BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMME (BIP) 2023

Master Degree in Psychology + Doctoral students

Host institution: University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, Department of Psychology

Partners' institutions: University G. d' Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara (Italy), Tallinn University (Estonia), Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania)

Structure: three sessions (online – in presence in Riga – online)

Students participating in the mobility: 15-20 students from abroad (5-7 students from the host university)

Staff participation in the mobility (in presence): Giorgia Committeri, Sergio Di Sano, Stefano Pagliaro from UGd'ACP; Rasa Pilkauskaitė Valickienė from MRU, Vilnius; Astra Schults from TU, Tallinn; Baiba Martinsone, Indriķis Krams, Ieva Bite from University of Latvia, Riga.

Number of ECTS provided: 3

Starting date: September 5th

Title: BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF BEHAVIOR AND WELLBEING

First session online September 5-7

Opening: September 5th h 10-12 EEST (9-11 a.m. CEST)

• General information and presentation of the topics (syllabus from each professor), introducing of proceedings' book

• Group self-presentation (staff and students)

September 6th h 15-17 EEST (14-16 p.m CEST)

• **CEES VAN LEEUWEN** (leading the Laboratory for Perceptual Dynamics at the KU Leuven):

How the brain got its long tail. A just-so story.

A newborn human brain exhibits about a quadrillion (10^{15}) synaptic connections. That's 10.000 times the scale of the entire world wide web. For neurons to communicate via such a large network, it must be highly efficiently structured. No genetic map could ever produce such a structure; the human genome only has ~3 billion base pairs, or maximally 700 megabytes. Neither could the network be configured through learning. Just consider how much weight adjustment is needed to configure even the simplest neural network. The alternative is that the

brain pre-configures itself through its own, spontaneous activity. This process starts before birth and continues afterwards, as learning through experience gets into the mix. When adequately pre-configured, functions could be acquired by populating the appropriate network regions while learning would be reduced to fine-tuning.

Part of the work in my group in the last 20 years has been focused on self-organization in neural networks, showing how an efficient architecture can be prepared by rewiring of connections in adaptation to spontaneous activity. Adaptive rewiring of random networks generates complex connectivity structures, which progressively become more brain-like: they develop modular small-worlds, show rich club effects and functional architectures such as layers, ganglia, and settle into convergent-divergent units. We even get the brain's characteristic long-tailed connection strength distributions.

• **JURĢIS ŠĶILTERS** (Professor & Lead Researcher: University of Latvia; Chair: Laboratory for Perceptual and Cognitive Systems at the Faculty of Computing, UL)

Developmental constraints in human perception

Human perception is a dynamic structure of interrelated perceptual domains. These domains generate a complex perceptual system changing during human life. Developmental impacts on human perceptual domains are multifaceted and fascinating both in terms of overall developmental pattern (perceptual and cognitive decline including) but also because of much subtler changes during the lifetime.

In my presentation, I will provide evidence from the research on the changes of color preferences during lifetime. I will also discuss developmental differences between perceptual domains and provide some examples of their interaction. (E.g., touch and vision are not just interacting but can be mutually scaffolding or substituting one another.) Further, I will discuss some underexplored perceptual fields (e.g., olfaction) and their developmental dynamics in healthy and impaired individuals. Finally, I will provide a glimpse into the developmental impacts on emotion regulation and cross-cultural variability in perceptual development.

September 7th h 15-16 EEST (14-15 p.m. CEST)

• **MARIA SPINELLI** (UdA):

The roots of emotion regulation in the parent-infant bio-psycho co-regulation

This lecture is aimed to discuss development of self-regulation from infancy based on parent-infant interaction.

Second session in presence – Riga September 11-16th

Address: Kalpaka blvd. 4, Riga, 2nd floor

September 11th h 11-12 On-site registration, welcome coffee; h 12-14

SLOT 1. BEHAVIOR AND PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

• **GIORGIA COMMITTERI** (UdA):

From localizationism to network-level neuropsychology

The lecture will offer an excursus within the evolution of anatomo-clinical correlation or lesion-symptom mapping in neuropsychology. Starting from the localizationistic and associationistic approach of the second half of the 19th century, through the development of techniques for acquiring and methods for analyzing structural and functional neuroimaging data, we will arrive at the current network-level view of the mind-brain relationship. Meta-networking organization based on transient changes of relationship within and across neural networks will be also presented for an up-to-date discovery of the topic.

The study of hemispatial neglect will be used as an exemplar case of different lesion-symptom mapping approaches and types of large-scale brain dysfunctions caused by a cerebral lesion or diaschisis (functional, connectional and connectomal).

