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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Sadly, Gert G. Wagner, one of the particularly active LIFE faculty members in Berlin, passed away in January. We reprint the MPIB's obituary for him. He will be greatly missed.

In this new edition of the newsletter, we find out from UM alumna Esra Ascigil that minimal social interactions like saying hello to a bus driver can boost your subjective well-being. Perhaps you will change your everyday behavior like I did upon reading her piece? Images of buses from all over the world are distributed throughout this issue.

We follow with thoughts from Berlin alumnus Tobias Bothe-Hutschenreuter about how being a LIFE fellow prepared him for his present position at Russell Reynolds Associates, an international leadership consulting firm. Perhaps his article will provide information about a career outside academia that may seem like a very distant option for now.

UVA faculty Tobias Grossmann answers our 10 questions and gives interesting insights into his field, developmental cognitive neuroscience.

We can then introduce two new faculty and several new fellows. Welcome to them all! We update the latest LIFE publications by fellows before turning to the LIFE news since the last issue.

Last but not least, I would like to make a special mention of the following article by UVA alumna Liz Tenney and others that appeared in the Careers Column of *Nature* and is sure to be useful to you:

Tenney, E., Chen, J., & Preston, M. (2024). People, passion, publishable: An early-career researcher's checklist for prioritizing projects. *Nature*. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-00812-3

Wishing you a beautiful spring!

Julia Delius

Source: David R. Frazier/Photo Researchers/Universal Images Group

A bus stops for passengers on a rural road in Argentina.

Table of Contents

Reminder

Fellows, alumni, and faculty, please keep us informed about your LIFE-relevant news (e.g., awards, career moves)! Fellows and alumni, please check that your web profiles are up-to-date—they are often the first thing that pops up when your name is googled! Send your updates to delius@mpib-berlin.mpg.de

LIFE Website: https://www.imprs-life.mpg.de

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Minimal Social Interactions and Life Satisfaction: The Role of Greeting, Thanking, and Conversing

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As a relationship scientist in training when the COVID-19 pandemic started, I knew that it was important to make sure I stayed socially connected. I attended social events on Zoom and distanced outdoor gatherings with friends and family whenever I could. But soon I realized that I was not only missing my interactions with close others. I was also missing smaller daily interactions, whether they be with the bus driver, the cashier at the grocery store, and even the everyday strangers I encountered. Now, as a postdoctoral researcher, I am digging deeper into these minimal social interactions with strangers and people we do not know well to examine their benefits on well-being.

Most of the existing work on social connection focus on interactions with close social ties, such as romantic partners, friends, and family. However, there is a growing body of literature showing that even minimal social interactions can boost subjective well-being. In previous studies, people had greater well-being if they talked to a stranger on the train, made small talk with their barista, or interacted with more weak ties than usual in their classrooms and communities (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014a, 2014b; Schroeder et al., 2022). Given that people interact more often with non-close others than close others on a typical day (Kahneman et al., 2004; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014a), minimal interactions can be an important resource for our subjective well-being.

In our latest research, we examined the association between minimal social interactions in life satisfaction using two large samples. For our first sample, we partnered with a public opinion research company to access a nationally representative sample from Turkey ($N = 3{,}266$ adults). Our second sample came from the Kindness Test (Banerjee et al., 2024), conducted by researchers from the University of Sussex in partnership with the BBC. As shown in Figure 1, the Kindness Test reached a large convenience sample ($N = 60{,}141$ adults) that consisted of people from the UK (68.5%) and English speakers from other countries (31.5%). We examined minimal interactions with strangers and weak social ties (i.e., people we do not know well).

Can a simple "hello" or "thanks" increase our well-being?

Although minimal interactions can be an important resource for our subjective well-being, many of us avoid talking to strangers and people we don't know well. One major reason for this is that

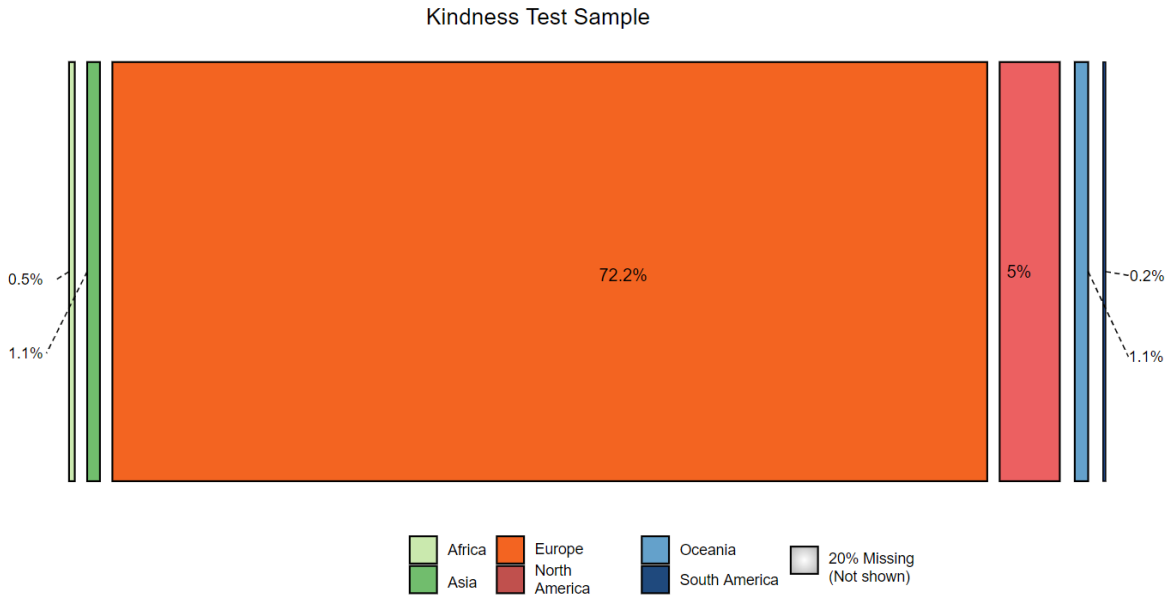

Figure 1. Origins of participants in the Kindness Test.

we have all sorts of worries about such interactions. We are often worried that it will be awkward to talk to strangers and people we do not know well, that our conversation partner will not like us, or that the conversation will not go well. Previous one-time intervention attempts were only partially successful and people remained somewhat pessimistic about their future minimal interactions (Sandstrom & Boothby, 2021).

A promising target for future interventions could be momentary interactions such as greeting or thanking. These should not induce the same degree of apprehension in people because they are so minimal. People do not have to worry about what to say, if people will like them, or if it will be awkward when they are greeting or thanking someone. But can a simple "hello" or "thanks" contribute to subjective well-being? When we set out to answer this question, we were aware of two lines of research that suggested two different possibilities.

On one hand, momentary interactions could have positive associations with subjective well-being. At one college campus, people felt a greater sense of connection to others if a stranger minimally acknowledged them by simply making eye contact as they walked by (Wesselmann et al., 2012). Similarly, people appreciated it when their weak ties reached out to them just to "check in and say hello" (Liu et al., 2023). Overall, this line of work suggested that momentary interactions in which people acknowledge and feel acknowledged by another person, such as when greeting or thanking, may increase subjective well-being. On the other hand, research on conversation depth suggested that momentary interactions may have no meaningful contribution to our subjective well-being. Deeper interactions allow for greater self-disclosure and social connectedness which may have greater subjective well-being benefits than shallow interactions (e.g., Kardas et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2020). This line of work suggested that momentary social interactions like greeting and thanking may not have the same subjective well-being benefits as conversations, which allow for deeper connections.

