

Call for papers

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Vulnerability in Health Trajectories: Life Course Perspectives

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In contemporary societies, the unequal distribution of health results from the influence of a range of social factors. The research on health inequalities has been recently re-visited and partly renewed by life course perspectives on health. Over the life course, social determinants affect individual health trajectories and shape the often sharply distinct health patterns among socially disadvantaged and advantaged groups. Both macro contexts (historical period, economic recessions) and micro contexts (family and working spheres, social networks) define how health trajectories unfold over the life course and how health inequalities develop among and across sub-populations. Such health inequalities continue to grow in many affluent countries, calling for more research at the crossroad of sociology of health and life course epidemiology.

Life course perspectives aim at a comprehensive understanding of the development of inequalities in health trajectories. Health is dynamic and changing over the life course, following different patterns (stability in good or poor conditions, decline, improvement, or recurrent fluctuations). As individuals age, general health slowly declines and is progressively impaired with increasing loss of functional and cognition abilities. In societies characterized by individualization and diversity of lifestyles, the development of trajectories unfolds at the interplay of agency and structure. Sociological conceptualizations of agency and structure contribute to our understanding of the processes by which inequalities in health trajectories occur over time and how social factors (i.e., socioeconomic position, working conditions, marital and family lives, lifestyles, gender, migration, discrimination) impact on health trajectories.

Educational, social security and health care systems influence life course trajectories, the resources individuals use at different stages of their life and their chances of staying in good health as long as possible. Socially disadvantaged groups are structurally positioned in unfavourable conditions in society. Therefore, they are likely to accumulate health risks (e.g. poor working and housing conditions, family circumstances) and to lack the material and

non-material resources needed to cope with the adversities of life and to develop healthy lifestyle habits. Such structural disadvantaged positions put them at higher risk of experiencing health decline earlier in their life course or at a faster rate of decline compared to the wealthier. They are also at higher risk of experiencing non-normative transitions for health reasons (job loss, divorce).

This special issue collects papers examining the processes by which social advantages and disadvantages affect the health of individuals over their life course. Which factors lead to health vulnerability and to chronic illness, handicap and disability, which contribute to an accelerated health decline (either mental, physical or social health)? Alternatively, which determinants have a favourable impact on health and allow individuals to remain in good health as they age? How are these processes influenced by embeddedness of people in the social structure? What are the social determinants (social system, socioeconomic position, family and working lives) and the individual determinants (biological inheritance, emotion, cognition, health behaviours) that moderate these processes? How can family and working spheres either support or impede health trajectories?

This special issue invites empirical papers based on either quantitative or qualitative data, or both. Theoretical papers and systematic reviews are also very welcomed. Papers should address health trajectories with a life course perspective. Analyses pertaining to different stages of the life course (foetal life, children, adolescents, adults, elderly) are welcome.

*Please submit your proposal for a contribution to Stéphane Cullati (stephane.cullati@unige.ch) by **20 September 2016**.*

Your submission for the special issue should include the following:

- *name, email address, and affiliations of all the authors*
- *title of the paper,*
- *abstract of around 500 words, structured (topic, aim, methods, results, discussion, conclusion).*

*The guest editors will decide on the acceptance or rejection of the abstract until **20 October 2016**.*

*Selected authors will be invited to submit their manuscript (max. 8,000 words, 50,000 characters including tables, figures and references) by **15 March 2017**. The manuscripts will go through the usual peer-review process of the Swiss Journal of Sociology. Accepted languages are English, German or French. More information about the Swiss Journal of Sociology and the submission process are available in www.sgs-sss.ch/sociojournal.*

Publication is planned for July 2018.

For any queries, please contact Stéphane Cullati at stephane.cullati@unige.ch