

jSchool 2020 – Projects



"...position the meaning behind the construct of personal values in a historical and social context..."

"Deconstruction of personal values: Cross-national replication study."

Project description

One of the most stable theories in psychology (Schwartz theory of basic values) suggests ten personal value priorities positioned in a circumplex indicating relationships among them. However, recent studies are indicating differences in construing of value priorities depending on the context and age. This project will position the meaning behind the construct of personal values in a historical and social context by examining the replicability of the theory of basic values in different countries. The study will be conducted on the sample of emerging adults using a mix-methodology framework.

About the supervisor

Jelisaveta Belic is a PhD Fellow at the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences (BIGSSS), a school of doctoral education jointly run by Jacobs University Bremen and the University of Bremen, Germany. She holds bachelor and master degrees in Educational and Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology from the University of Belgrade, and the University of Leiden. She is a psychotherapist in training, specialized in constructivist psychotherapy, as well as in BT, CBT, and Solution-focused psychotherapy. Coming from Serbia, her interests focus mainly around societal outliers—Roma children and families, LGBTIQ adolescents, and gifted underachieving pupils. Her current work focuses on the well-being outcomes of the interplay of individuals' values and values of their social contexts.



"...a survey about what people in different cultural and socio-economic contexts imagine might happen in the future..."

"The Futures in the Present: The Relationship between Personal and Societal Development."

Project description

What do people imagine might happen in the future, and how is that related to the actual present, past, and the future? The research team will explore the relationship between ontogenesis (personal development) and sociogenesis (societal development) in the case of imagining collective futures. We will conduct two applications of a survey about what people in different cultural and socio-economic contexts imagine might happen in the future, how that corresponds to current events, their political attitudes, personality traits and attitudes towards the future (e.g., optimism, openness, tolerance for ambiguity), behaviours in the present (e.g., conservation, political engagement), and how people creatively construct personal narratives of the future from available cultural resources (e.g., media discourses, fiction).

About the supervisor

Hana Hawlina is a PhD Candidate at the University of Neuchâtel (thesis advisor: prof. Tania Zittoun). Her PhD explores the relationship between imagination and sociogenesis, building a bridge between the person-oriented perspectives (sociocultural psychology, phenomenology, and neuroscience of the imagination) and the more sociological and philosophical accounts of the imaginary institution of society (Castoriadis, Anderson, Taylor, Appadurai, Ricoeur, Arendt). She also tries to engage with the general public and popularise sociocultural psychology in Slovenia as a columnist for Dnevnik (national newspaper) and a co-host of a radio podcast on the future of humanity *Quo vadis*.



"...explore whether the 'zoomers' conceptualization of the political landscape is different from boomers..."

"The dimensionality of political ideology in boomers and zoomers: A grassroots approach."

Project description

The issues youth is facing today may differ from what their (grand)parents deem important. As "boomers", perceived by youth as anyone who is old and out of touch, are the demographic group most likely to vote (and be elected), politics is incentivized to address their perceptions. In response, we will explore whether the "zoomers" conceptualization of the political landscape is different from boomers', and whether those differences, resulting in youth's disconnect from current political discourse, could deter them from voting and engaging in other conventional/traditional civic behaviours.

About the supervisor

Žan Lep is a young researcher and PhD student at the Department of Psychology, University in Ljubljana. In his research, he focuses on developmental perspectives of what motivates people, especially emerging adults and seniors, how they make decisions and how they behave in realms of health, civic participation and financial functioning.



"...we examine whether familial and child factors moderate the relation between childhood risk and child outcomes..."

"Parent and child moderators of the relation between familial risk and child well-being"

Project description

Early and middle-childhood risk is associated with a number of negative outcomes for children throughout their development. Using longitudinal data (child age 8-17), from 1421 families in 9 countries, we examine whether familial and child factors moderate the relation between childhood risk and child outcomes. Examining risk factors such as low SES and family chaos as predictors, youth impulsivity and parental warmth as moderators, and prosocial behaviour, social competence and child adjustment as outcomes, we can test findings across new cultural groups and examine models of resiliency. For students who are able to do so, this project will encourage new data collection, but for those unable to access a new subject pool, an existing cross-national data set can be made available for analyses.

About the supervisor

Ann T. Skinner is a Research Project Manager at the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, USA, a doctoral candidate in developmental psychology at Gothenburg University, Sweden and affiliated with University West, Sweden. Following an early career working with juvenile offenders and youth with emotional and learning disabilities, she has worked for the last 18 years on several large, federally-funded research projects at Duke, including the last 12 years on a nine-country study of parenting, child development and young adult risk behaviour. Her specific research interests include ways in which stressful household and community circumstances are related to parenting behaviour and child aggression.



"...investigate whether undesirable decisions by adolescents due to bad peer influence is mediated by reduced uncertainty"

"Using a Mouse-tracker to unravel peer influence in adolescence"

Project description

Peer influence is cited as one of the strongest predictors of maladaptive behaviours in adolescents. Decades of social influence research suggested that social modelling is primarily motivated by the desire to belong to the modelled group, and to reduce uncertainty about what is the appropriate behaviour. Whereas the first motive received much research attention, there is still a paucity in research on the uncertainty reduction account. This may in part be due to lack of insight in one's own uncertainty or reluctance to report it. Technologies such as mouse-tracker software provide new opportunities to unobtrusively measure if uncertainty is indeed reduced due to peer information.

To summarize, in the current study we will investigate whether undesirable decisions by adolescents due to bad peer influence is mediated by reduced uncertainty about the decision.

About the supervisor

Tina Venema is a social psychologist who currently works as a post doc at Aarhus University (Denmark) on the topic of destructive behaviour. She completed my PhD on the effectiveness of nudges at Utrecht University (The Netherlands). Throughout her career she has always been fascinated by the question why people continue to make decisions that are bad for them.



"...the relationship between inhibition and food intake in childhood cross-culturally..."

"Dietary habits, inhibition and spontaneous food intake in children: A cross-cultural study"

Project description

A healthy and balanced diet is important for child development and growth, and prevention of obesity and non-communicable diseases later in life. Environmental factors that influence consumption such as large portion sizes, availability and positioning of certain products, are moderated by cognitive factors such as inhibitory control. The relationship between inhibition and food intake has been documented in adults, adolescents and children. However, the development of executive functions in children, including inhibition, may vary cross-culturally. Further, large developmental shifts in executive control occur across childhood, which may render certain age groups to be more at risk when exposed to unhealthy food. Cross-cultural factors such as baseline cultural diets are likely to differ between countries and may also shape this relationship. This study will examine the relationship between baseline cultural diets, development of inhibition and food intake in children from different European countries. The aim of this study will be to replicate the relationship between inhibition and food intake in childhood cross-culturally, while taking into account developmental changes in inhibition and baseline cultural diets. This study could inform policies to help prevent childhood obesity.

About the supervisor

Zorana Zupan is a Research Associate at the Laboratory for individual differences, Institute of Psychology at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. She completed her PhD at the University of Warwick and a postdoc at the University of Cambridge. She is interested in cognitive psychology and health psychology, as well as translating psychological research findings into practical applications that can bring wider impact and benefit.