In our Turkish sample, we asked people how often they greeted and thanked people they knew but were not close to. We found that greeting and thanking weak ties more often was associated with greater life satisfaction. We also controlled for many well-known covariates of life satisfaction, including gender, age, employment situation, religiosity, education, relationship status, household income, and the region of residence, and found that these results held even after adjusting for many covariates. Our findings suggest that future interventions may consider targeting greeting and thanking, which may be easier than encouraging people to converse with strangers and weak ties.

Do the benefits of minimal interactions generalize to non-WEIRD cultures?

Previous research found that having conversations with strangers and weak ties was associated with greater subjective well-being. However, these studies mostly focused on North American and European cultures. North American and European cultures are relatively more individualistic and have looser social ties, which may make sociability more desirable than in collectivist cultures with tighter social ties (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). One might expect that minimal interactions are more beneficial in contexts where sociability is desirable. Therefore, we wanted to know if the benefits of minimal interactions could generalize to non-WEIRD cultures.

We attempted to gain more insight into this issue using our nationally representative sample from Turkey, which is a more tight and collectivist culture, and the English-speaking sample from the Kindness Test. In both samples, participants reported how many strangers they started a social conversation with in the past seven days. We found that, similar to previous findings from North American and European cultures, conversing with more strangers predicted greater life satisfaction in both samples. We also measured conversations with weak ties in our Turkish sample and again found that it was associated with greater life satisfaction. Our findings suggest that the association between minimal social interactions and subjective well-being might generalize to non-WEIRD cultures. However, we should note that a very small percentage of the Kindness Test sample participated from non-Western countries and we do not know whether some participants in this sample are originally from Western countries. Nonetheless, it was encouraging to see that the previously found benefits of conversing with strangers and weak ties were also observed in a nationally representative sample from Turkey.

Can we make causal inferences for these associations?

In this research, I was lucky enough to work with experts in statistics and econometrics who introduced me to instrumental variable analysis. This is a non-experimental method that is commonly used in statistics and econometrics for causal inference. We wanted to use this method to complement previous experimental findings on minimal social interactions and subjective well-being.

Although there were already several experimental studies on the effects of minimal social interactions on subjective well-being, limiting causal inferences to experiments may come at the expense of generalizability. Most experimental studies use convenience samples that are relatively small and not representative of the general population. Non-experimental methods of causal inference can complement experimental findings by using larger, more representative samples that researchers are often unable to reach in experiments. These methods can strengthen the case for psychological science to inform intervention and policy decisions (Grosz et al., 2020). But how does one make causal inferences using a non-experimental method? Below, I provide a simplified explanation of this method (for more details, please see our full paper and the supplementary materials: Ascigil et al., 2023).

Using traditional analyses—Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, for instance—it is difficult to establish a causal association between two variables in cross-sectional data. For example, we hypothesize that minimal social interactions predict life satisfaction. However, people who are more satisfied with their lives might simply engage in minimal interactions more often. Instrumental variable analysis allows for making causal inferences by checking for the directionality of hypothesized effects (Angrist et al., 1996). It does so by using something called an instrument. An instrument is a variable (Z) that directly affects the predictor (X) but does not affect the outcome (Y) except through its effect on X. The analysis consists of two stages. The first stage involves predicting X from Z and storing the predicted values of X (XPred) obtained from this model. Even though X may include variation due to Y (e.g., minimal social interactions may include variance due to life satisfaction), XPred obtained from this first stage is only due to variation in Z. At this point, the instrumental variable approach helps rule out the endogeneity between XPred and Y. The second stage of the instrumental variable approach predicts Y from XPred. If XPred has a significant coefficient, we can more confidently infer a causal association between X and Y than in an OLS regression.

To examine the causal association between minimal social interactions and life satisfaction, we used relational mobility as an instrument. Relational mobility is a socioecological construct that describes how much opportunity the social environment affords to meet new people (meeting dimension) and to choose or end relationships (choosing dimension; Thomson et al., 2018). Importantly, the measure does not refer to one's own movement between relationships but rather to the opportunities others have in their environment to meet and choose relationship partners. In our research, we focused solely on the meeting dimension because it signals descriptive norms about minimal social interactions (i.e., the extent to which others engage in interactions with strangers). If others in the social environment easily and commonly meet new people, this may increase the person's own engagement in minimal social interactions. Therefore, we expected relational mobility (specifically, the meeting dimension of this construct) to predict greater engagement in minimal social interactions.

In order for relational mobility to function as an appropriate instrument for our analyses, it needs to satisfy two main assumptions. First, it should directly predict minimal social interactions ("relevance assumption"). For reasons outlined above, we expected relational mobility to satisfy this assumption. The second assumption ("exclusion restriction") is more theoretical: The instrument's effect on life satisfaction should occur only through minimal interactions. This does not mean that there cannot be a direct significant association between relational mobility and life satisfaction, but rather expects this association to be explained only by minimal interactions. How easily others engage in minimal interactions should not impact one's own life satisfaction, except to the extent that others' engagement in minimal interactions influences one's own minimal interactions. Overall, in light of both criteria, we concluded that relational mobility was a good instrumental variable candidate.

In the first-stage instrumental variable analyses, we tested the association between relational mobility and minimal social interactions. In our Turkish sample, we found that relational mobility predicted greeting, thanking, and conversing with weak ties, as well as conversing with strangers more often. Next, we ran the second-stage instrumental variable analyses, which used the predicted values of minimal social interactions from the first stage as the predictor and life satisfaction as the outcome (see Fig. 2). We found that greeting, thanking, and conversing with weak ties, as well as conversing with strangers more often predicted greater life satisfaction. To make sure that our instrumental variable analyses were robust, we replicated one of our findings using the Kindness Test sample. In this second sample, we again found that relational mobility predicted conversing with strangers more often, and the predicted values from this model were associated with greater life satisfaction. These findings complement the previous experimental studies on minimal interactions and subjective well-being. They also make a methodological contribution by using an approach that is still novel in psychological science, though widely used in other fields.

Who benefits the most from minimal social interactions?

Recent theorizing and research has also highlighted the importance of studying additive and interactive effects of minimal social interactions and close relationships (Hirsch & Clark, 2019). One recent study suggested that people who have worse close relationships (i.e., those who have difficulties building and maintaining close relationships) not only engaged in more non-close relationships but also benefited more from these non-close relationships compared to those who had better close relationships (Merolla et al., 2022). Although we did not have a direct measure of close relationship quality in the current samples, the Kindness Test had a measure on receiving kindness from close others (i.e., how often people received acts of kindness from close friends and family). We used this variable as a proxy for the quality of relationships with close friends and family.

In our supplementary analyses, we added kindness received from close others as a moderator to our model. We found that receiving kindness from close others and having conversations with strangers did indeed have an interactive effect on life satisfaction. Having conversations with strangers had a stronger effect on life satisfaction for people who reported receiving less kindness from close others, compared to people who received more kindness from close others. This finding suggests that those who have worse close relationships may be the ones who benefit most from minimal social interactions.

Many countries are now calling attention to loneliness as a serious public health problem. There are people all over the world who struggle with isolation, loneliness, and lack social connection on a daily basis. Even the people who have close relationships with others can have days where their close others are unavailable or unresponsive to them. Our initial findings on the interactive effects of minimal social interactions and close relationships suggest that minimal social interactions could be a powerful tool for helping people who need social connection the most.

Future directions

A notable strength of our work is showing that even momentary interactions can increase subjective well-being. This is an important contribution given that prior research and interventions mainly focused on minimal interactions involving conversation. Our results suggested that interventions and policies targeting greeting and thanking might be a simple and low-cost way of boosting subjective well-being.

