vision, and values align to and advance the concepts of the SDOL. We also believe that in combining our past work around these concepts, an integrated Adtalem could set a world standard for educational equity and educational justice through this integration.

Diversity in portfolio, an inclusive curriculum, and strong academic and student affairs programming contribute to a more just educational environment for our students and produce the scholar practitioners who further contribute to educational justice. The integrated Adtalem framework moving beyond the Social Determinants of Learning could be a tool to measure models, initiatives, and identify further areas for growth or improvement – leading the way

toward the imperative of healthy communities for all through internal examination of these constructs for our learners.

The SDOH&H provides a framework to develop leadership and explore issues of individual and community health. Adtalem's commitment to being "intentional to be impactful" (Adtalem Global Education, n.d., para 1) in its efforts toward sustainability call for a portfolio that contributes to health and healthcare equity. Walden's intention is to be a leader in the development of improved communities through its vision, mission, values, and practices. While Walden's health curriculum and associated academic and student affairs programming contributes to health and healthcare equity, Walden also values the contributions the entire portfolio makes to educational justice for individuals and communities. Together, these goals, values, and intentionally broad portfolio provide the opportunity ensure Adtalem's place in becoming the leading provider of professional talent to the healthcare industry by expanding access to high quality education. In the societal sense, the combined portfolio has the opportunity to play a major role in addressing healthcare inequities and create healthier communities in the U.S. and beyond.

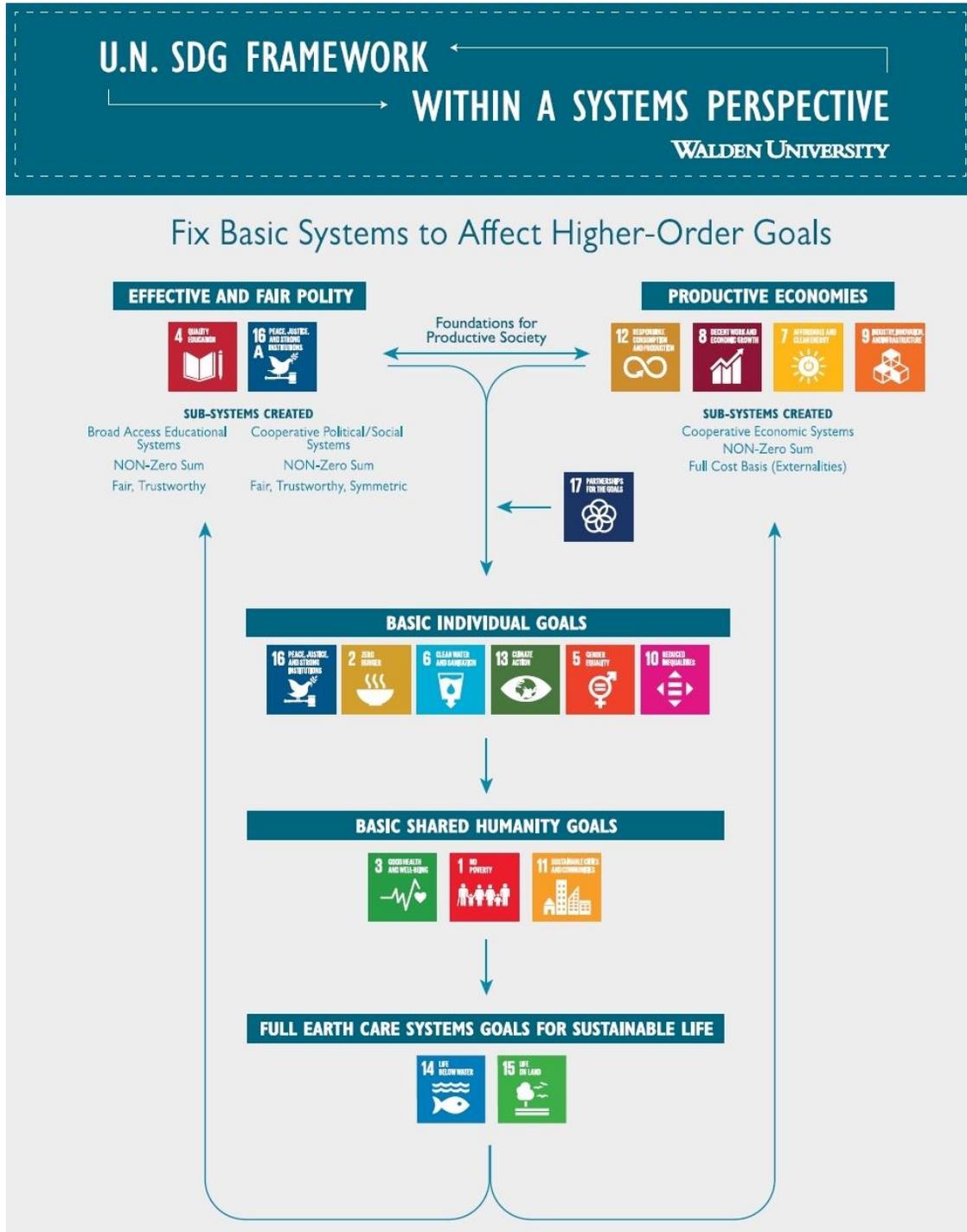
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[release/2021/03/11/the-national-league-for-nursing-and-walden-university-create-the-institute-for-social-determinants-of-health-and-social-change](https://www.nursingworld.org/newsroom/press-releases/2021/03/11/the-national-league-for-nursing-and-walden-university-create-the-institute-for-social-determinants-of-health-and-social-change)

