

PsychoBabble!

Psycho-babble: derived from two of our favourite words, we not sure if you will actually find this word in the dictionary. So we will go ahead and give you our interpretation of what this newsletter is going to be about!

The human mind is so complex, so vast and such an interesting study that all of us are constantly trying to learn more about it!

So, we the Psychology Club will search high and low for articles that would entertain and enlighten you! For this we have chosen Psycho-Babble as a platform!

"Happy reading !

Happy thinking !"

Thinking Too Much Can be Detrimental to Human Performance

Under certain circumstances paying full attention and trying hard can actually impede performance.

Memory, Memory which memory do you want!

In a new UC Santa Barbara study, published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, researchers investigated the biological underpinnings of this paradox.

Researchers explain that there are two kinds of memory: implicit, a form of long-term memory not requiring conscious thought and expressed by means other than words; and explicit, another kind of long-term memory formed consciously that can be described in words.



In the study, scientists considered these distinct areas of function both behaviorally and in the brain.

Long-term memory is supported by various regions in the prefrontal cortex, the newest part of the brain in terms of evolution and the part of the brain responsible for planning, executive function, and working memory.

“A lot of people think the reason we’re human is because we have the most advanced prefrontal cortex,” said the study’s lead author, Taraz Lee, Ph.D.

Prior brain studies have shown that taxing explicit memory resources improved recognition memory without awareness.

The results also suggest that implicit perceptual memory can aid performance on recognition tests.

Lee’s study used continuous theta-burst transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) to temporarily disrupt the function of two different parts of the prefrontal cortex, the dorsolateral and ventrolateral. The dorsal and ventral regions are close to each other but have slightly different functions.

Disrupting function in two distinct areas provided a direct causal test of whether explicit memory processing exerts control over sensory resources — in this case, visual information processing — and in doing so indirectly harms implicit memory processes.

A study was conducted to prove the same.

Participants were shown a series of kaleidoscopic images for about a minute, then had a one-minute break before being given memory tests containing two different kaleidoscopic images. They were then asked to distinguish images they had seen previously from the new ones.

“After they gave us that answer, we asked whether they remembered a lot of rich details, whether they had a vague impression, or whether they were blindly guessing,” explains Lee. “And the participants only did better when they said they were guessing.”

The results of disrupting the function of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex shed light on why paying attention can be a distraction and affect performance outcomes.

“If we ramped down activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, people remembered the images better,” said Lee. When the researchers disrupted the ventral area of the prefrontal cortex, participants’ memory was just slightly worse.

“They would shift from saying that they could remember a lot of rich details about the image to being vaguely familiar with the images,” Lee said. “It didn’t actually make them better at the task.”

Lee’s fascination with the effect of attentional processes on memory stems from his extensive sports background.

As he pointed out, there are always examples of professional golfers who have the lead on the 18th hole, but when it comes down to one easy shot, they fall apart.

“That should be the time when it all comes out the best, but you just can’t think about that sort of thing,” he said. “It just doesn’t help you.”

Now you know how it works.

Source: UC Santa Barbara

Website: <http://psychcentral.com/news/2013/08/11/thinking-too-much-can-be-detrimental-to-human-performance/58229.html>

The Surprising Link Between Power And Punishment

New research has found that providing a sense of power to someone tends to instill a black-and-white sense of right and wrong — especially wrong.

Once armed with this “moral clarity,” powerful people perceive wrongdoing with much less ambiguity, leading them to punish those they see as wrongdoers with more severity than people without power would.

Powerful and morally powerful.

The findings should alert managers to some unforeseen challenges they may face as they come to hold more power, according to Wiltermuth.

“We noticed in our MBA classes that the students who seemed to feel most powerful had these absolute answers about what’s right and what’s wrong,” he noted.

“We found the same phenomenon when we made other people feel powerful, and we also found the resulting clarity led people to punish questionable behavior more severely. That link between power and more severe punishment could cause a huge problem for managers. What a manager sees as appropriate punishment could be seen as absolutely draconian by other people.”

The researchers set up four experiments in which they made some individuals feel powerful by giving them the ability to control resources and administer rewards or punishments.

When presented with cases of transgressions, the powerful participants were more likely to say “yes, the behavior is immoral” or “no, it is not immoral,” the researchers found.

Very few powerful people answered with “it depends,” which was a much more popular answer among the less powerful, the researchers note, adding, “Owing to this certainty, the participants made to feel powerful felt that the transgressions deserved harsher punishments.”

But power is not always power

The researchers found that moral clarity was more clearly connected to delivering punishments than administering bonuses for good behavior.

“Our findings do not imply that having this moral clarity leads people to obtain power,” Wiltermuth said. “Rather, the findings imply that once you obtain power you become more likely to see things in black-and-white.”

This black-and-white thinking and the resulting link between power and punishment could lead to problems in both the public and private sector, according to Wiltermuth. He notes that people without power could begin protesting a manager’s decisions, which can erode the manager’s and the organization’s authority and ability to operate.

In the public sector, Wiltermuth uses the U.S Congress as an example, pointing to the dead certainty in which elected officials often make their case.