One of my coauthors in this research is currently running a study in London to encourage passengers to greet bus drivers. They placed stick-

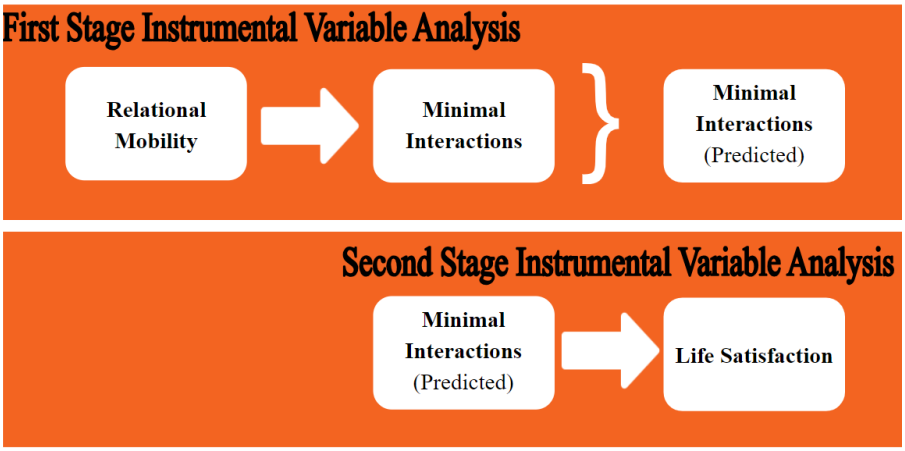

Figure 2. Schema of our analysis strategy.

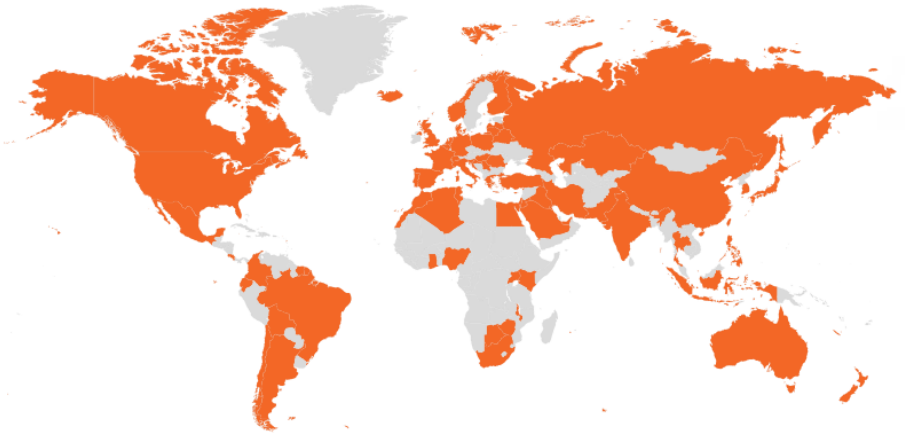

Figure 3. World map showing the countries represented so far in our new study.

ers with encouraging messages (e.g., "A 'thanks' or 'hey' can make my day") on the plexiglass partition separating the driver from passengers. In their pilot study, this increased the number of passengers greeting the driver from 23% to 30% (Sandstrom et al., 2024). Interventions like this are low cost and, according to our latest findings, may help boost people's subjective well-being.

Our research also expands the evidence base for the generalizability of the association between minimal social interactions and subjective well-being. We tested our hypotheses in a large, non-WEIRD, nationally representative sample from Turkey. However, in our future work, we would like to examine minimal social interactions more globally. To this end, we launched a global project examining minimal social interactions. The stage one registered report for this project is currently under review and we still welcome collaborators who are interested in examining minimal social interactions in a more global context. If you are from the countries highlighted in gray on the map (Fig. 3), please feel free to reach out!

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Source: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images News/Universal Images Group

A double decker bus makes its way past the Houses of Parliament in London.

Improving the Way the World Is Led: A Journey From Academia to Leadership Consulting

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At the beginning of the year, I was invited to an interactive information event on job orientation at my daughter's high school. The school was looking for parents who would volunteer to answer questions about their job to students who were in their final year of school—in a speed-dating format. After some persuasion by my wife, I finally decided to take part in the event. I thought to myself that it couldn't be that hard to answer a few questions about my job. But things turned out differently than expected.

First, I noticed that significantly less students seemed to take interest in talking to me. I only had a total of three "speed dates". At my wife's table, the students were queuing up!

Secondly, the students' questions were not as easy to answer as I had expected. I was prepared to talk about what excites me about my job and what my daily routines look like. The students' questions, however, were particularly aimed at gaining a fundamental understanding about what I am doing in the first place.

Something felt off. I glanced at my name tag that had been placed on the table in front of me. Slowly but surely it dawned on me what was going on. While my wife's name tag read "Psychologist and Coach" and other parents chose job titles such as "Actress" or "Lawyer", my name tag read "Leadership Advisor." At this point, I remembered the question I had only casually answered during the registration for the event a few weeks ago, "What is your job title?". My spontaneous answer clearly didn't make it any easier for me to arouse interest in the high-school students to exchange ideas with me. It was probably thanks to their curiosity that they were interested in finding out what my job was all about. Luckily, in the end, the students and I had lively discussions and I managed to spark interest in psychology and my profession.

But what is it that I actually do for a living? And how did my time as a LIFE fellow contribute to it? I hope to give you some insights in this article.

Let us start in the present day.

Today, I work at Russell Reynolds Associates (RRA), a leadership consulting firm based in New York. RRA is one of the big five Executive Search firms that supports their clients in identifying, selecting, and developing the right people for top management jobs—both externally and internally. RRA has 47 offices in major cities globally, advising some of the world's largest and most complex organizations on their most pressing leadership challenges across industries, functions, and geographies—this includes private companies as well as governmental and educational organizations. I work in RRA's office in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, where I spent around 3 days a week. On the other days I either work from home or travel for business purposes to meet clients in Germany, Europe, and abroad. Before joining RRA, I worked as a leadership consultant at Kienbaum Consultants International, a German-based HR consulting firm. Over the last 15 years, I had the opportunity to manage projects in different countries in the US, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

To simplify, I work in an area that most of us who studied psychology know as "personnel selection" and "personnel development" in the field of "industrial and organizational psychology." I assess people's experience, skills, competencies, motivation, and values to evaluate whether they meet the current requirements of a specific job, would get along with their colleagues, and fit the company culture. In other words, I apply scientific methods and tools to predict a person's performance on the job in the most objective, reliable, and valid way. This includes cognitive ability tests, trait-based personality questionnaires, work sample tests, and structured interviews.

One might wonder if there is a need for all of this in top management roles. Have most of the executives not already shown great performance? Does their successful career not speak for itself? Is there not likely to be an already restricted range of performance at the top? Admittedly, these are probably some of the most common questions I get. Unfortunately, past performance is not the best

predictor of future performance, especially when the new job has an increased management and leadership responsibility, includes new tasks and requirements, and is in a new organization with a likely different culture. In fact, oftentimes employees are promoted based on their success in previous jobs until they reach a level at which they are no longer competent, as skills in one job do not necessarily translate to another. In addition, the more complex the job, the greater the difference between a superior performer and an average one. The spread of job performance has also been shown to grow exponentially with the complexity of the job. People perform at their best, if their values, interests, skills and typical behavioral patterns match the right tasks, context, or environments. Taking personnel selection lightly on a top management level is likely to result in failure, costs, and consequences for other people.

