

Intellectual Humility in Childhood and Adolescence

Without a hunger to explore new possibilities and a restlessness to transcend our ignorance, will we be wide-eyed and open-minded enough to discover new areas of research? If we are not humble enough to learn as children learn, we may be unable to admit mistakes, seek advice, and try again. – Sir John Templeton¹

The John Templeton Foundation invites online funding inquiries for research projects on the etiology and developmental trajectory of intellectual humility in childhood and adolescence. As referenced in the above quote, we are particularly interested in understanding intellectual humility within the broader context of the [development of intellectual virtues](#).

Although there have been notable advances in our understanding of intellectual humility, important developmental questions remain underexplored. Further research on the etiology and developmental trajectory of intellectual humility will deepen and clarify the theoretical understanding of what intellectual humility looks like in the first two decades of life. This type of developmental framework will also enable researchers to examine intrapersonal, interpersonal, and other environmental conditions that affect its emergence.

DEFINITIONS

Intellectual humility is defined as recognizing that one’s beliefs or opinions may be incorrect or incomplete. Intellectual humility may also have other core or secondary features, such as respect of others’ ideas or willingness to revise one’s own beliefs. For further reading on intellectual humility, please see the end notes of this document.ⁱⁱ *Intellectual virtues* are the personal qualities—beyond knowledge, intellectual ability, and rationality—that are required for good thinking and learning.

SCOPE

We are targeting three major questions surrounding intellectual humility in childhood and adolescence. Example areas of study, as identified by a network of psychologists and philosophers, are included under each question.

1. What is the nature of intellectual humility in young people?

Because people learn in distinct ways at various ages, intellectual humility may manifest somewhat differently at different ages. Unfortunately, only a handful of academic papers have addressed the topic of intellectual humility within children or adolescence; there is a need for further work bridging the intellectual humility and developmental research literatures. How does intellectual humility relate to other qualities of a good learner or thinker? What are the behavioral, social, metacognitive, etc. precursors or “building blocks” of intellectual humility? How do they combine/interact to form intellectual humility?

2. What is the developmental trajectory of intellectual humility?

Grappling with how intellectual humility and its necessary precursors manifest within, for example, a 7-year-old versus a 14-year-old, will help deepen our understanding of the role that intellectual humility plays in related areas of human development. This understanding will involve placing intellectual humility within the context of other psychological constructs, like metacognition and social learning. What does intellectual humility look like at different ages/points in development? How does intellectual humility change over time? How do the various components of intellectual humility develop together? What is

the role of the environment and/or culture in shaping the developmental trajectory of intellectual humility?

Furthermore, we recognize that intellectual humility is only one of several important qualities necessary for good thinking and learning, and we are especially interested in projects that consider the development of intellectual humility alongside concepts like intellectual self-confidence (recognizing one's strengths), open-mindedness (transcending one's perspective), intellectual firmness (maintaining one's perspective), and curiosity (disposition to wonder and ask why), among others.

3. How do we measure intellectual humility at different stages of development?

Although various adult measures of intellectual humility exist, less attention has been paid to measuring intellectual humility in children. Moreover, the adult approach often relies upon self-report, which may not be appropriate across diverse developmental periods. How can we validly and reliably measure intellectual humility across different ages and abilities? How do we measure the multiple features or components of intellectual humility? How do we measure intellectual humility as a virtue?

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Foundation has a two-step application process, the first stage of which is the submission of an Online Funding Inquiry (OFI). OFIs must be submitted through the [Templeton Portal](#) by August 19, 2022 for consideration. All OFIs will be reviewed by internal Foundation staff, and applicants will be notified of their OFI status by October 14, 2022. Applicants who receive an invitation to submit a Full Proposal should expect to submit their proposals by January 20, 2023. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of Full Proposal reviews by July 14, 2023. For further information on our application process, please click [here](#).

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

We will consider request amounts of varying sizes for empirical or conceptual projects of up to 36 months in duration. In general, we do not plan to invite projects that request funds less than \$200,000 or more than \$1 million USD.

OFIs should include clear definitions of terms and a hypothetical theoretical framework for the development of the qualities under study. Applicants should also identify the age range(s) targeted in the project.

Please reference the [Online Funding Inquiry Instructions and Notes](#) [PDF] document (also found within the [Templeton Portal](#)) as you work on completing the OFI.

For questions, please contact programofficer@templeton.org.

ⁱ Templeton, J. (2000). *Possibilities for Over One Hundredfold More Spiritual Information: The Humble Approach in Theology and Science* (p. 7). Templeton Foundation Press.

ⁱⁱ Ballantyne, N. (2021). Recent work on intellectual humility: A philosopher's perspective. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/hxq4>

Leary, M. (2018). *The psychology of intellectual humility* [White paper]. John Templeton Foundation.

https://www.templeton.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/JTF_Intellectual_Humility_final.pdf

Porter, T., Baldwin, C. R., Warren, M. T., Murray, E. D., Bronk, K. C., Forgeard, M. J. C., Snow, N. E., & Jayawickreme, E. (2021). Clarifying the content of intellectual humility: A systematic review and integrative framework. *Journal of Personality Assessment*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/hd9h>

Van Tongeren, D. R., Davis, D. E., Hook, J. N., & vanOyen-Witvliet, C. (2019). Humility. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 28(5), 463–468. <https://doi.org/gf7mtv>