

INTRODUCTION

Positive Adult Development Intersects Social and Behavioral Science

Michael Lamport Commons
Harvard Medical School

Elke Fein
University of Freiburg

This special issue of the *Behavioral Development Bulletin* is dedicated to applications of adult development (AD) research in various social science disciplines. Positive adult development (PAD) research has experienced a considerable differentiation since its Piagetian beginnings in the last quarter of the 20th century. It has gained increasing influence, especially in developmental and educational psychology. At the same time, despite considerable epistemological benefits, it is not yet incorporated as a valuable complement to dominant social science perspectives on socioeconomic, cultural, and political life. Applications to date, however, indicate how AD perspectives can shed light on otherwise neglected dimensions. Due to PAD's constructivist and mostly content-free structuralist approaches it is transportable to interdisciplinary research in many different contexts. This issue of the *Behavioral Development Bulletin* therefore asks how AD perspectives can

- make valuable contributions to addressing real world challenges by offering more comprehensive understandings and interpretations of complex problems;

- suggest paradigmatic theoretical innovation to the social sciences; and
- gain deeper incorporation in behavioral economic, sociological, social, psychological, and political science contexts.

Although having invited both theoretical and empirical contributions to PAD research, the emphasis of this issue is on empirical applications, with a special focus on social science disciplines other than psychology. Also, by featuring papers that review how AD approaches have been received and used in other social science disciplines, the issue presents a very rich and broad panorama of how PAD perspectives have been and can be used in various areas of the social sciences. We hope that it provides inspiration to both developmentalists and other social scientists in view of discussing and showing how AD perspectives can make a difference in traditional social science disciplines through its specific theoretical and epistemological perspectives, thus building bridges between fields.

Current Issue

The papers for this special issue are organized into four sections, starting with a general, introductory one, before opening the floor to more empirical studies. Section 1 provides overviews of AD uses in the social sciences, as well as methodological discussions. The other three sections focus on: history, society, and religion (Section 2); leadership and organizational development (Section 3); and on education (Section 4).

The first section contains three contributions, opened by Dristi Adhikari's discussion of differences in perspectives and research approaches between the social and behavioral science and ways to bridge them by using

Editor's Note. This is an introduction to the special issue "Adult Development Meets Social and Behavioral Science." Please see the Table of Contents here: <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/dbd/21/2/>.—MLC

Michael Lamport Commons, Harvard Medical School; Elke Fein, Institute for Integral Studies, University of Freiburg.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Michael Lamport Commons, Harvard Medical School, 234 Huron Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. E-mail: commons@tiac.net

developmental research strategies (Adhikari, 2016). Next, Elke Fein and Thomas Jordan's review of the state of the art focuses more specifically on empirical research in the social and political sciences that is informed by developmental theories and models, especially on research that is less well known (Fein & Jordan, 2016). Finally, Michael Commons' contribution presents the metacross-paradigmatic stage in his model of hierarchical complexity (Commons, 2016). This article introduces and gives empirical and theoretical evidence of the highest known stage of development. It shows that even cross paradigmatic entities can be compared systematically and integrated further.

The second section assembles three contributions focusing on historical, societal, and religious dimensions and implications of AD. First, Sofia Leite discusses the relation between cultural evolution and the emergence of higher stages of cognitive development in an evolutionary perspective (Leite, 2016). She argues that population growth has been a major factor for the upward shift of average stage of development of humans, which, reciprocally, was a prerequisite for cultural evolution. Next, Sarthak Giri's paper compares moral development and social perspective taking in China and the United States, arguing that there is little or no difference in Kohlbergian stages of moral development and social perspective taking between different cultures if measured properly (Giri, 2016). The final paper by Nancy Nordmann also takes a comparative look at two kinds of models, namely an autogenetic framework of interpersonal agency and developmental models of social development (Nordmann, 2016). She holds that the autogenetic model fits the requirements of a social developmental model.

Section 3 has a paper by Anastasija Wagner and Elke Fein. The authors present a framework for analyzing the complexity of political leadership combining adult developmental with established social science methodologies (Wagner & Fein, 2016a). Based on this, they outline a developmentally informed profile of the Russian president's publicly displayed leadership behavior.

