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## In this Issue...

p. 1 Note from the Editor

p. 1 Letter from the President

p. 2 Special issue: *Transition to Adulthood: Different approaches to the study of how youth become adults*

1. The transition to adulthood: A life course perspective.
2. Uncertainty management in the transition to adulthood in Portugal.
3. How to become an adult in Portugal? Influence of contextual and personal variables in the transition to adulthood.
4. Transitioning to adulthood in Portugal and Canada: Youth's joint projects with peers.
5. The Meaning of "Responsibility" in the Transition to Adulthood: A Longitudinal Case Study with Brazilian Youth.
6. Mechanisms of identity development: The interaction between exploration and commitment.

p. 24 XIV EARA Conference in Cesme-Izmir

p. 25 From the Student and Early Career Network (SECNet)

p. 25 Report about the 2013 EARA-SRA Summer School in Kent (Ohio)

p. 27 Announcement of the 2014 EARA-SRA Summer School

p. 28 Job Opportunities

p. 29 EARA Publications

p. 24 Inquiries/Address Information

## From the President



Adolescence is a vibrant topic of study and it catches the attention of many journalists across the globe. I will give you three examples of studies that surfaced in the mass media during the last couple of weeks. All studies resulted from collaborations by teams of international researchers. First, a group of authors from over 10 countries from the international HBSC team (Health Behavior in School-aged Children) reported (in press publication in *Addiction*) that lifetime cannabis use decreased among adolescents in Europe and North America between 2002 and 2010. They also found two interesting societal trends: a. during 2002-2010 cannabis use became less characteristic of affluent countries in comparison to less affluent countries, or stated otherwise, cannabis use became more similar in affluent and less affluent countries; b. cannabis use became less characteristic of adolescents from affluent

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families in contrast to adolescents from less affluent families. The authors concluded that during a period of decrease, cannabis use appears to have 'trickled down' from richer to developing countries, and from more affluent to less affluent youth. Second, and following up the very interesting report byof Dagmar Strohmeier and Olga Solomontos-Kontouri in the May issue of the present newsletter on evidence based bullying prevention programs, Dutch sociologists in collaboration with the Finnish designers of the program reported that the KiVa anti-bullying program is also highly effective in the Netherlands: KiVa reduced complaints of bullying by over fifty percent. The researchers suggest KiVa to be introduced more widely in Dutch schools. Third, on the October 15th the Wall Street Journal of October 15th reported that 'Teens are still developing empathy skills'. WSJ noted earlier development of cognitive empathy in girls than in boys as well as a temporary dip of affective empathy in boys. This male empathy dip was found to be related to early pubertal development.

These three examples reveal that there is a lot of good news to share on adolescent development, and also that findings of adolescent research are fascinating and of high relevance to society. Luckily, our EARA community is in a perfect position to contribute to this fascinating field of study. By now all of you have received the information that online abstract submission for the 14th EARA conference is open from October 15th untill December 15th 2013. I hope that all of you will submit your latest findings and will join us in Izmir 201104 to discuss them.

I have also some news and a couple of more practical issue to share.

The EARA conference 2016 will take place in Andalusia, Spain. Marion Kloep, Leo Hendry and their Spanish colleagues wrote an excellent conference proposal that has been accepted by our council. Thanks Marion, Leo and colleagues!

As you probably have already noticed, our home journal, the Journal of Adolescence has vacancies for 4 assistant editors. I invite you to take a look at the journal website of

the journal and to consider applying. EARA definitely needs a good representation here. Peter Noack (main applicant) and Figen Çok and myself (co-applicants) obtained a grant fFrom the Jacobs Foundation for organizing the Second Workshop for young researchers of adolescence in Latin America in Chile in the fall of 2013. So, especially thanks to the work of Peter, EARA is establishing good connections with Latin America.

Finally, the European Journal of Developmental Psychology will devote a special issue to 'Romantic and sexual developments in adolescence and young adulthood'. The call for papers will be posted on the EARA website soon. I invite you to submit your work to the special issue.

Best wishes,

Wim Meeus

Adolescent Development Utrecht University  
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## ***Inquiries***

The EARA newsletter is a publication of the European Association for Research on Adolescence, and is published twice a year. All inquiries about the content of the newsletter should be addressed to the editor:

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# ***Special Issue: Transition to Adulthood: Different approaches to the study of how youth become adults***

***Filomena Parada*** (University of Coimbra, Portugal)

Over recent decades an immense body of literature has been produced on youth transitions in Western societies. In particular, discussions focusing on how young people construct themselves and their pathways from youth to adulthood have become a prominent feature of much of the research being produced in the field of adolescence and youth studies (e.g., Arnett, 2000; Buchman & Kriesi, 2011; Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2007; Parada & Young, 2013; Wyn & Woodman, 2007). For the most part, this literature is grounded in the acknowledgement that ongoing changes in the economic, cultural, social, historical, and political conditions embedded in individuals' daily lives have psychological and social impacts. These impacts influence how today's youth experience transitions to adulthood and adulthood in itself (Parada & Young, 2013). The transition to adulthood, like most areas of contemporary life, has gone through a process of increased diversification and de-standardization. This transition has become not only more prolonged and complex, but also less predictable, uniform or linear. Covering little over two decades of people's lives this transition spans from the end of childhood, around the start of the second decade of life, until the early to the mid-thirties.

Among others, Young et al. (2011) highlighted, the transition to adulthood corresponds to a period in young people's lives in which several major choices and decisions must be considered and often implemented (e.g., leaving the parental

home, establishing a stable romantic relationship, having children, finding and trying to maintain a position in the labour market). Although traditional structural markers and events continue to persist and influence how individuals transition to adulthood, today's youths' transitions often subvert the formerly orderly and prescribed progress through such markers and events. That is, the timing and the sequencing of how or when one becomes an adult has changed (e.g., Buchman & Kriesi, 2011; Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2007; Parada & Young, 2013; Wyn & Woodman, 2007). Throughout the transition to adulthood many youth perceive their lives as being in constant fluctuation, and progressing very much like the somewhat erratic balancing of a yo-yo (Pais, 2001). According to Wyn and Woodman (2007), new or distinctive life patterns and priorities are being forged and can be identified in the ways in which young people of today approach and live their lives, that is, in how they make sense of daily life experiences and transitions. These changes not only mirror individuals' new ways of being and acting, but also underlie the different transition pathways youth have been constructing for themselves.

The papers presented in this special issue of the newsletter both corroborate and subscribe to most of the previously mentioned assumptions. Relying on diverse theoretical and research approaches, all contributions bring to light some of the complexity and richness of the processes underlying the ways in which young people in contemporary Western societies navigate the multiple dimensions of the transition to adulthood. Undeniably, many questions remain unanswered (e.g., Buchman & Kriesi, 2011). Nonetheless, it is not our aim to provide such answers with the following set of papers. We simply intend on contributing to the ongoing debates surrounding the subject. Specifically, we intend to highlight some of the current trends in research, allowing us to better frame and understand the processes and outcomes emerging from the different ways in which young people of today become adults.

In the first paper, Schoon argues that one way of accomplishing the

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mentioned aim is to study the transition to adulthood from a life course perspective. According to Schoon, life course perspectives provide us with a comprehensive framework capable of effectively contributing to the understanding of the dynamic complexity inherent to phenomena such as the one under discussion. Schoon provides us with an overview of how ongoing changes influencing the timing and sequencing of institutionalised life roles and passages impact the developmental processes of adaptation to these changes and transitions. Further, Schoon also describes how these changes and adaptation processes become evident in the different transition to adulthood pathways being constructed by today's youth.

In the second paper, Oliveira and Fontaine present findings from a series of studies aiming to capture (1) the types of uncertainty management strategies used by Portuguese youth while navigating the transition to adulthood, (2) the predictive power specific personal (i.e., agentic) and familial resources have on the types of uncertainty management strategies being used by young people, and (3) the impact that both the amount and quality of these resources and the type of uncertainty management strategies used by individuals' have on the process of identity resolution and on their level of psychological well-being. The third paper is authored by Saraiva, Brandão and Matos, who report a series of findings contributing to the ongoing discussions surrounding the concept of emerging adulthood and how its meaning may differ across cultures, specifically when it comes to Portuguese culture and society. Thus, after asserting the interconnectedness existing between the development of an individuated sense of self towards parents and romantic partners, Saraiva et al. provide us with some evidence showing not only how the resolution of such processes is associated to young people's future expectations concerning the combination of work and family roles, but also how the association that exists between individuals' perception of financial circumstances and difficulties experienced in the process of individuation-separation

from the romantic partner is fully mediated by levels of self-esteem and depression.

In the fourth paper, Parada and Young report preliminary, unpublished findings from two studies, one conducted in Portugal and the other in Canada. These studies address the naturally occurring projects that youth engage in with peers as they make the transition to adulthood. Friendship appears as the overarching project youth engaged in peer relationships explicitly enact together across time, while navigating the transition to adulthood. Parada and Young's findings not only illustrate how complex processes such as the transition to adulthood are promoted and realized socially but also expose the similarities of the processes underlying the ways in which youth and their peers, regardless of the specifics of their cultural backgrounds, co-construct and make sense of transition experiences. Furthermore, as previously argued by Young et al (2011), Parada and Young's findings constitute further evidence of the explanatory value of Contextual Action Theory as an alternative framework for the conceptualization and research of the processes underlying the ways in which youth become adults.

