Internship Offer – Department of Clinical Psychology

1. Name:

Clinical Psychology Department (SPC), Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Mons
Academic manager: Sarah Galdiolo
Internship supervisors (*to be determined upon signing the documents*): Anthony Mauroy, Mélissa Florian, Maria-pascale Lukenga and Madyson Messiaen

2. Current research projects:

Theme 1: *Parenting and adolescence in the context of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*

Adolescence is a period of profound physical, cognitive, and social upheaval, during which young people are led to question their identity and experience new sensations. This quest for exploration can favor the emergence of risky behaviors, resulting in an increase in externalizing behaviors such as aggression, opposition, inattention, or even delinquency. When they become clinically significant, these behaviors affect not only the well-being of adolescents, but also that of their parents, contributing to increased parental stress. While these links between externalizing behaviors and parental stress have been widely studied during childhood, they remain little explored in adolescence, particularly in the context of neurodevelopmental disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Adolescents with ASD also go through this period of change, but their particularities make them more vulnerable to exacerbated behavioral difficulties. For parents, this stage can be particularly challenging, highlighting the importance of better understanding their experiences. This research therefore aims to analyze in depth the links between externalizing behaviors, parental stress, and coping strategies within families with an adolescent with or without ASD, in order to better understand the parental experience and promote the development of interventions adapted to their needs.

Theme 2 *: Digital interventions in mental health*

This thesis project is part of a research approach aimed at evaluating the effects of co-design on the effectiveness of digital platforms in mental health. The study focuses on the self-help website, *Home Stress Home,* which is an interface created in 2020 to support adults in psychological distress in the context of confinements linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the end of the pandemic and evolving mental health needs of the general population, this platform, like many digital tools, requires adaptation of its content to better meet users' needs. In this context, we explore how co-design, as an innovative and collaborative approach integrating users from the early stages of development, can influence key variables such as adherence, engagement, user satisfaction and symptom reduction. The challenge of this research is to produce solid theoretical and empirical data to better understand the mechanisms by which co-design improves the impact of digital interventions in mental health.

Theme 3: *Co-parenting in separated families*

This project is part of the study of post-separation co-parenting dynamics, focusing specifically on situations of high conflict between parents after marital breakdown. These situations refer to configurations where parents, despite the end of their emotional relationship, remain permanently engaged in intense and recurring conflicts, with major repercussions on family functioning and the well-being of children. Numerous studies have examined this issue, which constitutes a major challenge both for the families concerned and for support professionals (psychologists, mediators, legal experts, etc.). However, the scientific literature fails to agree on a univocal definition of the concept of "high conflict." The criteria used to identify these situations vary considerably, resulting in considerable heterogeneity in the family profiles studied. The objective of this project is therefore to propose a rigorous theoretical conceptualization to clarify and operationally define the notion of "high conflict" in post-separation co-parenting. To achieve this, a systematic literature review will be conducted to identify, analyze, and synthesize existing work. A first study using a qualitative method is currently underway. These analyses aim to answer the central question: “What constitutes high conflict?" and to propose recommendations for the consistent use of this concept in research and clinical practice.

Theme 4: *Social cognition and early childhood*

This project focuses on the study of empathy in triadic interactions between parents and their preschool child. Many studies have focused on empathy in marital relationships, therefore mainly in a dyadic context. However, parental couples often find themselves in the context of interaction with their child and adapt their exchanges to this specific context. No experimental study has looked at empathy, and more specifically the empathic accuracy *of* parents of a young child in interaction. Thus, using questionnaire, interview and observational measures, the objective is to measure the empathy of parents towards each other when they play with the child, as well as in the child's absence. In addition, this project aims to develop tools for assessing parental empathy and environmental sensitivity in children.

2.1. Description of internships:

We offer several **unpaid** research internships in which students will participate in several research projects conducted within the SPC. Students will also be required to write an individual research project during the internship.

The first 400-hour internship will include:

- Activities mainly focused on the theme of digital interventions in mental health
- Additional activities on two other themes (Parenting and adolescence in ASD and Social Cognition during early childhood)

The second **400-hour internship will include**:

- Activities mainly focused on the themes of parenting and adolescence in ASD and social cognition during early childhood
- A complement of activities on a theme linked to triadic interactions

The third **400-hour internship will include**:

- Activities mainly focused on the theme of co-parenting in separated families
- Additional activities on two other themes (Parenting and adolescence in ASD and Social Cognition during early childhood)

2.2. Activities that can be carried out during the internships:

In this context, the student will be required to contribute to some of the following activities, **depending on the projects assigned** :

- Develop, write and orally present an individual research project
- Contact and/or visit various institutions to collaborate during recruitment
- Meet with families, parents or young adults to help collect data
- Undertake the coding and/or transcription of data from these meetings
- Participate in pilot and preliminary studies
- Statistically analyze data using software such as Jamovi, SPSS, R Studio
- Analyze qualitative data using NVivo software
- Participate in double coding as part of a systematic review
- Contribute to the development of a scientific recruitment and popularization platform
- Participate in scientific activities (conferences, trade fairs, etc.)

3. Profiles sought:

- The applicant must be enrolled in a Master's program in Psychological Sciences
- Interest in family interactions
- Good knowledge of statistical and/or qualitative analysis software
- Fluency in French and English (for collaboration in writing articles)
- Proactivity, flexibility and autonomy are expected qualities!

4. Internship period:

The internships will take place throughout the 2025-2026 academic year, with internship periods to be agreed with the supervisors, **for 4 to 5 days of work per week.**
Due to various recruitment activities, the schedule will be flexible and will occasionally involve Saturday work in the case of scientific events or participant recruitment.

5. Practical details for applying:

To apply, please send a cover letter and CV by email with the subject line "Research Internship 2025" before August 11, 2025 to the following address:

- spc@umons.ac.be

In your cover letter, we invite you to highlight your affinity with one or more specific research projects, briefly explaining what piques your interest. It is also recommended that you highlight your skills in data analysis and processing, specifying the tools or methodologies you are proficient in and their potential usefulness for the project.