

Des personnes âgées plus âgées et plus nombreuses. Enjeux sociologiques et recherches locales.

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Avec le Japon, les pays occidentaux sont les premiers à connaître une proportion de personnes âgées jamais atteinte dans l'histoire de l'humanité. L'expression « révolution grise » (Loriaux, 1986) n'est pas trop forte pour évoquer les nouveaux rapports numériques entre les groupes d'âges et l'augmentation du nombre de personnes faisant l'expérience de la grande vieillesse. Si l'évolution démographique attendue dans les prochaines décennies est déjà bien identifiée, les enjeux sociologiques qui résulteront du vieillissement de la population restent quant à eux à scruter en temps réel, en tenant compte de l'individualisme - que la longévité tend probablement à renforcer -, de l'aspiration générale à une plus grande autonomie entre les générations, de la manière dont les solidarités collectives soutiendront dans le futur les parcours de vie.

A Tours, au sein de l'UMR CITERES (Cités, TERRitoires, Environnement, Sociétés), l'un de nos axes de recherche consiste à approfondir ces enjeux par le prisme de l'habitat. Caractérisé par le logement, l'environnement et ses ressources, les relations sociales de proximité, l'habitat reste l'endroit où s'opère l'avancée en âge et se joue le maintien de l'autonomie au sein du domicile. Il constitue aussi le lieu à partir duquel différentes formes de solidarités peuvent être mobilisées pour accompagner le vieillissement. Comment les individus, selon leurs caractéristiques sociales, envisagent-ils cette relation à l'habitat ? Se modifie-t-elle en cas de mobilité résidentielle ? Comment évolue-t-elle avec le parcours de vie ponctué d'événements qui mettent à l'épreuve les individus sociaux : maladie, veuvage, repli sur soi (...) ? Notre communication se propose d'apporter quelques réponses à ces vastes questions, afin de montrer qu'il n'existe pas une seule façon de vieillir pour le sociologue et que, faute d'antériorité, le contenu des « années fragiles » (Lalive d'Epinay et Spini, 2008) reste à découvrir par ceux et celles qui les vivent.

Cognitive Reserve and Cognitive Aging

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The demographic changes, with more and more adults attaining older ages, but, at the same time, also an increase of people suffering from cognitive impairments and thereby diminished well-being in advanced age constitute one of the biggest challenges in this century for our societies. Some individuals are able to maintain a relatively high level of cognitive functioning, even in very old age, while others are more susceptible to severe cognitive impairments. Therefore, a major goal in current aging research is to better understand how these inter-individual differences in maintenance of cognitive health in old age emerge. Concerning the preservation of cognitive functioning, the cognitive reserve concept (Stern, 2002) postulates that early and lifelong experiences, including educational and occupational attainment, and leisure activities throughout the lifespan, promote brain health, as they may increase an individual's reserve capacity and thereby possibly compensate for brain damage, neurological loss, and pathological decline such as dementia.

In this presentation, I will discuss our interdisciplinary research efforts on explaining the enormous inter-individual differences in cognitive reserve accumulated over the life course and its role for cognitive functioning in old age. First, I will talk about the build-up of cognitive reserve in early, mid-, and late life (through education, occupation, leisure activities, etc.).

Another focus will be on presenting studies investigating the role of cognitive reserve for cognitive functioning in different groups of vulnerable individuals in old age (chronic diseases, metabolic syndromes, frailty, stress, etc.). Moreover, I will discuss the interplay of cognitive reserve with other individual-difference characteristics such as personality and social aspects of older adults' life. I will also acknowledge the relevance of these cognitive reserve mechanisms for related outcomes of everyday functioning such as well-being. Finally, I will conclude the presentation with an outlook for future research.

CareACT - Internet-based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for enhancing elderly family caregivers' well-being

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The proportion of elderly caregivers is rapidly increasing which emphasizes the need for new support systems for caregivers. Internet-delivered psychological interventions are one possible approach, offering benefits as they are more easily to achieve for caregivers who often are home-bound with their relatives. To date, there are relatively few web-based psychological interventions to reduce the psychosocial burden of caregivers. In this paper, we will present the well-being model based on process-based cognitive behavior therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and investigate whether a supported ACT -based online psychological intervention (called CareACT) is effective for enhancing well-being of elderly caregivers.

151 caregivers enrolled in a quasi-experimental study comparing the impact of three interventions (Group 1: A guided 12-week web-based intervention, CareACT; Group 2: Standardized rehabilitation in a rehabilitation center; Group 3: Support given by voluntary caregiver organizations). Data collection was performed at three time points: baseline, 4 months and 10 months. Caregivers' experienced burden, depressive symptoms, anxiety, quality of life, sense of coherence, psychological flexibility, and attitudes towards caregiving were measured.

Depressive symptoms and avoidance of negative thoughts related to caregiving decreased more in the CareACT group compared to the caregiver organization support group (between group effect sizes, $d = 0.37-0.58$). The impact of the web-based CareACT intervention was comparable to the institutional rehabilitation, it not more effective. The effect of the caregiver organization support was in most variables very small. The results show that it is demanding to increase general well-being of elderly caregivers. The findings provide support for usefulness of a web-based ACT intervention including two face-to-face meetings and telephone contact every two weeks as well as the effectiveness of ACT-based interventions to improve the mental health and overall quality of life of elderly caregivers.

Exploring the potential of older people in an aging world: The generative response

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Aging is not what it used to be. As well as being more numerous and with a longer life expectancy, new generations of older people are likely to live more years in good health, are better educated than in the past and more prepared to keep on contributing to the society.

The talk will focus on generativity as a source of meaning in later life, emphasizing what are the differences (and possible advantages) of generativity compared to similar concepts such as active aging or successful aging, how generativity can be expressed in later life, and what kind of interventions are at hand to promote generativity among older people.

Generativity was a concept proposed by Erikson, who defined it as ‘...a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation’. Although he conceived generativity as a life task linked to middle age, but there are reasons, both theoretical and empirical, to argue its relevance in later life too. The talk will describe how many roles and activities in later life could be understood through the lens of generativity, both in family (e.g. parenting, grandparenting, caring for dependent relatives) and in community (working, volunteering, being involved in the political arena) contexts.

Unlike active aging or successful aging, generativity is anchored in the concept of development. By acting generatively, older people may experience meaning in life and increase their competences while, at the same time, contribute to sustain and improve their social context. From that point of view, the talk would discuss what kind of policies addressed to promoting generativity, both from individual and social perspectives could be designed. As a conclusion, the generativity framework opens up new and promising avenues to understand later life in terms of individual gains and social improvement.

Viellir avec un trouble du spectre de l'autisme

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L'autisme est un trouble du neurodéveloppement qui concernerait 1% des naissances, si on considère l'ensemble des formes cliniques du spectre. On estime actuellement en France la population d'adultes présentant un Trouble du Spectre de l'Autisme (TSA) à 600 000 personnes dont les particularités de fonctionnement entravent leur insertion sociale. Tout comme pour la population générale, ces personnes seront confrontées dans un avenir proche aux effets du vieillissement. Or, il existe très peu d'études sur le vieillissement des personnes avec TSA, les recherches se concentrant principalement sur la caractérisation des spécificités des enfants et des jeunes adultes. Les compétences des individus évoluant tout au long de la vie, les adultes TSA les plus âgés présentent probablement des spécificités de fonctionnement et des besoins propres qui doivent être considérés pour adapter au mieux l'accompagnement qui peut leur être proposé. Ainsi, la communauté scientifique souligne l'urgence de développer des recherches permettant de mieux comprendre le vieillissement des personnes avec TSA. Les quelques études dans le domaine soulignent que les jeunes adultes avec TSA présenteraient un fonctionnement cognitif similaire à ce qui est observé dans le vieillissement normal (hypothèse d'un dysfonctionnement exécutif). Ce constat a mené à l'hypothèse d'une prédisposition à un vieillissement précoce chez les personnes avec TSA. Par ailleurs, d'autres travaux montrent une amélioration de la symptomatologie autistique à l'âge adulte, possiblement en lien avec des

mécanismes de compensation mis en place au cours du développement. Ces compensations pourraient ainsi représenter des facteurs de protection face aux effets d'un vieillissement physiologique. Dans cette communication, nous présenterons un état des lieux de la recherche actuelle concernant le vieillissement des personnes avec TSA et évoquerons des pistes de réflexion sur les axes de recherche à développer dans ce domaine ainsi que leurs implications dans l'adaptation de l'accompagnement à proposer aux adultes vieillissants avec TSA.

Physical activities and exercise for healthy cognitive aging

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Physical activity and exercise can help improve cognition, quality of life and mobility in older adults. This talk will be an overview of more than ten years of intervention studies from our lab supporting the notion that multiple exercise modality, from aerobic endurance training to resistance, gross motor exercise and dance training can lead to several benefits in older adults. Our results suggest that these programs can help enhance cognition, quality of life and boost biomarkers associated with brain plasticity (e.g., BDNF). Studies with patients also suggest that physical activity and exercise can be used as effective non-pharmaceutical intervention in frail older adults and patients with Parkinson's disease, mild cognitive impairment at dementia.

Emotion-cognition interactions in healthy aging

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Research on cognition-emotion interactions has targeted effects of emotional states (such as mood or stress) on cognitive performance as well as effects of processing emotional material in memory or attention tasks. In the domain of cognitive aging, these issues have only recently begun to attract the attention of a growing community. Research on effects of emotional states on cognitive processing often has shown that these emotional states may reduce performance. Due to better emotion regulation in older adults, these effects could be smaller in aging. The talk will present some examples from our own work that indeed underline this proposal. Research on processing of emotional material across adulthood has revealed emotionally-enhanced-memory effects to be preserved or possibly even elevated in old age. In this context the talk will present some examples from our own work documenting reduced or even eliminated age effects in complex memory tasks when emotional information had to be processed. Thus, while most research has focused on beneficial effects of emotional memory in cognitive aging, we also explored the prediction that these effects may also cause particular memory problems to older adults when forgetting of information is required. The talk will present a recent study supporting this assumption. In a final part, results across these research lines will be integrated and discussed in the context of models of emotional processing, emotion regulation and cognitive control in old age.

Food adaptation and small appetite with aging : the small eater

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Achieving a 100-year-old with all cognitive and physical functions is everyone's wish. However, with aging, genetic environment, living conditions during adulthood and events of life can tumble elderly people faster than others towards dependency, malnutrition and/or frailty. Simone de Beauvoir wrote: "Senescence is not a slope that everyone goes down at the same speed. It's a fly of irregular steps that some tumble faster than others. "

Aging is not equal for everybody; at the same age of 75, people may compete as young marathoners, others continue their lives quietly at home while others are dependent in bed with professional caregivers in nursing home or in hospital. During the advanced age, the modifications encountered can impact on the eating behavior and the profile of the eater. In a study of the RENESSENS project, we observed that 8 out of 10 people living in nursing homes do not cover their caloric and/or protein needs compared to the recommended dietary intakes. This population with a small appetite is called "the small eaters". Elderly people do not have the ability to ingest the volumes of food traditionally served to cover its needs.