In the fifth paper, Mattos, a Brazilian researcher, presents us with a case study analysis of the transition to adulthood story of a young female coming from a disadvantaged background. This case study illustrates how the mechanisms operating in the construction of a values system, specifically of the meaning of being responsible, unfold and are integrated over time and across one's multiple domains of existence. This case-study is followed by Kunnen, the last author contributing to this special issue of the newsletter. In her paper, Kunnen reports findings from two studies that explore the dynamics of individual identity processes in the domains of friendship and study. According to Kunnen, these findings constitute additional evidence of the nature of the relationship existing between commitment formation and exploration. They also help to put the emphasis that has recently been given to the use or combination of individual and group data for the study of individual developmental processes into perspective,



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particularly concerning identity development.

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## **1. The transition to adulthood: A life course perspective**

**Ingrid Schoon** (University of London, England)

The transition to adulthood is a critical stage in the lives of young people, involving the assumption of multiple new social roles. The 'Big 5' transitions include leaving full-time education, entry into paid work, setting up one's own home, entry into

a committed relationship and making the step into parenthood. Transition experiences are shaped by previous experience in the family, in school, and the wider social context, and are in turn, setting the scene for adult adjustment and wellbeing. They are thus consequences of previous levels of adjustment and attainment and at the same time a springboard for later adjustments. To understand the transition to adulthood it is therefore necessary to adopt a life course perspective, conceptualising the transition as a developmental process which is embedded in a changing socio-historical context, involving multiple levels of influence from across the macro to the micro level (Elder, 1998).

According to life course theory the transition to adulthood is understood as a series of status passages in the institutionalised life course (Elder, 1998; Buchman & Kriesi, 2011). The assumption of new social roles, such as the completion of compulsory education or the entry into marriage are guided by a set of informal as well as legal norms and expectations regarding the timing of transitions. The timing and sequencing of transitions, in turn, are important in determining their meaning and implications (Elder, 1998). In every society age is used as a mean of placing individuals in a template defining and regulating transitions. There are cultural norms regarding the 'right time' to leave school, to get a job, to find a partner and to start a family. This age-specific norms and expectations can however vary in different socio-cultural contexts, by subgroups in the population, and are subject to social change.

### Transitions in time of social change

Striking changes in the timing of transitions, i.e. the prolongation of the transition to independent adulthood across most Western societies has generated great interest in their study and has steered debates regarding how exactly to assess this change and how to explain the observed diversity (Buchman & Kriesi, 2011). Since the late 1960s the average age of primary employment, marriage and parenthood has been extended from the early to the late twenties or even early thirties. The only

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transition marker that shows only a modest increase in median age is leaving the parental home, with the exception of Southern Europe, where it has risen considerably (Buchman & Kriesi, 2011). Explanations for the changing trends include 1. changing value systems; 2. feminism and the increasing participation of women in education and employment; and 3. changing education and labour market opportunities.

Following the youth and student rebellions during the 1960s and early 1970s, young people began to experiment with new ideas and life styles, bringing with it pervasive value changes (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). These were manifested for example in the delay of marriage and childbirth, the rise of non-marital unions, divorce, and remarriage, and ideational claims to autonomy and self realization. The women's movement also played a crucial role, encouraging women to pursue education and careers partially independent from family formation. The expansion of further education, in turn, as well as the increasing participation of women in the labour market, have also been considered as explanations for the increasing prolongation and destandardisation of life course transitions. Another cause for more prolonged and complicated transitions into paid employment and adult independence were the major economic recessions following the oil crisis in 1973, lasting from the late 1970s to the 1990s and bringing with them a sharp rise in unemployment, especially among young workers between ages 16 to 25. In response to changing labour market conditions and the introduction of new technologies in the modern knowledge economies young people were under increasing pressure to acquire further education and qualifications in order to secure a job at all. This trend towards increasing and extended education participation is most likely to continue in the current economic climate, following the global economic downturn which started in 2008, bringing with it the highest levels of youth unemployment since the 1970s, especially in Southern Europe. Furthermore, the wages for young people have been decreasing, even for some years prior to the

recession (Hurrell, 2012), making it difficult for young people to earn enough money to support the move into independent living or to start a family.

### Multiple and interlinked transitions

Transitions such as leaving full-time education, entry into the labour market and starting a committed relationship are not discrete, clearly bounded events, but are interdependent, often overlap and require compromises regarding the coordination of work and family related roles. For example, young people might be in higher education, but at the same time have to work in order to pay student fees, and also may have a partner or children. Most studies examining the timing and sequencing of transitions have however focused on only one type of transition, such as the transition into employment or into parenthood, and have examined the antecedents and associated outcomes. More recently researchers have increasingly recognised the importance of studying the transition to adulthood as a holistic social pathway, involving the combination of multiple social roles. The advancement of new methodologies, such as sequence analysis (Aisenbrey & Fasang, 2010), latent class and latent transition modelling (Macmillan & Eliason, 2003) has facilitated a better understanding of the timing and sequencing of multiple role transitions, as well as their combination and development over time. In particular, these approaches have enabled researchers to uncover underlying heterogeneity in transition experiences which has been masked by average trend information. This in turn has fuelled debates about the nature of youth transitions.

### Norms and time tables

While some researchers have argued that the prolongation of youth transitions reflects a new, normative life stage of emerging adulthood, others have questioned this assumption, arguing that there has been a polarization of experiences (Bynner, 2005). In particular young people from less privileged background are less likely to participate in extended education and instead follow the traditional fast track transition: leaving school at minimum

leaving age, finding employment and starting family formation at an earlier age than their privileged peers. Early transitions, such as leaving school directly after completing compulsory schooling or early parenthood are however generally considered 'less optimal' and have been associated with problems in establishing oneself in the labour market or making the transition to independent living (Bynner, 2005). On the other hand, it has been argued that early transitions can be beneficial for certain individuals (Schulenberg & Schoon, 2012). For example, the effects of early parenthood on well-being depend on marital status as well as other circumstances in life. A considerable number of young people are able to turn round an initially problematic transition, such as early school leaving or early parenthood, avoid financial dependence and lead a happy and satisfied life. A number of potential resource factors could be identified in these studies, including supportive social networks as well as individual capabilities and agency.

Each transition brings with it new challenges and opportunities, and can be understood as a turning point that can bring change to the better or worse. According to 'developmental match/mismatch models' (Eccles et al., 1997) transitions that provide a progressive increase in developmentally appropriate challenges through which young people can experience competence enable the individual to successfully master the transition. If, however, the demands of the developmental transitions are not matched to the capabilities of the individual, or if they amplify previous difficulties, then there can be a negative effect on mental health and wellbeing. A number of recent studies across different countries found that there is not one normative way to negotiate a successful transition to adulthood (Schulenberg & Schoon, 2012). There is heterogeneity in transition experiences: early transitions do not necessarily have to have a negative outcome, and protracted pathways to adulthood are not necessarily optimal.

### Conclusion

The transition to adulthood can be described as a dynamic process that involves

the active interaction between a changing individual and a changing context. Each role transition marks the entry into a new life domain, requiring adaptation strategies to successfully negotiate the transition. Selecting the appropriate transition strategy, in turn, depends on the structural opportunities and constraints as well as individual resources. Adopting a life course perspective facilitates a better understanding of the multiple influences on young people's life, the role of developmental integration of earlier experiences into later adaptation processes, as well as the importance of the wider social context in which development takes place.

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## **2. Uncertainty management in the transition to adulthood in Portugal**

**José E. Oliveira & Anne Marie Fontaine** (University of Oporto, Portugal)

In our late modern societies, the process of transition to adulthood takes place in a context characterized by high levels of anomie, coupled with a social process of compulsive individualization (e.g., Côté, 2000). Most social institutions are proving to be incapable of providing a sense of structure and organization to the transition process. While this increases the range of possible paths and shapes assumed by the transition to adulthood, it can also turn this process into a more difficult and problematic experience. Thus, the way in which young people are required to individualize their transition pathways is without precedent. They need to become agentic and acquire a sense of internal structure capable of compensating the lack of institutional support made available to them throughout the transition to adulthood. In Côté's (2000) terms, young people need to develop the necessary identity capital allowing them to satisfactorily negotiate opportunities and obstacles inherent to the transition process.

Furthermore, the socio-economic climate in which young people of today are navigating the transition to adulthood is characterized by high levels of uncertainty about the future, risk and unpredictability (e.g., Heinz, 2009; Leccardi, 2005). In late modern globalized societies, we seem to be witnessing heightened levels of uncertainty both at the personal and at the social level

(Bonss & Zinn, 2003). The course of events and the results of personal and collective decisions tend to be progressively more unpredictable and increasingly dependent on factors unknown at the time of the decision making process. Frequently, unexpected future events have a powerful influence on the end results of our original decisions. This phenomenon produces a sense of uncontrollability over the results of one's actions and ultimately over one's personal life. Uncertainty, thus, seems to be ubiquitous and a part of the current *Zeitgeist*. Overcoming a sense of pervading uncertainty has profound consequences in several life dimensions: in the capacity to articulate past, present and future in a coherent biographical narrative; in the capacity to set goals and make long term plans; in the necessity to constantly review current life plans in light of contextual changes; in the paramount difficulties tied to the process of autonomy/individuation; in the need to benefit from an ever prolonged family support, which may last well into the thirties.