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Appendix A: A Systems Perspective of the UN 2030 Goals/Sustainable Development Goals



## Appendix B: List of Walden Activities and Policies Related to SDOL

This is a targeted list of what Walden is/can be doing to support elements of the social determinants of health:

### Social Determinants of Learning (Inverted—What Walden can/should do in its sphere)

#### Physical Health

- Health issues/disabilities
  - Understand student needs deeply, design appropriate accommodations
- Quality of life related to physical health
  - Ensure best implementation of ADA
  - Reduce pressure to “complete fast”, price accordingly
- Health beliefs
- Health care access
  - Affordable supplemental health care insurance bundle available to students

#### Psychosocial Health

- Perceived stress
  - seek balanced-fit of pace of programs—stop emphasis on “rush”/“fast”—price accordingly (vanishing tuition for Capstones—perhaps all programs)
  - Making the “hidden curriculum” transparent
- Resilience
  - Emphasize progress—offer more mastery-learning opportunities and de-emphasize discrete grades
- Ability to set goals
  - Constructivist choices—choice as process of engagement and learning
  - Embed reflection in action in curricula, development of self
- Degree of self-confidence
  - Positive self-regard – person-centered learning (deep listening, reflective callouts)
- Student engagement
  - stimulate curiosity through choice
  - Tie learning outcomes to life outcomes more explicitly
  - Build 360 engagement (peer-peer, fac-student, student-fac, support staff)

#### Economic Stability

- The need to work while in school

- o Balance, pacing of programs (choice—not “fast or failure”). Incentivize pace-fit (vanishing tuition)
- o Chunk the curricula to allow for scaling, fit, and timing relative to personal and professional needs in real-time
- Job loss/insecurity
  - o Career focused and relevant skills/knowledge in curricula
  - o Appropriate and best-fit financial aid and FA counseling
- Living in economically depressed geographic areas
  - o Access scholarships that come with broadband internet tools
- Number of hours worked while in school

#### Physical Environment/Community

- Community incivility
- Workplace violence
- Homelessness
- Neighborhood safety
  - o Center SC alliance support IPD and NOBLE initiative
  - o CJ community safety focus
- Generational poverty

