

# Growing Up in Challenging Contexts

7th Annual Meeting of the  
Swiss Society for Early Childhood Research (SSECR)

**February 2–3, 2026**

**at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland**

University Campus Pérolles, Building **PER21 & PER22**  
Bd de Pérolles 90, 1700 Fribourg

## Abstract book

# SESSION OVERVIEW

Sunday, 01/Feb/2026

06:00pm–08:00pm Pizza for Juniors

Monday, 02/Feb/2026

08:00am–11:00am

**Junior Workshop:**  
The art of delivering  
a talk  
Location: PER 21 D130

10:15am–11:15am

**Arrival & Registration (SIGs)**

Location: PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

11:15am–12:15pm

**SIG Digital Media Meeting**

Location: PER 21 F130

**SIG Perinatal Health Meeting**

Location: PER 21 E130

12:15pm–12:30pm

**Break**

12:30pm–01:30pm

**SIG Play Meeting**

Location: PER 21 F130

**SIG Research with Families in Vulnerable Situations Meeting**

Location: PER 21 E130

**SIG Neurocognitive Development Meeting**

Location: PER 21 D130

01:30pm–02:15pm

**Arrival & Registration**

Location: PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

02:15pm–02:30pm

**Welcome & Opening of the Annual Meeting 2026:**

**Prof. Dr. Veronika Magyar-Haas, Prof. Dr. Sabine Krause & Prof. Dr. Sonja Perren**  
Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

02:30pm–03:30pm

**Keynote I: Prof. Dr. Shazly Savahl: Toward a Child Conscious Society: Social Justice Pathways for Child Well-Being in Challenging Contexts**  
Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

03:30pm–05:00pm

**Poster Session 1 & Coffee Break**

Location: PER 21 Foyer G130 & PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

03:45pm–06:30pm

**Alliance Enfance Session (DE/FR)**

Knowledge Transfer in  
Early Childhood:

Growing Up in  
Challenging Contexts  
Location: PER 22  
Joseph Deiss  
Auditorium

**Symposium 1:**  
Context and Individual  
Differences in Early  
Childhood Learning:  
Findings from the  
LEAPS Study  
Location: PER 21 F130

**Symposium 2:**  
Children and Digital  
Media (KiDiM)  
Location: PER 21 E130

**Symposium 3:**  
The SIG Neurocognitive  
Development  
Symposium: Multimodal  
Pathways to  
Neurodevelopment:  
From Connectivity and  
Genes to Cognition and  
Intervention  
Location: PER 21 D130

06:30pm–07:30pm

**Apéro**

Location: PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

**08:30am–08:45am** **Arrival & Registration**  
Location: PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

**08:45am–09:00am** **Welcome**  
Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

**09:00am–10:00am** **Keynote II: Dr. Stephanie Simon:** Poverty in Childhood: Constructions of professionals in early childhood education and care (ECEC)  
Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

**10:00am–11:30am** **Poster Session 2 & Coffee Break**  
Location: PER 21 Foyer G130 & PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

<b>11:30am–01:00pm</b>	<b>Symposium 4:</b> Navigating Languages and Multilingualism in Early Childhood: Familial and Institutional Practices in Challenging Contexts Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium	<b>Symposium 5:</b> Multi-sectoral Approaches to Child Protection in Switzerland: Early Childhood Adversity, Contextual Risks, and Multisystemic Interventions Location: PER 21 E130	<b>Symposium 6:</b> Context Matters: The Role of Parenting and Pedagogy in Children’s Biobehavioral Development from Infancy to the Early School Years Location: PER 21 F130	<b>Workshop 1:</b> Children’s Voices in Action: Applying the Mosaic Approach Location: PER 21 D130
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**01:00pm–02:00pm** **Lunch**  
Location: PER 22 Foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium

<b>02:00pm–03:30pm</b>	<b>Symposium 7:</b> Fostering Diversity, Inclusion, and Participation in Early Childhood: Tools, Perspectives, and Participatory Approaches Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium	<b>Symposium 8:</b> Families and Screens – Early childhood screen use beyond screen time Location: PER 21 F130	<b>Symposium 9:</b> The Mosaik of Childhood: Linking Sport Activities, Competencies, Self-Perceptions, and Well-Being to Foster Resilience for Challenging Childhoods Location: PER 21 E130	<b>Workshop 2:</b> Who Counts as an Early Childhood Expert? A workshop on the co-production of social vulnerability and professional legitimacy Location: PER 21 D130
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**03:30pm–03:45pm** **Break**

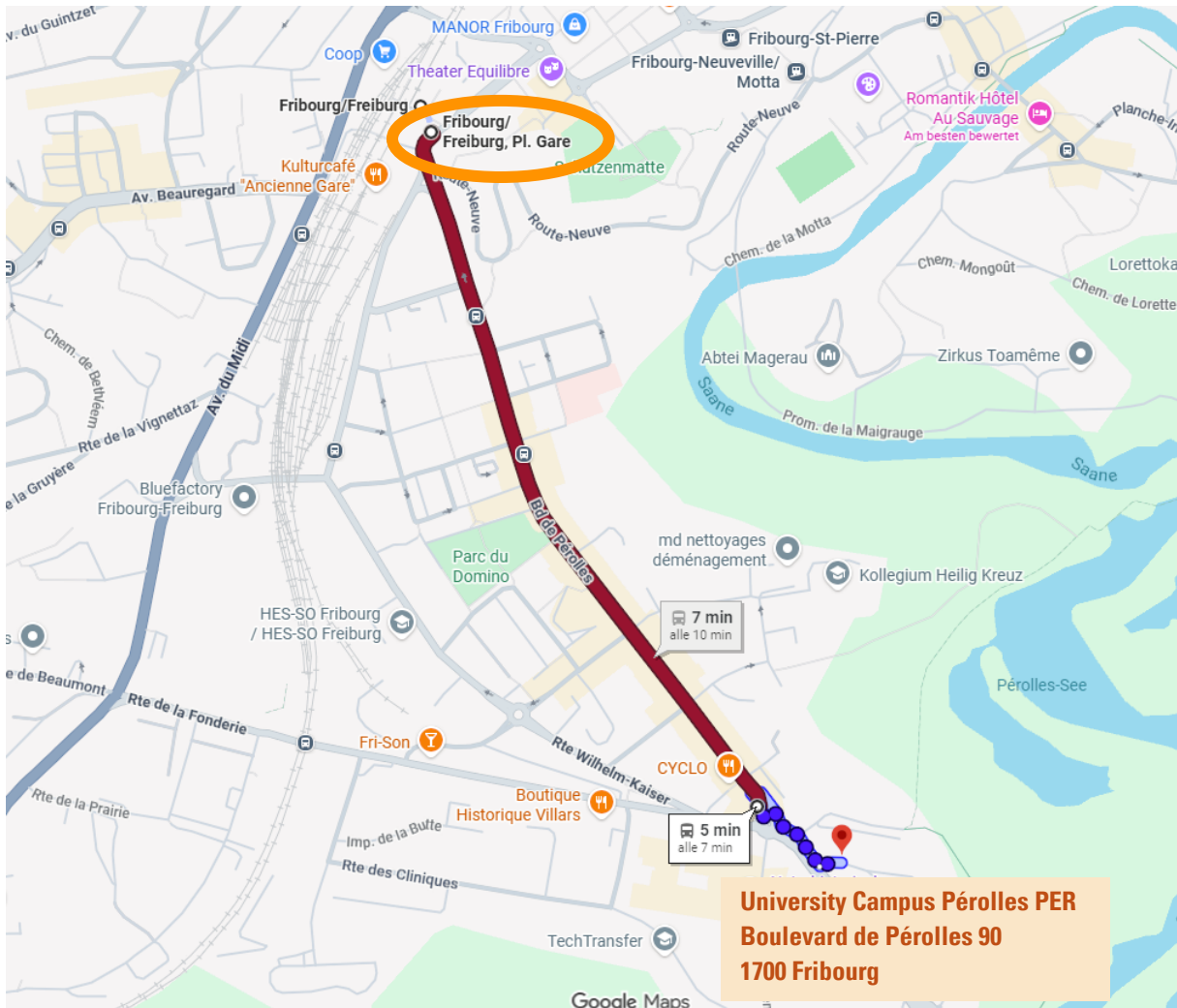
**03:45pm–04:45pm** **Final discussion:** Research and socio-pedagogical and medical practice  
Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

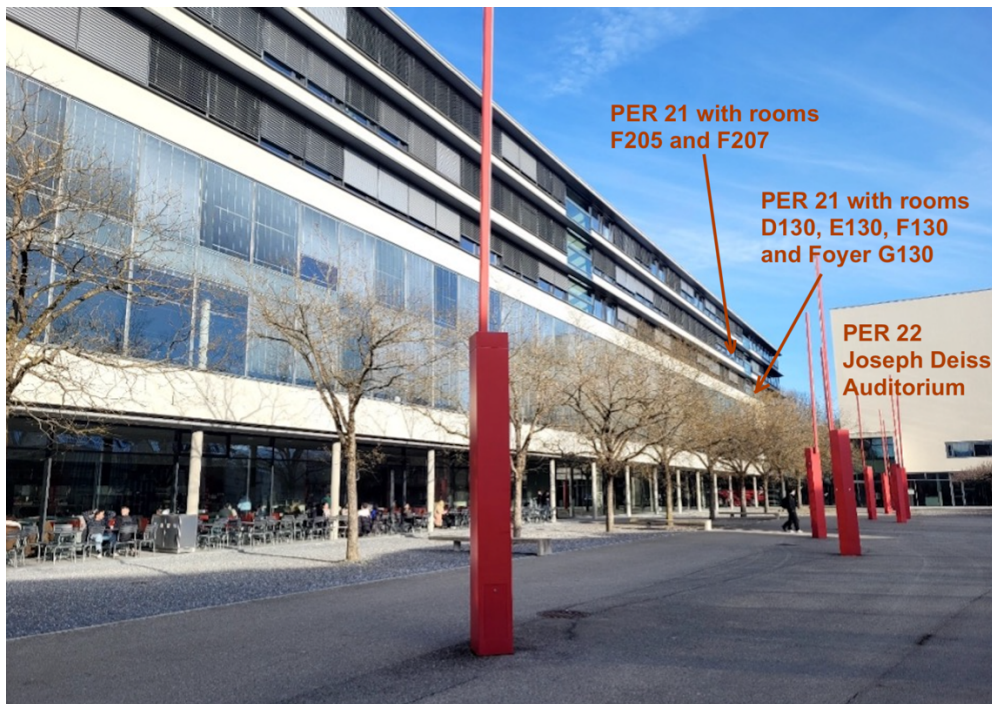
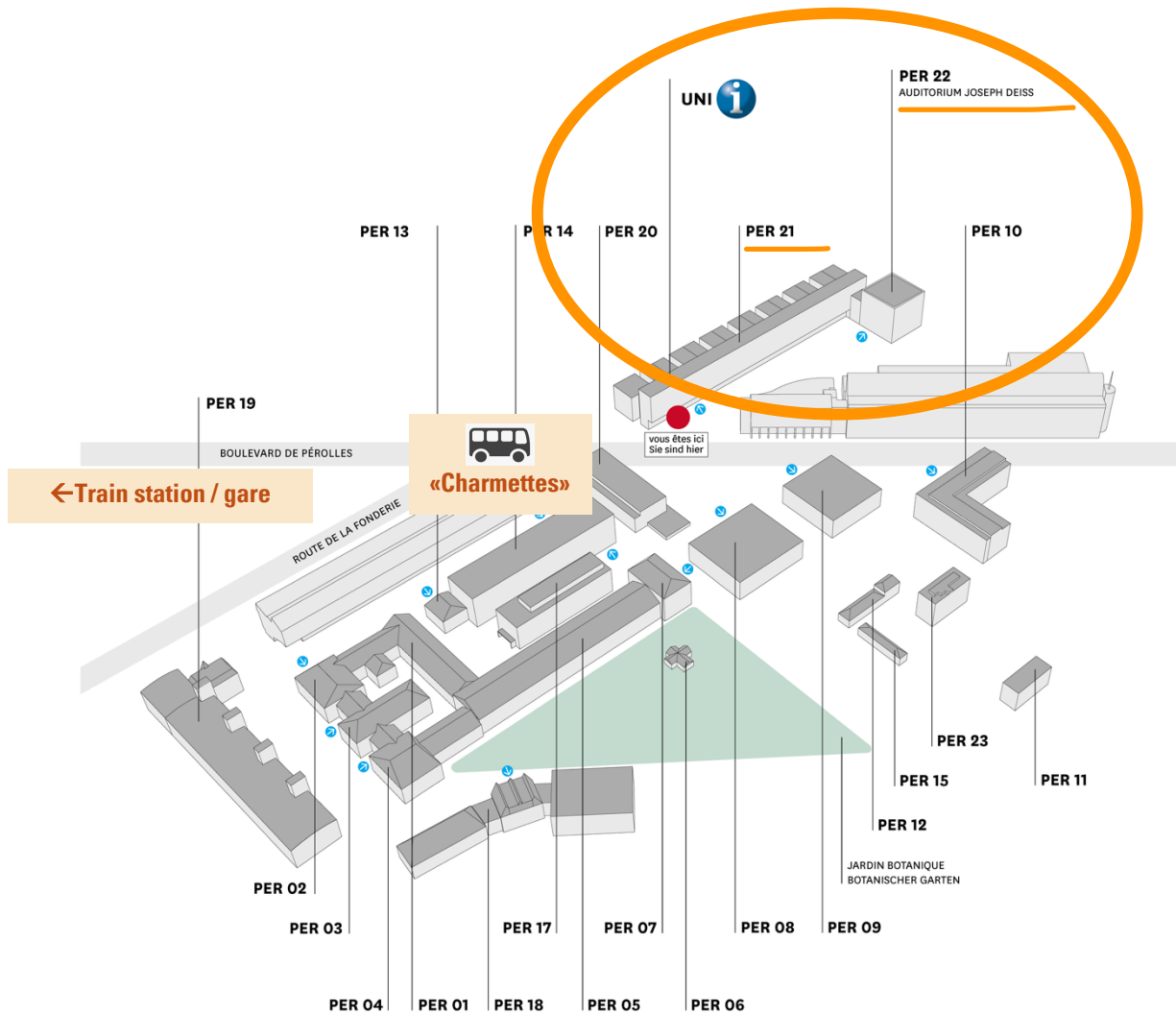
**04:45pm–05:00pm** **Poster Award & Closure**  
Location: PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

## CONFERENCE LOCATION

### Directions from Fribourg train station to University Campus Pérolles (PER)

In front of Fribourg train station, platform 2, buses N° 1, 8 and 9 are available to take you to the «Charmettes» bus station (Bus ride approx. 7 minutes every 5-10 minutes). Walking takes about 15–20 minutes.





We look forward to welcoming you in the foyer in front of the Joseph Deiss Auditorium, where registration will take place. From there, the other rooms will be signposted.

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 8:00am – 11:00am / PER21 D130**

**Junior Workshop: The art of delivering a talk**  
by Hedwig Ens

Presenting your work during this conference is an exciting opportunity to show your work and establish yourself as a legitimate and valuable contributor to the field. But facing an audience is stressful, even for seasoned speakers. You will feel under scrutiny, judged. In this context, how can you inspire trust and confidence while facing stress-induced self doubt? And how do you engage and guide listeners rather than merely recite results and conclusions? This workshop will provide concrete and actionable answers to these questions to help you present your work with an impact during the conference. Using exercises inspired from the world of improvised comedy, we will explore many components of stagecraft: voice and body language (posture and gestures), space and presentation tools (microphone, clicker...). We will work on stress management and dealing with questions from the audience. The workshop will be highly active and interactive. Throughout the morning, you will engage in activities in small groups and with everyone, receiving feedback from your peers and from the trainer. At the end of the session, you will be able to: - talk to, care for and adapt to your audience - manage your stress - project competence and confidence - answer questions calmly

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 11:15am – 12:15pm / PER21 F130**

**SIG Digital Media Meeting**

**Launch of the SIG Digital Media in Early Childhood**

Children today are growing up in a digital world. This can pose challenges to children, parents, families, and society more broadly. The aim of the SIG Digital Media in Early Childhood is to provide an overview of the current state of research on this topic, support the development of evidence-informed prevention and intervention strategies, and assist policy makers to make informed decisions. In this first SIG Meeting, we will create a network of researchers and early childhood professionals interested in the topic, shape the specific goals and activities of the SIG and discuss how these can reach the relevant stakeholders.

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 11:15am – 12:15pm / PER21 E130**

**SIG Perinatal Health Meeting**

The Guideline for perinatal depression: current stage

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 12:30pm – 1:30pm / PER21 D130**

**SIG Neurocognitive Development Meeting**

This Special Interest Group brings together researchers in Switzerland who study the neurocognitive foundations of typical and atypical development. The SIG aims to foster collaboration through joint research projects and review papers, as well as by encouraging the exchange of ideas, methods, and resources across disciplines. A further goal of the SIG is to prepare and submit a symposium for international conferences, promoting Swiss research in neurocognitive development within the broader international community.

Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 12:30pm – 1:30pm / PER21 F130

## **SIG Play Meeting**

### **The importance of play: an interdisciplinary perspective**

In summer 2025, the SIG play coordinators have issued a call for contributions for a focus publication on the topic of 'play' aimed for practitioners. The contributions have been submitted and the publication is scheduled to appear in spring/summer 2026. At the SIG meeting, we will provide an overview of the contributions and discuss the implications for research and practice with the participants.

Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 12:30pm – 1:30pm / PER21 E130

## **SIG Research with Families in Vulnerable Situations Meeting**

### **Launch of the SIG Research with Families in Vulnerable Situations**

From both global and local perspectives, children's lives are shaped by a wide range of challenges, crises, and vulnerabilities. This Special Interest Group (SIG) focuses on families in diverse constellations who experience social and structural disadvantage. The SIG intends to bring together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who conduct research on families in vulnerable contexts, work with them, or make decisions that affect them. Through regular exchange, the SIG seeks to share different forms of knowledge about the needs and realities of families in challenging contexts such as poverty, forced migration, and discrimination. In addition, key topics for research and action in both science and practice are to be identified jointly. At the founding meeting, participants will collaboratively define the SIG's specific goals and explore possible forms of cooperation, with the aim of building a sustainable network.

Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 2:15pm – 2:30pm / PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

## **Welcome & Opening**

### **Welcome & Opening of the SSECR Annual Meeting 2026**

**Prof. Dr. Veronika Magyar-Haas**, *President of the Department of Education Sciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland*

**Prof. Dr. Sabine Krause**, *Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Education Sciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland*

**Prof. Dr. Sonja Perren**, *President of the Swiss Society for Early Childhood Research, University of Konstanz, Germany & Thurgau University of Teacher Education, Switzerland*

Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 2:30pm – 3:30pm / PER 22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium

## **Keynote I**

### **Toward a Child Conscious Society: Social Justice Pathways for Child Well-Being in Challenging Contexts**

**Prof. Dr. Shazly Savahl**, *Industrial-Organisational Psychology, University of Cape Town, South Africa, & Dynamics of Youth, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Utrecht University, The Netherlands*

Children across the world are growing up in contexts characterised by converging and compounding adversities, including structural poverty, inequality, violence, displacement, ecological stressors, and the ongoing consequences of social and political instability. While research has generated a growing body of evidence on children's development under conditions of risk, far less attention has been given to the deeper question of what it would mean for societies to become genuinely child conscious. This presentation argues that child well-being research must move beyond documenting vulnerability, toward advancing a normative and policy-relevant agenda grounded in social justice, children's rights, and child-centred evidence.

Drawing on international scholarship on children's subjective well-being, including large-scale cross-national studies (Children's Worlds) and child-centred qualitative research (Children's Understanding of Well-Being), I propose a framework for a child conscious society that positions children as legitimate social actors and knowledge holders. This approach foregrounds children's lived experiences and everyday evaluations of their lives, while situating these experiences within the broader ecological and structural conditions that shape opportunity, safety, dignity, and belonging. A social justice lens highlights how inequities are produced and sustained through systems and institutions, and why child well-being must be understood as relational, contextual, and ethically embedded rather than merely individual or developmental.

The presentation further reflects on the implications for early childhood research and professional practice, i.e. how we conceptualise 'challenging contexts', how we measure well-being responsibly across diverse settings, and how we ensure that research contributes to meaningful change rather than symbolic inclusion. I conclude by outlining priority pathways for interdisciplinary collaboration, including child-informed indicators, context-sensitive measurement, ethical participation, and policy translation that supports families and communities while holding systems accountable. Ultimately, advancing child well-being in challenging contexts requires not only stronger evidence, but a renewed commitment to building societies that recognise children's rights, ensure authentic participation, and centre their flourishing as a measure of collective progress.

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 3:30pm – 5:00pm / PER21 Foyer G130**

### **Poster Session 1**

#### **When Screens Meet Vulnerability: Developmental Concerns in Very Preterm Children at 24 months corrected age**

*Lara Lordier*, Division of development and growth, department of woman, child and adolescent, Geneva University hospitals, Switzerland; *Chiara Liverani*, Division of development and growth, department of woman, child and adolescent, Geneva University hospitals, Switzerland and Department of Psychology, University of Geneva, Switzerland; *Lorie Buffon*, Haute Ecole de Travail Social, Filière Psychomotricité, Geneva, Switzerland; *Zoe Begnaud*, Division of development and growth, department of woman, child and adolescent, Geneva University hospitals, Switzerland; *Louise Moreillon*, Division of development and growth, department of woman, child and adolescent, Geneva University hospitals, Switzerland; *Ayala Borghini*, Cabinet d'accueil Périnatal, Geneva, Switzerland; *Cristina Borradori Tolsa*, Division of development and growth, department of woman, child and adolescent, Geneva University hospitals, Switzerland

Screens are an integral part of everyday life. Very preterm (VP) children face increased risks of motor, cognitive, communication, and emotional difficulties. A recent study has shown that as early as 6 months, screen exposure is linked to reduced parent-child interactions, and that at the age of 12 months, it is linked to a decrease in children's exploratory behaviors.

This study explores the associations between screen exposure and psychomotor, linguistic, and behavioral development in a cohort of VP children at 24 months corrected age, considering the role of parent-child relationships.

Thirty-nine VP children (<32 weeks' gestation) were divided into screen-exposed and non-exposed groups. Parents completed a questionnaire on screen habits and their child's screen exposure. Development was assessed using the BSID-III, with questionnaires evaluating language (IFDC), emotional development (ASQ-SE), and behavior (ECBQ). Parent-child interactions were assessed (CARE-Index and CIB) based on a 5-minute free play session.

At 24 months, 61% of VP children spent an average of 2 hours weekly in front of a screen. Screen-exposed children scored lower on language, vocabulary size, and mean utterance length compared to non-exposed children. They also exhibited higher negative affectivity. Screen time was negatively correlated with the number of words mastered and positively with negative affectivity scores.

This study provides some of the first data exploring associations between screen exposure and language and emotional development in VP children at 24 months. The findings emphasize the importance of exploring the

complex relationships between children's screen exposure, their development, and the quality of parent-child interactions.

### **Development of a Short Version of the Early Child Behavior Questionnaire to Measure State and Trait Temperament**

**Tilman Reinelt**, Department of Neonatology, Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation Center for Neurodevelopment, Growth, and Nutrition of the Newborn, University Hospital Zurich, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; **Wagner Lisa**, Department of Psychology, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Daum Moritz M.**, Department of Psychology, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Natalucci Giancarlo**, Department of Neonatology, Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation Center for Neurodevelopment, Growth, and Nutrition of the Newborn, University Hospital Zurich, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

**Introduction.** Early child temperament can be described by both state and trait components. However, many items on temperament scales are rarely observed over short time periods. To enable a valid assessment of observable temperament traits as well as the daily assessment of temperament states, this study aimed to (1) develop a short version of the Early Child Behavior Questionnaire (ECBQ) and (2) include only items observable on a daily basis.

**Methods.** Parents of N = 303 toddlers aged 18–36 months (M = 27.65 months, SD = 5.37 months; 50% female) completed the ECBQ at baseline. Of these, 160 participated in a subsequent 14-day diary study (median = 10 days), reporting their child's temperament on each day. We used Ant Colony Optimization to identify an optimal set of items, requiring (a) equal numbers of items per subscale (negative affectivity, surgency, effortful control), (b)  $\geq 85\%$  of parents observing each item on  $\geq 60\%$  of days, and (c) retention of items with the strongest loadings on their respective factors.

**Results.** The resulting 12-item solution showed a good fit to the proposed factor structure (CFI = 0.963, RMSEA = 0.026).

**Discussion.** Although not all facets of the original subscales could be represented, the new 12-item version retained coverage of the three higher-order dimensions and demonstrated feasibility for repeated daily assessments.

**Conclusion.** We developed a short version of the ECBQ suitable for both early child trait and state temperament, providing a practical tool for intensive longitudinal and ecological momentary assessment designs.

### **From Not Being Parented to Not Being a Parent: The Lasting Impact of Early Psychosocial Deprivation**

**Nina Graf**, Marie Meierhofer Children's Institut, Zürich, Switzerland and University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Raquel Paz Castro**, Marie Meierhofer Children's Institut, Zürich, Switzerland; **Flavia M. Wehrle**, Child Development Center, University Children's Hospital Zurich, Switzerland and University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Oskar G. Jenni**, Child Development Center, University Children's Hospital Zurich, Switzerland and University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Patricia Lannen**, Marie Meierhofer Children's Institut, Zürich, Switzerland and University of Zurich, Switzerland

**Introduction:** Early childhood is a pivotal period for healthy development and a growing body of research indicates that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have lasting detrimental effects across the lifespan and generations (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016; Cooke et al., 2021; Racine et al., 2023).

**Methods:** This population-based longitudinal study examines data from a 60-year follow-up of individuals placed in infant care institutions at ages 0-3 in the 1950s in Switzerland (N=431) compared with a cohort raised in families during the same period (Zurich Longitudinal Studies, ZLS; N=399) (Lannen et al., 2021; Wehrle et al., 2021). Preliminary findings reveal strong differences between the cohorts in many aspects (e.g. cognitive abilities, health, and socio-economic outcomes) (Lannen et al., 2024; Sand et al., 2024). Yet, the consequences of psychosocial deprivation in early childhood on parenthood remain unclear. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of psychosocial deprivation on parenthood outcomes – a critical factor in the intergenerational transmission of ACEs (Panggabean et al., 2023).

**Results:** Key findings indicate that formerly institutionalized individuals had a 67% lower likelihood of having children compared to non-institutionalized individuals (OR=0.33; 95% CI:0.16–0.66, p=0.002). Formerly

institutionalized individuals had children about 1.6 years earlier than the comparison cohort (Estimate=-1.70,  $p=0.096$ ).

Discussion: To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the long-term effects of early childhood psychosocial deprivation on parenthood outcomes. The findings highlight the lasting impact of ACEs on parenthood outcomes and underscore the need for further research exploring underlying mechanisms and long-term implications.

### **Dyadic perception of birth trauma among coparents: Trajectories of posttraumatic stress symptoms and associations with coparenting**

*Valentine Rattaz, Center for Family Studies, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital and University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland and Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland; Hervé Tissot, Center for Family Studies, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital and University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland and Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland; Valentin Offredi, University Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital and University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland; Antje Horsch, Institute of Higher Education and Research in Healthcare, University of Lausanne, Switzerland and Department Woman-mother-child, Lausanne University Hospital and University of Lausanne, Switzerland*

Introduction. The experience of traumatic childbirth can lead to the development of childbirth-related posttraumatic stress symptoms (CB-PTSS), which may negatively impact the couple relationship. Previous studies have studied birth trauma separately in mothers and partners, overlooking their joint perception. Moreover, studies have focused on the impact of CB-PTSS on the couple relationship, and none considered their association with the coparenting relationship. This study investigated how dyadic perception of birth trauma shapes CB-PTSS trajectories during the first postpartum year and their associations with coparenting. Method. 144 coparents participated in a prospective, longitudinal study. Birth trauma and coparenting were assessed at 6-12 weeks postpartum, and CB-PTSS were assessed at 6-12 weeks, 6 months, 12 months postpartum. Results. Latent class analysis identified three patterns of dyadic birth trauma: (1) no birth trauma (60%), (2) trauma reported by mother only (18%), (3) trauma reported by both parents (20%). Growth Mixture Model showed that mothers in class 2 and 3, and partners in class 3 had higher CB-PTSS intercepts. Mothers in class 3 had a significant negative CB-PTSS slope. No association emerged between coparenting and maternal CB-PTSS trajectories. For partners in class 2, better coparenting was associated with lower CB-PTSS intercept. For partners in class 3, better coparenting was associated with a slower CB-PTSS decrease. Discussion. Results highlight distinct CB-PTSS trajectories depending on dyadic trauma perception, as well as differential associations with coparenting. This underlines the importance of adopting a dyadic approach of birth trauma while examining CB-PTSS and their implications for family-level relational processes.

### **Parents as Teachers (PAT) early childhood intervention to improve Emergent Literacy in kindergarten – The Role of the Home Literacy Environment**

*Lynn Bolliger-Cantaluppi, Isabelle Kalkusch, Patsawee Rodcharoen, Alex Neuhauser, Peter Klaver, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik HfH, Switzerland*

Emergent Literacy (EL) skills—such as language comprehension and phonological awareness—are key predictors of later academic achievement. These skills start developing within the family context long before the onset of formal schooling. The extent to which parents provide a rich learning environment and act as expert partners in their child's EL development is referred to as Home Literacy Environment (HLE). Comprehensive early childhood education programs, like Parents as Teachers (PAT), might support EL development by strengthening the HLE. In this program, regular home visits and group meetings are employed from birth to age three to empower parents to help their children thrive. This study investigates the effect of PAT participation on EL in the second year of kindergarten with a longitudinal RCT-design with  $N = 161$  children from socioeconomically challenged families in the Zurich metropolitan area. We further examine whether this effect is mediated by the HLE in the first year of kindergarten. Structural equation modelling will be conducted using the R lavaan package. Preliminary findings will be presented

and discussed at the conference. We aim to provide further evidence for the effectiveness of PAT and contribute to better understanding how parents can support their child's literacy development.

### **Supporting Families of young children with educational special Needs in early stage: Insights from from E-PATS Programm adaptation in Geneva**

*Chatenoud Céline, Université de Genève, Switzerland; Millau Marie, Université de Genève, Switzerland; Caldognetto-Giovannini Cristina, Astural , Service Educatif Itinerant, Genève, Switzerland; Laverriere Céline, Fondation 022 familles; Nogueira Lara, Fondation Ensemble, Genève, Switzerland; Schlegelmilch Lara, Fondation 022 familles*

Supporting families with children who have special needs from early start is crucial to preventing difficulties and addressing the vulnerabilities these families face (Boulé & al, 2025; Gore & al., 2022). Programs such as parent-mediated interventions can improve family well-being by empowering parents, strengthening their competencies, reducing anxiety, and fostering supportive communities. From this perspective the Early Positive Approaches to Support (E-PAtS) program was implemented in Geneva. E-PAtS is an innovative initiative, distinguished by its co-facilitation model in which a parent and a professional share equal roles and perspectives. The professional facilitator may be any specialist working in the field of early childhood, making E-Pats a multidisciplinary program. Structured around eight group sessions and supported by research, E-PAtS provides support at strengthening family resilience and well-being. Specifically, E-PAtS provides information regarding communication, sleep, and behavior, as well as advice on how parents can take care of themselves.

This communication will present preliminary outcomes of the program on 15 families who participated in spring and fall 2025, using both quantitative and qualitative data as gathering in interviews pre and post.

Early findings show reduced anxiety among parents and high level of satisfaction. Qualitative data provides deeper insights into key factors, especially the sense of being understood, and supported by others as sense of belonging.

The aim of this poster is to highlight the project's impact on families, and to open a discussion on future directions for collaborative and participatory initiatives in the field of early childhood in Geneva.

### **A Supervised Machine Learning Approach to Understand Early Childhood Disruptive Behaviours**

*Katherine Cost, Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, Canada and Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada; Piyumi Konara Mudiyansele, Child Health and Evaluative Sciences, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON, Canada; Eva Unternaehrer, University Psychiatric Clinics Basel, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland; Charles Keown-Stoneman, Unity Health, Toronto, ON, Canada and Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada; Jonathon L Maguire, Unity Health, Toronto, ON, Canada and Department of Pediatrics, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada; Catherine S Birken, Child Health and Evaluative Sciences, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON, Canada and Department of Pediatrics, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada; Alice Charach, Department of Psychiatry, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON, Canada and Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada*

Introduction: Childhood externalizing behaviours can affect up to 12% of children and pose risks for poor academic, social, economic, health, and mental health outcomes. Prior research across various disciplines has linked these externalizing behaviours to various individual and contextual factors. This study aimed to identify the most influential, cross-validated predictors associated with child externalizing symptoms at age 3-9 years.

Methods: We analysed longitudinal data from 1,607 children (ages 3-9 years) in the primary care-based TARGet Kids! study using 15 predictors in a LASSO regression model with 10-fold cross validation, an advanced variable selection technique. Externalizing behaviours were measured with the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire.

Results: Eight variables were consistently associated with higher externalizing behaviour scores: younger age, male sex, shorter sleep duration, lower sugar-sweetened beverage consumption, lower birthweight, mother's part-time employment, higher parent screen time, and absence of household screentime rules. These predictors yielded an 83.84% accuracy in predicting externalizing behaviour scores in a hold-out dataset.

Discussion: Specific health habits and family circumstances may increase the risk of challenging behaviours in young children. The model's high predictive accuracy suggests these factors are likely to generalize well across samples. Supporting parents in making healthy choices may help reduce these risk factors.

Conclusion: Our transdisciplinary approach identified modifiable factors associated with child externalizing behaviour relevant to child development, psychology, pediatrics, and public health. These findings may inform interventions to support families to improve child behavioural outcomes.

### **Parental Mobile Device Use and Child Outcomes: Insights from the Swiss SMARTIES Study**

*Lena Zarifoglu, Universität Basel, Germany; Christina Stadler, Universitäre Psychiatrische Kliniken Basel; Eva Unternaehrer, Universitäre Psychiatrische Kliniken Basel*

Background: Smartphone use is deeply embedded in daily routines, including parenting. Though its potential consequences for child socio-emotional development remain underexplored. Prior research suggests that parental distraction, including phubbing and problematic use, may be associated with emotional and behavioral difficulties in children (Solecki, 2022; Toledo-Vargas et al., 2025)

Objective: This study aims to investigate whether different facets of parental mobile device use, such as screen time, phubbing, and problematic smartphone use, are associated with child behavioral and emotional outcomes in a Swiss sample of the SMARTIES study (OSF: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/X4WE2>).

Methods: Data stem from an online survey of 196 Swiss parents (25-60 years old, Mage = 40 ± 6.3 years, 89% mothers). Key measures include the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to assess child socio-emotional functioning, the Parental Scale of Phubbing (PSP), and the Problematic Smartphone Use Scale (PSPUS). Additional demographic and contextual variables were assessed to account for covariates.

#### **Results**

Analyses are ongoing and will be presented at the conference. We anticipate that higher levels of parental smartphone use, in particular problematic use and phubbing, may be associated with increased child behavioral difficulties.

Conclusions: This study will contribute to the understanding of how parental digital media habits relate to child development. Findings may support the development of tailored interventions and guidelines for families navigating smartphone use in high-stress or high-demand contexts.

### **What-Where-When: Investigating Relative Temporal Order Memory in individuals with Down Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, and Typically Developing children**

*Cheyenne Mauriello, Laboratory of Neurocognitive Development, Faculty of Psychology, UniDistance Suisse, Brig, Switzerland and Laboratory of Brain and Cognitive Development, Institute of Psychology, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland; Lucia-Manuela Cantonas, Laboratory of Neurocognitive Development, Faculty of Psychology, UniDistance Suisse, Brig, Switzerland; Pierre Lavenex, Laboratory of Brain and Cognitive Development, Institute of Psychology, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland; Pamela Banta Lavenex, Laboratory of Neurocognitive Development, Faculty of Psychology, UniDistance Suisse, Brig, Switzerland*

Relative temporal order memory is the memory for the order of the events that make up our lives, specifically in relation to other events or sub-events. Relative temporal order memory relies on the hippocampus, and constitutes a fundamental component of episodic memory.

I will investigate relative temporal order memory in individuals with atypical hippocampus development, specifically Down syndrome (DS) and Williams syndrome (WS), and in typically developing (TD) children from 4–9 years of age. TD children will serve both as a mental-age matched comparison group for individuals with DS or WS, as well as an experimental group in which to describe the typical development of hippocampus-dependent temporal order memory abilities, since the hippocampus exhibits delayed postnatal development. I will use a novel behavioral paradigm designed to assess object memory ("what"), spatial memory ("where"), and their interactions ("what-where"; "what-when"; "where-when"; and "what-where-when").

I will present preliminary data showing results in this novel what-where-when task in individuals with DS ( $n \sim 15$ ), WS ( $n=25$ ) and TD children ( $n=10$ ).

This study will provide new insights into how relative temporal order memory evolves in typical development and how it is manifest in individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions known to impact hippocampal function.

### **Reciprocal Adjustments Between Parents And Early Childhood Special Education Professionals In Home-Based Early Childhood Interventions: a Multiple Case Study In Switzerland**

*Myriam Gremion, Université de Genève, Switzerland; Florence Wolfahrt Schillinger, HEP Vaud, Switzerland*

The GRICEPS research group has been studying reciprocal adjustments between parents and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Professionals in the context of home-based interventions with young children with special educational needs and their families. Within a collaborative approach that actively involves participants in the co-construction of knowledge and practices, a multi-step research project has been implemented in Itinerant Educational Services (SEI) in French-speaking Switzerland.

