

The biology of PTSD: Implications for therapy

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Recent biological models of posttraumatic stress have pointed to the importance of acute reactions in the genesis and maintenance of PTSD. This presentation will review prevailing biological models of trauma response, with specific focus on fear conditioning models. There will be a review of empirical studies of biological markers of adaptive and maladaptive responses to trauma. These studies will include studies of heart rate, neuroimaging, and startle response. The review will then extend biological models to discuss factors that may predispose people to PTSD development and will review the relevant evidence. The review will address evidence concerning the role that neuroimaging evidence has in understanding the treatment of PTSD. Possibilities of enhancing current psychotherapy approaches to PTSD by modulating neurotransmitters associated with learning will be discussed and findings from a range of anxiety disorders will be discussed. Finally, challenges to early intervention will be discussed and the opportunities offered by biological advances will be outlined.

The glass ceiling - Australian and British women in management 2009: Myth or reality?

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Despite the dramatic increases in Australian and British women entering professional and managerial positions over the past 20 years, and the fact that women management and business graduates now outnumber men; a recent UK Equality and Human Rights Commission Report has linked women's progress into top jobs to a 'snail's pace' (HRC, 2008). Indeed, since 2006, the percentage of Australian women on Board Chairs has remained static at 2% and the percentage of female CEOs and Board Directors has decreased from 3% to 2% (in 2008) and from 8.7% to 8.3%, respectively (EOWA, 2008). Furthermore, there are indications that the economic crisis is also having more of a major negative effect on women managers, with recent UK statistics showing they were twice as likely to be made redundant compared to their male counterparts (National Management Salary Survey, 2008). In both countries, there is still major gender segregation based on management function with the most popular jobs for women managers being HR/Personnel and Marketing. Nevertheless, proportionally, men still dominate the senior positions even in these female dominated areas and men continue to earn more than women at every level of the managerial ladder (Davidson and Burke, in press). In Australia for example, even in HR, the pay gap between men and women is 43% and female CEOs earn two thirds of salary earned by male CEOs (EOWA, 2008). The aim of this presentation is to review and compare some of the changes related to women managers' position in the workplace and discuss some of the factors which help to perpetuate inequalities (including stereotyping and men and women's attitudes and behaviour). The business case related to the advantages of introducing management of diversity initiatives will also be presented, along with recommendations for 'shattering the glass ceiling'.

Adaptation and aftereffects in normal and disordered face perception

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We have a remarkable ability to discriminate and recognize thousands of faces despite their perceptual similarity. This capacity appears to depend on adaptive processes that code faces relative to perceptual norms abstracted from experience. I will illustrate how the operation of these processes can be revealed by perceptual aftereffects, how these processes are impaired in autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and how they contribute to our perceptions of beauty. Specifically, I will first present evidence that faces are coded relative to perceptual norms (average faces), which are continuously updated by experience, and that we maintain distinct norms for faces from visually distinct and socially important categories, such as different sexes and races. Second, I will show that face aftereffects are reduced in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), indicating that their adaptive processes are impaired, and offering a potential new explanation for some of their face-perception difficulties. Third, I will review evidence that average faces (norms) are attractive and that perceptual adaptation to faces affects our perceptions of attractiveness as well as normality. Finally, I will demonstrate that perceptual adaptation alters other aspects of person perception, specifically our perception of body normality and ideals. Interestingly, we also find that greater body dissatisfaction is associated with reduced effects of exposure to fat bodies, suggesting that impaired adaptation to fat bodies may be a mechanism that maintains body

dissatisfaction. Aftereffects have been dubbed the psychologist's microelectrode because of their power to reveal how simple sensory attributes are coded. The new research reviewed here suggests that they can also reveal much about the processing of more complex and socially relevant stimuli.

Emotional intelligence: Consensus and controversy

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Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a high profile and protean construct in modern psychology. However, despite a high level of interest in EI among both psychological researchers and practitioners, the science of EI is still in its infancy (or early childhood), and many key questions remain unanswered. These include: How can we best conceptualise EI? Is EI a personality trait or form of intelligence? How should EI best be assessed? Is EI a valid predictor of important life outcomes? There are two key conceptual paradigms driving most of the current EI research: EI framed as a cognitive ability vs. EI framed as a personality trait. Based on these two conceptual models, both objective ability-based tests and self-report questionnaires have been developed, but these measures are beset with some serious flaws and difficulties. Furthermore, the practical utility of tests for EI is limited by these conceptual and psychometric deficiencies. There are some indications of predictive validity, but as yet there is too little validity for the tests to be used with confidence in making real-world decisions, such as hiring a job applicant based on the basis of their score on a test of EI. This talk sets out to present a state-of-the-art overview of what we currently know about conceptualising and measuring EI and how EI affects learning, work, social relationships and mental health. After a brief historical overview, I will survey mixed vs. ability-based conceptual models of EI, pointing out key similarities and differences between these models. I will then survey key measures for assessing mixed models of EI (EQ_I, Schutte, ECI, etc.), followed by a discussion of ability-based measures. I then move on to discuss practical applications of EI in school, job, social, and mental health contexts. I will discuss both consensus and controversies surrounding these key questions and conclude by pointing out some alternative future directions for EI assessment and research.