Looking back at my many years of working in the field of personnel selection, I can say that I am deeply motivated to improve the way the world is led through proper, scientifically-backed personnel selection decisions. It is an ever changing field that becomes more dynamic with societal, technological and environmental developments. Take sustainability for example. Today, I support organizations at different stages of their sustainability journey, identifying gaps in leadership approaches and offering guidance on embedding sustainable leadership across their strategy, operations, and culture. Likewise, digitalization and the "rise of AI" impact my work. Ultimately, GenAI implementation isn't just about adopting the right technology. It's about having the right leaders—with the right capabilities—at the helm. With the speed at which the world and market is responding to GenAI, many leaders are making decisions about the tech without fully understanding it. "What does it take to be an AI enabled leader?" is just one of the many questions that constantly challenges me to rethink the models, methods, and criteria we use in personnel selection.

It probably does not come as a surprise to you that in my profession, the application of scientific critical inquiry and thinking is crucial. Over the last 15 years, I tried to foster the debate and exchange with practitioners in the field around making informed decisions in personnel selection and to not blindly follow the trend of an explorative, "hey there is a correlation" approach. Aside from my work for RRA—and my previous employer Kienbaum Consultants International—I had the chance to teach students at the University of Ulm about my experiences, caveats, and lessons learned of applying scientific principles in leadership consulting. Through guest speaker appearances—for example at the University of Basel where I was invited by MPIB alumnus Rui Mata—I engaged in discussions why some questions around predicting job performance are scientifically interesting to explore but far from being empirically validated to apply them in real life settings where thousands of people's jobs depend on it. In addition, until the present day, my mentor Oliver Wilhelm, University of Ulm, supports me by challenging my way of looking at questions of personnel selection and the prediction of job performance, reminding me of the importance of critical thinking.

How did my time as a LIFE fellow contribute to where I am today and how has it shaped my thinking? Probably in more ways than I can succinctly describe. As a psychologist who transitioned from a differentiated, multifaceted academic education to the world of consulting, I have witnessed firsthand how the skills honed during my studies and PhD journey have proved invaluable in delivering meaningful and impactful solutions to people I work with today. If I had to summarize, the following aspects come to my mind.

First, during my PhD journey, I immersed myself in a world of rigorous research, data analysis, and hypothesis testing. This process fostered my deep understanding of the scientific method, enabling me to approach problems with a structured and evidence-based mindset. Through the discussion with my mentors in the LIFE faculty and my LIFE peers, I learned to critically evaluate information, challenge assumptions, and seek empirical evidence to support or refute hypotheses on whether a person would be successful in their job.

Secondly, one of the key benefits of what I learned during my time as LIFE fellow is the ability to make data-driven decisions. In my psychology studies, I learned the importance of collecting and analyzing data to draw meaningful conclusions. As a LIFE fellow, I learned to look at research findings from different angles, discussing them with fellow PhD students and integrating different perspectives. This skill translates seamlessly into the consulting world, where data are often either abundant but need to be distilled into actionable insights, or rare and need to be carefully identified and docu-

mented to support decision-making. By gathering relevant insights, leveraging statistical techniques, and considering organizational data, I am able to identify meaningful relations between seemingly independent data that inform my decision-making process.

Thirdly, the complex nature of organizational challenges requires a systematic and analytical approach. During my time as LIFE fellow, I honed my ability to break down complex problems into smaller, manageable components. Through the valuable guidance by the LIFE faculty and my mentor Oliver Wilhelm I learned how to deconstruct complex issues, analyze interdependencies, and identify root causes. Today, I help clients to understand the complexities they face and can enable them to navigate through them effectively.

Finally, as a consultant, I am constantly challenged and strive to deliver evidence-based solutions to clients. By drawing on my scientific education and training, I can critically evaluate existing practices, theories, and models, and assess their relevance and effectiveness in specific organizational contexts. Over the years, I have witnessed the rise and fall of what sounds appealing to many practitioners in the field, but clearly lacks the theoretical underpinning and empirical evidence to qualify as a validated methodological approach to personnel selection—for example, speech analysis or the re-emergence of facial recognition. The ability to communicate the rationale behind personnel selection approaches and solutions helps me to bridge the dialogue between science and applied practice and enhances their credibility and acceptance among clients.

This mix of adhering to structured research methodologies, aiming for data-driven decisions, navigating complexities, and applying evidence-based solutions has empowered me to make a meaningful impact on organizations and their leaders. Scientific inquiry has been instrumental in helping me debias some of the layperson suppositions of my clients. Being a LIFE fellow has taught me the importance of questioning assumptions and seeking empirical evidence before drawing conclusions. This mindset has allowed me to challenge the preconceived notions and biases that often exist within organizations. It has enabled me to guide clients away from relying solely on intuition or anecdotal evidence, and instead, encourage them to embrace evidence-based decision-making. By incorporating scientific inquiry into the consulting process, I have been able to help clients recognize and address their biases, leading to more informed and objective decision-making that ultimately drives better outcomes for individuals and teams alike. Debiasing wrong perceptions and expanding the criteria for assessing leadership capability and potential unlocks a wider pool of talent and fosters a more inclusive and effective leadership culture.

You are probably curious by now, how I managed to spark the high-school students' interest in psychology and my profession as a "Leadership Advisor." While we discussed some of the aspects outlined above, I asked each student what type of sport they love and are passionate about and what team they support. I asked them what they are looking forward to and worry about when they think of their team. In all three discussions, there was always an element of "Do we have the right coach?" or "Do we have the right team?" to be at the top of the league or to remain in the league. We discussed what it would take to find out and if necessary, how to identify, select, and develop new members of their "Dream Team." I closed our discussions by saying, "This is what my job is all about. I support teams to have the best fitting 'Coach' and the right team members. I 'advise' management to find the right 'leaders' and to set up teams for success."

I hope that I managed to spark your interest, too!

Source: kirill_makes_pics, Pixabay

In Memoriam Gert G. Wagner

* January 5, 1953 in Kelsterbach – † January 28, 2024 in Berlin

LIFE faculty member Gert G. Wagner, our esteemed colleague, friend, and advisor, passed away on January 28, 2024, at the age of 71. His death is an immense loss to the LIFE community, to all those who knew him, and to the study of lifespan development. We miss him.

Gert was among the most active and collegial members of the LIFE Faculty, always helpful and ready to share ideas and propose collaborative studies. He was an economist who loved to work with psychologists because he took a genuine interest in people, be it the ones he worked with or the ones he studied. He was the mastermind of the German Socioeconomic Panel Study (SOEP). He also was a Max Planck Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (MPIB) for many years, participating in the scientific and social life of the Institute.

Ulman Lindenberger, LIFE Speaker Berlin

Obituary of the MPIB

Gert Wagner studied Economics and Sociology at Goethe University in Frankfurt/Main from 1971 to 1978. In 1979, he became a research assistant at and later the managing director of the DFG-funded Collaborative Research Center "Microanalytical Foundations of Social Policy" at the Universities of Frankfurt/Main and Mannheim. From 1989 to 2008, he was head of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) at the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin (DIW Berlin), which he also directed for many years as a member of the board and for some time as president. During a two-year interim period from 2011 to 2013 he directed the DIW Berlin as chair of the board and president. He was Professor of Social Policy and Public Economics at the Ruhr University Bochum from 1992 to 1997, Professor of Economics (specifically, of Empirical Economic Research and Economic Policy) at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder from 1997 to 2002 and at Technical University of Berlin from 2002 until his retirement in 2018.

