

Media Release

The Jacobs Foundation announces the recipients of the Klaus J. Jacobs Awards endowed with 1.2 million Swiss francs

- **The 2015 Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize goes to Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London (UCL) and Deputy Director of the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, London, UK.**
- **The 2015 Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize is awarded to Gesamtschule Unterstrass (Unterstrass Comprehensive School) in Zurich, Switzerland.**

***Zurich, October 1, 2015* – The Jacobs Foundation, an international Zurich-based foundation which promotes child and youth development, has announced the recipients of this year's Klaus J. Jacobs Awards. The Research Prize, endowed with one million Swiss francs, goes to neuroscientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore for her research on understanding emotional and social brain development during adolescence. The Best Practice Prize, which includes an award of 200,000 Swiss francs, goes to Gesamtschule Unterstrass (a private comprehensive school) in Zurich, Switzerland, for an innovative social emotional learning project adding social competencies to the Swiss curriculum. The Klaus J. Jacobs Awards will be presented on December 4, 2015, at an award ceremony at the University of Zurich, Switzerland.**

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore – 2015 Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize Recipient

UCL Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore receives the 2015 Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize chosen by a jury of experts honoring her groundbreaking achievements in child and youth development. Until about 15 years ago, the prevailing opinion amongst neuroscientists was that no major neurodevelopmental changes occur after early childhood; Blakemore has delivered a body of scientific evidence demonstrating that the adolescent brain is continuing to develop.

The social brain develops in adolescence

Her research shows that in adolescence changes occur in the processing of emotional and social information about other people, as well as self-awareness and decision-making. Her findings demonstrate that neural responses to social exclusion, risky decisions and the interpretation of social emotions continue to develop during adolescence. The social brain, that is the brain regions involved in understanding other people, undergoes structural changes and functional reorganization during the second decade of life, possibly reflecting a sensitive period for adapting to one's social environment. Thus, typical adolescent behavior should not be chiefly attributed to hormones and to changes in the social environment. Instead it is at least partly linked to biological developments in the brain that are adaptive, natural, and inevitable. Typical adolescent behavior, such as risk-taking and peer influence, may be advantageous since it is intrinsically rooted in human development, and therefore, should be reframed as exploratory and potentially socially beneficial as opposed to only risky and problematic.

“It is a great honor to be awarded the Klaus J Jacobs Prize. It is truly humbling that my lab’s research has been recognized by this prestigious award from the Jacobs Foundation. I am indebted beyond words to my mentors and to all the people who have worked in my team at UCL over the past 13 years, and I am grateful to the many children and young people who have taken part in our studies and the schools that support our research. I am also grateful to the colleagues who nominated me for this award. I feel privileged to work with such inspiring and supportive people”, says Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London.

Gesamtschule Unterstrass (Unterstrass Comprehensive School) – 2015 Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize Recipient

For over 34 years, Gesamtschule Unterstrass (Unterstrass Comprehensive School), a private school in Zurich, has dedicated itself to collaborative learning, drawing on elements of neuropsychology and cognitive psychology. This approach stresses ongoing training for teachers and places particular emphasis on reciprocal teaching, with older students teaching younger children. Gesamtschule Unterstrass has been chosen to receive the Best Practice Prize in recognition of its “Self-Management and Socially Responsible Action” project, which focuses on the sensitive period of adolescence.

Socially responsible behavior as part of the curriculum

This innovative project is adding interdisciplinary social skills to the school’s curriculum. As this idea is put into practice in the classroom, the emphasis is on various types of mixed-aged learning, with the focus on socially responsible behavior and self-management. When they teach younger children, adolescents need to manage themselves subordinating their own impulses and responding to the immediate needs of younger pupils. They learn to regulate their emotions and concentrate on achieving their goals. Leading a mixed-age group of 4- to 12-year-old children, for example, requires relationship skills such as the ability to solve conflicts (conflict management) and to listen and interpret (communication strategies). Taking on such responsibilities allows young people to grow.

“Adolescents, and especially those with social deficits or problems with self-management, who teach and mentor younger children discover and develop executive and empathic skills”, says Dieter Rüttimann, principal of Unterstrass Comprehensive School.

The Klaus J. Jacobs Awards

In memory of its founder, entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs, who passed away in 2008, each year since 2009 the Jacobs Foundation has presented two awards for outstanding achievements in research and practice in the field of child and youth development. The awards are endowed with total of 1.2 million Swiss francs.

The **Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize**, which includes an award of one million francs, honors scientific achievements that are of exceptional social relevance in promoting the development of children and youth. The Jacobs Foundation attaches great importance to practical application of scientific findings achieved through interdisciplinary research.

The **Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize** recognizes extraordinary efforts by institutions or individuals to implement, in a practical setting, innovative ideas related to child and youth development. This prize includes an award of 200,000 francs.

About the Jacobs Foundation

The Jacobs Foundation is active worldwide in promoting child and youth development. It was founded in Zurich by entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs in 1989. The Foundation’s endowment in 2014 totaled 4.5 billion Swiss francs (\$4.8 billion), and it allocates a budget of some 40 million Swiss francs per year to fund research projects, intervention programs and scientific institutions. About two-thirds of the grant making goes to scientific research in child and youth development. The Jacobs Foundation is committed to scientific excellence and evidence-based research.

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