Section 4 of this issue is dedicated to education. It is opened by Patrice Marie Miller and Darlene Crone-Todd's comparison of different ways of using the model of hierarchical complexity to evaluate graduate students' writing

tasks (Miller & Crone-Todd, 2016). Their paper suggests that the measures used are good predictors of students' performance in various fields of activity. The second and final paper in this section by Saranya Ramakrishnan, Sarthak Giri, and Michelle Mei looks at important behavioral interest necessary to thrive in academia, based on the modified Holland Interest Scale (Ramakrishnan, Giri, & Mei, 2016). Considering the imbalance between the number of graduates and available academic positions, they propose a typical interests profile of successful academics as a means to help students decide if academia is the correct career choice for them.

Overall, the contributions to this special issue present a broad overview and multiple insights into how AD perspectives can offer new interpretations and comprehensive understandings of complex social problems. By including complexity-based perspectives, they suggest innovative paths for addressing real world challenges, thus providing valuable paradigmatic theoretical innovation to the social sciences.

Putting this special issue together would not have been possible without the help of our co-editors, reviewers, and managing editor. Their efforts are very much appreciated.

Below are the papers that will appear in a future issue of the *Behavioral Development Bulletin*. These papers were originally written for the special issue on "Adult Development Meets Social and Behavioral Science"; however, due to space constraints in this issue, they will appear in a future issue.

Future Issue

The papers for this issue will be organized into four sections, starting with a general, introductory one, before opening the floor to more empirical studies. Section 1 will provide overviews of AD uses in the social sciences, as well as methodological discussions. The other three sections will focus on history, society, and religion (Section 2); leadership and organizational development (Section 3); and education (Section 4).

In Section 1, Sofia Kjellström and Kristian Stålné will give a wide overview of how adult developmental perspectives have been used in the broader social science field. They will distinguish seven different avenues in which de-

developmental approaches have made contributions to research in other fields (Kjellström & Stålné, *in press*).

In Section 2, Elke Fein will look at how developments in cognition and moral judgment have manifested and changed important elements of Russia's political culture over a period of 150 years, including two large scale systemic transitions (Fein, 2016). This paper will show how the changing complexity of political, legal, and economic cultures informs the emergence and functioning of specific social institutions. This will be followed two papers on AD and religion by James Day. In the first paper, Day will discuss how religion and spirituality are linked to well-being, prosocial, and antisocial behavior, and how models of religious and spiritual development can inform education, psychotherapy, and applied developmental psychology (Day, *in press-b*). In the second paper, he asks whether there are postformal stages in religious cognition (Day, *in press-a*). By looking, in particular, at "gifted" young people, Day explores how postformal thinking translates into the fields of religion and spirituality. The section will be completed by Albert Erdynast's analysis of developmental disparities of subjects' conceptions of the beautiful (Erdynast, *in press*). The real-life implications of such disparities are illustrated by the marriage and divorce of Nobel Prize winner Harold Pinter and Vivien Merchant. Erdynast argues that their structural level of meaning making around aesthetics and other issues were so disparate that communication between them seemed no longer possible.

Section 3 will start with an overview by Jonathan Reams on how adult developmental perspectives have been used and applied in the field of leadership studies, both in leadership theory and in leadership coaching and development (Reams, 2016). This will be followed by Anastasija Wagner and Elke Fein's paper that illustrates the Russian President, Vladimir Putin's publicly displayed leadership behavior through two policy case studies, looking at his domestic and foreign politics over a period of 15 years (Wagner & Fein, 2016b) In the third article in this section, Tom Hagström and Tomas Backström will discuss the impact of AD on organizational and company culture in a competitive bank. More precisely, they will elucidate how a combination of decentralized autonomy and company culture integration is related to em-

ployees' and organizational stage development (Hagström & Backström, 2016).

Section 4 of this issue will be dedicated to education. Rebecca Hamer and Eric van Rossum will present their model describing six hierarchically inclusive ways of understanding that shape and affect the perception and experience of learning and teaching (Hamer & van Rossum, 2016). They will focus on how postformal ways of thinking can be fostered in higher education. Gloria Nogueiras and Alejandro Iborra will explain transitions toward more complex ways of knowing, self-understanding and meaning-making (Nogueiras & Iborra, 2016). Their research is based on an in-depth field experiment with students in higher education. They will investigate how the development of increasing self-direction occurs throughout a semester course, and how that transition differs between freshmen and master's students. Also, they will discuss how specific teaching methodologies can facilitate this kind of epistemological transition.

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