Does age matter for personality psychologists?

Cornelia Wrzus, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

By now, it has been well documented that personality characteristics, such as Big Five traits, goals, values, self-esteem, emotional and cognitive abilities, can and do change over the lifespan. Apart from mean-level changes and changes in rank-order, much less is known whether personality processes change alike or generalize across the lifespan. This talk addresses the questions (a) whether personality effects on intra- or interpersonal outcomes observed in samples of young adults differ in children or older adults, and (b) which biological, environmental and/or social conditions might explain when personality effects change over the lifespan. During the talk, I will present theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on conditions whether and when age moderates personality effects. I will conclude with implications for specific areas of personality psychology.

Keywords: age differences, personality processes, contextual changes, lifespan psychology