



Workshop

17-20 May 2010

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies (HCAS), Helsinki



Meeting Sponsored by the Jacobs Foundation

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Welcome

On behalf of the Jacobs Foundation, the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and the Finnish Graduate School of Psychology, we would like to welcome you all to our third Pathways Workshop at the University of Helsinki.

The event will start off with presentations from our post-doctoral Fellows. Two key topics will be addressed: issues related to career planning, its antecedents and outcomes; and variations in transition experiences in the school and work context.

A special welcome to Nathan Jones, who will be joining us for the first time from the Northwestern University in the USA.

The aim of the workshop is to move forward our collaborative research projects on productive youth development in different cultural contexts. To achieve this we have arranged a series of sessions for discussion and consolidation of activities. The expected outcome is to identify and summarize similarities in findings on which to build future research and dissemination activities.

We have also arranged a methodology workshop focusing on sequence analysis for life course data. It is our great pleasure to welcome Dr. Bendan Halpin from the University of Limerick and Prof. Mervi Erola from the University of Jyväskylä, both distinguished experts in the field, and look forward to their presentation.

The workshop will provide ample scope for discussion and networking, for planning our future activities, but also for exploring the nature and culture of the beautiful city of Helsinki. I hope you will have a happy, productive and rewarding time at the workshop, and that our comparative studies of productive youth development will flourish.

Ingrid Schoon and Katariina Salmela-Aro



List of Participants

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Presentations

Monday 17 May 2010

This booklet lists presenters only. Please note that many of the papers have multiple authors.



Fellow presentations and discussions (15 min presentation and 15 min discussion) :

Career planning: antecedents and outcomes

09:15 – 09:45

Career success: The role of aspirations, ambition and gender in predicting adult social status and earnings.

Julie Ashby (Department of Quantitative Social Sciences, Institute of Education, University of London, UK)

09:45 – 10:15

Do Readers Choose People-Oriented Science Profession? Gender Difference in Science-Related Job Aspiration.

Yi-Miau Tsai (University of Michigan, USA)

10:15 – 10:45

The role of contexts in task- and self-related beliefs: Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Examination.

Angela Chow (University of Helsinki, Finland)

10:45 – 11:15

Antecedents and consequences of adolescents' school engagement and how it is related to burn out.

Katja Natale (University of Michigan, USA)

Transitions in the school and work context

11:30 – 12:00

Lonely But Not Alone: An Investigation of Adolescent Loneliness in the Context of Schools.

Nathan Jones (Northwestern University, USA)



12:00 – 12:30

Disadvantage Accumulation in Youth.

Miia Bask (University of Helsinki, Finland)

12:30 – 13:00

The Post School Transition as a Critical Period for Testing Psychological Theory.

Philip Parker (University Tübingen Germany)

13:00 – 13:30

Individuals negotiating demands of social and change: A control theoretical approach.

Martin Tomasik (Centre for Applied Developmental Science at the University of Jena, Germany)



Career success: The role of aspirations, ambition and gender in predicting adult social status and earnings

Presenter: Julie Ashby (Department of Quantitative Social Sciences, Institute of Education, University of London, UK)

ABSTRACT

Links between family social background, teenage career aspirations, educational attainment and adult social status attainment are well documented. Using a contextual developmental framework, this paper extends previous research by examining the role of gender and teenage job ambition in shaping social status and income attainment in adulthood. Drawing on data from an 18 year British follow up study we tested a path model linking family background factors (such as parental aspirations) and individual agency factors in adolescence (in particular, career aspirations, and the value attached to job ambition) to social status and income attainment in adulthood. The findings suggest that teenage job ambition is linked to adult earnings. That is, young people for whom it is important to get on in their job earn more money in adulthood than their less ambitious peers. The findings also confirm that teenage career aspirations are linked to adult social status attainment, and suggest that family background factors, teenage aspirations and job ambition interact to influence social status and income attainment in adulthood. Gender differences are discussed.



Do Readers Choose People-Oriented Science Profession? Gender Difference in Science-Related Job Aspiration

Presenter: Yi-Miau Tsai (University of Michigan, USA)

ABSTRACT

Choosing an occupation is a major task during adolescence to adulthood, yet little is known about how aspirations for such life-defining choices develop and how it relates to motivational constructs. The present study investigates how science-related occupational aspirations emerge and persist through young adulthood. Using the Child Development Supplement (CDS-II) and Transition to Adult (TA-2007) element of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data, we first describe the development of aspirations to become computer and engineer professional as well as life and health-related professionals over a 5-year period. Second, based on expectancy-value model, we investigate how adolescent self-concepts and values in mathematics and reading/English manifested to form their job aspiration. Our findings revealed that about 25% of adolescents maintained their earlier science aspiration over a five-year period. In addition, logistic regression analyses showed that, after controlling for SES, age, math and reading aptitude, boys' value toward reading/English pulled them away from computer and engineering science. On the other hand, girls' aspiration to pursue computer and engineering job are predicted by their self-concept in the mathematics domain.