The methodology is based on a multiple case study. Five parent–professional dyads were video-recorded during three home sessions, each lasting between one hour and one and a half hours. For each participant, a stimulated recall interview was conducted using selected excerpts, thus involving 5 parents and 5 professionals. Data analysis draws on the multi-agenda model of embedded concerns developed by Bucheton and Soulé (2009), combined with the framework of reciprocal adjustments (Saillot & Malmaison, 2018), and adapted to the field of early childhood special education.

Preliminary analyses highlight the numerous adjustments made by both ECSE professionals and parents, and show how these adjustment activities rely on a fine-grained reading of the environment in order to respond appropriately to the situation and the actors, while maintaining one's own priorities. They also bring to light the macro-concerns and micro-functions underlying the adjustments.

Furthermore, the adjustments are analysed through the lens of relational and participatory helping practices, as promoted by the Family-Centred Approach model (Dunst, 2002), in order to document their occurrence according to the actors' concerns and, where relevant, to identify real and inspiring practices in the field.

### **Peer Influences on Emotion Regulation in Early Childhood: Evidence from the EmU-Project**

*Sonja Lorusso, Thurgau University of Teacher Education, Switzerland and University of Constance; Pablo Nischak, Thurgau University of Teacher Education, Switzerland and University of Constance and Zurich University of Teacher Education in Special Needs; Ori Harel, University of Constance; Tatiana Diebold, Thurgau University of Teacher Education, Switzerland; Carine Burkhardt Bossi, Thurgau University of Teacher Education, Switzerland; Jens Pruessner, University of Constance; Sonja Perren, Thurgau University of Teacher Education, Switzerland and University of Constance*

Preschool is a sensitive period for developing emotional competence, with deficits linked to long-term negative outcomes. While early socialization experiences shape this development, research has focused almost exclusively on parents and professionals, neglecting peer influences. The EmU-Project (2022–2026) addresses this gap by investigating the contributions of peers to emotion regulation. Three field studies ( $N \approx 300$  children, ages 3–5) employed a multi-method design, integrating semi-standardized tests, short- and long-term observations, parent and teacher questionnaires, video-based assessments, and physiological measures (heart rate). Two new observational instruments for assessing children's emotion regulation were developed. The ongoing third study investigates the transmission of regulation strategies between peers. Results to date reveal no general gender differences in emotional expression, regulation, or strategy use. However, girls more often imitated others' emotions to maintain harmony, and mixed-gender dyads displayed less aggression than same-gender dyads. Children's language competence strongly predicted their own, but not their peers', regulation skills. Smaller age gaps between siblings predicted better regulation, suggesting a peer-like training effect. Finally, emotions proved contagious: peers' emotion regulation contributed to a positive developmental trajectory of children's emotion

regulation if teachers' support was lower. These findings indicate the central role of peer contexts in promoting emotional development and underline the importance of supportive environments and peer interactions for fostering emotional competence in early childhood. We aim to summarize results from the EmU project with this contribution and give an overview of how peers' contribute to preschool children's emotion regulation and related behaviors.

### **Exploring the challenging time of school transition from the lens of 4 years children with special educational needs: what is the role of classmates when starting school?**

*Floriane Moulin, Haute école pédagogique du canton de vaud, Switzerland; Delphine Odier Guedj, Haute école pédagogique du canton de vaud, Switzerland; Céline Chatenoud, Université de Genève, Switzerland*

The very complex period of life during the transition from pre-school to school is well documented in the literature from the point of view of adults (Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019). For the most marginalized children, particularly those with SEN, the transition to school is a pivotal moment often marked by discontinuities in spaces, support, and partnerships with families, which can further reinforce their marginalization. These effects are frequently associated with significant stress for both children and their families. In this challenging context, the children's point of view is still very little taken into consideration when it comes to understanding about their experience, more over for children with special education needs (Parsons et al., 2021). However, some research shows that classmates can play an important role as facilitators when starting school (Prior & Niesz, 2015). Furthermore, understand how they experience, perceive, and deal with this context of transition enables adults to highlight and act on what is relevant to children (Rayna, 2020). We used the mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) with 8 children with SEN during 4 creative workshops in preschool and 4 creative workshops at school with the children. During these meetings, the children created a transition book that illustrates their experiences in preschool and then at school. This research is funded by the SNF and took place in French-speaking Switzerland. This poster will present the method employed and a specific part of the results; the role of peers during the transition a challenging period of life for children.

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 3:45pm – 6:30pm / PER22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium**

#### **Alliance Enfance Session (DE/FR)**

#### **Knowledge Transfer in Early Childhood: Growing Up in Challenging Contexts**

The Alliance Enfance session on knowledge transfer offers additional expert contributions on the topic of "family-centred networking" by *Ilona Renner*, Federal Institute of Public Health, Germany, *Prof. Dr. Margot Vogel Campanello*, Social Work, Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH, and *Dr. Xavier Conus*, Department of Educational Sciences, University of Fribourg. Participants will also have the opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas in workshops.

#### **Wie wirken Frühe Hilfen und wie erforschen wir sie?**

*Ilona Renner, Leitung Fachgebiet Forschung, Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen, Bundesinstitut für Öffentliche Gesundheit, Köln, Deutschland | Directrice du secteur de la recherche, centre national pour l'aide à la petite enfance, Institut fédéral de la santé publique, Cologne, Allemagne*

#### **Abstract in German**

Deutschland verfügt seit 2007 über ein Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen. Dieses unterstützt die Weiterentwicklung der Frühen Hilfen unter anderem durch wissenschaftliche Forschung, durch Angebote zur Qualitätsentwicklung, durch Fachaustausch mit Akteuren der Frühen Hilfen aus Bund, Ländern und Kommunen sowie durch Öffentlichkeitsarbeit. Zentrales Ziel ist es, die Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten von Kindern, insbesondere aus belasteten Familien, frühzeitig und nachhaltig zu verbessern.

In ihrem Beitrag gibt Ilona Renner eine kurze Einführung in die Frühen Hilfen. Sie stellt das Wirkungsmodell vor und geht auf die erforschten Wirkungen der Frühen Hilfen sowohl auf der Ebene einzelner Massnahmen als auch des

Gesamtprogramms ein. Ein besonderes Augenmerk legt sie auf die Forschungsmethodik in Bezug auf die Zusammenarbeit mit der Praxis, die Interprofessionalität in der Forschung und den Einbezug vulnerabler Familien. Schliesslich geht sie auf die wichtigsten Learnings und Herausforderungen in der Erforschung der Frühen Hilfen in Deutschland ein.

#### **Abstract in French**

Depuis 2007, l'Allemagne dispose d'un centre national pour l'aide à la petite enfance. Cette institution encourage la recherche scientifique, la création d'offres favorisant la qualité ainsi que les échanges professionnels avec les acteurs de l'aide à la petite enfance au niveau national, régional et local. Elle effectue également un travail de relations publiques. Sa mission est d'améliorer de manière précoce et durable les conditions d'épanouissement des enfants, en particulier dans les familles en situation de vulnérabilité.

Dans sa contribution, Ilona Renner introduit brièvement le champ de l'aide à la petite enfance. Elle présente ses modalités d'action et ses résultats observés tant au niveau des différentes mesures que de l'ensemble du programme. L'accent est mis sur la méthodologie de recherche dans la collaboration avec le terrain, l'interdisciplinarité et l'inclusion des familles en situation de vulnérabilité. L'exposé passe en revue les principaux enseignements et défis de la recherche sur l'aide à la petite enfance en Allemagne.

### **Familien- und Kinderperspektiven in der Forschung**

#### **La perspective des familles et des enfants dans la recherche**

*Prof. Dr. Margot Vogel Campanello, Soziale Arbeit, Berner Fachhochschule BFH, Schweiz | Travail social, Haute École spécialisée bernoise BFH : la perspective des familles et des enfants dans la recherche, Suisse*

#### **Abstract in German**

Was bedeutet es für Eltern, wenn trotz Erwerbstätigkeit das Einkommen nicht ausreicht, um die Versorgung der Familie zu sichern? Wie organisieren sie ihren Alltag zwischen prekären Arbeitsbedingungen, Sorgearbeit und dem Anspruch, den Kindern Stabilität und Teilhabe zu ermöglichen und wie nehmen Kinder diese Situation wahr? Das laufende SNF-Forschungsprojekt «Familien(er)leben in Erwerbsarmut. Perspektiven der Kinder und Eltern» untersucht, wie sich Transformationen des Arbeitsmarkts auf die familiäre Lebensführung auswirken und welche Implikationen dies für Erziehung, Fürsorge und das Erleben der Kinder hat.

Im Beitrag gibt Margot Vogel Campanello Einblick in die Erfahrungen des Forschungsteams beim Zugang zu den Familien und beim Erfassen ihrer Lebenslagen. Sie zeigt auf, welche Unterstützungsbedarfe Eltern und Kinder formulieren und reflektiert die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Forschung und Praxis. Darüber hinaus werden Bezüge zu den Erkenntnissen aus Deutschland hergestellt, um über die Weiterentwicklung im Bereich familienzentrierter Vernetzung in der Schweiz nachzudenken.

#### **Abstract in French**

À quoi ressemble la vie des parents qui exercent une activité professionnelle mais ne disposent pas d'un revenu suffisant pour assurer l'entretien de leur famille ? Comment s'organisent-ils au quotidien, entre conditions de travail précaires, soins aux enfants, souci de leur offrir stabilité et participation ? Comment cette situation est-elle perçue par les enfants ? Le projet de du FNS « Vie de famille et pauvreté laborieuse. La perspective des enfants et des parents » cherche à cerner les répercussions des mutations du marché du travail sur la conduite de la vie familiale et ce que cela implique pour l'éducation, la prise en charge et le vécu des enfants.

Margot Vogel Campanello brosse un tableau des situations rencontrées par l'équipe de recherche au contact des familles au cours de l'enquête sur leurs conditions de vie. Elle détaille les besoins formulés par les parents et les enfants en matière de soutien et livre ses réflexions sur la collaboration entre la recherche et le terrain. Des travaux menés en Allemagne offrent une base pour développer les réseaux centrés sur la famille en Suisse.

### **Zusammenarbeit von Eltern und institutionellen Akteuren**

#### **Collaboration entre les parents et les acteurs institutionnels**

*Dr. Xavier Conus, Departement für Erziehungswissenschaften, Universität Freiburg, Schweiz / Département des Sciences de l'éducation, Université de Fribourg, Suisse*

### **Abstract in German**

Elterliche Praktiken spielen eine entscheidende Rolle für die Entwicklung des Kindes, bereits ab den ersten Lebensjahren. Diese Praktiken variieren jedoch je nach familiärem und sozialem Umfeld und tragen zu Ungleichheiten im Werdegang bei. Darüber hinaus können sie mehr oder weniger mit den von institutionellen Akteuren bevorzugten Praktiken übereinstimmen. Daher wird heute die Bedeutung einer verstärkten Zusammenarbeit zwischen Eltern und institutionellen Akteuren anerkannt, um gemeinsam die Entwicklung aller Kinder von klein auf zu fördern.

In seinem Beitrag zeigt Xavier Conus anhand von Untersuchungen im Kanton Freiburg, wie schwierig es sein kann, diese notwendige Zusammenarbeit zu konzipieren, ohne in einen vorschreibenden und stigmatisierenden Diskurs gegenüber Familien in prekären Situationen zu verfallen. Die professionelle Haltung und die Koordination von Massnahmen sind zwei Kernelemente für die Ermöglichung einer Familienzentrierten Vernetzung und einer Zusammenarbeit, die gleichzeitig für die Eltern emanzipatorisch und für die Kinder förderlich ist.

### **Abstract in French**

Les pratiques parentales jouent un rôle déterminant dans le développement de l'enfant, dès les premières années de vie. Or, ces pratiques varient selon les contextes familiaux et sociaux, contribuant à des inégalités de parcours. Par ailleurs, elles peuvent entrer plus ou moins en résonance avec les pratiques privilégiées par les acteurs institutionnels. D'où l'importance aujourd'hui reconnue de renforcer les collaborations entre parents et acteurs institutionnels afin de soutenir ensemble le développement de tous les enfants dès le plus jeune âge.

Dans sa contribution, Xavier Conus montre, à partir de recherches menées dans le canton de Fribourg, combien il peut être délicat de penser ces nécessaires collaborations sans glisser vers un discours prescripteur et stigmatisant envers les familles en situation de vulnérabilité. La posture professionnelle et la coordination des actions s'avèrent deux éléments centraux dans la possibilité d'un travail en réseau centré sur la famille et de collaborations émancipatrices pour les parents et porteuses pour les enfants.

**Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 5:00pm – 6:30pm / PER21 F130**

### **Symposium 1**

#### **Context and Individual Differences in Early Childhood Learning: Findings from the LEAPS Study**

*Chair(s): Isabelle Duss, University of Zurich; Johanna Lieb University of Konstanz, Thurgau University for Teacher Education*

The kindergarten years mark a crucial period for children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and early literacy development, laying the foundation for later educational success. While prior research has provided valuable insights, questions remain about how individual dispositions and early learning contexts interact during this formative stage, particularly in the first two years of formal education.

This symposium presents first findings from the Zurich Learning Progress Study (LEAPS), a large-scale longitudinal project following children across compulsory schooling. The focus lies on the first two years of kindergarten. Contributions will address the role of early childcare experiences and their quality for the development of socio-emotional skills, children's spontaneous focusing on numerosity as a predictor of mathematical competencies, and early pathways of early literacy development.

By bringing together these perspectives, the symposium will highlight how context and individual differences jointly shape learning and development in early childhood. The results provide new insights into mechanisms of early learning that are central for education and practice, and they point toward fairer assessments that better reflect the abilities of children from diverse language backgrounds.

### **Presentations of the Symposium**

#### **Non-family childcare and social-emotional skills in Switzerland: Quantity, Timing 2**

*Johanna Lieb, University of Konstanz, Thurgau University for Teacher Education; Doris Hanappi, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich; Moritz Daum, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich; Sonja Perren, University of Konstanz, Thurgau University for Teacher Education*

Earlier findings in Switzerland suggested that greater exposure to non-family childcare was linked to more problem behaviors when children entered first grade in 2004. Since then, major efforts were made to strengthen the quality of early education and care, and research attention has shifted from risks to resources. This study investigates associations between the amount of childcare before kindergarten and children's social-emotional skills, considering a possible moderation by childcare quality. Participants are two cohorts of 1,481 children entering kindergarten in 2024 and 2025. Children's cooperative skills, assertiveness, sociability, self-control, persistence and emotion-regulation were assessed in direct assessments using BASES, where children's skills are evaluated based on their performance in standardized tasks in small groups of classmates. Parents reported hours and days per week in daycare, playgroup and family daycare across early age periods (months 3-18; 19-36; 37 to kindergarten entry). We observed the quality of caregiver-child interactions in 134 childcare- and playgroups using CLASS to examine its moderating role in a subsample of participants. Assessments in kindergartens are completed; ratings of children's social-emotional skills and the parent survey are currently conducted. Data will be available by the time of the conference. The results will shed light on the contribution of non-family childcare in fostering children's social-emotional skills and the importance of quality development in Swiss childcare provision. Beyond the field of education, the study provides insights for economics, policy, and public health, where childcare is central to labor participation, equity, and long-term well-being.

### **SFON Profiles in Kindergarten Children: Associations with Numerical Competencies**

*Isabelle Duss, Bettina Wohlfender, Noemi Gloor, Elisabeth Moser Opitz, University of Zurich*

Early mathematical competencies are strong predictors of later academic achievement (Nguyen et al., 2016). In addition to the well-established predictive value of symbolic numerical competencies, the contribution of spontaneous mathematical focusing tendencies, particularly Spontaneous Focusing on Numerosity (SFON), is of growing interest. Previous research suggests that SFON performance predicts later mathematical skills (Batchelor et al., 2015; Hannula & Lehtinen, 2005).

SFON is typically assessed through action-based tasks (imitate an action Hannula & Lehtinen, 2005) or picture-based tasks (describe a picture; Batchelor et al., 2015). Studies indicate weak correlations between these task types, suggesting that they are measuring different cognitive aspects. To shed new light on the relationship between SFON tasks and students' cognitive characteristics, this study addresses the following research questions:

(1) Which SFON profiles can be identified among children in their first year of kindergarten?

(2) How are these profiles associated with numerical competencies?

Sample: 598 children (48% female; M = 5 years) from 135 kindergarten classes.

Measures:

- SFON: Picture-based task ( $\alpha = .86$ ); action-based task ( $\alpha = .63$ ).
- Numerical competencies (21 items): number decomposition, addition, symbolic magnitude comparison ( $\alpha = .87$ ).
- Controls: Gender, age, family language, verbal counting, object counting.

Preliminary results: Latent Profile Analysis revealed five profiles (Low-SFON, High-SFON, Action-Oriented SFON, Verbal-Oriented SFON, Extreme low Action-Oriented SFON). Pairwise comparisons controlling for covariates showed that children in the High-SFON and Action-Oriented SFON groups scored significantly higher in numerical competencies than those in the Low-SFON group ( $p < .01$ ).

Further findings and implications will be presented in the symposium.

References:

- Batchelor, S., Inglis, M., & Gilmore, C. (2015). Spontaneous focusing on numerosity and the arithmetic advantage. *Learning and Instruction*, 40, 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2015.09.005>
- Hannula, M., & Lehtinen, E. (2005). Spontaneous focusing on numerosity and mathematical skills of young children. *Learning and Instruction*, 15(3), 237–256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2005.04.005>
- Nguyen, T., Watts, T. W., Duncan, G. J., Clements, D. H., Sarama, J. S., Wolfe, C., & Spitler, M. E. (2016). Which preschool mathematics competencies are most predictive of fifth grade achievement? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 36, 550–560. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.02.003>

## Reducing Linguistic Bias in Pre-Literacy Tests

*Alexandra Schreiber, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry Zurich, University of Zurich, Switzerland; Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland; Nicoletta Klotz, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry Zurich, University of Zurich, Switzerland; Iliana Karpidis, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry Zurich, University of Zurich, Switzerland; Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland; Raphael Berthele, Institute of Multilingualism, University of Fribourg, Switzerland; Narly Golestani, Faculty of Psychology and Education Science, Department of Psychology, University of Geneva, Switzerland; Vienna Cognitive Science Hub, and Faculty of Life Sciences, Department of Behavioural and Cognitive Biology, University of Vienna, Austria; Silvia Brem, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry Zurich; Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich; Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning (AdaBD), University of Zurich*

Language and literacy skills are critical for later academic success. Early identification of children at risk for language or reading difficulties is crucial to provide timely and effective support. Standardized pre-literacy tests, however, are often based on a specific language and may disadvantage second language (L2) learners. This raises the question of whether such tests assess true literacy potential or whether they are confounded by proficiency levels in the tested language. We investigate whether language-neutral tasks are better at capturing literacy potential in L2 children, and how the number of languages spoken at home might influence pre-literacy skills. We compared performance of native German (L1) speakers to L2 learners on a) standard German-language assessments, and b) language-neutral adaptations in 400-600 children attending year two of kindergarten. We focus on early literacy precursors such as phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and rapid automatized naming (RAN), with language-neutral versions constituted of pseudowords and cognate words to reduce lexical knowledge demands. Preliminary analyses showed that L1 children scored significantly higher on the German RAN than L2 children ( $p = .019$ ), whereas no significant difference was found ( $p = .262$ ) in the language-neutral version. Planned clustering analyses incorporate language background, socioeconomic status, early childcare factors, and executive functions. Further analyses will also consider a more fine-grained characterization of children's language background based on the number of languages spoken by the children. Ultimately, this work aims to contribute to fairer and more accurate pre-literacy assessments that better reflect the abilities of children from diverse language backgrounds.

Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 5:00pm – 6:30pm / PER21 E130

## Symposium 2

### Children and Digital Media (KiDiM) / Kinder und Digitale Medien (KiDiM)

*Chair(s): Fabio Sticca, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik, Switzerland*

The omnipresence of digital media in everyday life of young children has sparked growing societal and scientific debate. Despite this, empirical evidence on the longitudinal effects of early digital media use remains limited, in particular for the first three years of life. The longitudinal project Kinder und Digitale Medien (KiDiM) addressed this gap by following 474 children from March 2021 to January 2022 (age at T1 in years:  $M = 1.3$ ,  $SD = 0.6$ ; 50% female), employing questionnaires, structured diaries, standardized developmental assessments, and behavioral observations. This symposium will start with an introduction to the topic, drawing on a literature review published in the context of KiDiM, followed by an outline of the project's design and aims. Four contributions will then be presented: The first evaluates the socio-cognitive processes that shape parents' decisions around using digital media with their children. The second explores the relative influence of children's screen time versus the quality of the home learning environment on early language development. The third investigates longitudinal associations between screen time and receptive as well as expressive language skills, contrasting outcomes for monolingual and multilingual children. The fourth addresses the relationship between screen time, physical activity, and gross motor development. By integrating these perspectives, the symposium highlights the complex and multifaceted role

of digital media in early development. It situates findings from KiDiM within the broader discourse on opportunities and risks of digital media in early childhood and discusses implications for caregivers, professionals, and policymakers.

## Presentations of the Symposium

### **Behind Screen Time: A Socio-Cognitive Examination of Parents' Decisions on Young Children's Screen Use.**

*Fabio Sticca, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Daniela Späni, Zürcher Kantonalbank; Simone Bamert, Kantonsspital Winterthur; Patricia Lannen; Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind*

The aim of the present study was to examine the socio-cognitive processes leading parents to use screen-based media in everyday activities with their young children. To this end, media exposure among children aged 1 to 48 months ( $M = 22.9$ ;  $SD = 13.94$ ) was examined through a survey of 129 parents using an online questionnaire. Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior, findings indicate that parents' perceived social norms are linked to their attitudes toward the use of screen-based media in daily activities with their children. A more positive attitude toward the use of screen-based media in daily life with young children was in turn linked to a higher intention to use screen-based media, which was associated with children's screen use. Perceived behavioral control was not found to play a relevant role in this socio-cognitive process. However, the age of the child positively predicted more media favorable social norms as the starting point of this mechanism and was associated with all other aspects of the socio-cognitive decision-making process. These results suggest that, based on children's age, social norms might play an important role in the context of parents' use of screen-based media with their children. Thus, the public opinion in this matter seems to be relevant, thereby giving an important role to institutions that publish recommendations for parents and professionals.

### **Screen Time versus Home Literacy Experiences: Longitudinal Associations with Language Development in Children Under Three**

*Raquel Paz Castro, Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind; Venera Gashaj, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Ankica Jurkic, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Valérie Brauchli, Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften; Patricia Lannen, Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind; Fabio Sticca, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik*

Early childhood is a particularly sensitive period of development. Mastery of the surrounding language is regarded as a key developmental milestone, with profound implications for later educational and professional pathways, as well as for social relationships and conflict resolution. Research on screen time and early language development has yielded mixed results, with studies reporting negative, null, or even positive associations. In contrast, the home literacy environment (e.g., shared book reading) is consistently linked to language growth. In this study, we examined whether screen time and the home literacy environment, assessed at study entry, predicted subsequent language development in 462 children under three years. Language skills were assessed at three time points spanning 10 months using parent reports on the Ages & Stages Questionnaire. Latent growth curve modeling, controlling for number of siblings, child age, and parental education, was applied to examine whether the predictors measured at baseline explained differences in children's language development. Results showed that both baseline screen time and the home literacy environment predicted language development, with stronger effects for the home literacy environment ( $\beta = -.14^*$  vs.  $\beta = .47^{**}$ ). These findings indicate that while higher screen time at baseline was modestly associated with slower language growth, a richer home literacy environment was associated with greater gains in language skills. Together, the results suggest that fostering rich literacy experiences may play a more central role in supporting early language development than limiting screen time alone.

## Screen Time and Language in Early Childhood: Diverging Paths for Monolingual and Multilingual Children?

*Ankica Jurkic, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Patricia Lannen, Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind; Venera Gashaj, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Valérie Brauchli, Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften; Raquel Paz Castro, Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind; Fabio Sticca<sup>1</sup> Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik*

Research on the relationship between screen time and language development in early childhood has yielded mixed findings. While some studies report undesirable associations, others find no association or even desirable ones. Furthermore, research examining this relationship in different populations of children, such as monolingual and multilingual children, remains scarce. The present study investigated longitudinal associations between screen time and societal receptive as well as expressive language skills in 348 monolingual and 122 multilingual children aged 4 to 37 months at study onset, assessed at two time points one year apart. Controlling for the child's age, gender and parental education, results from a multigroup cross-lagged model revealed no cross-sectional associations between screen time and societal receptive and expressive language skills in either group at either time point. However, screen time at time 1 negatively predicted later societal receptive language skills in both groups, while no significant association was found with societal expressive language skills. This suggests that the impact of screen time on language development may unfold over time. Taken together, the findings indicate that screen time may not be directly linked to children's expressive language skills but could have an undesirable impact on receptive language skills, highlighting the importance of mindful media use in early childhood.

## Screen time and physical activity: Influences on gross motor development in early childhood

*Venera Gashaj, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Patricia Lannen, Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind; Korbinian Moeller, Loughborough; Ankica Jurkic, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik; Raquel Paz Castro, Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind; Fabio Sticca, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik*

Crucial milestones in motor development occur during early childhood, forming the foundation for later motor, but also cognitive and social-emotional development. Understanding both risk and protective factors for early motor development is therefore essential. While physical activity is known to support gross motor development, concerns persist about potential negative effects of screen time, possibly due to the displacement of physical activities. However, existing evidence remains inconclusive. Addressing this gap, the present study evaluated longitudinal associations of screen time, physical activity, and gross motor development in children under three years of age. Using a three-wave panel design spanning ten months, data were collected from 462 children and their parents. Daily screen time and physical activity were tracked using parent-reported structured diaries and questionnaires. Screen time was operationalized as a composite score capturing average daily screen time, whereas physical activity was modeled as the average across seven diary days. Gross motor development was measured with the gross motor scale of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, covering skills such as crawling, walking, and jumping. A trivariate cross-lagged panel model indicated that higher levels of physical activity at T1 and T2 significantly predicted better gross motor skills at T2 and T3, respectively. In contrast, screen time was not significantly predictive of later gross motor development. These findings suggest that physical activity plays a stronger role in promoting gross motor development than screen time poses a risk. Accordingly, parents and early childhood education professionals should prioritize opportunities for physical activity while thoughtfully managing screen time to ensure a balanced developmental environment.

Monday, 02/Feb/2026: 5:00pm – 6:30pm / PER21 D130

### Symposium 3

#### The SIG Neurocognitive Development Symposium: Multimodal Pathways to Neurodevelopment: From Connectivity and Genes to Cognition and Intervention

*Chair(s): Mirella Manfredi, University of Zurich, Switzerland; Paul Matusz, University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (HES-SO) Valais, Switzerland*

Neurodevelopment is shaped by complex, multi-level interactions between brain connectivity, genetics, and socio-cognitive mechanisms. To advance our understanding of resilience and vulnerability across development, it is crucial to integrate multimodal neuroimaging, genetic approaches, and innovative behavioural interventions. This symposium showcases recent interdisciplinary work on structural, functional, and socio-affective mechanisms in typical and atypical development. Lea Schmidt presents a study on inter-hemispheric functional connectivity (ihFC) in a large neurodevelopmental cohort, showing that ihFC in key networks predicts psychopathological dimensions, particularly psychosis, and that associated genetic variants modulate connectivity profiles. Vanessa Siffredi discusses how spatial variability in corpus callosum microstructure relates to age and cognitive outcomes, identifying genetic markers contributing to callosal development. Paul Matusz introduces findings from the AMBER trial, a randomized controlled crossover study comparing VR-based stereoptic training with standard care in residual amblyopia, highlighting high compliance, age-dependent clinical benefits, but also important heterogeneity of treatment responsiveness. Finally, Mirella Manfredi examines the neural correlates of humour in preschoolers, demonstrating early links between facial emotion recognition and humour appreciation, and framing humour as an emerging socio-cognitive tool for emotion regulation. Together, these contributions illustrate how multimodal methods—ranging from imaging and genetics to virtual reality and ERP—shed light on the neural bases of cognition, emotion, and plasticity, with implications for supporting diverse developmental pathways.

## Presentations of the Symposium

### Exploring the relationship between functional inter-hemispheric connectivity, cognitive outcomes and genetic variations in a large neurodevelopmental cohort

*Lea Schmidt*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), 2Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML); *Alessio Comparini*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), 2Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML); *Jonas Richiardi*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML), Center for Biomedical Imaging (CIBM); *Vanessa Siffredi*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), 2Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML)

Background: Interhemispheric functional connectivity (ihFC) reflects coordinated activity between brain hemispheres and is essential for cognitive and socio-emotional functions. Altered ihFC has been linked to psychopathological difficulties in various DSM-5 neurodevelopmental disorders. This study examines the relationship between ihFC, psychopathology, and genetic variation using a multidimensional, data-driven approach. Methods: Multi-modal data were drawn from the Philadelphia Neurodevelopmental Cohort (PNC; Satterthwaite et al., 2026, N=877, ages 8–21), a large-scale neurodevelopmental dataset including resting-state fMRI, genetics and clinical assessments. Resting-state fMRI data (TR = 3000 ms, TE = 32 ms, voxel size = 3×3×3 mm, 6 min acquisition) were preprocessed using fMRIPrep (Esteban et al., 2019). Functional connectivity (FC) matrices were computed using hMRF 400 atlases and Pearson's correlation. Graph neural networks, such as GCN and ARMA layers, were used to model 7 psychopathological factor scores from ihFC features. An ablation analysis was performed to determine which inter- or intra-hemispheric components of the FC matrix, at both the graph and functional network levels, had the greatest impact. For functional networks found to be good predictor of psychopathology, a candidate gene association study was performed using PLINK, targeting different genes previously linked to FC. Results: FC matrices predicted general psychopathology with modest accuracy (mean  $r^2=0.1$ ; RMSE=0.98) with psychosis factor showing the strongest predictive signal ( $r^2=0.21$ ). ihFC in default mode, visual, dorsal attention, and limbic networks was especially important for prediction, and SNPs in candidate genes were associated with connectivity in these networks. Conclusion: Our findings demonstrate that ihFC plays a central role in psychopathology, with relevance for psychosis-related symptoms.

### Callosal structural characteristics as a biomarker of cognitive development: a multimodal study in youth

*Vanessa Siffredi*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), 2Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML); *Léa Schmidt*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), 2Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML); *Jonas Richiardi*, Department of Radiology, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Translational Machine Learning Lab (TML), Center for Biomedical Imaging (CIBM)

**Background and Aims:** The corpus callosum (CC), the brain's largest white-matter commissure, enables interhemispheric communication. As a key projection structure, CC alterations can affect both callosal fibres and the cortical regions they connect to, influencing cognitive functioning. This study aims to investigate structural CC characteristics as potential biomarkers of cognitive development. **Methods:** This study used cognitive, diffusion-weighted imaging, and genetic data from 1342 participants (ages 8–21) of the Philadelphia Neurodevelopmental Cohort. Cognitive functions were assessed via the Penn computerized neurocognitive battery, and five cognitive factors were derived using factor analysis. Single-shell diffusion-weighted images were preprocessed (QSIprep), diffusion-tensor modelling generated whole-brain maps of fractional anisotropy (FA) and mean diffusivity (MD), fiber orientation distributions peaks were estimated (QSIrecon). Using tractography-based segmentation (TractSeg), 7 CC streamlines were reconstructed. FA and MD were computed along 100 equidistant segments for each of the CC streamlines. Penalised functional regressions were used to assess associations between spatial variation in diffusion properties along CC tracts with age and cognition. For CC metrics significantly related to cognition, a candidate gene association study was performed using penalised functional regression, targeting 4 genes—DCC, CDH2, AKT3, GLI3—previously linked to developmental neurobiological mechanisms regulating CC formation. **Results:** Functional data analyses revealed spatially varying associations between along-tract CC characteristics, age, and cognitive factors. As hypothesized, specific SNPs within the candidate genes were found to be associated with CC characteristics. **Conclusion:** Spatial variability in CC characteristics is associated with age and cognition, with genetic factors contributing to the diversity of CC development.

### **High compliance in using stereoptic virtual reality serious games and young age can reduce residual amblyopia: the AMBER trial**

*Pawel Matusz, Institute of Health Sciences, School of Health Sciences, HES-SO Valais-Wallis, Sion, Switzerland  
The Sense Innovation and Research Center, Lausanne and Sion, Sion, Switzerland  
Department of Experimental Ophthalmology, University of Geneva, Geneva*

Amblyopia is the most common developmental visual disorder, where due to abnormal sensory experience the brain ignores input from the eye(s) despite their physical health. This influences the development of higher-level visual, attentional and motor skills of patients. Traditional treatment of patching is long and effective in only a proportion of the patients. Thus, new, more efficient approaches are necessary. Our crossover randomized controlled trial AMBER assessed potential benefits of a stereoptic video game in virtual reality (VR) headsets versus standard of care (SC) in people with residual amblyopia. The primary outcome was best corrected visual acuity (BCVA).

Of 14 participants, mean age 21.7±9.8y (8–35y) with residual amblyopia (strabismic, anisometric or mixed), 13 completed the 2 treatment arms: 1) VR training (30min/d, 5d/week) and 2) Continuation of SC. Each arm lasted 2 months, followed by a 2-month washout, before the second treatment started (8 months/patient). Treatment order was randomized. In all 5 visits, BCVA was assessed with Landolt and Sloan charts (logMAR), stereoacuity with the TNO, Titmus, Lang II and Asteroid tests (arcsec), and reading speed with the MNread test (words/min). We analyzed the short-term (screening to end of treatment at 2 months) effects and VR compliance. Outcomes were quantified per patient in absolute values and % change relative to the first visit.

BCVA (Landolt test) post-VR improved in 8/13 people (3 children, 5 adults; 3 anisometric, 3 strabismic, 2 mixed; mean improvement 39.6±58.6%) and in Sloan test in 3/13 (18.7±1.5%). BCVA (Landolt) post-SC improved in 4/13 (41±40%) and in Sloan in 4/13 (55±32%). Stereoacuity changes were highly variable in both arms, depending upon both the participant and the specific test: Some patients improved and others either unchanged or declined. Titmus test showed improvements in 6/13 participants (by 68.7±21.2%) post-VR vs. in 1/13 post-SC (20%). TNO and Lang II tests showed improvements in 1/13 each (by 50% and 88.9%, respectively) post-VR and in 1/13 (by 50% TNO) and 4/13 (by 68±16% Lang II) post-SC. Asteroid test showed no improvement post-VR and in 1/13 post-SC (4.2%). Reading improved post-VR in 1 mixed amblyopic adult (28%) and there were no improvements post-SC. VR compliance was high (13.9±5.2h = 69.5±25.9%).

The results suggest that VR-induced visual skill rehabilitation depended on patient age and compliance. Younger participants improved with only medium compliance (34-66%), while a few adults with high compliance (67-100%) also improved. Together, the results refine our understanding of gamified, technology-based novel interventions into sensory developmental disorders beyond the “one-size-fits-all” approaches, offering future targets for better understanding the mechanisms of VR-based vision treatment responsiveness.

## **The Growing Mind of Humour: Neural Correlates of Humour and Its Role in Self-Regulation**

*Mirella Manfredi, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Zürich, Switzerland*

Humour represents both a socio-cognitive mechanism emerging early in development and a resource for emotion regulation across the lifespan. In our works, we focused on slapstick humour, characterised by physical comedy and unfortunate situations. Previous ERP studies in adults indicated that victims' facial expressions act as specific triggers of amusement (Manfredi et al., 2014, 2017, 2020). We investigated whether preschoolers show similar neurocognitive responses when recognising humorous misfortune and whether these responses are linked to the ability to recognise emotional expressions. Thirty 4- to 5-year-old children completed a facial emotion recognition task (EmoRec) and a slapstick humour recognition task (HumRec). Results revealed distinct neural correlates of humour (N170, LP) and face processing (N170, P300), and a positive correlation between early face-sensitive processing (N170 in EmoRec) and later humour-related processing (LP in HumRec). These findings suggest that the appreciation of slapstick humour in preschoolers is closely tied to the early processing of emotional facial expressions.

More broadly, humour is also a well-documented strategy for emotion regulation in neurotypical populations, supporting resilience through reappraisal, distraction, and the amplification of positive affect. In autism, however, humour use shows qualitative differences, including reduced adaptive functions and heightened gelotophobia, yet emerging evidence points to its potential as a selective but valuable resource for well-being. Taken together, our results highlight the dual role of humour: as a neurocognitive mechanism integrating emotion and social information early in development, and as a promising tool to foster emotion regulation and resilience across neurotypical and neurodiverse populations.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 9:00am – 10:00am / PER22 Joseph Deiss Auditoriums**

### **Keynote II**

#### **Poverty in Childhood: Constructions of professionals in early childhood education and care (ECEC)**

*Dr. Stephanie Simon, Institute for Social Pedagogy, Adult Education and Pedagogy in Early Childhood, Dortmund University, Germany*

Poverty as a social problem has massive consequences for the unequal upbringing of children. Social as well as pedagogical, the consequences of child poverty are examined more than to speak about the reasons and structures which make poverty possible in a well situated society. This article aims to provide an overview of existing studies about child poverty and raise an empirical question: since child poverty is measured by household affiliation, the focus quickly shifts to the parents – “the poor child” is positioned and presented in a specific way. These presentation will provide empirical insights into different interpretations of child poverty by educational professionals in daycare facilities who are involved in the reproduction of social inequality, even if they try to address it. The focus is on tendencies toward responsabilisation and individualisation, but also on classist modes of stigmatisation and biologising attributions. How can these be broken down as part of a social and early childhood education that reflects on inequality in a professional way?