Life management in the transition to adulthood, in such a socioeconomic climate, often tends to be a synonym of uncertainty management (Bonss & Zinn, 2003). That is, the success of the transition to adulthood process may greatly depend on "navigational" resources for uncertainty management. In the context of a Mediterranean model of transition (Scabini, Marta, & Lanz, 2006) such as the Portuguese, the uncertainty management strategies used by young people depend on the personal (own agentic ability) and family (family support) resources at their disposal. The amount and quality of these resources (personal and familial) and the uncertainty management strategies used by young people are expected to have a decisive impact on the process of identity resolution as well as on the level of psychological well-being exhibited by them.

### **Study aims**

Taking into account the previous considerations, we carried out a series of three studies with the overall aim of contributing to a better understanding of how young people, going through the



transition to adulthood, manage uncertainty. Specifically, with these three studies we intended on determining, respectively, (1) the types of uncertainty management strategies used by young people while navigating the transition to adulthood, (2) how the different uncertainty management strategies used by young people were influenced by family and personal resources, and (3) the impact that the different uncertainty management strategies used by young people, and the family and personal resources at their disposal have on adult identity resolution and on psychological well-being. The uncertainty management strategies used by young people during the transition to adulthood were assessed by means of the Uncertainty Management in the Transition to Adulthood Scale (Oliveira & Fontaine, 2013), a measure specifically developed for that purpose. Self-determination, general self-efficacy and ego strength were the indicators used to assess personal, agentic resources. Autonomy and material support were the dimensions used to assess family resources made available to youth.

## Results and discussion

Study 1 results concern the design and development of the Uncertainty Management in the Transition to Adulthood Scale (Oliveira & Fontaine, 2013). We concluded that this scale presents the following three-factor structure: (1) target-focused uncertainty management strategies, (2) open-based uncertainty management strategies, and (3) postponement uncertainty management strategies. Target-focused strategies are focused on goal setting and action planning (e.g., to focus on goal setting and on the establishment of priorities, to make human capital investments, to constructively use family support). Open-based strategies have to do with exploring opportunities, entrepreneurship, and investing in multiple activities and projects (e.g., the exploration of different life styles, the experimentation of alternative life projects, the use of innovative and creative ways of approaching life challenges). Postponement strategies entail a more passive attitude that involves the postponement of life decisions until one

feels prepared to assume them or until circumstances are perceived as favorable to their implementation. When prolonged over time, this strategy can assume a dysfunctional nature and turn into a form of procrastination.

In study 2, in order determine the predictive power of agentic abilities and family support over the use of different uncertainty management strategies, we created a path analysis model for each one of the three uncertainty management strategies mentioned above (see Figure 1. for a depiction of our general path analysis model).

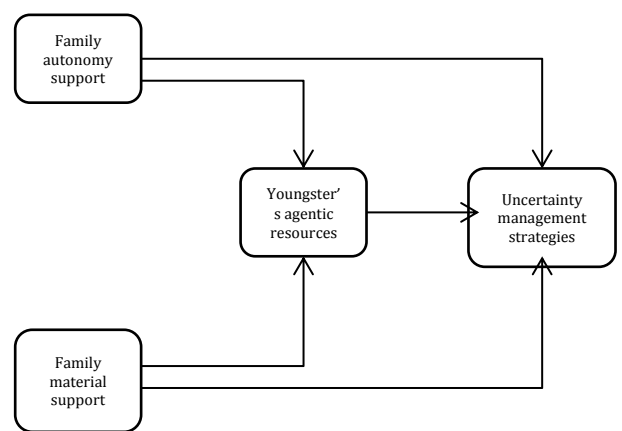


Figure 1. Path analysis model used to predict the use of a specific uncertainty management strategy based on the amount and quality of personal and family resources at the youth's disposal.

A similar structure was observed in the path analysis model created for determining the influence of family and personal resources on the use of target-focused, open-based, and postponement uncertainty management strategies. The main difference revealed by results concerns the influence that the amount or presence/absence of personal, agentic resources and family support have on the types of uncertainty management strategies used by youth. Specifically, postponement strategies tend to be used by young people presenting lower levels of both agentic abilities and family support. The use of open-based strategies depends on the amount and the quality of the individual's agentic abilities, which, in turn, depend on the presence of a family autonomy

supportive environment. Finally, young people using target-focused strategies seem to be the ones with the greatest amount of resources at their disposal. In order to be able to commit themselves to a planned biographic trajectory, young people must possess strong agentic abilities and benefit from strong family support, both at the autonomy and material (i.e., financial) level. Therefore, the ability to use target-focused strategies depends more heavily on the family of origin overall resources, which cannot be dissociated from the family's socioeconomic background.

In study 3, in order to determine the impact that family support, agentic resources and uncertainty management strategies have on identity resolution and psychological well-being, we developed another path analysis model (see Figure 2. for a depiction of our general path analysis model).

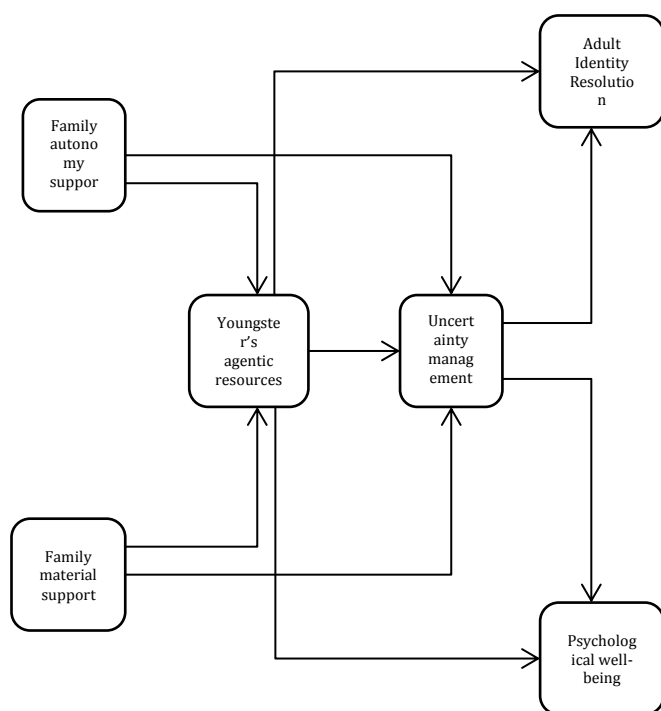


Figure 2. Path analysis model used to predict the impact of family support, agentic resources and uncertainty management strategies on adult identity resolution and psychological well-being.

The following main results were identified:

1. The strongest predictors of adult identity resolution were the young people's

agentic abilities, which are strongly associated to a family environment favouring autonomy development. Contrary to initial predictions, none of the uncertainty management strategies helped determining adult identity resolution.

2. Psychological well-being was predicted by young people's agentic abilities (fostered by family support), either directly or through the mediation of the target focused uncertainty management strategies.

With respect to the identity resolution prediction model, results suggest that the perception of possession of agentic resources needed to autonomously manage one's own biographical trajectories may be sufficient to derive a sense of being an adult. This result is in line with the increasingly subjective nature of the criteria used by young people to define themselves as adults in contemporary Western societies. Furthermore, the non-predictive role of uncertainty management strategies for identity resolution may denote a perception or representation of uncertainty as a condition that is, nowadays, pervasive throughout the life cycle. In this sense, there is a decoupling of the uncertainty management and the transition to adulthood processes. Uncertainty management may, then, be asserted as a need that will manifest itself recurrently throughout the adult life cycle and the multiple transitions it entails.

The structural model for the prediction of psychological well-being asserts the importance of the presence of family and personal resources, as well as the use of the target focused uncertainty management strategies for the production of a sense of self-realization. Structured action directed toward the implementation of life plans and projects (from which one derives a sense of self-fulfillment) seems to be closely linked to a sufficiently powerful and solid identity, nurtured and supported by a family network capable of providing autonomy and material support to its development.

## Conclusion

Accomplished transitions to adulthood in Southern European countries such as Portugal, seem to rely on comprehensive family support that, on the

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one hand, is able to foster a solid sense of identity (with the intrinsic agentic abilities needed to negotiate opportunities and obstacles inherent to the transition process); and, on the other, provides the necessary safety net indispensable for the implementation of fruitful uncertainty management strategies directed toward the accomplishment of personally meaningful life projects and capable of fostering a sense of psychological well-being.

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### **3. How to become an adult in Portugal? Influence of contextual and personal variables in the transition to adulthood.**

**Luísa Marinho Saraiva, Tânia Brandão & Paula Mena Matos**  
(University of Oporto, Portugal)

The transition to adulthood has been an extensively studied topic in the field of Developmental Psychology over the last decades. It is commonly agreed that, in post-industrial societies, there has been a

growing individualization and privatization of life-courses and a delay in the fulfillment of adult roles up to the third decade of life. On the verge of the 21st century Arnett (2000) proposed the term of “emerging adulthood” to coin a new developmental period with specific features and tasks. This perspective suggests that society enables young people to have a period of exploration and experimentation before making long-term commitments for the future. This concept has been explored and discussed in several studies with samples from different cultural and economic backgrounds (e.g. Arnett, 2000; Brandão, Saraiva & Matos, 2012a; Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2004; Saraiva & Matos, 2012). In line with the critique formulated by authors such as, Côté and Bynner (2008), we believe that although the prolonged transition to adulthood is reflected by a longer period of experimentation, this comes as a symptom of the instability and precariousness of labour markets in the current economic conjuncture. Therefore, the subjective experience of emerging adulthood relies on the institutional and personal resources available to deal with the challenges associated with this transition.

