

Interdisciplinary, global perspectives on adolescence: Unforgettable Experience in 2019 EADP-EARA-SRA Summer School in Kalamata, Greece

Meg Bishop^a, Laura Castillo-Eito^b, Shanting Chen^a and Beatrice Hayes^c

^aUniversity of Texas at Austin, USA

^bUniversity of Sheffield, UK

^cRoyal Holloway University of London, UK

Four hours south of Athens, between the peaks of Taygetos Massif and the gulf of Messinia, lies Kalamata, Greece. Kalamata is most commonly known for its olives and beaches. In August 2019, it was also home to the EADP/EARA/SRA summer school, a week-long intensive training wherein dissertation-level predoctoral scholars from around the globe are mentored by top scholars in the field of adolescent development. After a dangerously delicious breakfast spread of pastries, traditional Greek pies, fruit, yoghurt, and coffee, our day usually began with a talk from a senior scholar followed by a collaborative activity designed in response to the talk in the morning. After lunch, activities were wrapped up and junior scholars presented their dissertation work. The day usually ended with a stroll along the seaside or a dip in the ocean before a delicious dinner.

Cutting-edge research and collaboration

The senior scholars summarized in their presentations the most cutting-edge research in different aspects of adolescent development and pointed out important caveats in translating research findings into actionable interventions. Specifically, Dr Robert Crosnoe emphasized the need to take into account adolescents' biological and psychological changes as well as their social experience in designing effective interventions. Dr Crosnoe emphasized that although adolescence is often considered a period of irrational storm and stress, adolescents are in fact hyper-rational relative to their social contexts and urged us to start from a place of respect when designing adolescent interventions. Dr Tina Malti continued discussing the factors that we need to take into account to develop effective interventions. Specifically, Dr Malti talked about how promoting other-oriented and self-conscious emotions such as empathy and guilt can help prevent youth violence. Dr Michiel Westenberg took us through many years of research and experiments on the development of social anxiety and made us reflect on the differences between typical and atypical social fears.

The main take away from several senior scholars' presentation was that one size doesn't fit all; we must consider national, cultural, and historical contexts of the constructs that we study. For example, Dr Linda Juang explored how cultural and sociohistorical contexts shape the constructs that we study. Specifically, Dr Juang guided us through the distinctive historical and political contexts of race as a construct in Germany relative to the United States, and how these diverse histories shape our research and measures. Dr.s Katariina Salmela-Aro and Ellen Hamaker also discussed the same idea, but this time in a methodological context. Specifically, these scholars emphasized the importance of making intentional decisions about person- vs. variable- centred approaches and longitudinal approaches to developmental science, urging us to make sure to use a method that fits our research questions.

Collaboration was a central part of the summer school experience. After each senior scholar's presentation, we were asked to complete group activities related to their presentation. For example, following Dr Salmela-Aro's presentation, we split into small groups by interest area to design a study considering person-centred approaches. In these activities, each group member brought his/her own expertise in brainstorming and refining each other's ideas to come up with better solutions. At the end of each group activity, each group presented their work to the large group. It was really interesting to see how different groups approached the same questions in different but innovative angles.



Between the senior presentations and group activities, we participated in the junior presentations. These consisted of the junior researchers presenting an overview of their PhD research to date in front of a small group of both seniors and juniors (matched in terms of topic relatability). We presented within one-hour slots: half an hour to present and half an hour for discussion. During these discussions, we received feedback and tips to assist us in developing and improving our research further. These were really friendly and informative sessions which gave us the opportunity to share and discuss our research in a relaxed and informal environment, whilst also receiving invaluable feedback from the seniors. It was so interesting to gain insight into each other's areas and progression thus far, whilst also sharing personal anecdotes and experiences. Hearing about peer research taking place all over the globe was particularly inspiring, encouraging and a great opportunity for cross-cultural collaborations.

The final day of the summer school was a bit different. There were not junior presentations, but we participated in a Roundtable. This consisted of all seniors and juniors sitting together and having an open, honest discussion about the transition from PhD life to academia. Any questions were on the table and this allowed for the juniors to be honest about concerns and queries, receiving feedback from a variety of seniors across the globe. This was a particularly beneficial activity as, for PhD students, there are many grey areas within the world of academia. Being able to receive feedback from such a broad spectrum of seniors allowed juniors to develop a fuller and better picture of the realities of academia, including both the pros and cons. Luckily, we left this feeling optimistic about our futures!



Work is not everything!

During the evenings, we gathered together for our meals. These took place in the hotel's dining area where we enjoyed a delicious buffet spread – and bottomless wine! Sitting out, overlooking the beach with a great meal and glass of wine made these moments feel more like a holiday! We really enjoyed these informal evenings where we could all sit together and discuss our lives and cultures. The broad variety of cultures made fantastic conversation as we compared and contrasted various aspects of everyday life, anything from politics to colloquial phrases. These allowed a smooth transition from the work discussions of the day to a chilled evening.

Finally, we also had time each day to enjoy what Kalamata had to offer. There was time for everything, from walking along the beach and around Kalamata to going to the beach and the swimming pool; even some people took the bikes offered by the accommodation and went for a ride. These activities made the summer school more enjoyable and gave the participants the opportunity to learn more about each other and start forming friendships. To keep in touch, we created a WhatsApp group from the moment we arrived and we have kept using it to send pictures of our holidays and congratulate each other in big events such as engagements and weddings. We really hope that these friendships last many years and we can become each other's strongest support to overcome the struggles and hurdles in our future career.

It was a great honour to have been selected to attend the Summer School and the experience did not disappoint. The academic and work-focused aspects were both enjoyable and beneficial, providing tangible and relevant learning points that will no doubt benefit all juniors throughout the rest of their PhDs and future careers. Even better, the networking, collaborations and, ultimately, friendships that were formed made the experience even better than we could have hoped for. Already, the juniors have benefitted from these interactions in the form of cross-cultural collaborations in the nature of study visits and joint papers. Further still, trips are being planned to visit each other across the globe (somehow on our PhD stipends!). This shows just how well-

organised and well-rounded the school was. We would like to thank the organising committee for all their efforts. Drs Susan Branje, Katariina Salmela-Aro and Lisa Kiang did an excellent job. Without their hard work, none of this experience would have been possible. We had a brilliant time and would highly recommend the experience for anyone considering applying – only if we have secured a space first! 😊