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 10:00am – 11:30am / PER21 Foyer G130**

### **Poster Session 2**

#### **What do we Know about Digital Media Use in Swiss Preschool-Aged Children? Results from the SWIPE Study**

*Nevena Dimitrova, Haute Ecole de Travail Social de Lausanne, Switzerland; Eva Unternaehrer, Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrische Forschungsabteilung Universitäre Psychiatrische Kliniken (UPK) Universität Basel; Fabio Sticca, Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik (HfH)*

Background: Digital media is ubiquitous and central to the lives of adults and children. Child screen use is widely debated, mainly due to concerns about potential risks. Yet before risks can be meaningfully discussed, it is crucial to know if and how young children use digital media. In Switzerland, no official data on preschool children's media use existed prior to the SWIPE study, the first nationwide investigation of digital media use among 0–5-year-olds. Methods: A total of 3,672 parents (83% mothers) living in Switzerland completed an online survey about one of their children aged 0–5. Participants were distributed across linguistic regions (Swiss German: n=2056; Swiss French: n=1308; Swiss Italian: n=308). Children included 48% girls, with age groups ranging from infancy to age 5. The survey assessed demographics and children's digital media use, including screentime, content, and context. Results: Across ages, the most frequently used devices were smartphones (69%), streaming services (47%), and cable TV (46%). Daily time on digital activities increased with age: from 55 minutes for infants to 97 minutes for 5-year-olds. Restricting analyses to screen-based activities showed lower durations (17 minutes for infants, 52 minutes for 5-year-olds). Content was predominantly age-appropriate (99%), educational (95%), and highly engaging (92%). Parents reported allowing screen use for learning (68%), to gain peace and quiet (63%), and to prepare children for the digital future (41%). Implications: Findings will be compared with international data and discussed in relation to child screen use recommendations, with attention to content and context beyond screentime alone.

### **Children's Concepts of Artificial Intelligence and the Potential of Play – Approaches to AI Literacy in Early Primary Education**

*Marius Vogt, Lena Hollenstein, Franziska Vogt, St. Gallen University of Teacher Education, Switzerland*

It is acknowledged that artificial intelligence (AI) literacy is essential in the 21st century and should be fostered from early childhood onward (Su et al., 2023). AI literacy recently was framed as an extension of computational thinking (Ferraioli et al., 2025). The lack of clarity concerns the concepts of AI that young children have. Children's drawings have proven to be a valuable method for exploring their initial concepts (Botturi & Addimando, 2025; Giang et al., 2023). Additionally, the question remains how AI literacy can be fostered in a developmentally appropriate manner. Research has shown that concepts of digital transformation can already be explored in kindergarten through guided pretend play (AUTHORS, 2024).

Two research questions (RQ) emerge: (1) What concepts of AI do children in the first and second grades of primary school hold? (2) Which concepts of AI do children explore during pre-tend play, and how is the play guided by teachers?

The poster presents the results from the project's pilot phase. N = 30 children draw and explain their conceptions of AI. Audio recordings will be analysed employing qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015). Additionally, video observations are conducted of two pretend play sequences. A category-based observation grid is used to analyse children's engagement with AI concepts and the teacher guidance.

The data collection and analysis are ongoing. Results will be presented at the conference. Implications for refining the play ideas and for teacher professional development are discussed.

### **Manual and Oculomotor Serial Reaction Time Tasks Provide Evidence of Distinct Temporal Order Response Learning Development in Typically Developing Children**

*Kevin Schwab, Unidistance Suisse and University of Lausanne; Pamela Banta-Lavenex, Unidistance Suisse; Pierre Lavenex, University of Lausanne*

The development of procedural response learning (RL) in typically developing children (TDC) has been assessed using Serial Reaction Time tasks (SRTT), in which participants respond as fast as possible to the stimulus locations presented in random blocks (RBs) and fixed-sequence blocks (FSBs). Learning is inferred if the reaction time (RT) decreases during FSBs and increases in subsequent RBs. Studies reported age-related decreases in RTs and greater improvements in FSBs during a single learning opportunity. However, studies did not report the reliability to express RL, i.e., the number of times learning was demonstrated across multiple opportunities.

We designed SRTT presented either on a touchscreen or via eye-tracker, allowing for multiple opportunities to demonstrate RL. We tested adults (TDA) and TDC from 4 to 9 years of age.

The majority of the youngest TDC demonstrated at least one occurrence of manual RL, and this proportion increased with age, reaching 100% in TDA. Less than half of the youngest TDC exhibited a single occurrence of oculomotor RL, but this proportion also increased with age, reaching 100% in TDA. In the manual SRT, TDC exhibited the fewest number of learning occurrences, older children exhibited more, and TDA exhibited the most. In the oculomotor SRT, the same pattern was observed, although TDC exhibited a lower number of learning occurrences than for the manual.

Reliable expression of manual and oculomotor RL increases with age. Although oculomotor RL is demonstrated less in TDC, and is less reliable than manual RL, this is not the case for TDA.

### **Children's SES, Home Learning Environment and Language Learning Outcome**

*Silvana Kappeler Suter, Eva Heuss, Kerstin Pfannes, Johanna Quiring, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education*

Children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families tend to show lower language competence (Schwab & Lew-Williams, 2016). In households with low socioeconomic status (SES) or a migration background, fewer books and games are typically available, coinciding with fewer parent-child interactions and learning-related activities (Neuman & Celano, 2001). It is assumed that the home learning environment mediates the effect of SES on children's development (Dominke & Steffensky, 2025).

This study investigates whether SES affects the home learning environment. Furthermore, it examines whether there is a relationship between SES and language learning progress following a shared picture book reading session and whether this relationship is mediated by home learning environment.

Families with children aged 4–5 years complete a questionnaire that provides insights into their socioeconomic background and home learning environment. The children participate in a shared picture book reading session with a student and are assessed for their story-related vocabulary (Pre- and Posttest) and story comprehension.

At the time of the conference, data from 130 families and shared reading sessions will be available. To analyse the data, simple linear regressions are conducted to examine the relationships between SES and the home learning environment, as well as between SES and language learning outcomes. In addition, a mediation model is tested, with the home learning environment acting as a mediator between SES and language learning progress. The impact of SES on children's lives is a cross-disciplinary research field. Understanding how socioeconomic disadvantage affects children's learning can inform the development of effective measures to tackle inequality.

### **Negotiated Ecosystems: Classroom Environments and Play in Chinese Kindergartens**

*Chenhao Deng, Sonja Perren, University of Konstanz, Germany*

Children's play in classroom environments holds profound significance for cognitive, social, and emotional development. However, standardized pedagogical practices often prioritize curriculum delivery over play-based needs, resulting in homogenized spatial arrangements that limit developmental opportunities. This study investigates how kindergarten classroom environments shape children's free play behaviors and social dynamics, focusing on the physical properties (spatial components, layout, functioning) and environmental attributes (adjacency, operability, legibility, openness) that influence age-specific play patterns. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research was conducted in a kindergarten in Nanchang, China with 69 children aged 3–6. Data collection included qualitative and quantitative observations, field notes, snapshots, and informal interviews to analyze behavioral and perceptual data. Key findings indicate that peer engagement emerges as children actualize spatial affordances, co-creating transient micro-settings that reflect a triadic child-peer-environment relationship. Younger children (3–4 years) gravitated toward enclosed, sensorimotor-driven play that fostered emotional security, while older peers (4–6 years) engaged in rule-based, collaborative activities that enhanced social negotiation and cognitive flexibility. The study underscores the nature of classrooms as negotiated ecosystems, where children reinterpret spatial semantics through play. Design elements such as modular surfaces and symbolic cues were found to promote agency, creativity, and problem-solving. These insights advocate for age-responsive environments that balance structure and adaptability to support holistic cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Integrating ecological psychology (affordances) and environmental psychology (behavior settings), the research positions classrooms as active mediators of play, learning, and development.

## **Associations between Digital Media Use and Behavioral Difficulties in Swiss Preschool-Aged Children: Results from the SWIPE Study**

*Laura Gurri, Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Research Department, University Psychiatric Clinics Basel, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland; Nevena Dimitrova, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, Faculty of Social Work (HETSL | HES-SO); Jalisce Schmid, Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Research Department, University Psychiatric Clinics Basel, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland; Fabio Sticca, University of Teacher Education in Special Needs, Zurich, Switzerland; Eva Unternaehrer, Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Research Department, University Psychiatric Clinics Basel, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland*

Background: Digital media use has become an integral part of everyday life, including family settings, raising important questions about its impact on early child development. Previous research has yielded mixed findings regarding associations between screen exposure and child wellbeing, with most studies focusing solely on screen time.

Therefore, our first aim is to examine the association between children's screen time and behavioral difficulties, including internalizing and externalizing problems. The second aim is to identify different correlates of child behavioral difficulties beyond screen time, considering different types of digital media content and context, as well as parent-related psychosocial factors (e.g., parental motivation for screen use, parental phubbing).

Methods: A total of 506 parents (age =  $36.9 \pm 4.7$  years, 82% mothers) with children aged 0-5 years (age =  $3.4 \pm 1.3$  years, 47% girls) living in Switzerland participated in an online survey. The questionnaire included sociodemographic information, parental digital media attitudes and detailed data on children's digital media use, including screen time, content, and context of use. Child behavioral difficulties were assessed with the Strengths-and-Difficulties-Questionnaire (SDQ), and parental phubbing with the Parental-Scale-of-Phubbing (PSP).

Data analysis is ongoing. Results will address associations between children's screen exposure, behavioral difficulties, and additional correlates related to content, context, and parent factors.

Discussion: This study will provide important insights into whether, and how, different aspects of early screen media use are linked to child developmental outcomes. By moving beyond screen time alone, it aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of early digital media use and developmental outcomes.

## **Capture parenting – A new approach to old questions**

*Yvonne Reyhing, Karina Rädler, Pädagogische Hochschule Thurgau, Switzerland*

Parenting is subject to constant change and is guided by social discourse on what constitutes a good childhood and upbringing. Two topics have become increasingly relevant in this context: attachment parenting, which is mainly disseminated via social media, and intensive parenting, which describes over-involvement and unrealistic standards of parenting. Previous instruments for parenting have not yet included these aspects and are therefore now reaching their limits. The aim was therefore to develop and validate a scale for capture parenting styles that incorporates today's discourse on parenting. The theoretical basis is provided by the work of Hurrelmann and Bauer (2021), which identifies three dimensions: stimulation, recognition, and guidance, each in the context of orientation toward children's needs and authority. In order to adequately cover authority, the dimension of power exercise was added. An initial pilot study of the developed scale was conducted using an online questionnaire of parents in Thurgau before (06-07/2025) and after their children started kindergarten (10-11/2025). Based on the data from the first survey phase, three of the four dimensions could be extracted. However, stimulation and recognition had to be combined. Correlations with intensive parenting (recorded in adapted form by Liss et al. 2012) were demonstrated. The poster presents the development and refinement of the scale as well as initial validation steps. The results will be discussed whether the scale is a suitable instrument to capture parenting styles today.

## **Play and day-to-day activities supporting language acquisition: coaching for educators in childcare centers**

*Eva Heuss, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education; Franziska Vogt, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education; Fabienne Bohler, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education; Tanja Veraguth, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education; Marina Summerauer, Frühe Förderung Stadt Zürich*

Children enter kindergarten with varied levels of German language skills, ranging from no prior exposure to advanced (first or second) language acquisition (Albers 2010; Bayer 2011). Limited skills regarding the language of schooling can lead to disadvantages in kindergarten and school, as language skills impact peer interaction and access to learning (Keller et al. 2015; Winsler et al. 2014).

To support early access to the language of schooling (German), a project targets three-year-old children who do not yet speak it. Families are encouraged to enrol their child in daycare. Language specialists visit biweekly to model support strategies and coach educators; teams receive tailored training.

This poster examines the implementation of the project to improve language support for children learning German as a second language and discusses feedback from participating early childhood educators.

In 2023/24, the project supported 513 children in 260 groups across 148 daycare centers: 43% of the 338 officially registered centers in the targeted city (Stadt Zürich, 2023). Each group was visited an average of 18.4 times during the school year.

An anonymous survey conducted among 210 coached early childhood educators and 72 daycare managers (n = 282) showed high approval for the project: 95.7% agreed that the specialists effectively encouraged children to speak, and 92.5% observed improved peer interaction. Coaching was widely viewed as supportive, with over 96% expressing full or partial agreement.

The results suggest that targeted, practice-integrated language support and coaching can strengthen early language development and peer interaction for multilingual children in early childhood education.

## **Inhibition in Children with and without Neurodevelopmental Conditions**

*Emily Meachon, University of Basel, Faculty of Psychology, Switzerland and University of Basel, Department of Sport, Exercise and Health, Switzerland; Andy Cao, University of Basel, Faculty of Psychology, Switzerland; Kate Wilmut, Oxford Brookes University, Centre for Psychological Research, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes; Alexander Grob, University of Basel, Faculty of Psychology, Switzerland; Sebastian Ludyga, University of Basel, Department of Sport, Exercise and Health, Switzerland*

**Introduction.** Inhibiting actions and behaviors are essential skills for daily life, often involving coordination of cognitive and motor systems. While these systems and related inhibition skills improve from early childhood to adulthood, the development of inhibition is often delayed and more burdensome for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders. This includes conditions with core cognitive and/or motor skills difficulties, such as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). At present, a majority of the evidence surrounding inhibition in these groups is based on basic tasks that do not necessarily capture the complexities of real-world behavior.

**Methods.** In order to approach a more ecologically valid assessment of inhibition, we will apply the novel "stop walking task" of inhibition, which extends the traditional stop signal task to utilize step-based gross motor responses. Comparisons will be made within participants in sitting versus walking contexts and between groups of children with and without DCD and/or ADHD. Detailed study plans and preliminary results will be reported.

**Results.** We expect that all individuals will show similar patterns from the sitting to walking tasks, however, those with neurodevelopmental conditions will have reduced baselines in behavioral and neural outcomes compared to typical developing children.

**Discussion.** This study has implications for (1) deciphering the unique baselines and burdens in complex cognitive-motor integration in children with neurodevelopmental disorders and (2) understanding how developing brains coordinate complex motor inhibition through a task resembling real-world behavior.

**Conclusion.** Further interpretations will be provided in accordance with preliminary results.

## Developmental Changes in Processing Audiovisual Congruence and Incongruence across Childhood

**Carmen Providoli**, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland and URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and University Children's Hospital Zurich and University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Sarah V. Di Pietro**, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Switzerland and URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Nina Raduner**, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland and URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and University Children's Hospital Zurich and University of Zurich, Switzerland and Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Nico Ehrhardt**, URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien, Germany; **Sofia Weidle Scatolin**, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Iliana I. Karipidis**, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland; **Amelie Haugg**, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Christian Ruff**, Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland and URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Department of Neuroeconomics, University Zurich, Switzerland; **Michael von Rhein**, URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and University Children's Hospital Zurich and University of Zurich, Switzerland; **Nora M. Raschle**, Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland and URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich, Switzerland and equal contribution; **Silvia Brem**, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital of Psychiatry, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Switzerland and URPP Adaptive Brain Circuits in Development and Learning, University of Zurich, Switzerland and equal contribution

Audiovisual (AV) processing and integration is essential for language development and comprehension and continues to mature throughout childhood. How the brain processes AV congruent and AV incongruent information, and how this is influenced by age, warrants further investigation.

We developed a naturalistic movie-watching paradigm in which the narration was either congruent (AVcon) or incongruent (AVinc) with the visual scenes, and acquired fMRI data from 95 healthy children (ages 5.7–13 years). We examined age-related differences in brain activation during AVcon and AVinc processing at the whole-brain level ( $p_{FWE} < .05$ ) and within functional regions of interest.

Age was positively associated with an increase in the differential activation between AVinc and AVcon scenes in the left angular gyrus, bilateral frontal operculum, bilateral middle frontal and left superior frontal gyri. Further, younger children showed stronger deactivation in a cluster encompassing bilaterally posterior, middle and anterior parts of the cingulate gyrus when processing AVinc compared to AVcon scenes.

Our results suggest a developmental shift from broad suppression of internally oriented networks and limited engagement of higher-order control areas in younger children, toward a more mature strategy engaging regions for efficient semantic integration and conflict resolution during audiovisual incongruency in older children.

## Integrating the Perspectives of Young Children and Parents from diverse Socio-Cultural Backgrounds on their Socio-Urban Environment into Municipal Early Childhood Policy

**Xavier Conus**, University of Fribourg, Switzerland; **Caroline Kamrath**, City of Fribourg, Switzerland; **Carole Terrier**, City of Fribourg, Switzerland

The current context calls for greater citizen participation in public action (Beuret & Cadoret, 2015). Within early childhood education and care policies, this ambition requires the inclusion of the perspectives of families and children themselves, acknowledging their right to express their views on matters that concern them (Garnier & Rayna, 2017).

This poster presents both the approach and the findings of a research project carried out in collaboration between a university researcher and two municipal early childhood officers in the city of Fribourg, Switzerland. Designed to inform the development of the city's early childhood policy, the project employed a qualitative methodology involving group workshops to gather the views of 35 young children and 16 parents—half of whom were non-native speakers who had recently arrived in Switzerland—on their socio-urban environment.

Analysis of the data highlights the socio-urban environment as an essential space for young children to explore and socialise, in which they engage in a wide range of cognitive, motor, relational, playful, and creative experiences, even in places not specifically intended for them. However, the contrasting perspectives of children and parents reveal potential inequalities in opportunities for exploration and access to certain parts of the socio-urban environment. This underscores the importance of thinking in an interdisciplinary way how to promote spaces frequented by young children as informal learning environments accessible to all and strengthen the participation of all children and families in the conception of the services offered in these spaces to foster equal opportunities.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 11:30am – 1:00pm / PER22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium**

#### **Symposium 4**

#### **Navigating Languages and Multilingualism in Early Childhood: Familial and Institutional Practices in Challenging Contexts**

*Chair(s): Alex Knoll, Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW, Social Work; Franziska Vogt, St. Gallen University of Teacher Education (PHSG); Ursina Jaeger, Thurgau University of Teacher Education (PH TG)*

Multilingualism is a defining feature of many children's early experiences, particularly in contexts shaped by migration and social inequality. This symposium brings together three empirical studies from Switzerland that examine how multilingualism is negotiated in early childhood across diverse settings: within families, in transition to early childhood education institutions (daycare centers), and in informal learning environments such as playgroups. The contributions explore how language practices are embedded in broader socio-political and institutional conditions, and how these conditions shape everyday experiences of children and families. They address tensions between home and institutional language norms, professional attitudes toward linguistic diversity, and the role of language in educational transitions. These dynamics are especially relevant in situations where families encounter various challenges related to migration, integration, and institutional expectations. The symposium adopts an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing from education, sociology/sociolinguistics, social anthropology, and social work, and invites reflection on how early childhood institutions and families can navigate and value linguistic diversity.