In a previous review of literature (Brandão, Saraiva & Matos, 2012a), we focused on the specifics of the transition to adulthood in the Portuguese context, comparing the differences and commonalities with the Brazilian context and integrating studies from other southern European countries (such as Greece and Italy). Considering the pernicious effect of the current economic crisis in Southern European countries, it is necessary to frame the experience of emerging adulthood in a context of a precarious labour market with low wages and high youth unemployment (people between 15 and 24 years of age represent 42.1% of the total of those classified as unemployed in Portugal, in the first trimester of 2013). For this reason, families appear as the main source of financial support in Southern Europe, with most young people going through this transition while living in the parental home. Differing from studies using Northern European samples, in Portugal this prolonged co-residence seems to be

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integrated into the country's culture and therefore, is not detrimental to parent-child relationship and to the resolution of developmental tasks (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013). It is estimated that, in 2008, around 57.5% Portuguese young people aged between 18 and 34 years lived with at least one of their parents.

The reorganization of the parent-child relationship plays, therefore, an important role in the negotiation of the transition to adulthood. Parents provide young adults with the financial stability allowing them to try-out different pathways in education and work (Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2004). To study the transition to adulthood in Portugal it is necessary to consider the cohabitation of two generations of adults, posing particular challenges to the family system. The decision to leave the parental home seems to be connected to a stable romantic relationship and marriage. We consider that the reorganization of parent-child relationships and the development of intimacy are processes that co-occur and can explain differences in the trajectories towards adulthood. Therefore, we conducted a series of studies aiming to address the main developmental tasks of emerging adulthood within the context of Portuguese culture and society. Specifically, it has been the aim of our research team to investigate the association that exists between significant relationships, such as family and intimate relationships, individual psychological adjustment and contextual factors, such as the economic situation, during the transition to adulthood.

In our research with Portuguese emerging adults, we addressed the concept of separation-individuation as the ability to gain autonomy and to develop a differentiated sense of self within relationships with significant others. The development of an autonomous sense of self is one of the dimensions that can be associated with the larger construct of identity capital, playing a major role in one's ability to deal with insecurity and precariousness in the process of becoming an adult. Our research found an association between the resolution of individuation towards parents and romantic partners, being that the difficulties shown in the

development of a sense of an individuated self tend to be reflected on the same process towards the romantic partner as the relationship length increases (Saraiva & Matos, 2012). Also, the healthy resolution of this developmental task is associated with future expectations combining job and family. We found that young men who present more individuation difficulties toward the romantic partner (ambivalence, fear of love withdrawal and engulfment anxiety) tend to focus more on family plans, idealizing the role of the mother and considering the mother as the primal caregiver. They also tend to believe that women should be the primary child caretakers and that they should interrupt their career to take care of children, since their physical presence is essential for children's well-being. For men with higher engulfment anxiety these beliefs appear as an emotional and cognitive strategy allowing them to preserve their sense of independence and to be more strongly invested in their careers (Brandão, Saraiva, & Matos, 2012b).

Our studies suggest that the construction of future plans about career and family can be influenced by relational and social contexts. More specifically, contexts of emotional closeness, such as the relationship with the romantic partner seem to be particularly relevant. Nevertheless, our results showed interdependence between contextual and personal variables that can explain differences in the subjective experience of being an emerging adult. These results point to the importance of a more systemic and comprehensive view on the research on psychological processes. Through mediation analysis we observed an indirect relationship between the perception of financial circumstances and difficulties in separation-individuation towards the romantic partner. This association is fully mediated by levels of self-esteem and depression (Brandão, Saraiva & Matos, 2013). A negative view on one's own economic situation and the parents' financial circumstances leads to lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression, which in turn lead to higher ambivalence, fear of love withdrawal and engulfment anxiety in the relationship with



the romantic partner. These results highlight that individual and social resources come together in the definition of the range of opportunities and pathways available to young adults in the transition to adulthood. Also, these findings contribute to the discussion on the definition of emerging adulthood and its social meaning in different countries and cultural contexts.

Regarding psychological intervention, it is necessary to consider systemic variables that influence the trajectories of the transition to adulthood. As the structure and institutional support provided to individuals during social transitions, such as the transition to adulthood, decreases, the more relevant become individual resources explaining differences in life trajectories. Thus, psychological intervention can have a crucial role in the empowerment of individuals and in the development of a sense of agency with respect to their contexts. In this sense, it is necessary to promote a developmental individualization, in opposition to individualization per default (cf. Côté. & Bynner, 2008), that can help young people to deal with the challenges posed by late modern societies.

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## 5. Transitioning to adulthood in Portugal and Canada: Youth's joint projects with peers

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For more than two decades Young and colleagues (e.g., Valach, Young & Lyman, 2002; Young & Domene, 2012; Young & Valach, 2008) have worked on the development of Contextual Action Theory (CAT). CAT is a unique epistemology and research paradigm whose core tenet is that knowledge and meaning are constructed through action. Action is understood as all goal-directed, intentional human behaviour through which people construct and make

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sense of their lives. Actions are rather short, time-specific phenomena, anchored in people's everyday lives and experience. Also, according to CAT, human actions are social processes (e.g., Valach et al., 2002; Young & Valach, 2008). Actions individuals engage in are "social in their origin, their consequences, as well as their enfolding" (Valach et al., 2002, p. 28), being impossible to imagine the construction of "a meaningful project or career without the involvement of others" (Young & Domene, 2012, p. 18).

In other words, people understand their own and others' behaviour as goal-directed, that is, as having a goal or goals that give it meaning. Goals are a part of the action or project itself. Goals accompany and emerge from action, reflecting and representing the social meaning of actions, that is, its overall intentionality. Projects are broader than action. Projects are midlength sequences (e.g., going from a month to several years) of action that have common or similar goals. It is through projects that most individuals are capable of recognizing action as embedded in a superordinate goal structure. Career is how people organize and make sense, both prospectively and retrospectively, of their life and ongoing involvement with that life over the long run. Parenthood, marriage, occupation and friendship are among the most common ways in which, across lengthier periods of time, individuals' actions and projects coalesce together around shared goals (Young & Domene, 2012).

Thus, action, project, and career constitute an hierarchical system operating as organizing frameworks that people use as a means of creating and giving meaning to everyday life events and processes. Joint action and project are two key concepts within CAT. A joint project is described as encompassing common desired end states that are jointly constructed by two or more people, and the series of actions carried out to achieve these goals (Valach et al., 2002). A joint action reflects the processes of social construction pairs of individuals who are connected in some meaningful way engage in as a means of achieving specific goals or future end states (Young & Valach, 2008). As Domene and Young (2008) highlighted, the focus on experiences and meanings co-

constructed by pairs of connected people is one of CAT's most distinctive features. The same applies to its emphasis on process, that is, to the ways in which the "dyad engage together to achieve their goals over time" (p. 55).

The transition to adulthood is one example of a social process constructed through a person's engagement in series of joint actions and projects self-perceived as meaningful for the successful accomplishment of the task(s) at hand, both in the short and longer term (Young et al., 2011b). According to Young and colleagues, such an approach to the transition to adulthood allows us to understand the ways in which individuals act on their own development. It also allows us to understand how transition processes and experiences are co-constructed within interactions with other social actors. Parents, counsellors and peers are among the people youth seek out and engage in common shared actions and projects directed toward becoming an adult.

As documented in the literature, the transition to adulthood is meaningful for young people and their family members, constituting the parental family an important resource for individuals entering young adulthood (Young et al., 2008). Counselling can also be effective in supporting young people going through the transition to adulthood (Young et al., 2011a). Although the subject does not need to be explicitly addressed in the counselling process, the issues brought by clients to the counselor can easily be recognized as pertaining to the processes in which young people tend to engage in during the years of late adolescence and young adulthood. Peers also influence the transition to adulthood, being positive peer relationships, friendships and overall social support during late adolescence and early adulthood that is critical to successful transitions (Young et al., 2013). However, to date, no studies that we are aware of focused on youth's relationships with peers as goal-directed intentional action, or described the projects youth and their peers co-construct during the transition to adulthood.

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### Youth's joint projects with peers: Friendship, identity construction and career promotion

Having the above in mind, Young et al. (2013) conducted a study focusing on the description of the overall joint actions and projects youth engage in with their peers as they move from adolescence to adulthood. It was their aim to identify and more fully describe the processes of these social relationships in the context of the transition to adulthood. This study was replicated in Portugal, although using a smaller sample.

In both studies the qualitative action-project method (Domene & Young, 2008) was used to collect and analyze the data. Three types of data pertinent to the transition to adulthood project were collected: (1) participants' manifest (observable) behaviour (i.e., what they say and do) as they engage in joint and individual action pertinent to the study, (2) participants' internal processes (i.e., their cognitions and emotions) as they engage with each other – data collected from the research participants observing their manifest behavior on video and recalling cognitions and emotions, and (3) the social meaning that the actions and project have for the participants. Through the analysis of these three types of data, we were able to identify and describe the types of actions and projects youth and their peers jointly engage in while navigating the transition to adulthood. Thus, how they have been co-constructing daily living meanings and experiences pertaining to the transition to adulthood.

