

Editorial

The European Journal of Developmental Science— And: Developmental Science—A New Discipline or “Old Wine in New Bottles”?

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“A magic dwells in each beginning”

Hermann Hesse

It is with great pleasure that we announce the launch of the *European Journal of Developmental Science* (EJDS), a new peer-reviewed journal with four print- and online-issues each year. We feel encouraged by the increasing number of manuscripts published within the area of developmental science (e.g., Bergman, Cairns, Nilsson, & Nystedt, 2000; Cairns, Elder, & Costello, 1996; Hartup & Silbereisen, 2002; Lerner, Jacobs, & Wertlieb, 2003; Petermann, Niebank, & Scheithauer, 2004; Valsiner, 2005) to establish a new periodical devoted to this fascinating subject area. We feel, that time has come to react to the increasing need by establishing—next to well-known journals devoted to Developmental Science, like *Developmental Science* or *Applied Developmental Science*—a new “organ” or platform for researchers with a main focus on interdisciplinary research devoted to human development.

EJDS is dedicated to interdisciplinary research in Developmental Science. Despite the focus on human ontogenesis, we want to include a broad system theoretical perspective in order to fully acknowledge the various complexities of human ontogenesis. One of the basic assumptions of Developmental Sciences is that biological (such as genetic and neurophysiological), individual psychological, social, and cultural systems have to be taken into account simultaneously in order to arrive at a deeper and broader understanding of the various changes that humans experience during the course of their life-long development. Furthermore, Developmental Science does not only focus on the area of normative human development, but also covers research dealing with abnormal, pathological development. In addition, the application of research findings is yet another area of interest. Thus, Developmental Science offers a trans- and intradisciplinary framework for questions related to human development.

EJDS provides an interdisciplinary and international forum for basic research and clinical applications in the field of Developmental Science. The aim of the journal is to bring together work by researchers across different subdisciplines within Psychology, as well as across other disciplines, such as Anthropology, Biology, Communication Science, Neuroscience, Linguistics, Medical Science, Ethology, History, Philosophy, and Sociology, to discuss questions relevant to human development.

In Europe, research and conceptual work devoted to Developmental Science is still underrepresented, especially as far as integrative aspects of human development are concerned. With this idea in mind, we hope to encourage colleagues from Europe—but also from countries outside of Europe—to submit their manuscripts. Next to manuscripts by individual authors or research teams, special issues edited by an invited editor or team of editors will be devoted to selected topics on a regular basis. Hitherto we have invited several guest editors to realize a special issue. The second issue in 2007 for example will be edited by Carolyn T. Halpern, Kathryn E. Hood, and Richard M. Lerner and will be devoted to a colleague who has formed the field of Developmental Science substantially: Gilbert Gottlieb. Another special issue will be devoted to the outstanding work of Paul B. Baltes. Finally, we are glad to be able to announce the first special issue in 2008 devoted to research on temperament in early childhood, edited by Marcel R. Zentner. By promoting special issues we hope to provide an opportunity for expert scientists to put together outstanding work of several colleagues on important issues in developmental science and to discuss current controversies.

It is with great pleasure that we can inaugurate the EJDS with an issue, devoted to the question, whether Developmental Science is a new discipline or just “old wine in new bottles”? It has long been recognized, that a systematic developmental perspective is needed, but attempts to create effective programs of research, training, and application based upon the developmental scientific orientation are still hindered, at least partially, by “the inertia of traditional disciplines and the rigidity of existing research boundaries” (Carolina Consortium on Human Development, 1996, p. 1-2; cf., Ittel & Kretschmer, in this issue). Developmental science is not so much a subdiscipline of developmental research but rather a particular approach to the study of human behaviour (see Gottlieb, 2004). Despite the intellectual attractiveness of such an approach, getting the grand plan of a cross-disciplinary program of psychobiology infiltrated into a university curriculum was (and still is) no easy task. It is only in recent years that the pioneering views of developmental scientists have been realized in practice with the establishment in 1994 of the trans-university Center for Developmental Science in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the birth of two new journals (*Developmental Science* and *Applied Developmental Science*) and, more recently, the *European Journal of Developmental Science* you are holding in hand now.

The four articles in this special issue try to give answers to the question whether Developmental Science is “old wine” or an innovative approach. Scheithauer, Niebank, and Gottlieb describe important core aspects of developmental science: 1. providing a sub-

stantial biopsychosocial frame not confusing the “genetic” and the “biological” level of development (biopsychosocial perspective) and 2. considering change over time—or in other words—transactions of the different levels of development over time (developmental perspective). They summarize that Developmental Science is an integrative approach and has the potential to facilitate our understanding of the “whole”. Ittel and Kretschmer discuss historical roots of Developmental Science. Mack refers to selected philosophical problems of developmental science. Those are the distinction between nature and culture, the emergence of thought and the various epistemological and ontological aspects of developmental change, the problem of developmental explanation and the prospects of developmental science as a transdisciplinary framework for natural and cultural sciences. Finally, Josephs and Valsiner introduce and discuss a culture-inclusive understanding of developmental science in the field of human development.

Two additional articles are related to the topic of this special issue. Sarimski describes the necessity to take a biopsychological perspective for a better understanding of mental health problems among children with mental retardation. Greve and Ebner point out that humans change not only as an object of phylo-genetical and environmental influences, but also by forming intentions in the sense of life goals and by pursuing them in taking more or less corresponding measures. Thus, they draw attention to the human individual as object and subject of developmental change.

The first years of a newly launched journal are the most difficult. We will have the good fortune of working with and being supported by a wonderful scientific board whose members have already been very helpful and supportive in our efforts to launch our journal and by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Publishers. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht has been an established publisher since 1735 and we are optimistic that our collaboration will assure the success of EJDS. For further information as well as information for authors we would like to allude to the journal’s website (www.ejds.net).

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