#### Social Environment/Community

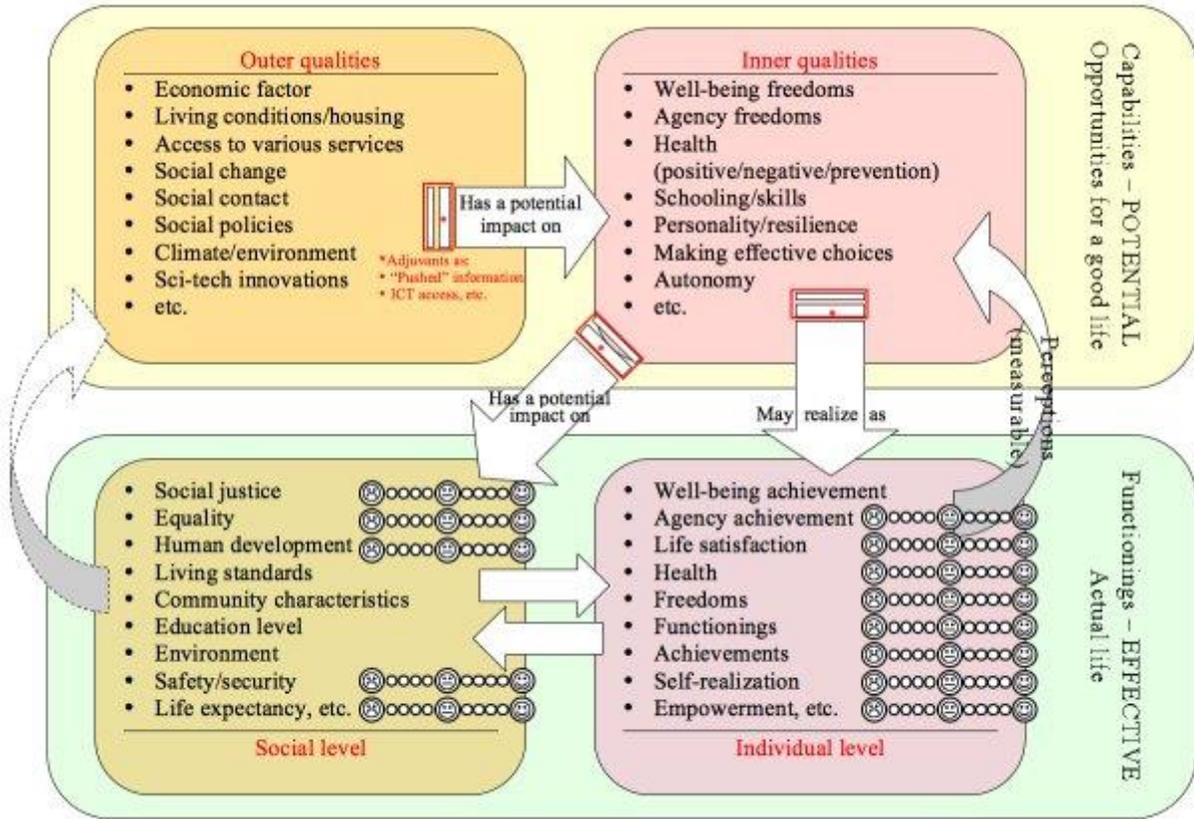
- Social supports/social networks
  - o Person-centered, culture of care in all learning and supporting relationships. Embrace into the Walden learning family. (expand social community)
  - o Social Change community engagements, build community partners
- Family emotional support
  - o Price for pace (see above)
- Discrimination perceptions
  - o Person-centered approach, inclusive curricula
  - o Center for Social Change empowering changemakers anti-racism resources
  - o PRME and ethical approaches to relationships and decision-making
- Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - o Inclusive curricula
  - o Appropriate scaffolding of writing needs/expectations and skill-building

#### Self-Motivation

- Motivation to learn
  - o Mutual inquiry, curiosity supported by choice and engagement with real-world needs, skills

- o Reflective, double-loop learning—“seeing opportunities and the future more clearly”
  - o Implementation of WOW—early engagement
  - o Reward pre-day-one engagement in customizing early or first course placement
  - o Walden readiness tool and pre-day-one assessments
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - o Scaffolded writing and communication skill development
  - o Choice driven engagement—persistence to connect the dots
- Focus of attention
  - o Relevant choices, skills, WIIFM built-in and easier to see
- Lifestyle choices
  - o Pace and price to fit (Laffer curve pricing that aligns with resource-intensity to a point)

**Appendix C: An Overview of Capabilities Theory as it Relates to SDOH and SDOL**



Based on work of Amartya Sen (1999) and Marth Nussbaum (2011)

Nussbaum, M. (2011). Creating capabilities: The human development approach.

Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press.

Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. New York, NY: Anchor Books