

# **Adult Development meets Social Sciences**

**Welcome to the 3rd ESRAD symposium  
May 31st – June 2nd 2013 in Freiburg, Germany**



# **Adult Development meets Social Sciences (other than psychology) Reviewing the state of the art**

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Presentation for the 3rd ESRAD symposium  
May 31st – June 2nd 2013 in Freiburg, Germany

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Aims of this presentation:

### Tentative overview of

- some of the **contributions** that adult development theories have already made, and/or
- the contributions they have the **potential** to make in social sciences outside the psychology discipline, by
- **reviewing** selected existing **literature** and
- discussing **prospects** for further research.

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Personal/scientific backgrounds of the presenters:

### **Elke Fein:**

political scientist, political culture, problems of systemic transition, (mal-) functioning of society, culture and institutions

### **Thomas Jordan:**

doctor of economic geography, conflict researcher, conflict management educator, management of complex social issues

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Questions:

- What do AD models have to **contribute conceptually** to the social sciences?
- What is the **added value** of AD perspectives as compared to other approaches to social problems?
- Are particular **AD models** particularly suited for analyzing social problems?
- Which **methodological problems** do researchers have to face when applying AD models to social problems and how are they dealing with that?
- Since a systematic **acknowledgement of AD models** is still not happening in the social sciences – what could be the **reasons** for this?

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Limitations of this presentation

- basic trends and experiences > exhaustive overview
- no systematic account of single disciplines
- single frameworks and their use in empirical social science research

## We will include

- researchers we know more about
- research outside our known community of AD researchers
- examples of empirical research

## We will exclude

- research based on MHC
- applications to organizational management, educational science/pedagogy/adult learning, religious studies

## Adult Development meets Social Sciences

**Selected examples** of how four adult development frameworks have been used in empirical studies of political and social phenomena:

1. The **integrative complexity** framework;
  2. **Shawn Rosenberg** (and colleagues);
  3. **Robert Kegan's** framework;
  4. The **dialectical thinking** framework;
- and a fifth significant study:
5. **Deanna Kuhn**



# Adult Development meets Social Sciences - Selected examples

## 1. Integrative complexity

- **Origins in 1960s:** "The direct line of development proceeds through conceptual systems (Harvey, Hunt, & Schroder, 1961), conceptual complexity (Schroder et al., 1967), interactive complexity (Streufert & Streufert, 1978; Streufert & Swezey, 1987), to integrative complexity (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1990) and meta-complexity (Streufert & Nogami, 1989)."
- Conceptualizes **7 levels in the integration of different perspectives**
- **From mid-1970s:** Analyses of political reasoning and behaviour
- **Key researchers:** Peter Suedfeld, Philip Tetlock, Siegfried Streufert
- A rather **large number** of empirical studies, mainly in political science, between 1970s and now

## 1. Integrative complexity

”Briefly, the successive versions of the theory focus on the complexity of information processing and decision making, complexity being defined and measured (usually on a 1-7 scale) in terms of degrees of **differentiation** and **integration** (cf. Streufert, 1970).

**Differentiation** refers to the perception of different dimensions within a stimulus domain, and to the taking of different perspectives when considering the domain.

It is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for **integration**, which is the development of conceptual connections among differentiated dimensions or perspectives.

Such connections are inferred from references to trade-offs between alternatives, a synthesis between them, a reference to a higher-order concept that subsumes them, and the like.”

# 1. Integrative complexity: Selected empirical studies (chronological order)

SUEDFELD, P. and TETLOCK, P. E. (1977). 'Integrative complexity of communications in international crises,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol 21, pp. 169-184.

TETLOCK, P. E. (1984). 'Cognitive style and political belief systems in the British House of Commons,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 46, pp. 365-375.

TETLOCK, P. E. (1985). 'Integrative complexity of American and Soviet foreign policy statements: A time series analysis,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 49, pp. 1565-1585.

TETLOCK, P. E. (1988). 'Monitoring the integrative complexity of American and Soviet policy statements: What can be learned?,' *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol 44, pp. 101-131.

SUEDFELD, P., WALLACE, M. D. and THACHUK, K. L. (1993). 'Changes in integrative complexity among Middle East leaders during the Persian Gulf crisis' *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 49:4, pp. 183-199.

SUEDFELD, P. (1994). 'President Clinton's policy dilemmas: A cognitive analysis,' *Political Psychology*, Vol 15:2, pp. 337-349.

GUTTIERI, K., WALLACE, M. D. and SUEDELD, P. (1995). 'The integrative complexity of American decision makers in the Cuban missile crisis,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol 39:4, pp. 595-621.

GRUENFELD D. H. (1995). Status, ideology, and integrative complexity on the U.S. Supreme Court: rethinking the politics of political decision making, *Journal of personality and social psychology*, Vol. 68:1.

BRIGHT, A. D. & BARROB, S. C. (2000). Integrative complexity and attitudes: A case study of plant and wildlife species protection, *Human Dimensions of Wildlife: An International Journal*, Vol 5:4.

SUEDFELD, P. (2003). Integrative complexity of western and terrorist leaders in the war against the Afghan terrorist regime. *Psicología Política*, 27.

SUEDFELD, P. (2010). The Scoring of Integrative Complexity as a Tool in Forecasting Adversary Intentions. Three Case Studies, Toronto Contract Report 2010-039, Defence R&D, Canada.

CARROLL, J. & BRIGHT, A. (2010). Integrative Complexity of Public Beliefs Toward Wildfire Management: Development of a Scale, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol 40:2.

