

Occupational Cognitive Stimulation and Cognitive Functioning in Young Adulthood: Insights from Add Health and New Data Collection Efforts

Abstract:

Cognitive functioning in young adulthood is shaped by a complex interplay of early-life socioeconomic factors and occupational experiences. Additionally, measuring cognitive function earlier in the life course is essential for dementia prevention research, as cognitive health in midlife and old age is shaped by experiences and exposures that begin decades earlier. However, most studies of cognitive aging lack assessments from young and middle-adulthood, limiting the ability to identify early determinants of cognitive decline. In this talk, Dr. Stebbins will present findings from her research on the role of occupational cognitive stimulation in shaping cognitive function during early adulthood. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), she examined how socioeconomic background and job characteristics contributed to cognitive outcomes, with implications for inequality in cognitive aging. Furthermore, she will discuss ongoing data collection efforts for Add Health Wave VI, which aims to provide new insights into health, aging, and life course processes as the cohort enters midlife. This new wave of data will offer a unique opportunity to explore long-term associations between sociodemographic and socioenvironmental exposures and cognitive health.