UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

CENTRE INTERFACULTAIRE DE GÉRONTOLOGIE ET D'ÉTUDES DES VULNÉRABILITÉS

JOB OFFER POSTDOC

THE CENTER FOR THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF GERONTOLOGY AND VULNERABILITY ANNOUNCES AN 80% POST-DOC POSITION IN INTERDISCIPLINARY LIFE COURSE RESEARCH FUNDED BY THE SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (SNSF)

The Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Gerontology and Vulnerability (CIGEV) of the University of Geneva offers a Post-Doc position in the field of interdisciplinary life course research. The Post-Doc will be part of the research project entitled "Individual pathways of cognitive reserve accumulation - a fine-grained lifespan perspective" funded by the SNSF and directed by Dr. Andreas Ihle (see project summary on next page). This interdisciplinary project with its high methodological profile will be the perfect next step for advancing the Post-Doc's career with respect to skills in sophisticated longitudinal analytical approaches and ambitious publication output.

Job description

The main aim of this position will be to prepare and conduct advanced modeling techniques such as sequence analyses, latent transition analyses, multilevel growth curve models, and dynamic structural equation modeling approaches using large-scale longitudinal interdisciplinary datasets. For the different analysis projects, the Post-Doc will write scientific articles as lead author for international peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, the Post-Doc will present the results on international conferences.

Requirements

The ideal candidate holds a PhD in Psychology, Sociology, Socioeconomics, or Demography (or has an equivalent degree), with strong quantitative skills and a research experience in interdisciplinary life course research. S/he is well-experienced in applying quantitative methods, namely longitudinal data analyses and in handling large datasets. S/he is fluent in English with good scientific communication skills (oral and written). Furthermore, s/he is highly motivated to target ambitious goals and has excellent team work and research management skills.

Application

The application (motivation letter, detailed CV, full list of publications and pdf files of all publications as first author, copy of PhD certificate, and letter of recommendation from PhD supervisor / prior employers) should be addressed per email to Dr. Andreas Ihle (Andreas.Ihle@unige.ch).

Contract duration: 22 months
Start date: 1st of February 2020
Percentage: 80%
Salary: According to the usual scale used by the University of Geneva

Location: University of Geneva, CIGEV

Deadline for application: 30th of November 2019

Information: Dr. Andreas Ihle (Andreas.Ihle@unige.ch)

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INDIVIDUAL PATHWAYS OF COGNITIVE RESERVE ACCUMULATION - A FINE-GRAINED LIFESPAN PERSPECTIVE

Project summary

The demographic changes, with more and more adults attaining older ages, but, at the same time, also an increase of people suffering from cognitive impairments and thereby diminished well-being in advanced age constitute one of the biggest challenges in this century for our society. With respect to the preservation of cognitive functioning, the cognitive reserve concept (Stern, 2002, 2017) postulates that early and lifelong experiences, including educational and occupational attainment, and leisure activities throughout the lifespan, promote cognitive health in old age. Yet, research addressing different aspects of inter-individual difference characteristics as potential moderators in the lifelong accumulation of cognitive reserve is still in its infancy. It is indispensable to take up a fine-grained lifespan perspective to understand in depth the interplay of the detailed pathways of cognitive reserve accumulation in different domains during the entire lifespan with the multifarious idiosyncratic life events and the contextual environments in the different life phases during the individual's history. To address this fundamental open issue in cognitive aging research, in three subprojects this research project will exploit available large-scale longitudinal interdisciplinary datasets using advanced modeling techniques such as sequence analyses, latent transition analyses, multilevel growth curve models, and dynamic structural equation modeling approaches. Specifically, in subproject A we will investigate inter-individual differences in the pathways of cognitive reserve accumulation over the entire lifespan from early childhood to very old age. The specific focus is to disentangle the differential contributions of different domains of stimulation (education, non-formal intellectual activities, physical activities, and social activities) from the different life phases of cognitive reserve build-up (early and late childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, early and late midlife, late and very late adulthood). In subproject B we will examine how idiosyncratic non-normative life event periods in the individual's life history influence in detail the pathways of cognitive reserve accumulation. A detailed focus will be taken on differential effects depending on the specific life phase in which the respective event period might affect individual trajectories. In subproject C we will investigate how contextual factors, such as demographic, economic, and societal characteristics of the surrounding environments in which an individual grew up and spent his or her adulthood, influence in detail the pathways of cognitive reserve accumulation. A special focus will be given on differential effects depending on the contextual level (country versus federal state / region versus neighborhood) and depending on the specific life phase in which the respective environment might affect individual trajectories. In all three subprojects we will investigate how in detail these differential patterns of the individual's cognitive reserve accumulation pathways influence the subsequent aging trajectories in cognitive functioning and well-being in old age. The present interdisciplinary proposal has enormous conceptual significance as it will help to refine current models of cognitive reserve in particular and gerontological research in general. Moreover, as the present project will help to better understand the multifaceted mechanisms throughout the individual's life underlying inter-individual differences in the fine-grained aging trajectories in cognitive health and well-being, it will be of highest significance for social prevention policies and may lay the ground for designing evidence-based intervention programs for our aging populations.