Findings for both the Canadian and the Portuguese studies are preliminary and reports of the final findings have yet to be published. However, it was possible to determine that, for both contexts, friendship appeared as the most salient project study participants engaged in. Nonetheless, the dynamics of youth-peer interaction diverged in one particular aspect: for the Portuguese sample, the construction of themselves as friends served as backdrop for being intimate, humorous and reciprocal with each other, thus for engaging in a series of additional functional steps (e.g., providing support, sharing emotion and exercising judgment) oriented towards the

construction of the friendship. In the Canadian sample, peers explicitly aimed to connect and seek out closeness with one another. They didn't rely as much as the Portuguese dyads on an implicit understanding of themselves as friends or of themselves as being connected (e.g., by describing themselves as friends, either to one another or to the research assistants).

Two sub-categories of friendship projects emerged: maintaining friendship and negotiating friendship. Maintaining friendship projects were about actions and goals related to the continuity of an already established relationship. A significant degree of connection and bonding was apparent in dyads that were engaged in a friendship maintenance project. Between dyad members falling into this category prevails a sense of support, trust and dependability. Negotiating friendship projects reflected a time of variability or shift in the relationship. This variability or shift in the relationship may result in its dissolution or in active attempts to solidify the friendship. Contacts between dyad members engaged in negotiating friendship projects tended to be unsatisfactory and not necessarily regular. Frequently there is a lack of reciprocity in the contact attempts made during the monitoring period, with one member of the dyad reaching out more often than the other.

Connection points across multiple life domains (e.g., a long friendship history, overlapping peer networks or activities, shared beliefs) and resources (e.g., time, proximity, and shared interests) appeared as particularly relevant to how youth and their peers enacted their friendship projects. The presence or absence of strong connection points together with the amount of available resources and with how young people address and manage challenges deriving from a lacking in resources served to further distinguish dyads that were maintaining or negotiating resources. Curiously, participants in the Canadian study made numerous references to social media and texting as predominant means to check in, stay in touch, and offer support. However, for Portuguese participants, having a conversation, or going out for a cup of coffee or for dinner, either just the two of them or

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with friends, appeared as the main ways in which peers maintained a sense of continuity and dependability in their relationship with one another.

Constructing identity and career promotion were the other major projects identified, particularly in the Canadian sample. Most likely, the size of the Portuguese sample did not allow for these two kinds of projects to emerge from data analysis as they did in the Canadian sample. However, career promotion and identity construction goals were identified in Portuguese youth's joint actions. Like in the Canadian sample, it is possible to assume that, for study participants, friendship projects served as a background for other actions, goals and projects related to other significant domains of their lives. Specifically, to jointly address identity issues as reflected in the degree of the intimacy in the friendship (especially in friendships where participants had significant levels of trust and attunement), or to address relationships outside of the peer dyad (e.g., with romantic partners, parents, roommates or other friends in the peer network, teachers) and, particularly, how these relationships with significant others in their lives should be or progress. It also seemed to serve as a background for jointly addressing career promotion goals, that is, goals relating to the navigation and exploration of educational choices and experiences, and the pursuit of specific occupations.

In the Portuguese sample, although the overall sequence of actions participants engaged in mostly concerned the maintenance or the negotiation of their friendship, participants' conversations were mostly constructed around career-related topics (e.g., how to achieve specific academic goals, which courses or graduate school to choose). This was particularly evident for the first interview, which took place just before the beginning of the exam period. Simultaneously, 3 of the 4 dyads in the Portuguese sample, at the time of the first interview concerned new friendships (that is, the participants had met recently, only a few months before, at the beginning of the school year). Maybe, as in the Canadian sample, those participants, who were either finding it hard or in the process of learning

how to trust and be attuned with one another, were less inclined to self-disclose about personal concerns, preferring to focus the conversation on work, school or entertainment.

### Conclusion

Both studies helped to evidence the significance of friendships as relational projects in young people's lives, in which often other peer projects (e.g., identity construction, career promotion) are intertwined. They also provide us with a description of the processes underlying the ways in which youth with their peers jointly construct and make sense of their transition-related events and experiences. The clear similarities observed between the Portuguese and the Canadian findings allow us to consider that, regardless of the specifics of the cultural environments individuals are embedded in, CAT provides a rich and useful framework capable of accurately describing how people construct and resolve problems in their daily lives.

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### **5. The Meaning of “Responsibility” in the Transition to Adulthood: A Longitudinal Case Study with Brazilian Youth**

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#### **Introduction**

Transition to adulthood is considered a critical development passage for a significant number of Brazilian youth who enter the labor force to help support themselves and their families before the age of 18. Research on the transition to adulthood is critical to understand how young people become able to produce and reproduce social and cultural life (Nurmi, 2004), and also to explore how they construct and negotiate their identities in the process (Zittoun, 2007). To date, however, research on transitions to adulthood among Brazilian youth has been scarce. Moreover, few studies have investigated one aspect that seems to be central to identity in transition: the construction of a system of values.

Several authors indicate that a system of values serves to guide developmental pathways (e.g., Branco & Valsiner, 2012). However, as suggested by Branco & Valsiner (2012), a reductionist perspective on values has been dominant in psychology for the last decades. This perspective understands values as stable traits or fixed categories which can be classified and “extracted” from individuals through the use of questionnaires and rating scales (Branco & Valsiner, 2012). An alternative approach was recently formulated, grounded in a cultural and systemic paradigm, emphasizing the centrality of the moral dimension to the construction of a reflexive subjectivity. This new approach understands values as motivational dispositions deeply rooted in the person’s affective domains. Values are crucial to guide individual’s interpretations of the world. Values also orient individual’s conduct towards expected and desirable goals (Branco & Valsiner, 2012; Rosa & González, 2012).

The construction of a value system is regarded as one of the cornerstones of the transition to adulthood, which is understood as a period of life where individuals participate in new spheres of experience and are required to integrate new self and world meanings. Being young implies subjective processes leading individuals to seek continuity of self in the midst of transformations (Zittoun, 2006; 2012). Often young people have to confront ideal expectations with real life choices and circumstances. The construction of values becomes relevant when youth are confronted with values and beliefs coming from different spheres of experience, making them question values previously taken or idealized by family or community members. As suggested by Zittoun (2007), contemporary youth face a world in which there is no single symbolic system that provides a coherent set of values and beliefs capable of guiding their life pathways. They have to create a “collage” (or a “bricolage”) with the elements/features that are made available to them by their contexts, producing ever new meanings along the way (Zittoun, 2006).

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One important value that is still scarcely studied is responsibility. Generally regarded as a personal capacity or competence (Zittoun (2007), responsibility is taken in this study as a core value or virtue (Rosa & González, 2012) that emerges and is consolidated in the transition to adulthood. As Rosa and González (2012) point out, in our culture, the notion of "responsibility" refers to one of the fundamental aspects that one must develop to be considered a virtuous person. Even before acting morally, a person must self-perceive him/herself as morally "responsible". Therefore, the notion of responsibility seems to encompass a personal synthesis, an operation that takes place in the field of self – the self-perception of oneself as responsible – which has consequences in terms of actions. It is this synthesis that seems to occur when the young person is faced with new spheres of experience and with significant others who navigate such spheres. The very meaning of "responsibility" – as a new affective-cognition – seems to be forged during this transition.

As one life course progresses, individual's self-configuration undergo constant changes, thus altering previous patterns of stability (Valsiner, 2007). The self is configured and re-configured in negotiation with canalized values, beliefs and significant meanings emphasized by a specific context. Brazilian context for youth transitions is characterized by a low quality educational system and fragmented youth policies. An excluding labor market, with high youth unemployment and underemployment rates also contributes to a scenario of scarce opportunities and social inequity. Relevant cultural meanings for becoming an adult in Brazil are autonomy and responsibility (Camarano, 2004). This study will explore how young people leaving a poor neighborhood of a large Brazilian city construct the meaning of "being responsible" and achieve greater self-stability over time, guiding their present and future actions in the midst of significant life changes.

## Method

With the theoretical framework outlined above, the present research used a

longitudinal case study design to investigate the process of construction of values – and more specifically of the value of responsibility – among disadvantaged Brazilian youths. A group of six young people (four male and two females) who participated in an apprenticeship program were followed for five years. Three rounds of in-depth interviews were conducted: the first round took place when participants were 18 years old; the second round of interviews took place when participants were 21 years old, and the third round of interviews took place when participants were 23 years old. The analysis identified critical moments emerging in their transition process, and explored the ways through which they coped with these moments, as well as the core meanings they constructed over time. In this article we will explore the trajectory of a young female: Jane.

## Case Analysis

Jane's case illustrates the process of construction of a system of values and more specifically of the value of responsibility. Jane is a young woman of African descent who lives with her parents and sister in a poor neighborhood in the city of Salvador, in the Northeast of Brazil. Her father is an auto mechanic and her mother is a homemaker.