## Adult Development meets Social Sciences - Selected examples

### **Tetlock:** Integratively complex thinkers are:

- less likely [...] to jump to strong conclusions about the personalities of others [...]:
- less likely to persist with their first impression of an event in the face of contradictory evidence,
- less likely to display overconfidence in their factual judgments and predictions
- less likely to fall prey to Groupthink,
- more likely to acknowledge value trade-offs in policy debates [...]
- better equipped to identify viable compromises in mixed motive games that leave everyone at least somewhat better off.

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences - Selected examples

## 2. Shawn Rosenberg

Professor of political science, Univ. of California, Irvine

Defined *sequential, linear* and *systematic* political reasoning.

Limited empirical research: piagetian tests and interviews on political topics.

### References:

ROSENBERG, S., (1987). **Reason & Ideology: Interpreting People's Understanding of American Politics**, *Polity*, Vol. 20:1.

ROSENBERG, S. (1988). **The Structure of Political Thinking**, *American Journal of Political Science*, 1988, Vol 32:3.

ROSENBERG, S., WARD, D. and CHILTON, S. (1988) **Political Reasoning and Cognition. A Piagetian View**, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

WARD, D. (1988) 'The structure of the idea of democracy in Eastport,' i S. Rosenberg, D. Ward and S. Chilton: *Political Reasoning and Cognition. A Piagetian View*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

WINTERSTEIN, S. K. (2005). **Cognition and communication: A theory of discourse structures**, doctoral dissertation, University of California, Irvine.

## Adult Development meets Social Sciences - Selected examples

### 3. Robert Kegan's framework

Three doctoral dissertations using Robert Kegan's "orders of consciousness" framework and the Subject-Object interview to study individual and group dynamics in the management of complex social issues:

STEINER, P. P. (1996) **Conforming and non-conforming concurrence: Aspects of "groupthink" and orders of consciousness in democratic decision making**, Doctoral dissertation, Graduate School of Education of Harvard University.

McGUIGAN, R. J. (2006) **How Do Evolving Deep Structures of Consciousness Impact the Disputant's Creation of Meaning in a Conflict?** Doctoral dissertation, Union Institute and University.

DeLAUER, V. G. (2009) **The Mental Demands of Marine Ecosystem-Based Management: A Constructive Developmental Lens**, Doctoral dissertation, University of New Hampshire.

## Adult Development meets Social Sciences - Selected examples

### 4. Michael Basseches' (and Otto Laske's) dialectical thinking framework

Michael Basseches' seminal 1984 study: 24 dialectical thought forms in reasoning about education.

Only 2 examples found of empirical social science research:

VURDELJA, I. (2011). **How leaders think: Measuring cognitive complexity in leading organizational change.** Doctoral dissertation, Leadership and Change Program, Antioch University.

ULMER, K. & FRISCHHERZ, B. (2012). **Dialectical thinking and comparative text analysis: Application to the topic of the green economy.** Online: [http://www.didanet.ch/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/dialectical\\_thinking\\_and\\_text\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.didanet.ch/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/dialectical_thinking_and_text_analysis.pdf)

## Adult Development meets Social Sciences - Selected examples

### 5. Deanna Kuhn: The Skills of Argument

Study of epistemological structures in reasoning about complex social issues.

Interviews with a stratified sample of 160 subjects on three topics:

1. What causes prisoners to return to crime after they are released?
2. What causes unemployment?
3. What causes children to fail in school?"

Focus on epistemological aspects of reasoning.

KUHN, D. (1991). **The skills of argument**. Cambridge University Press.



# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Summary and results:

- The **amount of empirical AD-based research** in social sciences (sociology, political science, economics, history, geography and anthropology) **is still very small** .
- Most initiatives **to use existing AD-based frameworks** as analytical tools for studying genuinely collective phenomena (e.g. social organization) are so far **speculative** (e.g. Spiral Dynamics) rather than empirically based
- This is **due to disciplinary habits and related methodological problems**.

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Summary and results:

### Methodological problems researchers have to face when applying AD models to social problems

- Difficult in many cases to **test individuals** for ego development stage or general level of complexity awareness
- Research strategies that require **assessment of individual stage** can only be used with consenting participants
- Dialectical thought forms **framework requires considerable (extra) training** (which conventional social scientists don't have) and is time-consuming

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Summary and results:

**Since a systematic acknowledgement of AD models is still not happening in the social sciences – what could be the reasons for this?**

- Researchers in disciplines that study collective phenomena (sociology, political science, etc.) are **skeptical** towards frameworks adapted to the study of *individual* meaning-making.

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Summary and results:

**Are particular AD models particularly suited for analyzing social problems?**

- All text based frameworks that can be used for **discourse analysis**:
- do not require an analysis of individual personal development,
- allow for **analyzing the complexity of reasoning and argumentation in public discourse**

**Prospects for further research:**

- developing a **Developmental Discourse Analysis** of socially constructed discourse (e.g. political programs, policy papers)

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Summary and results:

**Nevertheless, there ARE already important contributions of AD approaches in social sciences!**

- A more systematic inclusion of actor's reasoning and action logics according to AD frameworks allows for more differentiated understanding of social conflicts and social life in general

# Adult Development meets Social Sciences

## Summary and results:

### Contributions of the AD approaches presented to social knowledge

- Adding the dimension of **complexity** (higher-order concept) in general, as well as dimension to discourse analysis (logics of reasoning)
- Constructing conceptual **connections** between different (academic and social) perspectives, for example between individual and group dynamics in the management of complex social issues (analytical and pragmatic gains)
- More differentiated **understanding** of the relation of motivational and structural factors in explaining social behavior
- Higher **self-reflexivity of researchers** → more objective results, more efficient strategies of analysis
- More differentiated analysis of action logics (complexity of social behavior) also has **predictive potential**

## Adult Development meets Social Sciences

**Thank you very much!**