The role of contexts in task- and self-related beliefs: Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Examination

Presenter: Angela Chow (University of Helsinki, Finland)

ABSTRACT

Examining the role of contexts in motivation has gained increasing attention in literature, as this line of research contributes to the identification of favorable conditions for the development of students' motivation. This presentation discusses three studies¹ in progress. Although the specific variables being examined in these studies varied, they are common in their research goal at a broader level: to investigate how students' motivation is related to different contextual conditions. The first study compared the two genders in terms of their longitudinal development of task-values on four subject domains across the transition to post-compulsory education period, both before and after the transition tracks (*academic education track, vocational training track and non-study track*) they followed were taken into account. The second study first classified students into trajectory groups according to their task-value development in math and science and then compared the background variables of the groups, such as family SES. While the first two longitudinal studies were based on Finnish data, the third study was a cross-sectional one conducted within the US contexts. It examined the pedagogical

¹ Paper 1: Chow, A., Eccles, J. S. & Salmela-Aro, K. (in progress). A gender comparison of the longitudinal development of task-values on four subject domains across the transition to post-compulsory education period: a stage-environment fit perspective.

Paper 2: Chow, A. & Salmela-Aro, K. (in progress). Trajectories of students' task-values in math & science across the transition to post-compulsory education: Do adolescents follow different pathways?

Paper 3: Chow, A., Salmela-Aro, K. & Schneider, B. (in progress). How computer is used in math classes? Exploring the associations between computer usage, motivation and achievement.



usage of computers in the grade ten math classes and explored how this is associated with students' interest and self-competence belief in math.



Antecedents and consequences of adolescents' school engagement and how it is related to burn out

Presenter: Katja Natale (University of Michigan, USA)

ABSTRACT

Energy, dedication, and absorption has been generally regarded as work-related engagement that one feels while working. School is a setting where students work, and thus, these concepts can reasonably be extended to the school context. When characterizing school engagement vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience, as well as the willingness to apply oneself to school work. Dedication, in turn, refers to being strongly involved in one's tasks and experiencing a sense of significance and inspiration. Absorption is characterized by fully concentrating in one's tasks, wherein time passes quickly.

The purpose of the present study was (1) to investigate the structure of adolescents' school engagement (SEI) inventory, (2) to investigate the cross-lagged associations between adolescents' school engagement and burn out, and (3) based on the job demands-resources model, to investigate the possible antecedents (study resources, and demands, self-efficacy) as well as consequences (life satisfaction, depression) of these.

The present study is part of the Finnish Educational Transitions (FinEdu) longitudinal study, in which a total of 1530 (769 girls, 761 boys) adolescents from 13 post-comprehensive schools (6 upper secondary high schools; 7 vocational schools) participated. Students filled in a questionnaire concerning their school engagement and school burn out once during their first year of post-comprehensive school (Time 2), and once during their second year of post-comprehensive school (Time 3). Moreover, students answered to questions concerning their study resources and demands, and self-efficacy once during their ninth grade (Time 1), and to questions concerning their life satisfaction and depression once after their post-comprehensive studies (Time 4).

The results were analyzed by using confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM) and path modelling. The results showed, first, that the one-factor solution, describing overall school engagement, compared to two- or three-factor solutions, fitted the data best.



Second, the results showed that adolescents' burn out symptoms rather predicted their school engagement than vice versa: the higher the school burn out symptoms the adolescents felt the less school engagement they experienced. Study resources increased the feeling of school engagement and decreased the level of burn out symptoms. School engagement, in turn, positively predicted life satisfaction, whereas school burn out contributed to it negatively.

The results suggest that instead of three dimensional construct, school engagement is rather unidimensional but may become more differentiated during the later post-comprehensive school years. Moreover, the results suggest that job demands and resources model can be applied also to the school context.



Lonely But Not Alone: An Investigation of Adolescent Loneliness in the Context of Schools

Presenter: Nathan Jones (Northwestern University, USA)

ABSTRACT

We draw on the 500 Family Study to investigate adolescents' experiences of loneliness while at school, looking at the joint contribution of personal and situational factors. The 500 Family Study utilizes a variety of methods, including interviews, surveys, and the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), to examine the complex dynamics of today's families and the strategies they use in coping with the demands of work and family. We capitalize on the richness of the ESM data – which provides information on participants' activities, thoughts, feelings, and who they are with – to study the actual circumstances that either encourage or impede loneliness. We provide information on the characteristics of adolescents who are likely to feel lonely at school, paying particular attention to other emotions and social behaviors that are experienced concurrently with loneliness, including social withdrawal and bullying. Also, this study attempts to map out the activity structure of loneliness at school, both when adolescents are by themselves and when they are with other people. Finally, we consider the influence of loneliness on relevant outcomes, including grades as well as college and career aspirations; and, we explore possibilities to extend this work to other datasets such as Add Health and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID).



