

The effect of poverty on cognition, the brain and education

Two 4-year PhD Studentships for UK/EU candidates, funded by the Medical Research Council (UK) and the Templeton World Charitable Foundation, starting in October 2017:

Growing up in a deprived environment can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's development (Lipina et al 2005). Children from deprived backgrounds are more likely to be placed in special education, fail courses, and complete fewer years of schooling (McLoyd 1998). The effect of early deprivation is persistent – growing up in poverty can set a life-long trajectory associated with poor physical and mental well-being (Corak 2006). However, many disadvantaged children are highly resilient. Roughly one third of children growing up in poverty develop into well-adjusted and confident adults, who in many cases exceeded the educational and vocational accomplishments of their wealthier peers (Masten 2001, Werner 1993).

We are offering two fully funded PhD studentships as part of a project to explore how cognition, environmental factors, social influences and brain mechanisms interact to promote this resilience. By better understanding these interactions we hope to provide an evidence-base for future targeted interventions that promote the positive development of all children, regardless of their background. The project is a large longitudinal study, and each doctoral project will fit within this broad remit. However, the scope of the project is such that there will be substantial opportunity for the successful candidates to shape the questions they address and approach that they take. Both students will be supervised by Dr Duncan Astle (<https://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/people/duncan.astle/duncanresearch/>), and ideal candidates will have an interest in cognitive neuroscience, cognitive development or education (or all of the above).

If you are interested or have any questions then please contact Duncan.astle@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk