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J. Piaget



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18th Advanced Course

Cognitive Development, Mechanisms and Constraints

3 – 5 July 2008

Thursday afternoon, July 3, 2008

14h30 **Chris Jarrold**, University of Bristol
Rehearsal and the development of working memory

Abstract:

Considerable evidence suggests that the development of rehearsal undergoes a qualitative shift around the age of seven years; children aged less than seven appear not to engage in spontaneous subvocal rehearsal of to-be-remembered verbal information in serial recall tasks, whereas such rehearsal is apparent in older individuals. However, there is little corresponding evidence of a qualitative change in individuals' working memory performance around this age. This talk explores two potential explanations of this apparent discrepancy. First, it may be that the previous evidence suggesting that young children do not rehearse is flawed in some way, and I present data that address this issue by looking at probed recall and at correlations between memory span and speech rate in young children and in individuals with learning difficulties functioning below the 7-year level. Second, there is a relative lack of empirical data on the working memory abilities of children aged younger than seven years, and I present details of a recent study that compares the impact of rehearsal status on working memory abilities in 6- and 8-year old children. Taken together, the data are consistent with a shift in rehearsal strategy around age seven, but suggest this shift may be less discrete than previously thought, and that children may be able to engage in some forms of maintenance activity prior to this age.