In the beginning, when she entered the work environment as an apprentice, Jane faced a critical moment as she felt discriminated by her co-workers. She thought that being an "apprentice" was not a valued position. And she didn't trust her ability to take on the responsibilities of her job. As Jane says:

*"I think that people [co-workers] made a distinction because I was an apprentice. They didn't treat me as a real worker. When someone from outside asked who I was, they said that I was a 'young apprentice.' They didn't consider me as an employee. As for myself, I thought I wouldn't be able to do all the work I had to do."*

After some time, however, Jane looked for adult support in an older employee – Elena – who acted as her mentor. Every time she had a problem or a doubt, Jane turned to Elena, who

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encouraged her and gave her support to overcome these challenges. Jane felt that Elena trusted her more than she trusted herself. Therefore, it was through her relationship with Elena that Jane was able to build self-confidence and to position herself as a responsible worker. At this time, Jane developed a personal sense of responsibility, regarded as:

*"An ability to commit to something that I was doing, knowing that what I was doing was something important, something that was helping me grow, which would influence my future."*

After some time, Jane started to take on more responsibilities at work, and began to trust her new abilities. She got hired by the company at the end of the apprenticeship contract, and took on a new function at the secretarial level, and started to perform more complex tasks. By this time, Jane regarded herself as *"one of the people with more responsibilities in the department"*. She believed she was doing a good job and felt more adjusted to work. Progressively, Jane gained a sense of autonomy and felt she had become more independent from the influence of adults. She was *"acting with more freedom,"* beginning to *"do things for [herself],"* not relying as much as she used to on the *"advice and opinions of adults"*. She stopped doing what *"adults told [her] to do."* At work, Jane said she could *"see people seeking [her] to help them solve their problems,"* and began to feel that she *"was not only responsible for [her]self but also for others."*

However, when Jane was around 21 years old, another rupture happened in her family life and her new sense of responsibility acquired at work did not transfer to her home. Her mother got very sick, and Jane had to manage her family money and home expenses –tasks her mother used to do. Her newly acquired position and correspondent responsibilities at work did not help her cope with difficulties emerging in her family life. As Jane said:

*"I started to have money problems. I had a lot of debt in my credit card. I tried to manage the money in my family, because everything I earned I gave to support my*

*family. I had to manage everything, and this was a lot of work! And the debts started to pop-up."*

Although Jane had a steady job and was the main contributor to the family budget, as she tried to manage the family expenses, she realized she was not able to perform this task as satisfactorily as her mother used to or with the same competence she showed in her job. There was ambivalence between the two main positions she occupied in central spheres of her life. Her position as a responsible worker was confronted with her position in the family as a dependent daughter, and Jane felt desperate and anxious, as she was not able to integrate both of them.

As this ambivalence grew and became maximized, Jane started to feel *"desperate and swamped in financial debt."* She developed psychosomatic symptoms, such as hives and foreboding dreams. During this difficult time, Jane grew closer to her grandmother, a powerful leader of a religious community that seemed be the central figure in her family. Jane started to frequently visit her grandmother at the religious temple and to take part in religious ceremonies, although not as a formal member of the religion. She started to position herself and be positioned by the religious community as an *"initiated"*. And as Jane explained, she had to begin taking *"responsibility, not only for [her]self, but also for others"* as her grandmother did, meaning a kind of spiritual responsibility for the well-being of people belonging to the religious community.

Later on, she affirmed:

*"Now I am learning to manage my money. I paid off all my debts. I cut up all my credit cards. [...] I think I can take charge of my own life now. I am not only responsible for myself, I am responsible for others too, for helping others, feeling that not only your own life depends on you, but the lives of others can also depend on you."*

Therefore, it is possible to see that, with time, Jane developed a new sense of self and of the world surrounding her. Her new self-configuration integrated her self-positions at work and at home, with the support of significant adults, like her grandmother. She learned how to manage

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family money and feels more responsible both for herself and for others.

### Concluding Remarks

In this study, Jane's case was used to illustrate the mechanism operating in the construction of a hierarchical system of values along transition to adulthood. Her trajectory shows how the value of "responsibility" takes a central role in Jane's self-system, facilitating the overcoming of ambivalent tensions, and the emergence of new positions across different spheres of life. To deal with ambivalences, Jane developed a strong relationship with significant adults, such as Elena and her grandmother. They presented Jane with a set of alternative and more powerful positions, representing different ways of being "responsible", enabling her to reorganize her self-system around this new set of values. Along this process, Jane was able to build a personal sense of responsibility, which emerged initially in the work sphere. Through exchanges with Elena and other co-workers, Jane became able to perform complex work tasks. In time, she redefined her sense of interpersonal responsibility at work but started to face ambivalences in her family life. She was not able to become responsible for managing her family budget and planning monthly expenses in advance. This cycle brought Jane closer to her grandmother and she took a powerful position as an initiated member of a religious community, which facilitated an expansion of former – more limited – meanings of responsibility, adding to them the value of spiritual responsibility. This new sense of responsibility facilitated an integration of her self-system across space (i.e. different spheres of experience – family, work and religion) and time (flowing through past-present-future). Jane became able to project herself in a new path for the future as a responsible person. In line with Branco and Valsiner's (2012) perspective on values, Jane's transition can be characterized by the integration and empowerment of certain values (and more specifically the value of responsibility), promoting self-reconfiguration and enabling the emergence of a new dynamic stability in her self-system. The value of responsibility

took a central role in this process, allowing her not only to deal with everyday life difficulties and to address her present and future actions, but also to reconfigure her own identity system.

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### **6. Mechanisms of identity development: The interaction between exploration and commitment**

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Identity development is considered a major developmental task in late adolescence and emerging adulthood. Exploration and commitment formation are seen as the major processes of identity development (Marcia, 1966). By exploration we mean that individuals are seriously considering different possibilities before committing themselves to what really matters to them. Commitment formation in this age period refers to the development of strong, adaptive and self-chosen commitments in different domains of life.

My main research interest for the last 15 years concerns the individual process of identity development (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Kunnen, 2006, 2012), and in this paper I aim to explore how the commitment formation and the exploration process affect each other in individual development. Most models and most empirical evidence concerning the relation between both processes are based on inter-individual aggregation of data. Examples of these are the models of Luyckx et al. (2006) and of Meeus et al. (2010). However, using information that is based in these group level analyses in order to arrive at models that describe intra-individual processes is allowed only if the process fulfils the requirements of ergodicity (Molenaar, 2004). Ergodicity means that the analysis of the inter-individual variability yields the same statistical properties as the analysis of intra-individual variability, thus that the characteristics of group data are the same as characteristics of individual data over time. In psychology, the ergodicity requirements are often not met. In order to understand how identity develops in individuals, we therefore need knowledge that is based on analysis of individual series of data.

Bosma and Kunnen (2001) developed a model to describe the individual process of identity development. The core of the model is the assumption that commitments develop in a long series of daily life events that support or challenge the existing commitment. Enduring and serious challenge may result in a conflict which manifests itself by an increase in exploration and a decrease in the strength of commitments and may result in the growth

of new, better adjusted commitments and the achieved identity status as defined by Marcia (1966). In different studies support was found for this model. Kunnen (2006) found that crises, defined periods characterized by the presence of negative emotions, are related to decreases in commitment. Evidence was found for the negative relation between commitment and exploration as assumed in the model. However, these analyses were also based on group data.

Klimstra et al. (2010) did analyze individual trajectories and his findings confirm the model. They measured commitment and commitment reconsideration (a type of exploration as defined by Meeus et al, 2010) for five subsequent days and studied how changes in one variable affected the other. In the domain of friendship they found that reconsideration of commitments drives the reformulation of commitments; thus, adolescents start to compare their commitments to possible alternatives (a kind of exploration) before actually reshaping their commitment. In the ideological domain no evidence of those processes was present. Klimstra and colleagues explain this difference between the two domains by the fact that in the interpersonal domain more exploration and activity is going on. This seems to be an important finding: studying a dynamic process is especially suited when the developmental process is in action that very moment.

The foregoing has implications for the way in which we study the dynamics of individual identity development. It suggests that firstly, to understand individual development, we should study individual time series and not use aggregated group data. Secondly, we should study these dynamics the moment they take place, and not in a period of rest and stability. In this paper we explore the validity of these two implications by analyzing the commitment-exploration interaction on a group level and on an individual level, and by comparing the relation between exploration and commitment strength in individuals who do and who do not go through a period of crisis and commitment change.

In general, based on the findings of Klimstra et al. and Kunnen, a negative relation between commitment strength and level of exploration can be expected. We investigated the following hypotheses:

The relation between exploration and commitment on a group level will be significantly weaker than the intra-individual correlation between exploration and commitment.

The intra-individual correlations between exploration and commitment will be stronger in individuals who experience a crisis as compared to individuals who do not experience a crisis.

To test these hypotheses we selected two domains that are highly relevant for most late adolescents: friends and study.

## Method

Thirty psychology students (five male, twenty-five female) were interviewed 5 to 8 times, with six months' intervals, during the bachelor phase of their studies. They were between 18 and 23 years old at the start of our study.

**Instruments:** The commitment strength and level of exploration were assessed by means of the Groningen Identity Development Scale. The GIDS consists of a semi-structured identity interview that is organized per domain. In each domain a short interview is administered, meant to stimulate the participant to think about what is important to her/him in that specific domain. Next, the participant is asked to write on a card what is most important in this domain: the commitment. A questionnaire is administered about this commitment. This questionnaire results in a score for the strength of the commitment (scale 0-36), and a score for the amount of exploration in that domain (scale 0-28). The whole instrument covers six domains, but for this article we focus on the data concerning the domain of friends and the domain of study.

