

Öffentlicher Vortrag

A Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development

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My research addresses motivational processes involved in development across the life span. Together with my colleagues Richard Schulz (University of Pittsburgh) and Carsten Wrosch (Concordia University, Montreal) I developed the "Motivational Theory of Life-Span Development", which has influenced a plethora of empirical studies over the past two decades. The theory addresses the role of individual motivation in the context of life-span development and raises specific propositions about adaptive vs. maladaptive developmental regulation. I will present a select set of empirical findings speaking to the major propositions of the theory. We use quasi-experimental designs to study the motivational adaptation of individuals to developmental transitions when opportunities for major developmental goals arise or vanish. Exemplar life-course transitions addressed in our research are those associated with the "biological clock", the progression from school to work, and with changes associated with illness, disability, and rehabilitation. I am intrigued by the ability of people at all ages to adapt to and make the most of these changes, and try to focus on the basic building blocks of individual differences that lead some to loss and despair and others along adaptive paths to successful development.

Curriculum Vitae

Jutta Heckhausen grew up in Germany and received her Ph.D. from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. She was a Senior Scientist at the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Development in Berlin and a fellow at the Center for Social and Behavioral Science at Stanford before joining the Department of Psychology and Social Behavior at UC Irvine in 2000. Professor Heckhausen received the Max Planck Research Award in 1999. She served as Chair of the Academic Senate at UC Irvine in 2008-09. She publishes in journals in developmental psychology as well as personality and social psychology (Developmental Psychology, Psychology and Aging, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Psychological Review). Her most recent book is Motivation and Action, published with Cambridge University Press.