

INVITED SYMPOSIUM EARA 2018

Personality Development in Adolescence

Chairs: Jaap Denissen, Tilburg University, the Netherlands

Discussant: Amarantha De Haan, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Personality traits are defined as relatively stable individual differences in affect, behavior and cognition. The framework that is most often used to investigate them is the Big Five framework. Adolescence has proven to be a period of profound personality trait change. Not only is rank-order stability in adolescence lower than in adulthood, there is also evidence for mean-level changes in socially desirable traits. Now that the description of personality development in adolescence has become clearer, the field is ready to take the next step and map both the antecedents and the consequences of personality trait development. Across four talks, novel research using innovative longitudinal methods are presented. Laceulle starts by demonstrating longitudinal consequences of personality traits on psychological adjustment, combining evidence from multiple studies. Following this, De Clercq investigates the effects of physical (harsh punishment) versus non-physical (corrective discipline) parenting tactics on growth in dark traits. Third, Denissen reports evidence that peers' personality trait development is not related to adolescents' own trait development. In another study, however, daily experiences of conflict and negative affect were reciprocally associated with changes in trait neuroticism. Finally, Göllner focuses on the effects of (changing) teachers on changes in high school students' personality traits, including social cognitive traits (e.g., motivation). An overall perspective on the findings is provided by our discussant, Amarantha de Haan.

PRESENTATION 1: Longitudinal Associations between Pathological Personality Traits and Psychological Functioning across Adolescence

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In recognition of the fact that personality pathology is unlikely to appear de novo in adulthood, recent research increasingly focusses on the development, origins and outcomes of personality pathology in adolescence. The current presentation provides an overview of studies examining the longitudinal associations between pathological personality traits and psychological functioning across adolescence. In the first study ($n \approx 300$) preliminary findings are presented linking early adolescent change in pathological personality traits to subsequent psychological problems. In the second study ($n = 127$) it was examined how pathological personality traits in late adolescence were longitudinally related to symptom distress, suggesting that adolescents high on negative affectivity and detachment at the start of the study were more likely to follow maladaptive trajectories of personality disorder related distress. Finally, in a data pooling study of 5 longitudinal datasets ($n = 1.590$) it was examined how key dimensions of personality pathology were prospectively related to depressive symptoms in adolescents, indicating that there are substantial links between early personality pathology and depressive symptoms. Together, the findings shed light on the question of how the development of personality pathology places adolescents at risk for psychological problems.

**PRESENTATION 2: Positive and Harmful Effects of Parental Disciplinary Tactics on
Dark Trait Development Throughout Childhood and Adolescence**

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It is generally accepted that parenting matters in the context of childhood trait development, with consistent support for the nurturing effects of positive parenting and harmful effects of negative control. Children with a manifest dark trait constellation, however, may be particularly challenging to parents, as these traits are associated with an increased chance for parents to lose a supportive and positive parental attitude in dealing with the child's difficultness, and to turn towards more negative controlling strategies. The present study aims to refine this construct of negative parental control into conceptually distinct controlling strategies, and examines differences and similarities in the effects of physical (harsh punishment) versus non-physical (corrective discipline) parenting tactics on the developmental course of childhood dark traits across an 11 year time span. Data were drawn from the ongoing Flemish Personality and Affect Longitudinal Study (PALS), currently including five consecutive multi-informant assessment points of a representative Flemish group of both community children and children with a referred status at the moment of inclusion in PALS ($N = 720$, 54.4% girls, age range T1 = 8-14.78 years, $M = 10.73$, $SD = 1.39$). Latent growth modeling suggested significant differences between both kinds of parental discipline in terms of their effects on subsequent growth in dark traits, and also showed a number of interactional effects between baseline level of dark traits and parenting on the developmental course of dark traits. These findings will be discussed from a trait activation perspective and may offer fruitful guidelines for parents and clinicians who experience that the manageability of a child is not always evident.

PRESENTATION 3: Opening the Black-Box of Personality Development in Adolescence:

Dynamic Factors Associated with Personality Stability and Change

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Adolescence is a period of relatively pronounced personality change yet it is currently a mystery what drives these developmental changes. The current talk tries to open this black box by looking at two possible mechanisms: personality trait (co-)development of peers, and daily affective and social experiences. Two studies used data from the large-scale RADAR project. In the first project (Borghuis et al., 2017), we sampled 2,230 Dutch adolescents across 7 waves. We found increases in rank-order stability and a combination of maturity increases and temporary maturity dips across time. We did not, however, find evidence for co-development between adolescents and their friends and/or siblings. In a second study (Borghuis et al., submitted), we selected a subsample of 1,046 adolescents and their best friends, focusing on up to six yearly measures of trait neuroticism and 15 bursts of experience-sampling assessments of daily conflict and negative affect. Using cross-lagged analysis, we found that daily experiences and trait neuroticism were reciprocally associated, although the effect of daily experiences on rank-order personality changes were more consistent than vice versa. This pattern of bidirectional influences was also uncovered using within-person analysis (random-intercept models; Hamaker et al., 2015). We discuss these results with regard to contemporary personality development theories that emphasize the role of repeated momentary experiences as a key mechanisms of personality trait development.

PRESENTATION 4: The Consistency of Students' Personality When Getting a New Teacher

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It is widely assumed that teachers influence and shape the life experiences of their students. Students interact with their teachers every day, and thus, it is not surprising that, for instance, positive student-teacher relationships (e.g., characterized by supportiveness, encouragement of divergent thinking, empathy, etc.) are associated with positive school outcomes such as enhanced performance and positive socioemotional development (e.g., McCormick & O'Connor, 2015). In two longitudinal studies, we examined teacher-specific effects on students' personality by comparing time consistency of personality ratings between students who got a new teacher over the course of the study and those who did not. In a first study (PISA; OECD, 2004) we analyzed social cognitive variables (i.e., students' academic self-view, academic interest, effort, and motivation) and found effects for language related effort measures. Math related social cognitive constructs were however unaffected by the change in teachers. In a second study (TRAIN; Jonkman, Rose, & Trautwein, 2013), we also contrasted the social cognitive constructs with the Big Five personality traits and asked whether teacher specific effects were more pronounced for social cognitive variables than for the Big Five traits. Again, teacher specific effects were found for language related social cognitive constructs but not for math related constructs. In addition, we found one further effect for students' extraversion. To be taught by the same teacher was related to a somewhat higher time consistency in students' extraversion than to be taught by different teachers. These findings will be discussed from a person-environment fit perspective which may be fruitful when investigating the personality development of individual students within the educational context.