

Navigating the social world - A cross-cultural and developmental perspective on social norms

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There is an astonishing variety in human sociality, which cannot be explained by biological factors alone. Rather, it is brought about by our abilities to create, sustain and transmit social norms. The ontogenetic roots of these abilities have been primarily investigated in Western populations - often under the assumption that these findings are representative and apply universally. However, anthropologists have long reported cultural differences in childhood socialization practices and behavioural researchers have recently shown cross-cultural variation in adults' norm understanding. This project will therefore undertake a systematic, cross-cultural investigation into the development of social norm understanding focusing on two core features: (1) mechanisms of norm enforcement and (2) the role of norms in social coordination and cooperation. A set of comparative studies will be conducted with children from different small-scale societies in Africa and South America, which represent a wide range of living conditions, forms of subsistence, languages, and social structures. These studies will provide insight into how universal patterns of development and socio-cultural environments interact and shape norm understanding. They will also inform new theorizing about socio-cognitive development which better reflects the diversity of human sociality.

Projektbeteiligte

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Universal norm psychology leads to societal diversity in prosocial behaviour and development

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Infants acquire novel actions through motor cortex activity during action observation.

Children across societies enforce conventional norms but in culturally variable ways

Challenges and Coping: Perspectives of Syrian and Iraqi Refugee Youth in Germany