• **INDRIĶIS KRAMS** (UL):

Evolution of cooperation, animal personalities, and brain chemistry

Altruism, reciprocity (reciprocal altruism), and pseudo-reciprocity (by-product mutualism) are two important models for the evolutionary stability of cooperation and are often considered alternative hypotheses. Altruistic relationships are based on common genes. Reciprocity is typically defined as a scenario where help given enforces help received: cooperation is stable because each actor's cooperative investments are conditional on the cooperative returns from the receiver. Pseudo-reciprocity is a scenario where help enables by-product returns: cooperation is inherently stable because at least one actor's cooperative investments yield by-product returns from the receiver's self-serving behaviour. Reciprocity and pseudo-reciprocity are only strict alternatives when reciprocity is also defined by the restrictive assumption of zero fitness interdependence, meaning that the receiver's fitness has no inherent benefit for the helper's fitness. However, reciprocity and fitness interdependence are not mutually exclusive because helping can increase both help received and by-product benefits from partners. Moreover, partners that reciprocate help tend to become interdependent over time, and interdependent partners that make larger cooperative investments also increase the need for responsiveness to the returns (enforcement). In this lecture, we will analyse several well-known cases of reciprocity and pseudo-reciprocity in animals and humans to understand whether it is useful to place cooperative behaviour into discrete categories or if it is more insightful to estimate responsiveness and fitness interdependence as continuous dimensions.

Welcome activities for students
h 14:30-16 Meeting with Erasmus coordinator at the UL
h 18 Dinner in the Cider Bar "Sidrērija" on Peldu Street 24, Old Town Riga

September 12th h 9-12:00 with coffee-break

SLOT 2. SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF BEHAVIOR

• **RASA PILKAUSKAITĖ VALICKIENĖ** (MRU):

Biopsychosocial origins of prosocial behavior

Prosocial behavior represents a broad category of actions that are defined by society as generally beneficial to other people and to the ongoing political system (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). This category includes a range of behaviors that are intended to benefit others, such as helping, sharing, cooperating, comforting, and donating to charity. Specifically, we address three questions: Why do people help? When do people help? Who helps? Approaches to the question of why people help have focused on three types of mechanisms: (1) learning, (2) arousal and affect, and (3) social and personal standards. Psychological level: Social Exchange theory. The theory that human interactions are transactions that aim to maximize one's rewards and minimize one's costs (external and internal rewards). Sociological level: Social Norms theory (the reciprocity norm the social-responsibility norm). Biological level: Evolutionary Psychology (kin selection and reciprocity). When do people help? A decision model of intervention and a cost–reward framework will be discussed. Who Helps? Dispositional Variables. Prosocial dispositional variables are enduring personal attributes that are, across time and situations, associated with consistencies in the tendency to engage in helpful or altruistic acts. The dispositional variables will be considered including demographic characteristics, personal motives, and personality traits. Sustained prosocial activities – Organizational Citizenship Behavior within private, for-profit organizations. What are the motives for employees to exhibit citizenship behavior? A review of prosocial and instrumental predictors of Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Gender and Organizational Citizenship Behavior.

• **STEFANO PAGLIARO** (UdA):

On the effects of ethical climate(s) on employees' reactions: A social identity approach

Ethical work climate represents a set of shared formal and informal perceptions of procedures and policies, which shape expectations for ethical behaviour. Thus, it seems crucial for organizations to understand the positive and negative consequences of different kinds of ethical climates in order (a) to avoid the associated financial and sociopsychological costs and (b) to rely on those climates that, on the contrary, may increase employees' positive relationship with the organization, positive behaviours, as well as wellbeing. In recent years, researchers as well as practitioners have focused their attention on this construct, considering its direct influence both on individual and organizational outcomes and behaviours. In this talk, I will present evidence from a research project in which we compared the effects of a more individualistic and independent vs. collectivistic and interdependent ethical climate

on employees' reactions (i.e., attitudes, behavioural intentions, wellbeing), across a range of cross-sectional and experimental studies, conducted both with in real contexts and in the lab. We thus attempted to understand how different types of ethical climates predict employees' (positive and negative) attitudes and behaviours: In doing so, we relied on the social identity approach to suggest that the effects of (different) ethical climates on employees' attitudes and behavioural tendencies are driven by identification with the organization. Evidence showed that a collectivistic and interdependent ethical climate promotes pro-organizational behaviour and well-being, while discouraging counter-productive work behaviours, and in this way, it helps building a trustworthy organizational atmosphere. Across the studies, organizational identification emerged as a fundamental underlying mechanism driving the effects of ethical climates on employees' reactions.

• **STEFANO PAGLIARO** (UdA):

Bystanders' reactions to intimate partner violence: an experimental approach

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a widespread phenomenon. Despite the prevalence of IPV in Western societies, most cases remain unnoticed or at least unreported to authorities. Social psychologists have been investigating bystanders' reactions to IPV, to understand which factors may influence the willingness to intervene in support of a female victim of violence. In this talk, I will review a research programme that directly investigated personal and situational factors that make potential bystanders believe a woman victim of IPV deserves and needs (their) help and support, and what, on the contrary, makes them deny any such willingness to help. I will present evidence about the situational antecedents of bystander's reaction, the underlying mechanisms of this intervention, and an extension of such evidence to non-prototypical cases, i.e., to an IPV episode occurring within a same-sex couple. I will conclude by discussing future directions, and by highlighting the theoretical and practical contributions of this programme of research to the understanding of IPV for both researchers and practitioners.

h 14-17 Visit of laboratories at the UL:

Laboratory for Perceptual and Cognitive Systems at the Faculty of Computing, Raiņa 19, Riga
Laboratories of the Faculty of Biology, Jelgavas 1, Riga

September 13th h 10-13 with coffee-break

SLOT 3. PATHWAYS OF BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

• **IEVA BITE** (UL):

Evidence based interventions for autism spectrum disorders (Behavioral treatments and cognitive behavioral therapy)

Basic principles of evidence based treatments and components of these treatments for children and adolescents with high- and low-functioning autism will be covered during this lecture. Overview about early interventions for ASD as well as social skills training for preschool and school-age children will be given. Programs such as Early Birds for parents, Early Start

Denver Model, Children's Friendship Training Program, The Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®) will be included. Finally, basic principles of cognitive behavioral treatment for anxiety and depression in people with ASD will be discussed.

• **ASTRA SCHULTS** (TU):

Supporting behavioral development in classroom: Social context in school

During the lecture, we will look into Self Determination Theory and learning motivation. We will explore the factors shaping the learning environment that have an effect on the behavior of the pupils in the classroom as well as on their learning outcomes, including academic achievement.

In addition, we will briefly consider the differences in shaping the learning environment and behavior of the pupils with special educational needs compared to the pupils without special educational needs.

Discussion (1 h) Student reflection and summary of their gains (exchange of insights, research ideas etc.)

September 14th h 10-13 with coffee-break

SLOT 4. BEHAVIOR IN THE CONTEXT OF LEARNING

• **SERGIO DI SANO** (UdA):

Social Media and Social Relations in Schools: Promoting Well-being through Gamification

This lecture explores the impact of social media on students' well-being and social relationships in schools, focusing on the potential of gamification as a means to promote positive outcomes. By incorporating game-like elements into educational and social activities, gamification offers an engaging approach to encourage positive online behavior, enhance social interactions, and mitigate the negative effects of excessive social media use. Drawing on empirical research and practical examples, the lecture highlights the benefits of gamification in fostering prosocial behaviors, strengthening interpersonal connections, and improving overall psychological well-being. It also addresses the challenges and ethical considerations associated with gamification in educational settings. The lecture aims to inspire students to critically evaluate their social media usage, emphasizing the potential of gamification as a tool to foster healthier and more fulfilling social relationships in schools.

• **BAIBA MARTINSONE** (UL):

Research and practice of promotion wellbeing at schools: Connections between educational and clinical psychology

During several last decades, there is consensus among researchers and practitioners that schools are a key place for preventive facilitating of well-being of students and teachers. Evidence-based approaches for Social emotional learning and promoting the mental health will

be presented. The pathway of promoting well-being at schools in Latvia will be described and findings of empirical research will be integrated within this lecture.

Discussion (1 h) and establishing of student groups based on their identified interests

September 15th h 10-13 with coffee break

- **Group work on specific topics of the 4 slots**
- **Preliminary project work with students**
- **Concluding remarks and farewell**

September 16th

Free student networking

Third session online October 24-25th

October 24th h 10-12

- **Project/review presentations by students and discussion**

October 25th h 10-13

- **Project/review presentations by students and discussion**
- **Closing remarks**

Final requirements/assessment:

- presence (at least 80% of the lesson hours)
- presentation of a project to be chosen in one of the four slots (or alternatively a research review); no more than 4-5 pages.