Gert Wagner's collaboration with the MPIB began back in the late 1980s, when he was a visiting scientist and became involved with the Berlin Aging Study (BASE) as a member of the core project group. Later, he became a co-PI of the Berlin Aging Study II (BASE-II), the ongoing successor project. In 2008, he was appointed Max Planck Research Fellow by the Max Planck Society and Senior Fellow of the MPIB in 2018. At the MPIB, Gert Wagner mainly collaborated with the Center for Adaptive Rationality and the Center for Lifespan Psychology. Furthermore, he was on the faculty of the International Max Planck Research School on the Life Course (LIFE). Gert Wagner also actively contributed to the Research Data Management Group from its beginnings and helped to establish the topic at the MPIB. He was a member of the National Academy of Science and Engineering (acatech), associate of the Harding Center for Risk Literacy, Potsdam, and fellow at the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB Fellow), Wiesbaden and Berlin. He was also a member of the German government's Social Advisory Council and past member of the German Science Council and held a significant position within the academic landscape of Berlin and, more broadly, of Germany.

His most important scientific achievements lie in opening up the SOEP for sociological and psychological measurements and for a large number of methodological innovations. In addition, as founding chairman of the German Data Forum (RatSWD), he made significant contributions to the development of social science infrastructures and provided practical policy advice, for instance, as a member of the Advisory Board of the Federal Statistical Office, of the Enquete Commission "Growth, Prosperity and Quality of Life" of the German Bundestag, and of the German Evangelical Church's Chamber for Social Order (Kammer für soziale Ordnung der EKD).

In 2018, Gert G. Wagner was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany by the Federal President for his work in communicating science to policy makers and society at large, and in 2023, he became a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science (APS), a rare honor for an economist and sociologist.

Gert G. Wagner was always ready to share ideas and propose collaborative studies. He took a genuine interest in people, both those he worked with and those he studied. We would like to convey our deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to his family. We will sorely miss his manifold contributions and honor his memory.

10 Questions

Tobias Grossmann, Professor of Psychology, University of Virginia

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How did you get involved in developmental psychology?

My research experience and training as an undergraduate student was primarily in cognitive neuroscience. However, I have always been interested in questions surrounding human origins and evolution. In fact, originally, I wanted to pursue a PhD studying comparative cognition in Mike Tomasello's group at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig. While working as a student research assistant in Mike's group and being exposed to research comparing great apes' and human children's social cognition, I realized that many of the questions I am interested in can be addressed by studying the developmental origins of (uniquely) human social cognition. Then an opportunity arose to join a newly formed research group at the MPI for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, also in Leipzig, to pursue a PhD in the newly emerging field of developmental cognitive neuroscience co-supervised by developmental psychologist Tricia Striano and cognitive neuroscientist Angela Friederici.

Could you name books or articles that have profoundly influenced your own thinking about the field?

In my mind, Mike Tomasello's "*The Natural History of Human Thinking*" and "*Becoming Human: A Theory of Ontogeny*" have been the most compelling and influential books concerning questions regarding the evolutionary and developmental origins of the human mind. Then, there is Mark Johnson's book "*Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*," which is now in its 5th edition (de Haan et al., 2023) and gave the field I work in its name when first published in 1997. Finally, there is Chris and Uta Frith's seminal review paper, entitled "Interacting minds: A biological basis" published in *Science* in 1999. Incidentally, Chris and Uta have just published an open access book, "*What Makes us Social?*", summarizing research and their ground-breaking ideas on all things human social cognition and behavior.

Which do you consider the two main current debates within the field?

My sense is that at some level our field is still being haunted by the 'ghosts' of the 'nature versus nurture' debate. Fortunately, considering the overwhelming evidence to demonstrate that this is a false, outdated, and unsupported way of thinking about development, most researchers have moved on and embrace the interactive, probabilistic, and epigenetic nature of human development. That aside, as far as infant cognition is concerned, there is a recent debate questioning the sophistication of early infant cognition and more specifically, the interpretation of decades worth of infant looking-time research. This debate was kickstarted by Mark Blumberg and Karen Adolph in an article recently published in TiCS (Blumberg & Adolph, 2023) and has resulted in pushback mounted by several groups of infancy researchers, including myself (Liu et al., 2023).

What research topics have been neglected or have not received enough attention so far?

We, that is, infant cognitive neuroscientists, tend to lag behind the quick advances in adult cognitive neuroscience, where brain function is now routinely studied at the network level with ever increasing spatial, temporal and computational precision and detail. There is much scope for improvement in this regard. At the same time, I think that it is equally important to continue designing innovative and ideally naturalistic tasks that provide a window into the developing mind, reflective of the developing infant's lived experience in context. But to return to your original question concerning neglected topics, I believe that it will be important to better understand the affective and motivational processes that undergird early brain and behavioral development.

One of your foci is on infants' expression and perception of affect. Can you tell us more about this?

Most recently, in collaboration with Adrienne Wood, we examined whether and how genetic

variability in the oxytocin system is linked to individual differences in expressing positive affect in infants (Grossmann & Wood, 2023). Our results show that genetic variation in the oxytocin, previously linked to increased release of oxytocin, was associated with higher rates of positive affective displays among a sample of 7-month-old infants. Moreover, infants displaying increased levels of positive affect (smiling and laughter) also showed enhanced brain responses in the right inferior frontal cortex, a brain region previously linked to perception–action coupling, when viewing others smile at them. Our findings suggest that, from early in development, genetic variation in the oxytocin system is associated with individual differences in expressed positive affect, which in turn are linked to differences in perceiving positive affect.

How can your research be applied to everyday life?

This is a question that my parents, both engineers, keep wondering about too! I don't think that my research has any direct applications to everyday life. However, I'm hopeful that showing how complex and psychologically rich development during infancy is, can generate some fascination and excitement for the topic among students, parents, and grandparents.

What are you currently working on?

Much of the current work in my lab is focused on understanding variability in social brain and behavioral development in infancy and beyond, including longitudinal approaches. One major project funded by the National Science Foundation examines the developmental origins of social interaction processing in the brain with a specific focus on perceiving and learning from third-party social interactions. There are also several student-initiated projects, ranging from social reward in infancy to self-regulation in preschoolers that keep us busy.

What do you get out of LIFE as a faculty member?

Over the years my students and I have benefited tremendously by being a part of this wonderful community of scholars. The work in my lab, especially the longitudinal research, has been heavily impacted by conversations and interactions with LIFE members. Furthermore, I was fortunate to spend a summer in Ulman Lindenberger's group at MPIB, which provided me with the unique opportunity to develop and test ideas concerning longitudinal predictions in early development.

What is the added value of LIFE's internationality?

LIFE's internationality and interdisciplinarity are the key defining features that, in my mind, make this platform so special and invaluable. Entertaining new and different perspectives as done when fostering international and interdisciplinary interactions as part of LIFE, opens up new ways of thinking and understanding. At a personal level, I'm also very grateful that LIFE allows me to stay connected with colleagues, friends, and family in Germany and Europe.

How has the COVID pandemic changed the way you work?

The pandemic shut down in-person research in my lab for multiple years, and we are still recovering from the impact this has had on our productivity and research progress. On the upside, it has taught us the value and importance of in-person interactions and helped us find creative solutions to continue some of our longitudinal research online. Like most of us, I have gotten used to spend more time working from home. I now often find myself 'craving' being at the office and remind myself that I can just hop on the bike and cycle to work!

Website

https://www.tobiasgrossmann.com

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Child wearing an EEG cap looking at a toy bunny with interest.

Source: T. Grossmann

Source: Jeannette Williams/Omni-Photo Communications, Inc./Universal Images Group

Unusual greeting for a bus driver in Gibraltar.

