



The Jacobs Center
Research Seminar Series

Dr. Patricia Lannen

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Life Stories- Impact of Infant Institutionalization in Switzerland: a 60-Year Follow-Up

For healthy development, a young child needs a responsive environment and in particular, social interaction with a consistent caregiver. A child raised in institutional care in Switzerland before 1981 and under the legal context and historic care practices at the time, was typically deprived of such supportive, intensive, one-to-one relationship with a primary caregiver. There is a growing amount of research from global data demonstrating institutional care under conditions of deprivation to be profoundly damaging to children. However, there is a paucity of longitudinal research that tracks health and life course of individuals exposed to deprivation in early childhood.

This study is a 60-year follow-up of 700 infants tested on health and development in 1950-ies. At the time, about 400 infants were included in a population-based survey of all infants (age 0-3) placed in institutions in the canton of Zurich and about 300 took part in the Zurich Longitudinal Studies, a study of a community sample of children growing up in families. Significant development deficits were found in infants placed in institutions. Through population registry, we have located the original study participants, now in their early sixties. We will present preliminary data on comparative mortality and whether institutional quality (operationalized as interaction time and child-staff-ratio) and early development outcomes (based on the assessment with a standardized developmental test Brunet-Lézine) predict life expectancy.

This 60-year follow-up of children placed in institutions compared to children growing up in families in the same geographic location is a unique opportunity to shed light into the mystery of long-term adaptation and relevant for the physical and mental health of infants placed in care institutions around the globe today.

Friday, May 29, 2020, 10:00 h

At the Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development
Andreasstrasse 15, 4th floor, AND 4.19, 8050 Zürich

*Individual meetings with Dr. Lannen are available,
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