For our first hypothesis we computed the average of the inter-individual correlations between commitment strength and exploration of each of the first 5 measurements (the waves in which the group was complete), and by means of a one-sample T-test we compared the

individual correlations with this averaged mean, for both domains separately. As a next step, we separated the individual correlations in a crisis and a no-crisis group. We classified a trajectory as "crisis" if the trajectory of commitment strength was V-shaped or decreasing and the highest and the lowest score differed by more than 10 points. Other trajectories were classified as "non-crisis".

## Results

With regard to the difference between intra- and inter-individual correlations, we found that the correlation between exploration and commitment was negative in all four analyses. The intra-individual correlation was significantly stronger than the inter-individual correlation in the domain of friends. In the domain of Study no differences were found (table 1).

*Table 1. Correlations between exploration and commitment strength in inter- and intra-individual analysis.*

Domain	Group level	Individual level	p
Friends	-0.15	-0.45	.001
Study	-0.40	-0.40	.981

Comparing the intra-individual correlations for individuals who did and who did not experience a crisis, we found in both domains that the correlation for individuals who did experience a crisis was significantly stronger than for individuals who did not (table 2).

*Table 2. Intra-individual correlation between exploration and commitment for crisis and no-crisis trajectories*

Domain	No crisis	Crisis	p
Friends	-0.31	-0.69	0.02
Study	-0.16	-0.67	0.001

## Conclusions

In this short paper we explored different ways to study the dynamics of individual identity development in two different domains. In the domain of friendship we found that the relation between both processes is much stronger if we study the individual process, as compared to an analysis in which we aggregate the individual data on a group level. In the domain of study the relation between both processes on the aggregated level was equally strong as on the individual level. A possible explanation for this is that the commitments for individuals in our study may have followed a comparable developmental process. They were all first year students in the same major program, thus they all started their studies at the same time with at least some commitment to that specific program. In other domains the developmental trajectories may be more idiosyncratic.

Secondly, we found that in both domains the dynamics were much more salient in individuals who did go through a crisis or a period of change during the investigation. In the crisis group the average correlation was around 0.68, which can be considered a very high correlation in social research.

The relevance of this small exercise is only partly to confirm that indeed there is a negative relation between commitment formation and exploration. More important is, in my opinion, that it demonstrates that in order to investigate individual processes, individual data are needed and group data are not always helpful. And secondly, the findings suggest that relations between different processes may depend on the stage of the developmental trajectory itself. That means that, depending on the research question, we should pay attention to the actual stage in the developmental process of the subjects under study.

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# ***XIV EARA conference in Çeşme/İzmir***

***Submitted by***

***Figen Cok*** (TED University, Ankara Turkey).

**WELCOME TO EARA 2014  
CONFERENCE**



I guess you all received our updated conference web page information. It is my hope that you all can come to the EARA 2014 Çeşme Conference. The submission procedure has already started and registration is also already possible. I would also like to remind you that the conference program is rich, as great names in the study of adolescence will be with us as keynotes, invited symposia and round table discussion.

You will find good accommodation options at the conference web page. As the date of the conference is during the best time for the region, the hotel prices are quite high and I strongly recommend you to take the advantage of early booking offered. Our conference organization provided decent prices for a comfortable stay in (or close to) the conference venue. Due to the scattered nature of the Çeşme region, I would like you to consider the hotels offered by the organization because reaching the conference venue from different parts of Çeşme may be difficult due to the route of vehicles.

Please note that the submission deadline is December 15, 2013 which is also the deadline for the early booking at the conference hotel.

The Conference offers 4 excellent preconference workshops by young and competent facilitators which will be held on September 3, the first day of the conference.

We will have pre and post conference tours to Ephesus and İzmir, the famous city known as the pearl of the Aegean. Ephesus, a fascinating antique city is also worth visiting. This tour includes a one night stay in the heart of İzmir which is a lovely living city. A direct journey to and from the airport to the conference site will also be organized.

In the conference program, we have organized a welcome reception by the Aegean sea, a winetasting gathering (İzmir region produces good local wines by the way) and a Gala Dinner (Turkish night). As you can see, we hope to have relaxing time, in addition to the highly academic atmosphere. A dinner for young SECNET is also planned.

The temperature will be about 30 C and the sea water temperature will be about 24 C at the time of the conference in Çeşme, making it the perfect time for a holiday in the region. Çeşme is a very popular holiday destination and the conference venue is a good place for this purpose as well. The conference hotel has a special beach as well as a beautiful sea. The conference organization will be happy to help with your possible family and/or individual plans.

Please contact [info@eara2104.org](mailto:info@eara2104.org) and visit [www.eara2014.org](http://www.eara2014.org)

Do not forget to bring your swimsuit with you!

Hope to welcome you with Turkish hospitality in Çeşme/ İzmir.



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# ***From the Student and Early Career Network (SECNet)***

***Submitted by Hebbah Elgindy,  
Örebro University, (Sweden)***

The SECNet has been working hard to launch our new website for our members. It is finally online. Through our website, members can find resources and information about writing skills, funding and job opportunities, upcoming conferences and relevant associations related to your research. We also have a blog section and an "Emerging Scholars Spotlight" section for members who would like to share their recent research with others. Check it out - <http://earasecnet.weebly.com>. We also now have a Facebook page (can be found through our website) that will be updated more regularly so that members can keep up to date with our recent developments and work.

We are also currently working on our next two objectives. The first one is working on finding better ways to reach out to members, and the second objective is preparing for a workshop for young scholars at the upcoming EARA conference in Turkey, 2014. More information and updates can be found through our website and through our Facebook page.

## ***Report about the 2013 EARA-SRA Summer School in Kent (Ohio)***

***Submitted by Radosveta Dimitrova  
(Tilburg University, The Netherlands),  
Raquel Assunção (Oporto University,  
Portugal), Stefanie Nelemans (Utrecht  
University, The Netherlands), and Leah***

***Wilson (University of British Columbia,  
Canada).***

The 2013 EARA-SRA summer school took place from June 16-23 in Kent (Ohio), USA with the generous funding support from the Johan Jacobs Foundation. The event was hosted at the wonderful campus of Kent State University, which we quickly learned was home to the black squirrel. Dr. Manfred van Dulmen and his team did an exceptional job of organizing the event and making us all feel welcomed. Nine well-established researchers, recognized for their expertise and teaching abilities, were brought together with 26 young scholars, representing universities from 10 different countries all across the world, for six intensive days of research training.

We came to Ohio expectant about the week we were about to experience, the people we would come to know, the knowledge we would acquire, and also the research and collegial bridges that would be established. It was rewarding to meet colleagues who share our anxieties and, as stated during the Summer School, our dreams and passions. We knew the challenge was great, and that by the end of the week we would be richer than when we began.

The introductory seminar on cross-cultural and interdisciplinary communication was extremely helpful, and somehow set the pace for the entire week. Junior and Senior scholars alike were reminded about the importance of remaining mindful of the diversity of all of those around us in order to communicate effectively. This introduction helped us all have much better level of understanding of the different ways of speaking the English language as well as of different cultures. Throughout each day there were presentations from Senior Scholars followed by group activities designed to help Junior scholars engage with the presentation material in new and interesting ways. These seminars and group activities were amazing opportunities for learning and exchanging professional and cultural experience.

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More specifically, the Senior scholars presented their research on various topics such as interpersonal and romantic relationships, life span and developmental research, sociometric measurement, gene-environment interactions, depression, and academic well-being in adolescence, but also on more general topics such as publishing your research and career management. Junior scholars were then invited into smaller groups to complete some challenging assignments related to the presentations given by the Senior scholars. This aspect of the summer school was especially stimulating because of the cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary nature of these groups. Our days were filled with learning, reflection, and the interchange of ideas. At the end of each day, Junior scholars had the chance to present their own dissertation research (plans) and receive feedback from some of the Senior scholars as well as from their peers. It was a great opportunity to learn from one another's expertise and begin to collaborate with others both established and beginning in the field.

After all the hard work during the daytime, our hosts provided us with excellent social activities and delicious food at some amazing local places. We visited the Akron History of Psychology Museum, which includes some exceptional original pieces of psychological history, such as an original Bobo doll from the studies on aggression conducted by Albert Bandura and artifacts from the Stanford Prison Experiment by Philip Zimbardo. Some of the wonderful places we visited for dinner included a lovely vineyard, a magnificent and peaceful country estate with beautiful gardens, and the amazing Twin Lakes Park. The evening social activities made for a well-rounded day that allowed us to get to know each other in different ways, as well as soak up some time in the warm outdoors.

Major achievements of the 2013 EARA-SRA Summer School were:

- Creating a stimulating and enthusiastic environment for the Junior scholars to share our own research and benefit from scientific

guidance outside of our countries, universities, and specific disciplines;

- Providing intensive training in innovative and creative research, as well as facilitating helpful discussions about a variety of topic related to adolescent development, including a session specifically focusing on professional skills and career development;
- Setting up fruitful ground for follow up networking and future collaborations via the EARA-SRA summer school 2013 Facebook group, a website (<http://www.vandulmenlab.org/summer-school-2013.html>) and for exchanging documents and photos in Dropbox.

