**SOMICS workshop with Pascal Boyer**

**May 13, 2016, CDC-CEU**

Preliminary program:

**10:00-12.00:** **Pascal Boyer**

Presentation and discussion of two papers circulated in advance

**12-13.00: Luncheon** (sandwiches, coffee)

13.00-14.30: Student presentations (part 1)

**13:00- 13:45:** **Kata Oláh**

ELTE University, Dept of Cognitive Development

**A cross-cultural study of the role of natural pedagogy in cultural knowledge transfer**

In Western societies the dominant mechanism ensuring intergenerational transmission of most cultural knowledge is provided by explicit verbal teaching. In contrast, teaching has been generally considered rare or largely absent in traditional non-Western societies where cumulative culture is nevertheless successfully transmitted via mechanisms of individual observational learning and an inclination for faithful behavioural imitation. This standard view has been recently challenged, however, by proponents of Natural Pedagogy theorywho hypothesize that cultural knowledge transfer in human groups relies crucially on a specialized adaptation to communicatively demonstrate for the naïve learner the relevant cultural information to be acquired. Such ‘pedagogical’ knowledge displays employ non-verbal ostensive and referential gestures to inform and ‘pedagogically guide’ the juvenile apprentice when reproducing the novel cultural information demonstrated. We tested for the presence of *natural pedagogy* as spontaneous use of non-verbal communicative gestures to inform a learner, in seven diverse societies by introducing a new skill and providing newly trained individuals with motivation to transmit the skill to novices. Results indicate that in each society pedagogical gestures of ostensive communication were produced significantly more often during the experimental manipulation than in comparison conditions. These findings provide the first cross-cultural evidence that Natural Pedagogy is a universal mechanism of non-verbal teaching present across cultures.

**13:45 – 14:30 Victoria Flomina**

Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology and Sociology

Central European University

**Collective mobilizations around violent death in religious (martyrical) and secular (heroic) contexts**

I’ll talk about the way distinct beliefs about the afterlife status of a sacrificial figure (‘living’ saint vs. ‘dead’ person) enable public mobilizations that differ radically in their ethos and practice (a festive celebration, mourning and solemn commemoration, protest and demands for justice and revenge, etc.). As I deal with the grassroots commemorative practices that are not supported by the state and or institutionalized, my research mainly seeks to identify the cultural pull factors that determine the popular success and potential longevity of a mobilization.  On the ideological level such factors might include historical and political context in which a death occurred and specific beliefs about the duty of a living community towards its heroes etc., on the level of practice – how engaging or fun different types of commemorative rituals are, what opportunities for socialization they create, what type of emotions they exploit, etc. The hypotheses I’ll discuss stem from my ethnographic observations of the two currently developing cults in Russia and in Cyprus.

**14.30-15.00: *Coffee break***

15.00 – 16.30: Student presentations (Part 2)

**15.00 – 15:45:** **Johannes Mahr**

Ph.D. Candidate in Cognitive Science

Central European University

**Why do we remember? The communicative function of episodic recollection**

I provide a novel account of episodic memory function based on an empirically informed analysis of its generative role in belief formation. The distinction between episodic and semantic memory is traditionally drawn in terms of autonoesis. I will argue that autonoesis is best understood as allowing us to have access to the reasons for our beliefs about the past. I will then defend the claim that this capacity serves a communicative function in human cognition by showing that this account can make sense of a range of empirical phenomena that are hard to reconcile with alternative views.

**15:45 – 16:30: Nazli Altinok**

Ph.D. Candidate in Cognitive Science

Central European University

**Own versus foreign language use by ostensive demonstrators influence the likelihood of correcting over-imitation in preschoolers**

I’ll explore the hypothesis that the phenomenon of over-imitation is a consequence of children’s preparedness to learn culturally relevant information from reliable epistemic sources. We test whether own- versus foreign-language use in ostensive demonstration contexts influences differentially preschoolers' evaluations and degree of epistemic trust in the source of information by employing a modified version the an over-imitation paradigm originally developed by Hoehl et al. (2015). Four and 5-year-old children first saw an agent speaking in their own language (or a different agent speaking in an unfamiliar foreign language) who then proceeded to ostensively demonstrate to them how to retrieve a sticker from a novel a puzzle-box by first performing a series of superfluous actions on the apparatus before presenting the only causally relevant and efficient action that was necessary to operate the sticker dispenser. Then children were given the apparatus to operate themselves (first re-enactment phase). Subsequently, a second demonstrator came in speaking either their own- or a foreign-language. She also proceeded to demonstrate how to use the puzzle-box, but unlike the first experimenter, this second demonstrator retrieved a sticker from the puzzle box by performing the causally relevant action *only*. Children then had their turn again to operate the sticker dispenser (Second re-enactment phase).  Our preliminary results show that following the first ostensive demonstration children were equally likely to learn (and over-imitate the superfluous actions) from both sources independently of whether they spoke the child’s own language or a foreign language. However, following the second model’s relevant-action-only demonstration children reduced their rate of over-imitation of the superfluous actions but did so only if this second demonstrator spoke their native language. These findings suggest that children’s willingness to accept a second demonstration as carrying potentially corrective information to modify their initially acquired new skill is influenced by the shared versus non-shared language used by the demonstrator.

**16.30- 16.45 Short Break**

**16.45-17.30: Denis Tatone**

Ph.D. Candidate in Cognitive Science

Central European University

**Infants use transfer-based interactions as cues to relational models**

Given our species' unprecedented reliance on resource transfer to initiate a sustain a number of social relations, each defined by its specific directive standard (relational model), we hypothesize that humans may be prepared to infer from the occurrence of a transfer-based interaction the presence of an underlying social relation. Moreover, given the plurality of models onto which social relations can be structured, we further hypothesize that specific transfer modes (e.g., giving) may cue distinctive relational models (e.g., equality-matching). We will discuss the findings from two looking-time studies with 12-month-old infants, which provided corroborating evidence for such hypotheses.

**17.30-18.00 General discussion**