

Titles and Abstracts of the Presentations

Jacquelynne Eccles

University of Michigan, USA

Social and Personal Identities as Contexts for Development

There are consistent average differences in the achievements and life choices of adolescents from different socially defined, identity-related groups (e.g., gender-defined groups, ethnically-defined groups, religiously-defined groups and social-class defined groups). There are also consistent average differences in the achievements and life choices of adolescents with different personal identities (achieved and personally chosen identities). Developmental psychologists are interested in two aspects of the link between identities and achievement/life choices: (a) how these identities form and in how group membership gets "under the skin" or into adolescents' identity systems and (b) how these identities influence behavior and life choices. I will talk about both of these questions and relate them to two concrete examples: gendered occupational choices and ethnic differences in academic achievement.

Alexandra Freund

University of Zurich, Switzerland

Motivational Development across Adulthood

One of the most dramatic changes across adulthood is the changing ratio of gains to losses in resources. How do people manage this shift in resources? Recent research suggests that motivational processes might be a key for understanding successful development in the face of declining resources. In my talk, I will outline the motivational processes that have emerged as central in research on motivational development across adulthood, such as goal orientation towards gains and losses or goal focus on the process or the outcome of goal pursuit. In the workshop, doctoral students will work on the theoretical and empirical challenges associated with investigating motivational development across adulthood.

Marcus Hasselhorn

Center for Research on Individual Development and Adaptive Education of Children at Risk (IDeA),
German Institute for International Educational Research, Frankfurt/M., Germany

Developmental Relationships and Stabilities of Working Memory Capacity, and Precursor Skills of Reading, Writing, and Math during the Last Preschool Year

During the last couple of years specific precursor skills have been identified to be powerful predictors of children's acquisition of reading, spelling, and arithmetic during elementary school years. Less is known about the developmental pathways, interdependencies, and stabilities of interindividual differences with regard to those early predictors of school success during the preschool period. Thus, more than 600 children took part in a longitudinal study, where those predictors were assessed at the age of four and five years. In addition, working memory capacity was assessed. The results are discussed in terms of the plasticity and modifiability of relevant predictor characteristics of children's early school success.

Peter Herrlich

Leibniz Institute for Age Research - Fritz Lipmann Institute, Jena, Germany

We live longer and healthier - do we know why?

Dinner Lecture

Fact is that the life expectancy in the industrialized nations has been increasing steadily. Amazing, however, that we do not suffer from an extended period of disabilities, but rather that the physical and mental fitness lasts longer. From the side of biological research at least some news are to be reported.

Ingrid Schoon

Institute of Education, University of London, UK

Becoming Adult in a Changing World: Transition Experiences of Young People in the UK and the US

Social, economic and demographic changes over the past three decades have brought about changes in life course transitions. Traditional pathways into adult life are said to have become de-standardised, more heterogeneous and differentiated, with individuals gaining greater control of their lives. Education and training are more extended, and entry into family formation and parenthood postponed until the late 20s or early 30s. But have these changes impacted on all young people in the same way, and what is the role of structure versus agency in shaping the transition to adult roles? Here we will report evidence based on data collected for two British Birth cohorts born in 1958 and 1970, and two age cohorts born at the same time in the US, following their development from childhood into the adult years. The inclusion of US and UK data is an important feature of the presentation, enabling comparison of changing transition experiences in two cultures who are similar in so many respects, yet also different. In this paper, distinct configurations of role statuses in the mid 20s among British and American youth are identified (focusing on living arrangements; spousal, parent, and work role statuses; college attendance; and educational attainment). Furthermore, the role of adolescent experiences (focusing on parental education background, academic performance, and education aspirations) as predictors of role status configurations in young adulthood is assessed. The following questions will be addressed: a.) have transition experiences changed for the two age cohorts growing up in a different context; b. do transitions differ for US and UK; c. what is the role of initial life plans, i.e. education aspirations in adolescence, in shaping transition behaviour; and d) to what extent are both plans and the experiences during the transition structured by cultural features and social economic status? Adopting an integrative life course approach, findings are discussed in terms of person x environment interactions and their embeddedness in a wider socio-historical context. While psychological models emphasizing self-directed exploration in emerging adulthood (e.g. Arnett 2000), sociological traditions emphasize the interaction of social structure and personal agency in the creation of individualized life courses (e.g. Bynner 2005; Côté & Bynner 2008; Shanahan 2000). Both agree that the decade of life following the completion of mandatory education is pivotal for developing one's own lifestyles and establishing adult work and family roles (e.g. Settersten et al. 2005). The relative contribution of both perspectives and the usefulness of their integration for a better understanding for the interlinkages between structural forces and adolescent life planning in shaping early adult experiences is examined.