New LIFE Faculty in Charlottesville and Zurich

Tara Hofkens is an Assistant Research Professor at the UVA's Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. She investigates the impact of classroom experiences on student engagement, achievement, and psychological well-being from early childhood to adolescence. Her research focuses on how developmental and contemplative perspectives on stress and engagement could revolutionize teaching and learning in American public schools. Her work has been funded by the Mind & Life Institute, the LEGO Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the Institute for Education Sciences and Education Innovation and Research grants.

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Key publications

Hofkens, T. L., Whittaker, J., Pianta, R. C., Vitiello, V., Ruzek, E., & Ansari, A. (2022). Pathways of mathematics achievement in preschool: Examining executive function and task orientation. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 81*, Article 101432. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2022.101432

Hofkens, T. L., Pianta, R. C., & Hamre, B. (2023). Teacher-student interactions: Theory, measurement, and evidence for universal properties that support students' learning across countries and cultures. In R. Maulana, M. Helms-Lorenz, & R. Klassen (Eds.), *Effective teaching around the world: Theoretical, empirical, methodological and practical insights* (pp. 399–422). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31678-4_18

Hofkens, T. L., & Pianta, R. C. (2022). Teacher-student relationships, engagement in school, and student outcomes. In A. Reschly & S. L. Christenon (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 431-449). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07853-8_20

Mariëtte van Loon is an Assistant Professor funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF). She researches the development of metacognitive skills. Adaptive metacognitive development is important during childhood and adolescence, as metacognition is one of the strongest predictors of long-term academic learning success (even stronger than IQ). Her focus is on procedural metacognition, particularly the on-task measurement of self-monitoring and control processes. Her academic journey commenced in the Netherlands with a master's degree in Psychology in Utrecht, followed by a PhD in Maastricht. She then moved to Switzerland for a postdoc in Bern before joining UZH in August 2023.

Her research investigates the accuracy of monitoring judgments and the effectiveness of control decisions when research participants (children and adolescents) solve different types of memory and comprehension tasks. She is particularly intrigued by error recognition, the actions undertaken to correct errors, and the developmental aspects of these skills during childhood and adolescence.

Currently, she is leading a large-scale longitudinal research project that aims to track the intra-individual development of metacognitive skills among adolescents over a three-year period. Data collection starts when adolescents are 12 years old, and they are followed until they are 15. The main project aim is to understand the heterogeneity among adolescents in metacognitive skills and explore why some of them exhibit adaptive metacognition while others lag behind. The research group employs a measurement burst design with various intensive measures of metacognition. These measures are combined with social network analyses to investigate the influence of peer relations on metacognitive development.

Mariëtte is excited to be a part of LIFE and is very much looking forward to engaging in scientific discussions, learning from each other about diverse research approaches, and collaborating to answer (developmental) research questions.

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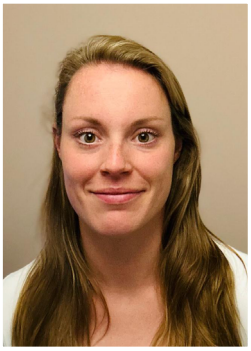
Key publications

Van Loon, M. H., Orth, U., & Roebers, C. M. (2024). The structure of metacognition in middle childhood: Evidence for a unitary metacognition-for-memory factor. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 241, Article 105857*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2023.105857

Van Loon, M. H., & Oeri, N. S. (2023). Examining on-task regulation in school children: Interrelations between monitoring, regulation, and task performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 115*(3), 446–459. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000781

Van Loon, M. H., Bayard, N. S., Steiner, M., & Roebers, C. M. (2021). Connecting teachers' classroom instructions with children's metacognition and learning in elementary school. *Metacognition and Learning, 16,* 623–650. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11409-020-09248-2

New LIFE Fellows in Ann Arbor, Berlin, & Zurich



Esmee Aalders. I've recently started my PhD journey with Moritz Daum's team at UZH. My research focuses on understanding the intricacies of communicative behavior development in both bilingual and monolingual children. Specifically, I'm interested by how children tailor their speech to different listeners and how this is affected by language status. Originally from the Netherlands, I spent most of my time in Amsterdam, where I obtained master's degrees in Pedagogical Sciences and Criminology. My professional path has led me to roles as a behavioral scientist in child protection services and as a researcher in the Dutch Ministry of Defense. However, I'm very excited to return to academia and delve into the field of scientific research. Beyond academia, I spend my time painting or outdoors, exploring new sports and activities.

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Jessica Bezek. I am a PhD candidate in Clinical Psychology at UM working under the mentorship of Luke Hyde. As a member of the Michigan Neurogenetics and Developmental Psychopathology (MiND) Lab, I study how experiences of early life adversity influence brain development and mental health. In particular, I am interested in exploring the environmental and neurobiological mechanisms underlying risk and resilience in the face of neighborhood disadvantage. My primary methodological interests include neuroimaging and structural equation modeling, which I have applied toward recent projects examining neural reward processing in the context of antisocial behavior, as well as patterns of functional brain network organization associated with resilience. I aim to integrate developmental, clinical, and neuroscientific perspectives into my work to better understand contextually-informed developmental trajectories and modifiable points of intervention in the context of adversity.

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Lydia Brundisch. I am an external fellow at the Center for Lifespan Psychology at the MPIB within the RHYME group under the supervision of LIFE alumnus Markus Werkle-Bergner. My research interests are spatial navigation, episodic memory and the maturation of associated neural signatures. I graduated as Bachelor of Psychology from the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg in 2020. My thesis topic was the factor structure and measurement invariance of the Baumgarten-Adjektivliste in self-report and peer-report. I then studied cognitive science at the University of Potsdam. For my master thesis project, children aged 4 to 8 years played 3-D video games and I analyzed their performance across a task battery including spatial navigation strategy, spatial memory, reversal learning performance, and motor performance. For my dissertation, I will build on my master thesis using longitudinal and neuroimaging data.

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Jasmine Cooper. I am a doctoral candidate in the Psychology PhD program at UM with concentrations in Cognition and Cognitive Neuroscience and Developmental Psychology. Under the leadership of Patricia Reuter-Lorenz and Toni Antonucci, I investigate how life course factors, such as physical and mental health status and social relations, influence cognitive and neural development in older adulthood. Additionally, I am interested in identifying factors that heighten the risk of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) in vulnerable and understudied populations. Prior to joining UM, I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where I conducted research on the neural correlates of working memory and the underlying effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student well-being.

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Minne Hagel. Having attained both my bachelor's and master's degree in psychology from FU, I currently work as a predoctoral fellow in Manuel Völkle's research group for Psychological Research Methods at HU. During my B.Sc. and M.Sc. studies, I worked at the Socio-Economic Panel (DIW), in the Methods and Evaluation/Quality Assurance unit at FU headed by Steffi Pohl, and in the Mental Health Monitoring Unit of Robert Koch Institute. This introduced me to causal inference in evaluation research as well as the breadth of methodological questions that arise when working with panel data. The question that piqued my interest the most is inherent to many psychological studies but not always explicitly discussed: How can we ensure that a given statistical effect can be interpreted as causal? Michael Eid's supervision of both my bachelor's and master's thesis initiated and fostered my interest in latent variable modeling. In my master's thesis, I evaluated the statistical performance of the robust chi-square test in Mplus by applying it to different multilevel confirmatory factor analysis models for multitrait-multimethod data. Now, I am very fortunate to combine questions on causality in non-experimental studies and latent variable modeling in my doctoral project, which focuses on causal effects in latent state-trait (LST) models. Under the guidance of Manuel Völkle and Christian Gische, I will compare different ways of estimating standard errors of causal effects as well as different theoretical perspectives on causal identification in LST models and explore causal effects in continuous time models.