Additionally, we organized:

- A meeting during the EADP (European Association of Developmental Psychology) conference in Lausanne in September 2013;
- Joint activities among Joint scholars of EARA and ERU (Early Researchers Union) at the EADP;
- Paper symposia to be submitted for SRA Biennial Meeting in Austin, Texas in 2014.

By building on these initiatives, we are sure that in the future many more collaborations among Junior scholars will follow. These were days of intense work, but also lots of laughs and good times on a personal level. We made friends, which in many cases will be friends for life, and created professional connections that will lead to profitable projects in the future. This week was definitely a turning point for all Junior scholars and an incredible opportunity for the development and construction of our emerging careers.

An evaluation on the last day objectively confirmed what was already subjectively known: The 2013 EARA-SRA summer school was a great success. On behalf of all Junior scholars, we would like to thank the Senior scholars, the organizing committee (Manfred van Dulmen, Nancy Darling,

Sheila Marshall, and Sandi Thouvenin), and the generous support by Jacobs Foundation for providing us with such an important resource for our academic career and overall professional development.

**The 2013 EARA-SRA Summer School Senior Scholars were:**

Deborah Capaldi (Oregon Social Learning Center, USA); W. Andrew Collins (University of Minnesota, USA); Toon Cillessen (Radboud University, Netherlands); Joanne Davila (SUNY Stony Brook, USA); Carolyn Halpern (UNC Chapel Hill, USA); Patrick Heaven (Australian Catholic University, Australia); Geert-Jan Overbeek (Utrecht University, Netherlands); Sally Powers (UMass Amherst, USA); Katariina Salmela-Aro (University of Helsinki, Finland)



**The 2013 EARA-SRA Summer School Young Scholars were:**

Raquel Assuncao (Oporto University, Portugal), Sophie Choukas-Bradley (University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, USA), Hebbah Elgindy (Örebro University, Sweden), Radosveta Dimitrova (Tilburg University, The Netherlands), Gary Glick (University of Missouri, USA), Amy Griffin (Boston College, USA), Serra Icellioglu (Istanbul Kultur University, Turkey), Dalal Katsiaficas (University of California Los Angeles, USA), Vera Kontrikova (Masaryk University, Czech Republic), Jeremy Luk (University of Washington, USA), Stefanie Nelemans (Utrecht University, The Netherlands), Giovanni Piumatti (University

of Turin, Italy), Teri Preddy (University of Tennessee, USA), Jessica Rassart (Katholic Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium), Nayra Rodriguez (University of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico), Susan Rowe (Griffith University, Australia), Britta Ruschoff (University of Groningen, Netherlands), Lisa Ryherd (Iowa State University, USA), Asuman Buyukcan Tetik (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Cigdem Topcu (Middle East Technical University, Turkey), Sarah Trinh (University of Michigan, USA), Yvonne van den Berg (Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands), Andrea Vest (Arizona State University, USA), Kelly Whitaker (University of California Berkeley, USA), Leah Wilson (University of British Columbia, Canada), Matha Zapata Roblyer (Oklahoma State University, USA).

## ***Announcement of the 2014 EARA-SRA Summer School***

***Submitted by Susan Branje (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)***

Since 2008, EARA and SRA have jointly organized Summer Schools, which are training grounds for young scholars interested in adolescent development. Originally held by EARA, the Summer Schools have been a tradition since 2001 with generous funding by the Johan Jacobs Foundation. The Summer Schools bring together established researchers, recognized for their expertise and teaching abilities with doctoral students from around the globe for five, intensive days of research training. The training includes exposure to innovative and creative research, as well as workshops focusing on professional skills. The summer schools have given students enthusiasm to search for scientific guidance outside of the borders of their countries and the walls of their universities.

In 2014, the Summer School will be held in Utrecht, The Netherlands from June 2nd to June 6th. The site for the school is De Bergse Bossen, located in national park



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Utrechtse Heuvelrug and close to Utrecht University. The summer school will be directed by Marcel van Aken and Susan Branje. The Senior Scholars slated for this year include (in alphabetical order): Wim Beyers, Bill Burk, Lisa Crockett, Eveline Crone, Robert Crosnoe, Ingrid Schoon, Alexander Vazsonyi, Wilma Vollebergh, Melanie Zimmer-Gembeck, and Marc Zimmerman.

We invite doctoral students in any part of the world to apply. A total of 26 students will be selected on the basis of their academic records, research experience, letters of recommendation, and overall evidence of scientific aptitude and competence. Students who apply should have their doctoral research planned or underway, but not completed. Preference is given to students who are mid-way in their research, so that they can benefit from the critiques given during the school. Students will receive travel subsidies (as much of the total cost as possible), with accommodations and meals paid for by the School.

#### HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Send the following documents in English, saved as Word (.docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) files.

1. Your curriculum vitae (labeled yourname.cv.docx)
2. A short description of your dissertation topic and progress so far (1-2 pages double spaced), (labeled yourname.dissertation)
3. A recommendation letter from your supervisor (labeled yourname.docx).

Send the files, by email, to the Director of the 2014 EARA-SRA Summer School:  
Prof. Dr. Susan Branje ([s.branje@uu.nl](mailto:s.branje@uu.nl)).

Applications must be received by December 15th 2013. All applications received by that date will be evaluated by members of the EARA-SRA Summer School Committee, with notifications emailed by February 15th 2014.

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## ***Job opportunities***

### ***1. Assistant Editor Vacancies***

***Submitted by Wim Beyers (Ghent University, Belgium)***

The *Journal of Adolescence* is seeking to appoint four Assistant Editors to join the editorial team, led by Ann Hagell, Editor-in-Chief. Two are replacements for colleagues who are moving on, and two are new posts reflecting the Journal's continued success and expansion.

This is an exciting opportunity to become part of an international team working to support the development of theory and practice through well-designed empirical research, and to learn more about the work of other countries as well as the US. Around half of our submissions and subscriptions come from non-US countries. Applicants for these posts can be based anywhere in the world.

For more information about the Journal and the posts, see our website at

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-adolescence/> (and scroll down to the 'news' section). Applicants for the position should submit a CV, together with a covering letter indicating their interest in the position and the particular skills they have to offer. Applications and inquiries can be directed by email to [a.k.hagell@btinternet.com](mailto:a.k.hagell@btinternet.com). Closing date for applications is 6 December 2013. It is planned that the contracts for these posts will run from 1 January 2014, for three years in the first instance.

### ***2. Developmental Psychology position at Örebro University, Sweden***

***Submitted by Håkan Stattin, (Örebro University, Sweden)***

This is a career position in developmental psychology. You will have a position as a full time researcher over four years.



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If you apply, you should have:

1. had your PhD maximum less than seven years ago,
2. shown to provide own research funding, and
3. shown that you independently drive excellent research at high international level.

The person who applies will develop his or her research in developmental research and will be expected to build up a competitive research team. The demands are high, but resources will provide an infrastructure and a program involving both leadership development and pedagogical qualifications.

You will initially work at the Center for Developmental Research (PI is Håkan Stattin) and will have full access to this center's data bases. You are expected to develop your own research agency and take on an independent line of research over time. You will have four years to establish your own research interests, and establish your research group at Örebro University.

The ambition with this announcement is to recruit young researchers who are top researchers internationally. If successful, the researcher will have a tenured position with continued possibilities to act as a research leader within his or her own field of research.

The applicant will work in a research environment where the English language is the working language.

For more information about the position, please email Håkan Stattin (hakan.stattin@oru.se).

## ***EARA Publications***

**Albanesi C., Mazzoni D., Cicognani E., Zani B.** (in press) Predictors of civic and political participation among native and migrant youth in Italy: the role of organizational membership, sense of community and perceived social well being,

in M. Barret, B. Zani (Eds) *Political and Civic Engagement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. London, Routledge.

**Albanesi C., Zani B., Cicognani E.** (2012). Youth civic and political participation through the lens of gender. The Italian case. *Human Affairs*, 22, 3, p. 360-374.

**Albert, I., Ferring, D., & Michels, T.** (2013). Intergenerational family relations in Luxembourg: Family values and intergenerational solidarity in Portuguese immigrant and Luxembourgish families. *European Psychologist*, 18(1), 59-69.

**Ataman, A., Çok, F., Şener, T.** (2012). Understanding civic engagement among young Roma and young Turkish people in Turkey, *Human Affairs*, 22, 3, 419-433.

**Branje, S., van Dijk, M., Hale III, W., Frijns, T., & Meeus, W.** (2012). Longitudinale associaties tussen ouder-kind relaties en depressieve symptomen in de adolescentie: De modererende rol van sekse, leeftijd en persoonlijkheid. *Pedagogiek*, 32, 199-216.

**Brouns, B., De Wied, M., Keijsers, L., Branje, S., Van Goozen, S., & Meeus, W.** (2013). Concurrent and prospective effects of psychopathic traits on affective and cognitive empathy in a community sample of late adolescents. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54, 969-967.

**Defoe, I., Keijsers, L., Hawk, S., Branje, S., Dubas, J., Buist, K., Frijns, T., Van Aken, M., Koot, H., Van Lier, P., & Meeus, W.** (2013). Siblings versus parents and friends: Longitudinal linkages to adolescent externalizing problems. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54, 881-889.

**Cicognani E., Klimstra, T., Goossens, L.** (in press). Sense of community, identity statuses, and loneliness in adolescence: a crossnational study on Italian and Belgian youth. *Journal of Community Psychology*. DOI:10.1002/jcop.21618.

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