Faculty of Psychology

At the Institute of General Psychology, Biopsychology and Methods of Psychology, the Chair of Biopsychology offers a position as

Research Associate / PhD Student
(Subject to personal qualification employees are remunerated according to salary group E 13 TV-L)

limited for three years starting January 1, 2022. The position entails 75 % of the fulltime weekly hours. The position offers the chance to obtain further academic qualification (e.g. PhD). The period of employment is governed by the Fixed Term Research Contracts Act (Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz-WissZeitVG).

The successful applicant will work in the DFG project “Reconstructing the naïve theory of the self”, which is a collaboration of the TU Dresden and Jacobs University Bremen. The applicant will be supervised by Prof. Dr. Bernhard Hommel, who is leading the behavioral studies of the project, and collaborate with Prof. Arvid Kappas and Prof. Dr. Francesco Maurelli at JU Bremen, and their research teams.

The project investigates how humans conceptualize a “self”. People attribute a self to other humans, but also to non-human animals or technical systems, and they treat them accordingly — more or less carefully, politely, or empathetic. But what are the criteria for attributing a self to another agent? This project aims to tackle this question by using a “synthetic” approach. We will program small, very simple robots in such a way that they show behavioral characteristics that are likely to solicit the attribution of a self — such as causality, human-like movement speed, behavioral efficiency, learning ability, and social sensitivity. In Turing-tests, human participants will be confronted with videos of behavior of otherwise identical robots showing or not showing these characteristics, and participants will be asked to assess both robots on a number of self-relevant scales. Those behavioral characteristics that lead to a significant increase in the attribution of a self will be combined and implemented in a robot. Participants will be presented with the behavior of this robot and with an otherwise identical robot that is controlled by another human. To the degree that participants will no longer be able to tell these robots from each other, we assume to have identified the criteria for attributing a human-like self. We will then investigate in which ways the attribution of a human-like self will affect how humans treat a robot: whether they show more empathy, trust it more, conform more to its behavior, and treat it less aggressively.

Tasks: Tasks include participant recruitment, implementation of the experiments, guidance of the student assistants, data analysis, publication, and presentation of the results in scientific journals and at conferences.

Requirements: We are looking for a highly motivated person with a university degree (MSc or diploma) in Psychology, Cognitive Neuroscience, Cognitive Sciences, or a similar discipline; a strong interest in theoretical and empirical psychological topics; excellent statistical and methodological skills; excellent proficiency in English and high levels of commitment; initiative and scientific curiosity. Prior experience with scientific publishing as well as programming skills are advantageous.

For questions please contact bianca.fricke@tu-dresden.de.

Applications from women are particularly welcome. The same applies to people with disabilities.

Please submit your comprehensive application (including a cover letter describing your research interests and qualifications, your CV, relevant certificates, and the names and contact information for two referees) by October 15, 2021 (stamped arrival date of the university central mail service applies), preferably via the TU Dresden SecureMail Portal https://securemail.tu-dresden.de by sending it as a single pdf document to bianca.fricke@tu-dresden.de or to TU Dresden, Fakultät Psychologie, Institut für Allgemeine Psychologie, Biopsychologie und Methoden der Psychologie, Professur...
für Biopsychologie, z. Hdn. Frau Fricke, Helmholtzstr. 10, 01069 Dresden. Please submit copies only, as your application will not be returned to you. Expenses incurred in attending interviews cannot be reimbursed.

Reference to data protection: Your data protection rights, the purpose for which your data will be processed, as well as further information about data protection is available to you on the website: https://tu-dresden.de/karriere/datenschutzhinweis