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Olivia Metzner. I am a PhD student at the University of Potsdam, working in Rebecca Lazarides' research group, "School and Instructional Research." My academic journey began with a BA degree in Education Science and European Ethnology from HU, followed by an MA in Educational Science with a specialization in consulting and organizational development from TU Berlin. My dissertation project investigates motivational-affective processes in learning and instruction. Particularly, I am interested in the relations between teachers' motivational-affective beliefs and their instructional behavior. To investigate these relations, I examine associations between teachers' motivational beliefs and their instructional behavior by conducting a systematic review and meta-analysis (macro-level approach). Furthermore, I apply AI-based methodologies to examine the relations between pre-service teachers' motivation and their motivational language in class (micro-level approach).

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Maggie Meyer. I am a doctoral candidate in Social Psychology at UM working with Rich Gonzalez. I graduated from Central Michigan University in 2021 with a BS in Psychology and Pure Mathematics. I am broadly interested in using a quantitative approach to understanding issues of racial bias in legal decisions. My primary line of research uses threshold-based decision models to explore racial bias in police searches within a US context. Another line of work explores why people refrain from using their legal protections (such as consenting to a search or waiving their right to remain silent). A new branch of my research intersects with issues across the

lifespan, from police perceptions of young black men to differences in decision making as police officers age.

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Caroline Poppa. I am a doctoral student at the SHARE BERLIN Institute, working on a German Research Council (DFG) project on "Publication Bias in the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences" (Pub-Bias) under the supervision of David Richter. I joined LIFE in April as an external fellow, focusing on the delineation of publication bias on both the hypothesis and dissemination level. As a part of SHARE, I am further deeply interested in understanding the impact socio-economic conditions over the lifespan can have on cognition, health, and life satisfaction in later life. My academic background is in developmental neurobiology and psychology. I received my BSc in Biology and further specialized in Neurobiology and Behavior during my MSc, both at FU. In my master's thesis, I investigated the effect of an aerobic exercise intervention on blood-derived markers for neuroplasticity in healthy older adults, supervised by LIFE alumna Elisabeth Wenger. I was a student research assistant in the "Mechanisms and Sequential Progression of Plasticity" project at the Center for Lifespan Psychology at MPIB (2019–2022). Before joining the Pub-Bias project in October 2023, I was a research associate in the Department of Medical Psychology of Charité University Hospital Berlin, working in the Prenatal Stress and Aging group led by Claudia Buß.

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Eileen Rüegg. I am a PhD student at the Chair for Developmental Psychology: Metacognitive Development during Childhood and Adolescence at the UZH (supervisor: Mariëtte van Loon). Our research focuses on understanding both normative and at-risk metacognitive development. We are conducting a longitudinal study over three years to identify short- and long-term changes in metacognitive abilities and their interaction with other variables. I am specifically interested in investigating individual differences in metacognition, with the aim of uncovering the relationship between monitoring accuracy, metacognitive control, and various variables such as working memory and motivation. I obtained both my master's and bachelor's degrees in Psychology from the University of Bern. For my master's thesis, I investigated the relationship between cognitive inhibition and psychometric intelligence, controlling for the effect of speed using a fixed-links confirmatory factor analysis.

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Ran (Rachel) Yan. I am a third-year developmental PhD student at UM studying under the guidance of Adriene Beltz at the Methods, Sex Differences, and Development M(SD) Lab. My current research focuses on exploring the diverse experiences related to gender using intensive longitudinal methods. In particular, I am interested in examining the bio-psycho-social context of gender and its impact on daily behavioral and psychological outcomes.

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Ziqi Zhang. After receiving a master's degree in Education, Basic Psychology at the Brain and Cognitive Neuroscience Research Center, Liaoning Normal University, China, I started as a PhD student at the Chair of Developmental Psychology: Adulthood at UZH (advisor: Alexandra M. Freund) in the project "Exhaustion and Recovery." The main aim of my dissertation is to develop and test a computational model of effort distinguishing between the costs and value of investing effort into the pursuit of a goal. My research questions are: How do people of different ages experience the investment of effort into the pursuit of goals? Which factors contribute to the experience of exhaustion after investing effort into their goal pursuit? Under which conditions does exhaustion lead to continuing or disengaging to invest effort into their goal pursuit?

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Katharina Zimmermann. I am a doctoral student at the Chair for Developmental Psychology: Meta-

cognitive Development during Childhood and Adolescence at UZH, under the guidance of Mariëtte van Loon. I completed both my bachelor's and master's degrees in Psychology at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. My research interests primarily lie in the realms of cognitive and developmental psychology. For my PhD thesis, I am investigating short-term fluctuations in, and long-term development of adolescents' metacognitive control. This is particularly interesting for identifying children and adolescents whose metacognitive development is at risk, and subsequently developing effective learning strategies to improve their metacognitive skills. Additionally, I am passionate about enhancing my methodological skills and expertise in data analysis, as I believe that a comprehensive skill set is essential for conducting rigorous and insightful research, leading to meaningful scientific contributions.

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Source: John Birdsall MR/Press Association Images/ Universal Images Group

Bus on the highway in Cuba.

Source: JJames Strachan/Robert Harding World Imagery/Universal Images Group

Local bus, formerly a US school bus, Solola, Guatemala.

LIFE-Related Publications

These include all recent articles reported by *LIFE fellows* as well as selected work by *LIFE alumni*. See also https://www.imprs-life.mpg.de/publications. If your work is missing, please let us know!

Ajrouch, K. J., **Hu, R. X.**, Webster, N. J., & **Antonucci, T. C.** (2024). Friendship trajectories and health across the lifespan. *Developmental Psychology, 60*(1), 94–107. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001589

Ascigil, E., Gunaydin, G., Selcuk, E., Sandstrom, G. M., & Aydin, E. (2023). Minimal social interactions and life satisfaction: The role of greeting, thanking, and conversing. *Social Psychological and Personality Science.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506231209793

Bezek, J. L., Tillem, S., Suarez, G. L., Burt, S. A., Vazquez, A. Y., Michael, C., Sripada, C., Klump, K. L., & **Hyde, L. W.** (in press). Functional brain network organization in youth and multi-domain resilience to neighborhood disadvantage in youth. *American Psychologist.*

Buchberger, E. S., **Joechner, A.-K.**, Ngo, C. T., **Lindenberger, U.**, & **Werkle-Bergner, M.** Buchberger, E. S., Joechner, A.-K., Ngo, C. T., Lindenberger, U., & Werkle-Bergner, M. (2024). Age differences in generalization, memory specificity, and their overnight fate in childhood. *Child Development.* Advance online article. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.14089

Buchberger, E. S., Ngo, C. T., Peikert, A., Brandmaier, A. M., & **Werkle-Bergner, M.** (in press). Estimating statistical power for structural equation models in developmental cognitive science: A tutorial in R. *Behavior Research Methods.* Preprint: https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/gsdvz

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Source: Chris Martin-Bahr/Science Photo Library/Universal Images Group

Bus line in Christchurch, South Island, New Zealand.

LIFE News

- The Spring Academy 2024 is taking place at UVA from May 27 (arrival) to May 31, 2024.
- LIFE Berlin will host the Fall Academy from October 13 to 16, 2024 at MPIB.

Exchanges

- DZNE fellow *Warsha Barde* and MPIB fellow *Hannes Diemerling* are on exchange visiting Steve Boker's lab at UVA from April to the end of May.

