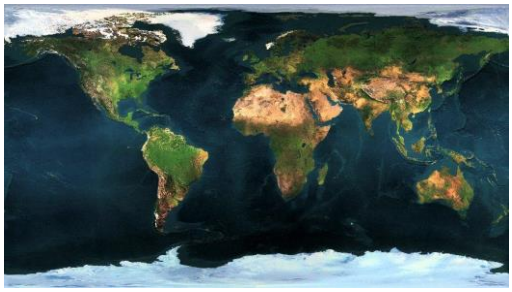
SRCD 2015 Pre-Conference Workshop on Cross-cultural Cognitive Development

Wednesday, 18th March 2015, 1:30 pm – 6:00 pm
Franklin Hall 11, 4th Floor, Marriott Downtown Hotel, Philadelphia



Program

13:00-13:30	Arrival and Registration
13:30-13:45	Welcome
13:45-14:20	Measuring developmental reaction norms across cultures Talk by Clark Barrett (UCLA)
14:20-14:55	A roadmap for conducting cross-cultural research Talk by Cristine Legare (U Texas at Austin)
14:55-15:20	Discussion by Felix Warneken (Harvard) Short Panel Discussion
15:20-15:45	Coffee Break
15:45-16:30	Parallel Breakout Sessions (1) Cognitive development (moderated by Susan Gelman) (2) Parenting and social development (moderated by Heidi Keller) (3) Human universals and variability (moderated by Clark Barrett) (4) Ethical and practical issues in the field (moderated by Tara Callaghan) (5) Interdisciplinary methods (moderated by Cristine Legare) (6) Comparisons across societies (moderated by Philippe Rochat)
16:30-16:45	Coffee Break
16:45-17:45	Panel Discussion with Anne Fernald (Stanford), Susan Gelman (U Michigan), Paul L. Harris (Harvard), Heidi Keller (U Osnabrück), Philippe Rochat (Emory)
17:45-18:00	Closing Remarks

Organizers: Bailey House, Patricia Kanngiesser, Marie Schäfer

Supported by the Department of Developmental and Comparative Psychology, Max-Planck-Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Abstracts

Measuring reaction norms of cultural learning across cultures

H. Clark Barrett, Department of Anthropology, University of California Los Angeles

Biology and culture are typically thought of as distinct influences on human psychological development. In psychology, culture and socialization, acting on domain-general mechanisms, are often thought to be the main drivers of development. In biology, on the other hand, plasticity is often conceptualized as a biological trait that can be shaped by the evolutionary process, and is modeled using the concept of a reaction norm. Here, I suggest that human acculturation processes can be conceptualized by modifying the traditional biological concept of a reaction norm to include "open" reaction norms that have evolved to handle content and situations that are in some dimensions evolutionary novel, including culturally transmitted information. I present a theoretical framework for open reaction norms as a bridge between work in evolutionary psychology, developmental psychology, and culture-gene coevolution theory, and illustrate this approach with recent empirical work on cultural learning of danger in four-to-eight-year old children from two populations, urban Los Angeles and the Shuar of Ecuador. This work shows that a danger learning bias is present across cultures, with the strongest effect for animals and weaker effects for foods and artifacts, in the same order in both populations. However, there were also culture-specific variations, including an absence of a danger learning bias for artifacts among the Shuar. Possible explanations for these cross-cultural similarities and differences will be discussed.

A roadmap for conducting cross-cultural research

Cristine H. Legare, Department of Psychology, The University of Texas at Austin

The lack of systematic psychological research outside of Western cultural contexts is a major impediment to progress in understanding the development of cognition and behavior. I propose that our objective as developmental psychologists should be to incorporate theoretically-motivated, methodologically-rigorous, cross-cultural research into all topics of psychological scientific inquiry. Childhood enables the remarkable adaptation, transmission, and diversity of human cultural learning. Thus, our understanding of the development of cognition and behavior is inextricably linked to how the minds of children enable human culture and, conversely, how culture shapes the minds of children. I will provide a roadmap for conducting cross-cultural, developmental research to both describe and explain the psychological capacities responsible for cultural continuity and variation. As a field, we need to move towards a new developmental science, one in which interdisciplinary perspectives on the interplay of mind, culture, and childhood play an integral role.