#### **Presentations of the Symposium**

#### **Language Practices and Dealing with Multilingualism in Early Childhood Institutions: Ethnographic Insights**

*Andrea Scholian, Sofiane Yousfi, Alex Knoll, Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW, Social Work*

This presentation is based on an ethnographic study funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation that explores how multilingualism is addressed in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Drawing on participant observation (Breidenstein et al., 2013) in different daycare centers, the study investigates everyday interactions, routines, and institutional practices to understand how children with different linguistic backgrounds are engaged with by professionals. Theoretical concepts from sociology and sociolinguistics (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 2007) suggest that different languages are endowed with varying degrees of prestige and that, accordingly, their speakers receive

different levels of recognition in educational institutions, which can have an impact on their future educational careers and social (in)equality.

The empirical material provides rich insights into how linguistic diversity is interpreted and handled in practice. The study explores children's, parents' and teachers' everyday practices by participant observations as well as their perspectives by interviews and group discussions. Variations in language-related practices may reflect broader institutional cultures and professional orientations toward multilingualism. By focusing on situated practices and interactions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language is embedded and dealt with in early childhood institutions.

References:

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. HUP.

Breidenstein, G., Hirschauer, S., Kalthoff, H., & Nieswand, B. (2013). *Ethnografie: Die Praxis der Feldforschung* (1. Aufl.). UVK UTB.

Heller, M. (2007). Bilingualism as Ideology and Practice. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism. A Social Approach* (pp. 1–22). Palgrave MacMillan.

### **Transitions to center-based childcare for children and parents with limited local language knowledge**

*Fabienne Bohler, Janine Hostettler Schärer, Franziska Vogt, St. Gallen University of Teacher Education (PHSG)*

Many research findings emphasize the effectiveness of high quality early childhood education for future academic outcomes (Anders, 2013). However, transitioning into daycare can be challenging without a common language for day-to-day communication.

This research seeks to understand the transition into center-based childcare for children and their parents who do not speak the local language. Furthermore, the research aims at identifying practices of early childhood educators which support the process. Researchers observed the transition processes of four children in ethnographic case studies. The length of the transition processes varied greatly: between 7 and 18 visits per child and family were observed, with the research team present for a total of 39 visits to the centers. In addition, semi-structured interviews with three childcare center heads were conducted.

The results reveal both, general and specific challenges for the transition of children with little knowledge of the local language transitioning into daycare centers were identified. Specifically, linguistic practices such as translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014), the involvement of interpreters, and multilingual information can improve the process.

Some aspects are important for all children, also for families speaking the local language: a transition period tailored to individual needs (Siegrist & Widmer, 2018), a key educators' focus and responsiveness on building a relationship with the child, and targeted and structured communication to support families in the transition process. Further steps toward a migration-sensitive transition process are indicated for research and practice.

References:

Anders, Y. (2013). Stichwort: Auswirkungen frühkindlicher institutioneller Betreuung und Bildung. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 16(2), 237-275.

García, O. & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Siegrist, S. & Widmer, F. (2018). Das „Stadtzürcher Transitionsmodell“: ein modulares Modell für die Gestaltung des Übergangs von der Familie in Institutionen der Frühpädagogik. In K. Fasseing Heim, R. Lehner, T. Dütsch, U. Arnaldo, E. Hildebrandt, M. Wer Huber, & B. Zumsteg (Hrsg.), *Übergänge in der frühen Kindheit* (S. 237–258). Waxmann Verlag.

### **Navigating compulsory play: the example of preschool language support**

*Ursina Jaeger, Thurgau University of Teacher Education (PH TG); Alex Knoll, Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW, Social Work*

In 2024, the canton of Thurgau introduced the “Selektive Obligatorium der vorschulischen Sprachförderung” (SOVS). This policy measure provides for compulsory German language learning for children who, at the age of three, are

identified as still having insufficient knowledge of the local language of instruction in school. Every municipality implemented the policy measure in coordination with existing early childhood institutions (daycare centres, playgroups, childminders). While attendance of these institutions is voluntary for children without language support, but subject to a fee, the authorities cover the costs of compulsory attendance.

Our ongoing study, funded by the Lotteriefonds, examines the introduction of the SOVS with a focus on social differentiation in the context of this restructuring of the field of early childhood care and education. Using a wide array of qualitative research methods (ethnography, focus groups, interviews, document analysis) in the methodological spirit of 'studying through' policies (Wright and Reinhold 2011; Shore, Wright, and Però 2011), we ask: How is the SOVS organised, implemented and perceived at the municipal level? And what does this mean for the field of early childhood education and care and the handling of linguistic diversity in the context of educational spaces shaped by migration? (Blommaert 2015).

In the symposium, we present initial findings with a focus on how language and multilingualism are used as a cipher for a seemingly neutral social order in early childhood, as well as how the organisation of multilingualism contributes to social differentiation.

References:

Blommaert, J. (2015). Language: The great diversifier. In S. Vertovec (Ed.), *Routledge international handbook of diversity studies* (pp. 83–90). Routledge.

Shore, C., Wright, S., & Però, D. (Eds.). (2011). *Policy worlds: Anthropology and the analysis of contemporary power*. Berghahn Books.

Wright, S., & Reinhold, S. (2011). 'Studying Through': A Strategy for Studying Political Transformation. Or Sex, Lies and British Politics. In C. Shore, S. Wright, & D. Però (Eds.), *Policy worlds: Anthropology and the analysis of contemporary power* (Vol. 14, pp. 86–104). Berghahn Books.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 11:30am – 1:00pm / PER21 E130**

### **Symposium 5**

#### **Multi-sectoral Approaches to Child Protection in Switzerland: Early Childhood Adversity, Contextual Risks, and Multisystemic Interventions**

*Chair(s): David Bürgin, University Psychiatric Hospital Basel, University of Basel, Switzerland; Meret Sophie Wallimann, University of Applied Science Zurich (ZHAW), Zurich, Switzerland*

This symposium sheds light on the adversity that children and adolescents encounter growing up in challenging contexts, drawing from multi-sectoral Swiss research. Research presented includes epidemiological, intervention, and administrative data to illustrate complex individual, familial, and contextual risks. The first presentation addresses early onset and chronicity of maltreatment, revealing distinct household risk factors and nuanced correlates for early or chronic psychological and physical abuse self-reported by youths in the school context. The second talk reveals insights from young adult care leavers and highlights intersecting biosocial, migratory, and familial stressors before and during out-of-home care, emphasizing the cumulative burden and the need for targeted preventive strategies starting early in childhood. The third talk displays the effectiveness of Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN), demonstrating improvements in child and parent outcomes and reduced neglect risk in high-risk families. The last presentation provides an overview over the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child protection practices through administrative data trends and service user perspectives, revealing service gaps and increased disadvantage among vulnerable groups. Together, these insights provide multi-sectoral perspectives on familial, systemic, and pandemic-related influences, making a compelling case for multifaceted interventions and integrated monitoring approaches to better support children growing up in adversity. This symposium aims to foster dialogue and collaboration across sectors including schools, youth welfare and mental health services, and child protection services to advance child well-being in challenging contexts.

**Early Onset and Chronic Exposure to Child Maltreatment: Illustrating Patterns of Household Risk Factors for Psychological and Physical Abuse in Swiss Adolescents**

*Meret Sophie Wallimann, Julia Quehenberger, Thomas Gabriel, University of Applied Science Zurich (ZHAW), Zurich, Switzerland*

Background: Early childhood maltreatment is discussed as both a harmful influence on developmental outcomes and a significant risk factor for subsequent victimization. But there is limited research on risk factor patterns associated with early onset and chronic exposure, particularly in general population samples.

Objective: This study aims to investigate: (1) the age chronology of self-reported exposure to child maltreatment, and (2) illustrate risk factor patterns associated with early onset or chronic exposure across distinct maltreatment types.

Methods: The study relies on a classroom-based online survey in Switzerland with a sample of  $n = 1'402$  adolescents. Self-reported data were collected on psychological and physical abuse, along with household-level risk factors.

Result: Among the 41.7% of students reporting psychological abuse, one third (32.5%) indicated chronic or early exposure. For physical abuse, 34% reported victimization, of which 37.8% were exposed either chronically or since early childhood. Network analyses revealed distinct patterns across maltreatment types.

Discussions & Conclusions: Early and chronic exposure to child maltreatment is frequent and closely tied to household risk factors. While physical and psychological abuse share some common correlates, their household contexts differ, highlighting the importance of tailoring prevention and intervention strategies to specific forms of maltreatment.

**Early Family Backgrounds and Placement Histories of Young Adults Previously Placed Out-of-Home: Findings from the 'Swiss Youth Welfare Trajectories: Learning from experience' JAEL-study**

*David Bürgin, University Psychiatric Hospital Basel, University of Basel, Switzerland; Delfine d'Huart, University of Basel, Switzerland; Nils Jenkel, University Psychiatric Hospital Basel, University of Basel, Switzerland; Marc Schmid; University Psychiatric Hospital Basel, University of Basel, Switzerland*

Introduction: Young people placed in out-of-home care (OHC) report high rates of parental maltreatment, accumulate diverse psychosocial stressors, and are exposed to contextual adversity before, during, and after OHC. This talk aims to highlighting early family backgrounds and placement biographies of young adults who were previously in OHC highlighting complex, cumulating, and intersecting risks.

Methods: In the JAEL study, 231 formerly out-of-home placed young adults (~1/3 women, Mage = 26) were assessed about ten years after the MAZ.-study using online questionnaires and interviews. Family background and placement characteristics were captured with anamnestic questionnaires and qualitative interviews. Child maltreatment retrospectively with the MACE scale.

Results: Before placement, over 40% lived in single-parent households, many in patchwork families, often with lower or troubled socio-economic backgrounds. About half had at least one foreign-born parent, with some reporting migration-related stressors. Two-thirds had a parent with psychiatric treatment, substance problems, or a criminal conviction. Overall, 87.5% of participants reported child maltreatment before age 18, 61.4% before age 6. At first placement, mean age was 11.5 years: 53.6% entered care between ages 13–17, 29.4% between ages 6–12, 7.1% between ages 3–5, and 6.2% between ages 0–2. On average, participants experienced 3.7 placements; 4.4% had more than 10, and 37% had lived in foster care as well as residential homes.

Discussions & Conclusions: Children in out-of-home care face early and intersecting risks, with maltreatment and adversity compounding over time. Prevention should strengthen families and reduce early stressors, while interventions foster resilience during and after placement.

## **MST-CAN – A Family Psychiatric Approach for High-Risk Families Facing Neglect and Abuse**

*Corinna Buderer, Tania Perez, Marc Schmid, University Psychiatric Hospital Basel, University of Basel, Switzerland*

Background: Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) is a structured and licensed home-based, family psychiatric treatment program. The program aims to reduce the psychological strain on families and, most importantly, to lower the risk of neglect and abuse. It is specifically designed for high-risk families, where parents often suffer from mental health disorders and are overwhelmed by parenting responsibilities, leading child protection services to consider out-of-home placements.

Method: Several studies were conducted with N = 88 families. The children, with a mean age of 9.36 (SD = 3.22), were assessed using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and the Relationship Problems Questionnaire. Parental stress was measured with the Parental Stress Scale and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). The outcomes for children were compared to a matched control group from residential care facilities (N = 43). Additionally, the risk of neglect was evaluated by referring social workers using the Child Neglect Index.

Results: Both parental and child psychological distress significantly decreased, with medium to large effect sizes ( $d = 0.5 - 0.7$ ). The risk of neglect, as assessed by social workers, showed a substantial reduction with a large effect size. Notably, 95% of the children were able to remain with their families, without any further reports of endangerment.

Discussion & Conclusion: MST-CAN demonstrates the value of combining real-world, environment-focused interventions with evidence-based psychotherapy for high-risk families. The program highlights the potential for keeping families together by addressing core psychological and environmental challenges effectively.

## **Child Protection in Challenging Contexts: Trends in Administrative Data and Experiences of Service Users During and After Covid-19**

*Nicole Eicher, Kaj Flurina Affolter, Tim Tausendfreund, Dragan Stoll, Andreas Jud, University of Applied Science Zurich (ZHAW), Zurich, Switzerland*

Introduction: The Covid-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for child protection (CP) services, raising concerns about how vulnerable children and families were identified and supported. At the same time risk factors for child abuse and neglect (e.g., parental stress) were exacerbated, especially in families facing multiple burdens even before the pandemic. This study combines quantitative analyses of administrative data with qualitative accounts from service users to examine how the pandemic affected CP and those involved.

Methods: Using time-series analyses, we investigate trends in CP mandates in Zurich from 2016 to 2024 (N= 19,615 CP cases). In parallel, experiences of 11 service users (data collection ongoing) are explored through narrative interviews.

Results: Preliminary findings suggest that service provision dropped during the first months of the pandemic, peaked in 2022, and subsequently returned to pre-pandemic trends by 2023. Insights into service users' perspectives highlight their dependence on institutional implementation of Covid-19 regulations, with stricter measures increasing disadvantages. Inequalities were further exacerbated when lost resources could not be compensated by alternative strategies.

Discussion & Conclusion: Findings indicate that the pandemic shaped not only the timing and extent of interventions but also the profiles of those reached or overlooked by the system. This underscores the risk of systemic blind spots and the need for integrated approaches to monitoring and addressing vulnerabilities. The triangulation of CP administrative data and service users' perspectives enables structural trends to be linked to subjective experiences and highlights the complexity and multidimensionality of Covid-19 as a social phenomenon.

## Symposium 6

### Context Matters: The Role of Parenting and Pedagogy in Children's Biobehavioral Development from Infancy to the Early School Years

Chair(s): **Ryan Murray**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; **Daniel Schechter**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Biology and Medicine, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

Across contexts of home and school, converging evidence shows these different environments precisely fine tune children's self-regulation and brain function. In infancy, intrusive or withdrawn parenting covaries with infant heart rate—especially in father–infant and triadic play—revealing context-specific biobehavioral coupling. In toddlerhood, maternal processing of emotional context and sensitive caregiving modulate intergenerational risk for dysregulation; protective effects persist into peri-puberty, reducing disruptive behaviors. Schooling offers complementary leverage: older kindergarten entry associates with higher effortful control, implying modest gains in self-regulation beyond age alone. Pedagogical design also matters: autonomy-supportive Montessori versus traditional classrooms show age-dependent differences in the brain's "arrow of time" (temporal non-reversibility) alongside advantages in language and creativity, linking everyday classroom structure to systems-level maturation. Converging neural evidence further indicates context-sensitive phenotypes that connect parental self-regulation and experiential history with children's socioemotional behavior and brain organization. Parents' emotion-regulation strategies and childhood experiences moderate parent–child synchrony across corticolimbic structure and socioemotional neural responses, in functions directly related to children's well-being. Building on these converging findings, this symposium will pursue four main learning objectives: (1) Delineate proximal parenting–physiology coupling in infancy; (2) Explain how maternal contextual processing and sensitivity buffer intergenerational risk in toddlerhood and beyond; (3) Evaluate classroom timing and pedagogy as levers for self-regulation and neural dynamics; and (4) Identify neural phenotypes and parental moderators linking caregiving to well-being in early and mid-childhood. This symposium thus bridges parenting and schooling contexts to reveal how early environments sculpt trajectories of self-regulation, socioemotional health, and neural maturation.

#### Presentations of the Symposium

#### Dynamic associations between mothers' and fathers' parenting behaviors and infant physiological emotion regulation

**Hervé Tissot**, Center for Family Studies, University Institute of Psychotherapy, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital & University of Lausanne, Switzerland; **Setareh Ranjibar**, Centre for Psychiatric Epidemiology and Psychopathology, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital & University of Lausanne, Switzerland; **Valentine Rattaz**, Center for Family Studies, University Institute of Psychotherapy, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital & University of Lausanne, Switzerland; Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland; **Nilo Puglisi**, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland; **Nicolas Favez**, Center for Family Studies, University Institute of Psychotherapy, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital & University of Lausanne, Switzerland; Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland

Emotion regulation (ER) is a key developmental process shaped in parent-infant interactions, where parents and infants dynamically co-regulate emotions. Appropriate parental responses foster co-regulation, while unadjusted behaviors (intrusion, withdrawal) may increase infant stress, observable via heart rate (HR). Yet, most research has focused on mother-infant dyads, neglecting fathers and triadic dynamics.

We examined links between infant HR and intrusive or withdrawn parental behaviors (IWPBs) during mother-infant, father-infant, and triadic interactions. Eighty families with 3-month-old infants participated. Parents engaged in three successive 2-min free play sequences (mother-infant, father-infant, triadic), while infant HR was continuously recorded. Each sequence was divided into 5s intervals (72 per family; n = 5760). IWPBs intensity was coded on a 5-

point scale in each interval, and infant HR was averaged within intervals. Dynamic network analyses were used to test within-interval and cross-lagged (lag-1) associations between the variables.

Results showed that higher IWPB intensity was significantly associated with increased infant HR within intervals, while it predicted HR increases in subsequent intervals. Context comparisons revealed significant within-interval associations in triadic and father-infant interactions, but weaker or absent effects in mother-infant contexts. When focusing on intrusions, we found significant within-interval and bidirectional cross-lagged associations with HR, though patterns differed by context: mother-infant and triadic contexts showed within-interval effects only, whereas in father-infant interactions infant HR predicted later paternal intrusions.

Findings highlight dynamic, context-specific links between parental behavior and infant physiology, underscoring the need to include fathers and triadic contexts in ER research.

### **Context processing and its moderating role on the link between posttraumatic stress and mother-child outcomes**

**Shannen Graf**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; Faculty of Biology and Medicine, University of Lausanne (UNIL), Lausanne, Switzerland; **Ryan Murray**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; **Sébastien Urben**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Biology and Medicine, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland; **Daniel Schechter**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Biology and Medicine, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

This pilot study explored the moderating role of context processing (i.e., context-encoding and -memory, CEM), in the intergenerational transmission of posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) from mothers to their toddlers. Thirty-one mothers (M age = 33.87 years, SD = 4.14) and their 1- to 3-year-old toddlers (M age = 22.66 months, SD = 7.01) participated. Mothers reported their current PTSS and their child's regulatory problems. They completed a CEM task where they had to recognize contexts that they had previously seen paired with emotional faces (i.e., angry and neutral faces). Maternal sensitivity was assessed during free play and after a 3-minute separation using the CARE-Index, and a ratio score was calculated to see the change in maternal sensitivity following the separation. Results showed that while recognition of contexts previously associated with angry faces did not moderate the link between PTSS and the change in maternal sensitivity, better recognition of contexts previously associated with neutral faces did: mothers with higher PTSS showed a greater increase in sensitivity following the separation when they were better at recognizing the contexts that were previously linked to these ambiguous faces. Furthermore, maternal PTSS was associated with child dysregulation only in mothers with poor context processing of contexts that were shown with angry faces. These findings suggest that context processing may influence both maternal behavior and child outcomes, and that that is influenced by the emotion displayed by the faces. This offers insights into mechanisms underlying the intergenerational transmission of trauma and potential targets for early intervention.