Disadvantage Accumulation in Youth

Presenter: Miia Bask (University of Helsinki, Finland)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the accumulation of multiple disadvantages amongst Finnish youth at the age of 21. Accumulation of welfare problems is a serious problem for a welfare state for several reasons. At the individual level, the accumulation of problems decreases the life quality for individuals. Over time this may alienate the individuals from activities, such as production, consumption, political activity and social interaction in a society. Coexistence of individual problems is against the objectives of the welfare state and the individual deprivation may also be costly for the welfare state in a long run. To scrutinize the patterns of disadvantage accumulation among Finnish youth, we run a latent class analysis. We find two distinctive classes with a high problem accumulation. More specifically, it seems that there is quite a small class (4.6% of the youth) with problems such as unemployment, higher levels of smoking, drug and alcohol use as well as higher levels of criminal activity. Basically, this group shows external problem behavior. Another class with higher problem probabilities is a bit larger (16.1% of the youth) and seems instead to suffer from problems such as feelings of loneliness, being an outsider, depression and higher levels of school drop-out. Accordingly, this group is instead showing more of an internal problem behavior.



The Post School Transition as a Critical Period for Testing Psychological Theory

Presenter: Philip Parker (University Tübingen, Germany)

ABSTRACT

The post school transition is associated with a number of major developmental tasks including developing mature relationships, establishing independence, and choosing occupational paths. Such major challenges and changes in central domains of young adults lives provides an ideal period from which to study the role of intrapsychic factors on environmental and the effect of changes in the environment on person factors. Areas which can be profitable studied during this transition and which are a focus on my research include the role of increasing independence on young adult's physical activity, the dynamic interaction between person and personality in relation to major changes in relationships, the effect of changes in social factors on life satisfaction and subjective well-being, and the association between school relevant factors and their effects on occupational outcomes. This presentation, explores the importance of the post school transition period using a major research project on the role of dynamic interactions between personality and relationship quality as an example. Results indicate the important role that personality plays in changes in relationship quality as young adults move from school to university. There is also an indication that change in personality and relationship quality is correlated over time. Lessons learned from this project are considered in reference to potential future collaborative projects.



Individuals negotiating demands of social and change: A control theoretical approach

Presenter: Martin Tomasik (Centre for Applied Developmental Science at the University of Jena, Germany)

ABSTRACT

Macro-social phenomena such as globalisation or individualisation confront individuals with new demands that can be considered adaptive challenges. Individuals can deal with such demands in terms of different primary and secondary control strategies that can be summarized into goal engagement and goal disengagement. This paper analyses demographic and psychological predictors of goal engagement and disengagement in a sample of German adults that are affected by many demands of social change. The goal of the analyses is to find out more about the nature of demands by investigating the predictors for how individuals deal with them.



Reading Lists

Suggested reading for the sequence analysis workshop run by Dr Brendan Halpin

- Abbott and Hrycak (1990), "Measuring Resemblance in Sequence Data: An Optimal Matching Analysis of Musicians' Careers", *American Journal of Sociology* 96(1)
- Tak Wing Chan (1999), "Optimal Matching Analysis", *Social Research Update* 24 (<http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU24.html>)
- Brüderl and Scherer (2004), "Methoden zur Analyse von Sequenzdata", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 44
- Pollock (2007), "Holistic Trajectories: A Study of Combined Employment, Housing and Family Careers by Using Multiple-Sequence Analysis", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A* 170(1)
- See also the two special issues of *Sociological Methods and Research* 2000 and 2010 (volumes 29(1) and 38(3))

Suggested reading for sequence analysis in life course research run by Professor Mervi Eerola

- Andrew Abbott and Angela Tsay. Sequence analysis and optimal matching methods in sociology, Review and prospect. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 29(1):3-33, 2000 (with discussion, pp 34-76).
- Francesco C. Billari. The analysis of early life courses: complex descriptions of the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Population Research*, 18(2):119(24)-, November 2001.
- Duncan McVicar and Michael Anyadike-Danes. Predicting successful and unsuccessful transitions from school to work by using sequence methods. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A (Statistics in Society)*, 165(2):317-334, 2002.