Laurence Steinberg

Temple University, USA

A Dual Systems Model of Adolescent Risk-Taking

Opening Session

This talk presents the results of a program of research on the underpinnings of risk-taking in adolescence that is informed by recent advances in developmental neuroscience. It has been hypothesized that reward-seeking and impulsivity develop along different timetables and have different neural underpinnings, and that the difference in their timetables helps account for heightened risk-taking during adolescence. In order to test these propositions, age differences in reward-seeking and impulsivity were examined in a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse sample of 935 individuals between the ages of 10 and 30, using self-report and behavioral measures of each construct. Consistent with predictions, reward-seeking increases in early adolescence, then declines. In contrast, impulsivity declines steadily from age 10 on. Heightened vulnerability to risk-taking in middle adolescence may be due to the combination of relatively higher inclinations to seek rewards and still maturing capacities for self-control, a vulnerability that appears to be accentuated by the presence of peers, as evidenced in both behavior and neural activity. Implications for public health, education, and legal policy will be discussed.

Research and Legal/Public Policy

Talk

Clemens Tesch-Römer

German Center of Gerontology, Berlin, Germany

Aging in Context: The Influence of Cultural and Historical Contexts on Adult Development

Individual development over the life course, and especially age related changes in late phases of life, are not fully explained by endogenous factors like biological maturation and functional decline. Hence, within life-span psychology and life-course sociology conceptions of development and ageing have been established which point to the societal, cultural and historic embeddedness of change processes in adulthood and old age. To explore the contexts of ageing, two forms of comparative research can be used: Comparing ageing processes in different societies/cultures and comparing ageing processes in different historical time periods. This presentation is divided in two parts. First, theoretical notions and methodological requirements for comparative research will be discussed. Second, empirical examples for comparative ageing research are given for studies comparing cultures (based on cross-cultural data from the project OASIS) and studies comparing time periods (based on cohort sequential data from the German Ageing Survey, DEAS).

Rainer K. Silbereisen

CADS – Center for Applied Developmental Science, University of Jena, Germany

Coping with Demands of Social Change across the Lifespan

Closing Lecture

Alexander von Eye

University of Michigan, USA

Some Walk in a Different Direction - We are not all Lemmings

The main goal of inferential statistics involves the attempt to generalize effects found in samples to populations. In developmental research, this often results in statements that describe developmental trajectories that are supposed to apply to every individual in a population. Recent results in methodology and statistics allow researchers to determine whether such general statements do indeed apply. Results show that, in virtually all cases, sizeable portions of populations follow trajectories that differ from those used to describe the population as a whole. Similarly, the prediction of trajectories from other trajectories that can be examined using such methods as structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling is often presented as uniform over the range of observations and as valid for the entire population. In this contribution, new methods of Configural Frequency Analysis (CFA; Lienert, 1968; von Eye & Gutiérrez Peña, 2004) are presented that allow one to determine where, in which form, and for whom series of measures are related to each other (von Eye, Mair, & Mun, 2010). Specifically, it will be shown that some configurations of series of scores reflect the null hypothesis according to which the series are unrelated. In contrast, other configurations are observed more often than expected, and still others are observed less often than expected. Proper specification of CFA base models, that is, CFA models that reflect the null hypothesis is discussed. Empirical examples which use data from a project on positive youth development illustrate, that longitudinal models can be found that describe the data well. However, using CFA methods, it is also shown that these models by no means describe everybody in the population, and that relationships between series of measures vary over the observation period.