### **Maternal Stress-Related Neural Reactivity and Caregiving Sensitivity in Early Childhood: Associations with Peri-Pubertal Disruptive Behaviors**

**Ryan Murray**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; **Setareh Ranjbar**, Centre for Psychiatric Epidemiology and Psychopathology, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital & University of Lausanne, Switzerland; **Shannen Graf**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; Faculty of Biology and Medicine, University of Lausanne (UNIL), Lausanne, Switzerland; **Sandra Rusconi Serpa**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland; Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service, Department of Women, Mothers, and Children, Geneva University Hospitals, Geneva, CH; **Camille Piguet**, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service, Department of Women, Mothers, and Children, Geneva University Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland; Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland; **Sébastien Urben**, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), Lausanne, Switzerland;

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Disruptive behavior disorders (DBD) among youth are a pressing public-health concern and a key pathway of intergenerational risk of trauma transmission. In the 8-year longitudinal Geneva Early Childhood Stress Study, we examined whether maternal psychological, behavioral, and neurobiological factors assessed in toddlerhood predicted peri-pubertal disruptive behaviors. Mother–child dyads ( $n=28$ ; child age at Phase 1=12–44 months; Phase 3=9–15 years) completed clinical interviews; mothers underwent fMRI while viewing emotion-related (prosocial and threat versus neutral) and threat-related (threat vs prosocial) adult interactions; maternal sensitivity (MS) was coded from filmed play interactions; child disruptive symptoms were evaluated via the Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia at follow-up. Ten a-priori neural clusters were reduced via principal components analysis, yielding two theory-consistent indices—Neural-Emotion and Neural-Threat—and a third component Neural-Preoccupation that reflected precuneus activity. Using exploratory forward stepwise regression adjusted for Phase 3 child age, sex, and socioeconomic status, Neural-Threat and MS uniquely predicted fewer disruptive behaviors suggesting protection, whereas Neural-Preoccupation predicted more symptoms, suggesting risk. A priori moderation testing showed that MS buffered the relation between threat-related neural activity and disruptive behavior, with greater MS amplifying the inverse association. Maternal PTSS severity during early childhood showed no direct association with disruptive behaviors during peri-puberty. Findings suggest that stress-responsive maternal brain function relates to children’s disruptive behaviors, and that early sensitive caregiving may potentiate protective neural processes. Results highlight neurobehavioral targets for early, trauma-informed prevention: reducing parental distress, enhancing sensitivity, and supporting adaptive threat monitoring.

### **Age at Kindergarten Entry as a Context for Temperament Development**

*Lisa Wagner, Moritz Daum, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development and Department of Psychology, University of Zurich*

**Introduction:** In Switzerland, kindergarten represents a transition from predominantly play-based contexts to environments that combine peer interaction with adult-guided routines, structured participation, and increasing demands on self-regulation. While schooling is known to shape cognitive skills, its role in temperament development – an important predictor of adjustment, persistence, and social functioning – remains less well understood. Examining the timing of kindergarten entry provides insight into how this transition relates to socio-emotional outcomes beyond chronological age.

**Methods:** Caregivers of 505 children (50.5% girls; mean age = 5.60 years,  $SD = 0.89$ ), all of whom entered kindergarten according to the standard cut-off date, completed the 36-item Children’s Behavior Questionnaire (Putnam & Rothbart, 2006). Children attended either the first (42.0%) or second (40.4%) year of kindergarten, or one of the first two years of primary school (21.6%). Most caregivers were mothers from middle- to high-income households. Regression analyses tested associations between relative age at entry and temperament dimensions, controlling for chronological age and gender.

**Results:** Older entry age was associated with higher effortful control, but showed no significant associations with surgency or negative emotionality.

**Discussion:** These findings indicate that the timing of kindergarten entry may contribute modestly to socio-emotional development, with effects strongest for self-regulatory aspects of temperament.

**Conclusion:** Longitudinal research is needed to clarify within-person processes and inform education policy on school-entry cut-off dates, with implications for both developmental science and interdisciplinary debates on early childhood education.

## **Pedagogy, autonomy scaffolding, and the brain's arrow of time**

*Elvira del Agua Banyeres*, Center for Brain and Cognition, Computational Neuroscience Group, Department of Information and Communication Technologies, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona 08005, Spain; *Anira Escrichs*, Center for Brain and Cognition, Computational Neuroscience Group, Department of Information and Communication Technologies, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona 08005, Spain; *Yonatan Sanz Perl*, Center for Brain and Cognition, Computational Neuroscience Group, Department of Information and Communication Technologies, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona 08005, Spain; *Morten Kringelbach*, Centre for Eudaimonia and Human Flourishing, Linacre College, University of Oxford, Oxford OX39BX, United Kingdom; *Solange Denervaud*, CIBM Center for Biomedical Imaging, MRI imaging and technology, Polytechnical School of Lausanne, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL), 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland; *Gustavo Deco* Center for Brain and Cognition, Computational Neuroscience Group, Department of Information and Communication Technologies, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona 08005, Spain

Early environments leave measurable signatures on developing neural systems. We ask whether everyday classroom structure, an actionable environmental lever, relates to age-dependent properties of large-scale brain activity. In a cross-sectional cohort of 96 children (4-16 years) enrolled in Montessori (MSC) or traditional (TSC) schools, we quantified the brain's "arrow of time" as the temporal asymmetry (non-reversibility) of fMRI signals during resting state (undirected cognition) and movie-watching (externally guided attention). This thermodynamics-inspired marker indexes directional flow in neural dynamics related to adaptability and flexibility in adults.

The schooling models differed in autonomy scaffolding: Montessori progressively expands learner autonomy within a stable framework; traditional classrooms typically shift from open-ended early learning to performance-oriented instruction. Behaviorally, MSC showed higher language and convergent/divergent creativity scores. At the neural level, age moderated pedagogy effects. During rest, non-reversibility increased with age in MSC but decreased with age in TSC, with strongest contributions from somatomotor, dorsal attention, and frontoparietal networks. During movie-watching, group differences were larger in younger children and attenuated with age, with residual effects in subcortical, visual, and default-mode networks. Exploratory analyses indicated higher non-reversibility in females than males, more pronounced in TSC.

We interpret these findings as evidence that autonomy-supportive, developmentally aligned pedagogy tracks with distinct maturation of the brain's temporal directionality alongside advantages in language and creativity. As "Context Matters," this work connects educational context to systems-level neural organization, offering a mechanistic lens on how early learning environments may cultivate adaptable, equitable developmental trajectories.

## **Familial Neural Similarity as a Context-Sensitive Mechanism in Early Socio-emotional Development**

*Plamina Dimanova*, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development at the University of Zurich, Department of Psychology; *Sofia Scatolin*, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development at the University of Zurich, Department of Psychology; *Elena Federici*, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development at the University of Zurich, Department of Psychology; Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich; *Dennis Saikkonen*, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development at the University of Zurich, Department of Psychology; *Nora Raschle*, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development at the University of Zurich, Department of Psychology; Neuroscience Center Zurich, University of Zurich and ETH Zurich; URPP Adaptive Brain Circuit in Development and Learning

Family environments shape neurodevelopment, yet neural pathways linking parental characteristics to children's development remain underdefined. Across >250 family members, we operationalize familial neural similarity (FNS) as cross-generational resemblance in brain structure and function and test its links to socioemotional outcomes and context. Using structural MRI, we show FNS is measurable and feature-specific. Moreover, in the corticolimbic tract (CLT), linked to socioemotional processing and mental health, biologically related parent-child dyads show greater similarity than random adult-child pairings, and higher CLT similarity associates with children's mental well-being. In a sample including fathers, robust parent-child similarity emerges for neocortical ( $r=0.47$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and

subcortical CLT components ( $r=0.42$ ,  $p<.001$ ), alongside behavioral similarity in well-being ( $r=0.25$ ,  $p=.023$ ); paternal childhood experiences moreover moderate transmission (adj.  $R^2=0.32$ ,  $p=.007$ ). Functional analyses from our SNSF-SMILIES project converge: during socioemotional movie watching, whole-brain FNS exceeds that of unrelated pairs ( $B=0.21$ ,  $p=.004$ ), with sex-specific amplification (mother–daughter:  $B=0.48$ ; father–son:  $B=0.37$ ). Regionally, similarity is elevated in prefrontal and temporal systems, (vlPFC;  $B=0.23$ ,  $p<.001$ ), where FNS tracks parent–child similarity in internalizing symptoms ( $B=0.94$ ,  $p=.003$ ) and is moderated by parents’ emotion-regulation strategies ( $B=0.06$ ,  $p=.006$ ). Complementary data using an explicit Theory of Mind task also demonstrates heightened parent–child similarity in right temporoparietal junction ( $B=0.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ), relevant for mentalizing. Collectively, FNS offers a context-sensitive neural phenotype linking family history and experiences to children’s socioemotional brain organization. Ultimately, integrating biobehavioral synchrony with FNS in accelerated longitudinal and clinical designs are expected to move the field from description to prediction and prevention in early development.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 11:30am – 1:00pm / PER21 D130**

### **Workshop 1**

#### **Children’s Voices in Action: Applying the Mosaic Approach**

*Delphine Odier Guedj, Haute école pédagogique du canton de vaud, Switzerland; Floriane Moulin, Haute école pédagogique du canton de vaud, Switzerland; Céline Chatenoud, Université de Genève, Switzerland*

Consulting children on issues that affect them is essential, particularly during challenging or transitional periods in their lives. According to Groundwater-Smith (2011), empowering children to express themselves not only combats their invisibility but also informs career choices, support mechanisms, and policies that impact them (Badham, 2004). Achieving this requires appropriate methodological approaches, particularly those that use creative and participatory methods (Ellis, 2017).

In ongoing research funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation in the French-speaking region of Switzerland, we explored children’s experiences of transition using the Mosaic approach. This approach is grounded in six core principles that emphasize active participation, flexibility, and reflective practice. Data collection draws on multiple tools—such as drawings, photographs, discussions, and observations—to capture the diversity of children’s expressions, making it inherently multi-method. A key aim is for the approach to be embedded in professional practice, allowing children’s voices to be heard even without researchers present.

In the workshop, participants will directly experiment with the Mosaic approach on the theme of “empowerment in their professional or family domain,” focusing on a socially relevant question chosen collectively at the start. The workshop is divided into three phases: a presentation phase of the approach and its components (15'), a second creation phase (45 min), during which participants will use various craft materials and photographs to explore the six principles, and finally, an evaluation phase (30 min), during which the adaptations necessary for the specific family or professional context of each participant will be identified.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 2:00pm – 3:30pm / PER22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium**

### **Symposium 7**

#### **Fostering Diversity, Inclusion, and Participation in Early Childhood: Tools, Perspectives, and Participatory Approaches**

*Chair(s): Geisa Bragança, University of Teacher Education Thurgau, Switzerland; University of Konstanz, Germany*

Young children grow up in contexts shaped by cultural, linguistic, and developmental diversity. In line with the UN children’s rights framework, it is crucial to ensure participation and foster diversity-sensitive practices from the earliest years. This symposium takes an interdisciplinary view, outlining challenges and strategies for successful participation across early childhood settings.

The first presentation introduces and validates a tool for assessing diversity-sensitive practices in Swiss and German Early Childhood Education (ECE) classrooms. Grounded in the Anti-Bias Approach, it examines how

practices manifest across Switzerland's three language regions and discusses implications for professional development.

The second presentation presents the project "Diversity-Reflective Play Materials. App-Supported Training in ECEC Institutions" (DiSiKit). Addressing the need for diversity-reflective competencies and practical tools, the project combines expert consultation, app-supported process support, and training in ten institutions. It links research with practice through case- and material-based learning, connected to digitalisation, and provides insights for ECEC professionalisation.

The third presentation examines participation of children with and without disabilities in inclusive ECEC settings in Germany. By integrating parents' and educators' perspectives, it identifies barriers, resources, and strategies shaping participation, with focus on social inclusion, peer interactions, and institutional culture.

The fourth presentation highlights participatory research methods designed to capture the views of young children and vulnerable groups. These approaches ensure ethical research processes and enhance the societal relevance and impact of early childhood research.

Together, the symposium advances knowledge on fostering diversity, inclusion, and participation in early childhood and offers practice-oriented perspectives for educators, researchers, and policymakers.

## Presentations of the Symposium

### **The Anti-Bias Lens: A New Tool for Assessing Pedagogical Practices in Diverse ECE Classrooms**

*Geisa Bragança, Sonja Perren, University of Teacher Education Thurgau, Switzerland; University of Konstanz, Germany*

Children grow up in an increasingly diverse world, shaped by differences in culture, language, gender, and abilities. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings—and particularly educators—play a crucial role in fostering appreciation for diversity, challenging prejudices, and promoting social competence. This study validates a newly developed tool designed to assess teachers' educational practices toward diversity in Swiss and German ECE classrooms. Grounded in the Anti-Bias Approach and its four core goals, the instrument comprised four dimensions—Acceptability, Appreciation, Prejudice Awareness, and Anti-Discrimination—across key domains of educational practice, including learning environment arrangement, teacher–child interaction, collaboration with parents, and teamwork.

A cross-sectional, quantitative study was conducted with 247 early childhood professionals from day-care centers and playgroups in Switzerland and Germany, who completed an online questionnaire. Reliability of the subscales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and factorial validity was examined with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Results indicated strong psychometric properties and a well-fitting factor structure,  $\chi^2(76) = 109.24$ ,  $p = .007$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.44$ , TLI = .942, CFI = .963, RMSEA = .042, SRMR = .047. The Teamwork scale demonstrated excellent fit when tested independently but introduced misfit in the full model; it was therefore excluded, though it remains interpretable as a standalone measure. Data collection in the French-speaking region (Romandie) and the Italian-speaking region (Tessin) of Switzerland will be conducted in the near future.

Additionally, potential differences across Switzerland's three language regions (German, French and Italian) will be presented to examine how cultural and linguistic contexts shape diversity-sensitive practices. The study aims to provide insights into the instrument's usefulness for assessing such practices and to guide the design of regionally tailored professional learning initiatives.

### **The Implementation of Diversity-Reflective Play Materials in ECEC Institutions. An App-supported Training Programme**

*Svenja Garbade, University of Hildesheim (Germany), Institute for Information Management Bremen (Germany)*

Among other things, the childcare system is called upon to lay the foundations for institutional educational success, minimise social inequalities and ensure the comprehensive participation of all children, taking diversity into account (Bätge et al. 2021). There is a considerable need for professionalisation with regard to diversity-reflective

competencies (Zehbe 2021; Garbade 2023; Kerle 2023; Zehbe/Kaul 2024) in ECEC institutions. There is also a lack of tools for translating existing knowledge into educational practice (Garbade 2021).

Generalisations, scandalisation and stereotyping (Kuhn 2021) can be countered through the guided use of diversity-reflective play materials (e.g. Garbade/Cloos 2025). These findings are addressed by the research and practice-oriented project "Diversity-Reflective Play Materials. App-Supported Training in ECEC Institutions" (DiSiKit), a consortium of the Universities of Hildesheim and Kassel, the Institute for Information Management Bremen GmbH and the PARITÄTISCHER Wohlfahrtsverband Hamburg e.V., with a strategy that combines expert advice, app-supported process support and training elements and implements them in ten ECEC institutions. This is accompanied by research.

The results will be incorporated into the further development of practical training. This focuses on case- and material-based learning and links it profitably with digitalisation. The project combines findings from qualitative guided interviews with managers, group discussions with professionals (Bogner et al. 2014), participant observations (Breidenstein et al. 2020) and document analyses (Schulz et al. 2020) will be linked according to the principles of comparison and triangulation with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). The presentation will introduce the project and provide more in-depth insights.

### **Building Participation in Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Barriers, Resources, and Strategies from the Perspective of Parents and Educators**

*Janina Dott, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany*

Although equal participation in inclusive early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a right for all children, children with disabilities continue to be excluded and show lower levels of participation compared to their peers. Integrating the perspectives of parents and early childhood educators presents a promising, but relatively unexplored approach. This study (1) compares the participation of children with and without disabilities, (2) identifies common environmental barriers, and (3) analyses strategies that parents and educators use to support participation.

Parents and educators of 72 children with and without disabilities from 14 ECEC institutions in Germany completed a questionnaire on children's participation and environment. Groups were compared on item- and summary-level. Strategies were analyzed by mapping parents' and educators' responses to a model on inclusive early childhood education.

While overall participation did not differ between the two groups, children with disabilities were less involved in social activities. Educators generally rated children's involvement lower and more often expressed a desire for change than parents. Peer relationships and cognitive activity demands represent the greatest environmental barriers for children with disabilities. Common strategies include adapting activities to children's individual interests and needs, promoting peer interactions, and family involvement.

Our results show that participation is a multidimensional construct that is influenced by both personal and environmental factors. Parents and educators provide unique insights into young children's daily experiences. Supporting peer interactions could foster the social participation of children with diverse abilities in inclusive ECEC environments to achieve greater participation for all.

### **Listening for Impact: Participatory Methods for Societally Relevant Research**

*Patricia Lannen, Marie Meierhofer Children's Institute, associated institute of the University in Zurich*

In order to conduct research that can lead to evidence-based practice and socially relevant recommendations, it is essential to include the perspectives of those directly affected. However, conducting such participatory research with young children and vulnerable groups poses specific methodological and ethical challenges. However, overcoming these hurdles is a prerequisite for truly capturing and considering the voices of these target groups.

How can we take children's developmental stage into account when collecting standardized data or conducting interviews? How can we ensure that young children truly understand what is being asked of them and what will happen with the information they provide? How can we carefully weigh the risks and benefits of participation for vulnerable target groups?

