

VACANCY DOCTORAL RESEARCHER – CONFLICT THINKING

The Research group TOR of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Brussels, Belgium) has a vacancy for a PhD-student for a project on *Conflict thinking*, funded by Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO). The successful candidate has a background in one of the social sciences, preferably sociology, social psychology or political science. We are looking for someone who is interested in an interdisciplinary approach to public opinion research and has excellent quantitative data analysis skills.

Project

Against the background of the growing success of political actors that rally support with narratives that contain a strong conflict element, this project assesses the particularities and consequences of perceiving the world through the lens of social conflict in Western (European) societies among the public at large. Whereas much current research focuses on specific manifestations of conflict thinking (e.g., populism, ethnic prejudice, or feelings of collective relative deprivation), this project assesses whether it is possible to empirically measure conflict thinking per se, that is, in a non-applied way. We aim to measure an individual's general tendency to perceive the world through the lens of social conflict regardless of the specificity of the groups that are perceived to be in conflict. We seek to answer three interrelated research questions. First, how can we measure conflict thinking at the individual level and what is the social and psychological profile of people who adhere to conflict thinking in contemporary European societies? Second, how do characteristics of the social context (country level) affect individual-level conflict thinking? And finally, what are (1) the causal origins and (2) behavioural and attitudinal consequences of conflict thinking? To answer these questions we rely on both cross-national and single country studies (RQ1 & 2) as well as on (RQ3) population-based experiments that assess whether subtle manipulations in terms of (a) feelings of vulnerability and/or (b) the presence of conflict frames in new stories result in adaptations of thought and behavior.

The project is supervised by Bram Spruyt (promotor, Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Filip van Droogenbroeck (co-promotor, Vrije Universiteit Brussel).

Your profile

- You have a master in Social Sciences, preferably sociology, social psychology or political science (people who graduate in June can apply)
- You obtained excellent study results in the bachelor and master programs
- You have excellent quantitative data analysis skills, ideally in the context of large-scale survey data
- You have experience with or an interest in experimental research (e.g., survey experiments)
- You are a dynamic person that is highly motivated to pursue an academic career
- You have good English writing skills

We offer

- A full time position as a pre-doctoral researcher for one year with three additional years after a positive evaluation, starting on 1 October 2019
- Financial means and opportunities for methodological training
- Scientific and financial support for participating in various national and international conferences
- A three-member doctoral committee that provides feedback and advice
- Being part of an interdisciplinary research team that is well-embedded in national and international networks

Procedure

By the 10th of June you send to Bram Spruyt (Bram.spruyt@vub.be):

- A letter of motivation explaining the relevance of your skills for the project
- Your CV
- A 1-2-page summary of your master thesis
- In case you have publications (not obligatory), a copy of what you consider to be your most important publication

By the 20th of June you are informed about the outcome of the first selection based on the information and documents you provided. When positive, you are invited for an interview. The interviews take place on 8/7/2019.

For more information or a full project outline please contact Bram Spruyt (Bram.Spruyt@vub.be).