LIFE Berlin

- *Lydia Brundisch*, *Minne Hagel*, *Olivia Metzner*, and *Caroline Poppa* have joined LIFE as fellows. See pp. 17ff. for more information.
- MPIB alumna *Stefanie Gundert*, Institute for Employment Research (IAB), Nürnberg, is on secondment to the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Berlin, from September 2023 to August 2024.
- Uni Potsdam alumna *Andrea Hasl* has taken up a position as a Senior Advisor for Analysis and Data with the Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen [Association of German Foundations] in Berlin.
- Faculty *Simone Kühn*, currently head of the Lise Meitner Group at MPIB, will join Ralph Hertwig, Ulman Lindenberger, and Iyad Rahwan as Director at the MPIB upon Ute Frevert's retirement in June. She will lead the new Center for Environmental Neuroscience.
- HU alumnus *Jannik Orzek* successfully defended his thesis entitled "Regularization Strategies for Extended Structural Equation Models" in January. He has now joined Factworks, Berlin, working as a data analyst.
- MPIB fellow *Claire Pauley* has submitted her thesis entitled "Exploring the Role of Age-Related Neural Dedifferentiation in Episodic Memory Decline" to HU and will defend it in June. She has joined Simone Kühn's group as a postdoc.
- MPIB fellow *Sina Schwarze* submitted her thesis entitled "The Development of Flexible Behavior: Age Differences and Training-Related Changes in Activation, Connectivity, and Neural Representations During Task Switching" to FU in December and will defend it in May. She is remaining at the Center for Lifespan Psychology as a postdoc.
- MPIB fellow *Sonja Sudimac* has submitted her thesis entitled "Exposure to Natural Versus Urban Environments: Short-Term Effects on Stress, Stress-Related Brain Function, and Hippocampal Structure" to FU and will defend it in June. She is remaining with Simone Kühn's group as a postdoc.
- MPIB alumna *Anna Thoma* has been awarded the Otto Hahn Medal 2023, which the Max Planck Society bestows for outstanding scientific achievements in connection with the doctorate.
- The Berlin LIFE seminar in the summer semester is on "Genetics, Social Inequality, and Development" and has been organized by *Laurel Raffington*. Speakers include LIFE alumni Paige Harden and Elliot Tucker-Drob, with whom Laurel did her postdoc.

LIFE Michigan

- *Savannah Adams* and *Jahla Osborne* have taken over as UM fellow speakers from *Rita Hu* and *Kathy Xie*.
- *Jessica Bezek*, *Jasmine Cooper*, *Maggie Meyer*, and *Ran (Rachel) Yan* have joined LIFE as new fellows. See pp. 17ff. for more information.
- Fellow *Jessica Bezek* received the Naomi E. Lohr Award for Excellence in Clinical Psychology ($2,000) from UM for her role as a supervisor to the first year graduate students on their neuropsychological assessments.
- Fellow *Jasmine Cooper* will be doing a summer internship at the National Institute on Aging's Laboratory of Behavioral Neuroscience. During the internship, she will work on a project that explores the link between brain-based biomarkers and cognition.
- Faculty *Ioulia Kovelman* is the recipient of the Department of Psychology's 2024 Amy L. and Kirk L. Wolfe Prize.
- Fellow *Maggie Meyer* was accepted to the Michigan Law School to pursue a dual JD and

Psychology PhD and was awarded the Dean's Scholarship ($90,000 across 3 years).

- Faculty *Shinobu Kitayama* has received the American Psychological Foundation (APF) Gold Medal Award for Impact in Psychology which "recognizes the work of a psychologist or group of psychologists that is impactful, innovative, and transformational."
- Faculty *Leah Richmond-Rakerd* has received the Association for Psychological Science's (APS) Janet Taylor Spence Award which "recognizes transformative early career contributions to psychological science." APS also remarked that "[a]s a result of [Richmond-Rakerd's] interdisciplinary approach to the study of self-regulation, her work is influencing multiple fields of psychological science and has implications for public health and public policy."

LIFE Virginia

- Fellows *Minah Kim, Analia Marzoratti,* and *Allison Ward-Seidel* all passed their comprehensive exams and advanced to doctoral candidacy.
- Fellow *Kenn Dela Cruz* was awarded the Jefferson Scholars Foundation Dissertation Year Fellowship from the Jefferson Scholars Foundation and the Catalyzing Advocacy in Science and Engineering Fellowship from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Faculty *Tara Hofkens* will lead a project assessing the impact of an inquiry-driven school model that integrates the core content areas with interdisciplinary project-based learning and portfolio-based assessment. The funding of $1.9M from a larger $3.8M grant was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program.
- Faculty *Tish Jennings* has been honored with the UVA Distinguished Research Award.
- Fellow *Lee LeBoeuf* was selected for the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) State Policy Fellowship to work with the Virginia Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Care and Education.
- Fellow *Emma Toner* has received the Raven Society Scholarship ($2,000) which is awarded to UVA students who "demonstrate outstanding achievement in the classroom, unique achievement in scholarship outside the classroom, and leadership and community service during their time at UVA."

LIFE Zurich

- *Mariëtte van Loon* has joined the Zurich LIFE faculty. See p. 16 for more information.
- *Esmee Aalders*, *Eileen Rüegg*, *Ziqi Zhang*, and *Katharina Zimmermann* have joined LIFE as new fellows. See pp. 17ff. for more information.
- Fellow *Miriam Löffler* visited Jessica Daikeler, Survey Design and Methodology department at GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Mannheim, Germany, from December to January.
- Fellow *Michelle Loher* is visiting Megan Patrick at the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at UM from May.
- Fellow *Francesa Mele* is at the Social Research Institute, University College London until autumn, hosted by Ingrid Schoon. During her stay, she is using data from "Next Steps – Longitudinal Study of Young People in England" to understand the role of socioemotional skills (e.g., school engagement, academic self-concept and locus of control) on school-to-work transitions and educational attainments, as well as potential differences depending on socioeconomic background, sex, and ethnicity.
- Faculty *Nora Raschle* has been elected into the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies' FENS Kavli Scholarship program and is currently acting as a Board Member for the FENS Kavli Network of Excellence (see https://fens-kavlinetwork.org/who-we-are/governance/).
- Fellow *Kevin Schoenholzer* is on a research stay with Anna Katyn Chmielewski at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. They are collaborating on Kevin's final PhD thesis paper on educational outcomes in times of educational expansion, using harmonized panel data from 6 countries. They aim to determine to what extent social change in the shape of educational expansion has shifted patterns of intergenerational educational mobility across cohorts born in 1948–1992.
- Science outreach courses on "Voice training and public speaking skills" and „Handling questions from the media and the public" are in planning for Zurich LIFE fellows.

Frequently used acronyms in LIFE

CRTD: Center for Regenerative Therapies Dresden

DIW: Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung [German Institute for Economic Research]

DZA: Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen [German Centre of Gerontology]

DZNE: Deutsches Zentrum für Neurodegenerative Erkrankungen Dresden [German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases]

FU: Freie Universität Berlin

HU: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

LIFE: International Max Planck Research School on the Life Course

MPIB: Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung [Max Planck Institute for Human Development]

SHARE: The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe

UM: University of Michigan

UVA: University of Virginia

UZH: University of Zurich

People loading vegetables and bags onto a public bus in a bus station in the Mountain Province region of the Philippines.

Source: Alain Evrard/Robert Harding World Imagery/Universal Images Group

LIFE Newsletter

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Aim of the newsletter
The LIFE newsletter encourages collaboration and interaction among people within the LIFE program. It provides an information platform where fellows, alumni, and faculty members can learn more about each other's research, and identify colleagues with similar interests and possible projects for collaboration.

Contributions
Please send contributions, suggestions, and input to the editor.

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