This contribution presents innovative and empirically tested methods that have proven effective in capturing the voices of these target groups. Drawn on concrete examples, it demonstrates how participatory approaches can enrich both the validity of research findings and their societal impact. Overcoming these hurdles is a prerequisite for truly capturing and considering the voices of these target groups.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 2:00pm – 3:30pm / PER21 F130**

## **Symposium 8**

### **Families and Screens - Early childhood screen use beyond screen time**

*Chair(s): Eva Unternaehrer, Psychiatric University Hospitals Basel (UPK), Switzerland), Nevena Dimitrova (Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne*

Screens have become an essential part of our everyday life, particularly at home, with many young children being drawn to entertaining mobile apps and attention-grabbing screen content. This creates a challenging context for families, because of potential negative impacts of excessive screen use, for instance on physical health, verbal development, and socio-emotional development. At the same time, digital media experts also agree that simply focusing on child screen time is not sufficient anymore. Instead, newer frameworks centering around child wellbeing also consider the content that is being consumed, along with contextual factors and the personality of the child. To address these challenging contexts, intervention and prevention strategies need to sensitize parents to look out for potential negative effects, while also promoting healthy screen habits.

In this symposium, Eleonora Benecchi and Petra Mazzoni explore early childhood fandom through parents' perceptions of children's engagement with screen content; Katrin Braune-Krickau will discuss qualitative findings from the SMART START study involving new parents and how they use smartphones after becoming parents; Chiara Castiglione will shift from community to clinical populations and present findings on early childhood media consumption in a clinical context; Margarete Bolten will conclude the symposium with pilot findings of a prevention project conducted at the children's hospital in Lucerne.

An integrative discussion will debate potential next steps in supporting parents, children, and their families to overcome the challenges in early child screen use.

## **Presentations of the Symposium**

### **Through the Looking Glass: Early Childhood Fandom as Seen by Parents in Switzerland**

*Eleonora Benecchi, Petra Mazzoni, Università della Svizzera italiana*

Introduction: Media fandom has been studied as a site of cultural participation, identity construction, and creative practice (Booth, 2010), yet scholarship has focused mainly on adolescents and adults, overlooking how fan identities may emerge in early childhood (Hunting, 2019). This study examines fandom in families with children under six, approaching fandom as a relational process shaped by co-creation, media practices, and the household's social and technological context.

Method: This spin-off of the SWIPE project combines a revised version of the Fan Identity Questionnaire (Lozano et al., 2020) with parent-reported data on children's fan practices. The adapted tool captures four dimensions of fan behavior, experience, viewing, collecting, and knowledge, alongside new indicators on co-creation, device use, and media consumption modes. Parents act as key informants, enabling ethical access to children's practices and insights into bidirectional fan socialization.

Results: Preliminary observations suggest possible correlations between children's fan engagement and various dimensions of the family environment. Media diet, language diversity, gender dynamics, and household composition links to differences in co-creative practices and forms of participation. Early indications also hint at reciprocal influences between children's and parents' fan activities, though further data collection is needed to confirm these trends.

Discussion: The study highlights intergenerational fandom as a dynamic, bidirectional process in which children actively contribute to and reshape family fan cultures. This research expands the scope of fandom studies and opens new avenues for understanding how fan identities are formed, negotiated, and transformed from the earliest stages of media engagement.

### **Between Distraction and Connection – Presence of Smartphones in Early Family Life: A Qualitative Interview Study**

*Katrin Braune-Krickau, Larissa Schneebeli, Michael Gemperle, Anouk Joliat, Agnes von Wyl, Zurich University of Applied Sciences*

Introduction: Parental smartphone use forms part of early family life. As toddlers develop, they not only notice but increasingly engage with smartphones. This shared digital presence may cause disruptions in parent-child interactions. While quantitative studies link technoference to reduced parental sensitivity (Braune-Krickau et al., 2021) and adverse child outcomes, little is known about how parents themselves experience and interpret these dynamics. This qualitative study explores mothers' experiences regarding the presence of smartphones within the parent-toddler relationship.

Methods: The study is part of the multi-methods project Smart Toddlers (SNF, grant nr. 10001C\_192820). Twenty-nine mothers of children aged 14–16 months participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Results: The developed themes captured mothers' experiences of their own and of their toddlers' smartphone use. Mothers reported balancing the need to protect interactions with their child, such as joint play and meals, with the desire for "me-time" and social connections with others on their smartphone. Many became acutely aware of the "magnetic pull" of smartphones for their child. Most sought to delay device use to protect natural learning and creativity, rejecting smartphones as tools for soothing or distraction.

Discussion: Overall, mothers experience a high amount of ambivalence, striving to balance digital connectedness and staying attuned to their child. They aim to minimize technoference while also acknowledging the challenges they face in this respect. This underscores a need for parental guidance that considers the complex functions smartphones fulfill in early family life.

### **Media consumption in early childhood in a clinical population**

*Chiara Castiglione, Franziska Schlenzog-Schuster, Universitäre Psychiatrische Dienste Bern*

Introduction: Studies have found that toddlers and infants acquire screens at a younger age and media use takes an increasingly large part of children's time.

The aim of this study is to describe the prevalence of media (smartphone, television, tablet, laptop) use in children aged two to six years in a clinical population.

Methods: All the participating children were referred to the child and adolescent psychiatry department for assessment. Parents of seventy-six children between the age of 2 and 6 years (mean 4.4 years, SD = 1.07, 21 females) filled out a questionnaire asking about the media use of their child. At another appointment a standardized parent interview on childhood psychopathology was conducted with the parents of twenty-six participants.

Results: In our analysis, we found that children on average use electronic devices for 49.97 minutes per day. Females show longer media use compared to males. Television is the media females use most, whereas males use smartphones most. Although the amount of media consumption was broad (0 to 180 minutes per day), the quantity had no influence on the number of diagnoses collected using the parent interview on childhood psychopathology.

Discussion: Our results add to the existing literature showing that children's media use is higher than recommended. To the best of our knowledge this is one of the first studies examining the prevalence of media use in a clinical population of young children, combining it with psychopathology. The small sample size restricts generalizability. Future research should explore larger populations and evaluate long-term effects on psychopathology.

## Promoting Conscious Digital Media Use in Early Childhood: Insights from a Pediatric Pilot Project in Central Switzerland

*Margarete Bolten, Luzerner Kantonsspital*

**Introduction:** Digital media use is deeply embedded in family life, with particular relevance for preschool-aged children. Early childhood is a sensitive developmental period shaped by play, direct interaction, and communication. While excessive or unreflective media exposure may disrupt these processes, mindful and age-appropriate use can support learning. Pediatric care offers a unique opportunity to engage parents in reflecting on media habits and promoting balanced practices.

**Methods:** In this pilot study, parents of children aged 0–6 years attending routine visits were invited to participate. The intervention included a brief video-based counseling session on age-appropriate media practices. Pre- and post-intervention assessments covered: parental reports on media use, attitudes and concerns regarding exposure, feasibility and usefulness of the intervention.

**Results:** Preliminary findings show high acceptance and feasibility of media-related counseling in pediatric visits. Parents reported greater awareness of potential developmental impacts and reflected more critically on their own media habits.

**Discussion:** Results suggest that brief counseling interventions within pediatric care can increase parental awareness, encourage reflection, and foster more mindful media practices. Limitations include the small sample and short follow-up, restricting generalizability. Future studies should evaluate effectiveness in larger, more diverse groups and explore long-term outcomes. Broadly, these findings may inform structured pediatric guidelines and policy measures to support families navigating children’s development in an increasingly digital environment.

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 2:00pm – 3:30pm / PER21 E130**

### **Symposium 9**

#### **The Mosaik of Childhood: Linking Sport Activities, Competencies, Self-Perceptions, and Well-Being to Foster Resilience for Challenging Childhoods**

*Chair(s): Jonathan Wientges, PHTG, Switzerland; Laura Dapp, Universität Konstanz, Germany*

Children’s participation in physical activity, motor and social-emotional competencies, self-concept, and well-being are key foundations of healthy, active, and socially integrated lives. Yet these domains have mostly been studied in isolation. This symposium brings together research from the MOSAIK and EMOKK projects to provide an integrative view on how sport activities, competencies, and self-perceptions co-develop in early childhood. The four talks are anchored in a holistic model of motor and socio-emotional development—introduced by the chairs—with each presentation focusing on specific layers of this model.

Beginning with the foundational layer, Talk 1 examines the relationship between basic motor competencies and participation in organized sports, disentangling selection and socialization effects. Focusing on the competence layer, Talk 2 addresses social-emotional development by introducing a novel instrument for assessing social-emotional competencies in sport contexts. Talk 3 moves to the level of self-concept, presenting innovative measures to capture young children’s beliefs about their motor and social-emotional competencies and linking these self-perceptions to sport participation. Finally, Talk 4 addresses the apex of the model, demonstrating the impact of sport participation on children’s well-being. Together, these contributions showcase the complexity of early childhood development and highlight innovative methodological approaches—including observational measures in motorically demanding tasks, pictorial self-report tools, and longitudinal modeling.

By bridging disciplinary perspectives and integrating complementary methodologies, this symposium delivers a unique framework for understanding how competencies and self-perceptions coalesce to shape children’s lives. It highlights the building blocks that foster resilience, competence, and confident participation in the challenging contexts of modern childhood.

## **Reciprocal relationship between the development of motor competencies and sports participation in preschool children**

*Christian Herrmann, Kathrin Bretz, PHZH, Switzerland*

Basic motor competencies (MOBAK) are essential for participating in exercise and sport and are the foundation for a physically active lifestyle. Children who participate in sports clubs tend to have a higher level of motor competence (selection effect), and this can further improve their competencies (socialisation effect) (Herrmann, et al., 2024). This article analyses the interaction between the development of basic motor competencies and participation in club sports.

As part of the SNSF-funded EMOKK-study, a total sample of N=1201 children in the 1st to 2nd preschool class was pooled from three cohorts (2020–2021: N=137; 2021–2022: N=519; 2022–2023: N=545) with two measurement points. The children's basic motor competencies were tested using the MOBAK-KG (self-movement, object movement). Their participation in club sports (frequency of ball sports and individual sports per week) was assessed using parent questionnaires (Herrmann, et al., 2025). Latent cross-lagged panel models (CLP) were calculated in Mplus to model the interactions.

The CLP model (CFI=.99, RMSEA=.014) showed that the level of competence in "object movement (t1)" significantly determined the "frequency of ball sports (t1-t2)" in children ( $\beta=.34$ ). The "frequency of ball sports (t1)" itself was also related to "object movement (t1)" ( $\beta=.22$ ), but not with their competence development. Furthermore, it was found that the level of competence in "self-movement (t1)" influenced the "frequency of individual sports (t1-t2)" in children ( $\beta=.20$ ). The "frequency of individual sports (t1)" itself was not related to "self-movement (t1)" and their development. In addition, negative influences of "self-movement (t1)" on the "frequency of ball sports (t1-t2)" ( $\beta=-.17$ ) were also observed.

The analyses showed that the selection effect was more evident in the longitudinal study with preschool children.

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## **Measuring Social-Emotional Competencies in Sport: The BASES-Sport Validation Study**

*Jonathan Wientges, PHTG, Switzerland; Christian Herrmann, PHZH, Switzerland; Sonja Perren, PHTG, Switzerland*

Motor and socio-emotional competencies develop in early childhood through social interactions and physical activities, playing a crucial role in successful competence development. Such development is essential for participation in sports and leisure activities, fostering an active lifestyle, and supporting physical and mental health. Yet, research has often examined these domains in isolation. To bridge this gap, this study validates the Behavioral Assessment of Social – Emotional Skills in Sport (BASES-Sport), a structured observational tool designed to assess children's social-emotional competencies during motorically demanding tasks.

Data collection was integrated within the Zurich Learning Progress Study (LEAPS) and involved 270 children in their second year of kindergarten in the canton of Zurich. The assessment took place in a gymnasium setting and included three structured tasks: the Coordination Ladder Task (testing Self-Control and Persistence), the Throwing Task (Emotional Regulation), and the Movement Puzzle Task (Sociability, Assertiveness, Cooperative Skills). Children's behaviors were video-recorded and later coded using a standardized scoring system adapted from BASES-Standard (Lieb et al., 2023; Lieb et al., 2025). To complement social-emotional assessments, motor competencies were evaluated using MOBAK-KG tests (Herrmann et al., 2020).

At the time of submission, scoring of the video recordings is ongoing. Results will be available and presented at the conference.

This validation study aims to establish BASES-Sport as a robust instrument for assessing social-emotional competencies in motorically demanding contexts. The findings will contribute to future research and practical applications in child development, physical education and sports psychology.

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### **Follow the Fox: Exploring Self-Perceptions and Sport in Preschoolers**

*Laura Dapp, Universität Konstanz, Germany; Kathrin Bretz, PHZH, Switzerland; Jonathan Wientges, PHTG, Switzerland; Sonja Perren, PHTG, Switzerland; Christian Herrmann, PHZH, Switzerland*

Self-perceptions are essential in children's lives as they influence motivation, learning, and development across domains (Marsh & Craven, 2002). However, valid and age-appropriate tools for assessing domain-specific self-concepts in preschoolers are still scarce, wherefore a new line of instruments was developed.

Specifically, this talk introduces the SEMOK (self-perceived gross motor competence; Bretz et al., 2025), the SE-M-ABC (self-perceived gross and fine motor competence; Dapp et al., 2025), the SESEK (self-perceived socio-emotional competence; Dapp et al., 2025) and the SESEK-Sport (under development). All instruments share a child-appropriate, pictorial format with a gender-neutral fox character modeling each task, as suggested by Bretz et al. (2024). Their close alignment with established competence measures enable valid comparisons between perceived and actual competencies.

The second part of this contribution highlights how these tools can be used to capture the role of sport participation in shaping young children's self-perceptions. While evidence suggests that physical activity fosters self-concept in older children and adolescents (Liu et al., 2015), the lack of age-appropriate measures has prevented systematic investigation of these processes in preschoolers. Drawing on data from the SNSF-funded MOSAIK project (N ≈ 300; part of the LEAPS study), we provide first insights into how sport participation relates to self-perceived competencies in early childhood.

These findings illustrate the potential of pictorial self-concept measures to bridge developmental assessment and sport-related practice, opening new pathways for understanding how early experiences of movement shape the developing self and for designing interventions that foster confidence, competence, and active participation from the very beginning.

References:

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## **The interplay of actual and perceived motor competencies, physical activity and well-being: a child-centered approach**

*Kathrin Bretz, Johanna Kress, Christian Herrmann, PHZH, Switzerland*

Actual motor competencies (AMC) are crucial for healthy development. Higher AMC are associated with increased physical activity and the development of sport-specific skills, supporting lifelong involvement in movement (Hulteen et al., 2018). Conversely, low AMC can lead to negative interpersonal (peer problems) and intrapersonal (low self-assessment) outcomes, lowering well-being (Mancini et al., 2016). While positive self-esteem benefits health, few studies have explored the relationships among AMC, perceived motor competencies (PMC), and well-being in children.

In this study a person-centered approach was used to identify groups of Swiss children sharing patterns in AMC, PMC, club sport participation, and well-being, and examined how these profiles differ by BMI, gender, and age. The sample included 427 first and second graders ( $M=7.78$  years,  $SD=.70$ , 50.1% girls), from the EMOKK study, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. AMC were assessed using the MOBAC-1-2 instrument and PMC by the SEMOK-1-2 questionnaire, with parental reports on sport participation and well-being.

Three distinct profiles emerged: Profile 1 (15%) combined high AMC and PMC, frequent team sport participation, and high well-being. Profile 2 (74%) participated in individual sports with regular AMC/PMC and high well-being. Profile 3 (11%) exhibited low club sport activity, low AMC, overestimated PMC, and low well-being. These children may be “at risk” for health motor development.

Findings suggest well-being may not only be an outcome of physical activity, but may also enable participation in play and sports, underscoring its role in promoting healthy motor development.

References:

Hulteen, R. M., Morgan, P. J., Barnett, L. M., Stodden, D. F., & Lubans, D. R. (2018). Development of Foundational Movement Skills: A Conceptual Model for Physical Activity Across the Lifespan. *Sports Medicine*, 48(7), 1533–1540. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-018-0892-6>

Mancini, V. O., Rigoli, D., Cairney, J., Roberts, L. D., & Piek, J. P. (2016). The Elaborated Environmental Stress Hypothesis as a Framework for Understanding the Association Between Motor Skills and Internalizing Problems: A Mini-Review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00239>

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 2:00pm – 3:30pm / PER21 D130**

### **Workshop 2**

#### **Who Counts as an Early Childhood Expert? A workshop on the co-production of social vulnerability and professional legitimacy**

*Isabela Fernandes, University of Geneva, Switzerland; Monique Voltarelli, University of Brasilia, Brazil; Giovanna Caetano, University of Seville, Spain*

Ensuring children’s rights, protecting them from discrimination, violence, and vulnerabilities, as well as engaging in sustained pedagogical work, is a central function of early childhood institutions.

This contribution discusses the unequal distribution of legitimacy in the field of early childhood, focusing on both the social position of professionals and the political place of childhood.

The devaluation of educators is part of a structural regime that naturalizes the association between care and femininity, producing an economy of power-knowledge that disqualifies practices associated with women and with childhood, recurrently framed within a logic of incompleteness. The work of educators is positioned within the sphere of the non-professional or semi-professional, particularly when contrasted with the recognized expertise of health and psychology professionals.

In many contexts, limiting educator training to the technical level further reinforces simplification and deprofessionalization, weakening both educators’ professional status and children’s rights.

The workshop will engage participants in exploring how early childhood education demands and produces professional knowledge that is dynamic, situated, and relational, rather than purely technical or protocol-driven.

Participants will be presented with short scenes from early childhood settings (photographs, mini-stories, or videos) illustrating situations in which children, educators, materials and environments interact, highlighting how vulnerabilities and learning are co-produced.

Objectives

- Engage with the complexity of childhood through sociology of childhood and posthumanism
- Recognise the unequal distribution of legitimacy in early childhood and its consequences for the co-production of social vulnerability

**Tuesday, 03/Feb/2026: 3:45pm – 4:45pm / PER22 Joseph Deiss Auditorium**

### **Final discussion: Research and socio-pedagogical and medical practice**

During the closing discussion of the conference, colleagues from various disciplines will explore the connection between research and practice in challenging, vulnerable contexts. With regard to practice, the focus will be on heterogeneous care practices in family and professional environments, from the perspective of children and parents as well as professionals. After a brief statement by the panellists on this question, the moderators will open the floor for questions from the plenary.

#### **Panelists**

*Prof. Dr. Sabirah Adams, Centre for Higher Education Development, University of Cape Town, South Africa*

*Prof. Dr. Christine Gervais, Department of Nursing Sciences, Université du Québec en Outaouais, Canada*

*Maria van der Harst, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Utrecht University, The Netherlands*

*Prof. Dr. Andrea Lanfranchi, University of Teacher Education in Special Needs, Zurich, Switzerland*

*Prof. Dr. med. Michael von Rhein, University Children's Hospital Zurich, Switzerland*

#### **Moderators**

*Prof. Dr. Veronika Magyar-Haas, Department of Education Sciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland*

*Dr. Anne Carolina Ramos, Department of Education Sciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland*