



Candice L. Odgers

Award for Distinguished Early Career Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest

Citation

“Candice L. Odgers’s innovative research has significantly contributed to prevention programming and public policy. Her work addressing the developmental course of externalizing and conduct disorders and substance use yielded key insights into genetic and environmental variations in risk, leading to policy recommendations regarding how best to target interventions. Her research utilizing an ecological systems approach to understanding social inequalities in child health led to the development of new methodologies for assessing children’s lives in real time using cutting-edge technologies. She has received numerous awards honoring her contributions and is a world-renowned speaker whose work has appeared in premier journals.”

Biography

Candice Odgers was born in a small Canadian town in 1976. Childhood survival depended largely on two things: being able to endure long frigid winters and running faster than the slowest kid in her “wolf-pack-like” group of childhood friends. The surrounding area was resource rich in terms of mining, oil and farmland, but this wealth did not often translate into prosperity for the local residents. Boys left home and school early to make “big” money on oil rigs and chase hockey dreams. Girls, well girls had fewer op-

tions. These early observations of sex differences in roles and opportunities would be a theme that would emerge later in Odgers’ academic work.

Odgers left home at the age of 15 in a “move to opportunity.” The first stop was Athol Murray College of Notre Dame, an athletically themed boarding school, which provided the chance to benefit from a close integration of athletics and academics. Odgers left Notre Dame after 1 year. The motto of the school was “Luctor et Emergo” or Struggle and Emerge, and there was slightly more struggle in this transition than anticipated. Odgers then moved on her own to a small nearby city where she became the first person in her family to graduate from high school. As a first-generation college attendee, the pursuit of an advanced degree was supported, but not actively encouraged; this also meant that there was little guidance when it came to selecting the right university. As a result, Odgers prioritized two things in her decision: proximity to the ocean and a top-ranked women’s basketball program.

Odgers attended Simon Fraser University in Vancouver British Columbia, where she pursued a degree in criminology and psychology and earned a position on the Women’s varsity basketball team. The academic experience was life changing. A new world of information and opportunities were opened up, and Odgers quickly developed a love for psychological theory and methods. Her athletic career, unfortunately, came to an abrupt halt. The Women’s basketball team was involved in a bus accident attempting to navigate a mountain pass, and Odgers was seriously injured. She spent the next 4 years undergoing physical therapy to repair a fracture in her lower back and neck. Ending her athletic career was difficult, but it also opened up opportunities for pursuing research. Much of the time in the years that followed was spent in juvenile justice facilities documenting the life histories and mental health needs of court-involved youth. Odgers graduated from Simon Fraser University with an Honors and Masters level degree in 2001 and was awarded the Terry Fox Gold Medal for demonstrating “courage in the face of adversity” and overcoming her injuries.

Odgers was on route to complete a PhD at Cambridge University on a Commonwealth Scholarship and study criminology when a chance meeting in Krakow, Poland, dramatically altered her course. American Professor Dick Reppucci convinced her that she should consider both psychology and the University of Virginia as a way to realize her academic goals. In addition to being a fantastic mentor, Reppucci was also very persuasive. Thus, later that summer, Odgers found herself driving across the continent to become a psychologist. Arriving on the hottest day of the summer raised some doubts for the Canadian native that Virginia was the correct choice. However, the years that followed proved otherwise. Professors John Nesselroade and Jack McArdle welcomed her into the quantitative psy-

chology area and provided in-depth training in applied longitudinal data analysis and life span development; knowledge and tools that would shape much of her later work. For his part, Reppucci, in the tradition of his mentor Seymour Sarason, passed along a deep appreciation for the power of social settings in shaping behavior and the importance of community in understanding children's development. During this time Odgers also colead a multisite study with Professor Marlene Moretti, drawing attention to the health crisis that was occurring within the walls of juvenile justice settings. Before leaving Virginia, Odgers defended her PhD in Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda and finished an Ironman Triathlon; these events served as important markers of the distance traveled both academically, from first-generation high school graduate, and athletically, from an ambulance on the side of a snow-covered mountain.

Odgers eventually found her way to England where she completed her postdoctoral training with Terrie Moffitt and Avshalom Caspi at the Social, Genetic, and Developmental Psychiatry Center. It was with these two incredible scholars that her research expanded from a focus on high-risk populations to mapping children's trajectories of development within large-scale cohort studies. The time spent with Moffitt and Caspi was career and life changing; the high-quality of the data, science and the mentorship was unrivaled. Watching these two great minds at work was both humbling and inspiring. As a result of the latter, Odgers began the task of building a 'genes-to-geography' archive for the 2,232 children from the Environmental-Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study. These efforts tied together a longstanding interest in the role of communities in shaping children's life chances with the opportunity to move analytically across multiple levels of analysis and influence.

Odgers moved back the United States and took her first faculty position at the University of California Irvine in 2007. In what can best be described as a regression back to the risk-taking propensities of her early years, Odgers promptly abandoned all sound advice typically given to new Assistant Professors and launched two high-risk and somewhat unconventional projects. The first was the miLife Study, inspired by then-mentor Clyde Hertzman, who was a pioneer in the study of biological embedding of social adversity. Hertzman believed that social causation could be found in the repetitive and cumulative exposures of life and that an important way to understand how adversity leaves a lasting mark on children was to capture the "drip, drip, drip of daily life" as it occurred. Young adolescents were provided with mobile phones and surveyed multiple times throughout the day to isolate the immediate effects of violence exposure on behavior, affect, and mental health. The work was intensive in terms of time, technology, and data, but the team was rewarded with a high-response rate and access to a unique window into the lives of adolescents.

The second study was a study supported by Google in which Odgers developed a new method for capturing key features of children's neighborhoods by taking a virtual tour in Google Street View. This high-resolution geospatial information was then linked to the rich archive of information on the E-Risk Study children. The "genes-to-geography" merger allowed the team to ask: *Can cohesion among neighbors help to protect children growing up in poverty? How do low-income children fare when they grow up in the "shadow of wealth"?* Odgers was fortunate to have her work supported through a William T. Grant Foundation Scholars Award and her research benefited in countless ways during this time from their commitment to fostering high-quality research that has real-world impact and "improves the lives of young people."

Odgers has benefited greatly from the support of a number of generous colleagues and mentors. At the University of California, Irvine, Odgers found an intellectual home and formed lasting friendships with fellow faculty members, including Greg Duncan, Jodi Quas, Jennifer Skeem, and Carol Whalen. The time spent in California was especially memorable in that it was where Odgers and her husband Shane Goodridge became parents; first to a 150-pound Rhodesian Ridgeback and next to an infant son, Finn. In 2012, Odgers moved to Duke University and accepted a position in the Sanford School of Public Policy and the Center for Child and Family Policy. In this setting, she has been inspired by the commitment to generating "Knowledge in the Service of Society" and by fellow psychologists Dean Kelly Brownell and Kenneth Dodge, who work tirelessly on the front lines of public policy to translate psychological science. This transition was also filled with an intense mixture of loss and joy with the unexpected passing of a beloved friend and mentor, Clyde Hertzman, and the birth of a beautiful daughter, Ava. Clyde Hertzman was an incredible scientist and relentless advocate for *all* children. His early passing meant that Odgers and countless others will spend the coming years trying to live up to his example as both a scientist and a human being. With an eye toward deepening our understanding of how social and growing inequalities influence children, Odgers continues to follow Clyde's example, as well as thousands of children and their communities over time.

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Income Inequality and the Developing Child: Is It All Relative?

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Children from low-income families are at heightened risk for a number of poor outcomes, including depression, antisocial behavior, poor physical health, and educational failure. Growing up in poverty is generally seen as toxic for children. However, less is known about how the “economic distance” between children and their peers influences behavior and health. This article examines how both poverty and the growing divide between low-income children and their peers may be influencing low-income children’s life chances. Among wealthy nations, children in countries with higher levels of income inequality consistently fare worse on multiple indices of health, educational attainment, and well-being. New research also suggests that low-income children may be experiencing worse outcomes, and a form of “double disadvantage,” when they live and attend school alongside more affluent versus similarly positioned peers. The role of subjective social status in explaining why some low-income children appear to suffer when growing up alongside more affluent peers is explored, alongside a call for additional research focused on how children come to understand, and respond to, their perceived social status.

Keywords: poverty, income inequality, subjective social status, relative deprivation, child and adolescent well-being

The life chances of children depend heavily on the resources that are present in both the family and the zip code that they are born into (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Marmot et al., 2008). The graded effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on health emerge prior to birth and have been observed well

Editor’s note. Candice L. Odgers received the Award for Distinguished Early Career Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest. Award winners are invited to deliver an award address at the APA’s annual convention. This article is based on the award address presented at the 123rd annual meeting, held August 6–9, 2015, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Articles based on award addresses are reviewed, but they differ from unsolicited articles in that they are expressions of the winners’ reflections on their work and their views of the field.

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