



COLLOQUIA TREVERENSIA

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Adolescent Development: Longitudinal Models and Research

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Wim Meeus is emeritus professor of Adolescent Development Utrecht University and Developmental Psychology Tilburg University, The Netherlands. Initially a social psychologist he did his PhD on Obedience to authority, a series of experiments replicating and extending findings of Milgram. After his PhD he switched to the study of adolescent development and initiated a number of longitudinal studies from the late 1980's on. Presently he leads the ongoing longitudinal RADAR study that started in 2002.

Wim Meeus is interested in the development of young people in general, but his own research mainly focuses on development of the self (identity, personality), personal relationships (parents, peers and intimate partners) and psychopathology (anxiety, depression, delinquency, aggression, drug use). His research aims to cover the period from ages 12 till 25. Another key interest is the use of longitudinal models in developmental research. Which models are best suited to answer the different developmental questions we have?

Abstract:

When we ask people about events they remember the best or experiences that touched them the most they often come up with memories from their adolescent years. Also, many people describe adolescence as the best period of their life. At the same time parents describe adolescence as the most difficult period to rear their children. Together, these facts simply signify that adolescence is a key period in life and a very dynamic one. My talk aims to capture the dynamics of adolescent psychosocial development by providing an overview of existing longitudinal research into the adolescent self, personal relationships in adolescence and adolescent psychopathology. A key message will be that adolescence is the formative period of life for the majority of young people, but not for all. Most fare well, but some do not. This implies that perspectives on adolescence as a period of turmoil and chaos are inadequate. Another message will be that it is relatively easy to describe adolescent development, that it is more difficult to capture individual differences in development and that it is very difficult to identify cause and effect in the developmental process in adolescence. Especially the last issue is important since very often claims are made about what causes what in adolescent development.