“You ask yourself, ‘How can they talk about these complex issues in such black-and-white terms?’ The short attention spans of the media and their constituencies may explain some of it, but it may also be that politicians are so powerful that they may actually see issues in black-and-white terms more than the rest of us do,” he said.

Wiltermuth said he is continuing his research, with an emphasis on exploring “how we can reduce this moral clarity and create a healthy sense of doubt.”

Source: University of Southern California Marshall School of Business

Website: <http://psychcentral.com/news/2013/01/20/the-surprising-link-between-power-and-punishment/50546.html>

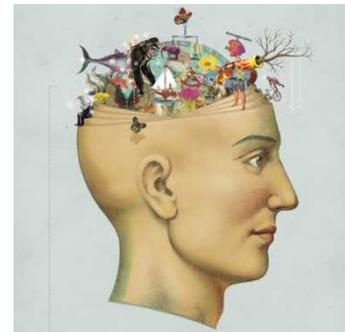
10 Psychological Theories That Prove We're Mindless Robots

We are the architects of our own personalities—or so at least we've been led to believe by our mothers. The truth is, we don't have much control over our behavior and our perceptions of the world. Several psychological theories suggest that our personalities, our thought progressions, and even our feelings are the product of uncontrolled bodily processes. Does this mean that we're actually mindless robots tricked into thinking that we have control over our behavior?

Probably—and here are ten reasons why:

10 Explicit and Implicit Memory

When we think of our own memory, we usually view it as consciously constructed. We see it as a list of ideas and facts that we have remembered and could describe at a moment's notice. This memory, of which we are aware, is called explicit memory. But on the other hand, humans have memories of tasks they cannot recall. Implicit memory is unconscious, and doesn't require deliberate memorization.



This type of memory is different than explicit memory because we are actually completely unaware of it—and it plays a significant role in controlling our behavior. As a child, for example, you may have had a tradition of going to the movie theater and ordering popcorn. You may not have even liked popcorn very much, but because going to the theater was such a pleasant experience, your implicit memory extends the pleasure to your feelings of popcorn.

Psychologists sometimes link this tendency to impulsive behavior. Even when you're an adult, rather than deriving a simple pleasure from the taste of popcorn alone, you unconsciously experience a physiological link to your happy childhood.

9 Gender



Most children have made the distinction between genders by the age of three. But the million dollar question is whether or not gender attributes are determined by biology, or constructed via our social environments.

We're obviously influenced by socially constructed gender roles at a young and impressionable age. Girls are told to play with Barbies, and boys with Lego. But although our social environments encourage us down certain paths, it's still clear that biology plays an enormous role, too.

Scientists have found that one likely cause for gender distinction is hormone exposure during prenatal development. A study with rats found that male rats exposed to anti-male hormones during infancy made them less aggressive than the average male rat throughout their life span. These hormones could play a role in structurally different brain compositions of men and women. Men tend to experience greater stimulation in the left hippocampus, and women in the right hemisphere. This results in women excelling at language, and men having greater spatial awareness.

8 Moral Development



Kohlberg developed a theory of moral progression in three stages. He studied boys aged ten to seventeen, and offered them a dilemma. He told them a story about a man whose wife was dying of cancer. Since he couldn't afford her medication, he stole it. The boys then explained what they thought was the right thing to do.

After studying their responses, Kohlberg made the suggestion that there are three levels of moral development. The first is the pre-conventional stage,

when children don't have any empathy for others and their only motivation to do good is from fear of punishment. The second is the conventional stage, when the child's motivation comes from wanting to be regarded as good in the eyes of others. The last stage is the post-conventional, when the person begins to question authority, think independently, and understand that individual rights sometimes take precedence over the collective.

7 Puberty

Because teenagers go through puberty at different ages, maturity is attained at different times as well. One study found that boys who sexually matured earlier than their peers often developed social maturity earlier, too—and they would often be perceived as leaders by their peer group. Boys on the other side of the spectrum tended to become more hostile, socially withdrawn, and likely to engage in negative behavior.



The results for girls are a little more complicated. Some studies have indicated that girls who sexually mature earlier are more likely to be perceived as having higher status in social encounters; but on the other hand, they also are more likely to participate in rule-breaking activities such as stealing, cheating, and alcohol use.

6 Sexual Orientation

Are gay people gay because they choose to be? Or is sexual orientation predisposed? Although this is a widely debated topic, psychologists agree that homosexuality is at least partially biologically determined. Unlike gender, hormones do not seem to play a significant role in sexual orientation. Studies have found that homosexual men can have the same level of testosterone as heterosexual men. This is important, because it shows that you can't "fix" a gay person by pumping him with gender-appropriate hormones.

So what determines our sexual orientation? Alas, the answer is that we're still not exactly sure. But interestingly, homosexual men are more likely to have an older brother than straight men are. This

statistic counts only for brothers born of the same mother—and surprisingly, the more older brothers you have of the same mother, the more your chances of being gay increase. A possible explanation is that each time a mother is pregnant with a boy, her immune system becomes bombarded with proteins only found in males. The extreme exposure leads to maternal antibodies against these proteins, which affect the development of the fetus's brain. This may be a controversial finding if ever proven, because it could lead individuals to believe that homosexuality is a syndrome that can medically prevented.

5 Aggression

It's a common idea that higher levels of testosterone cause higher levels of aggression, and this has been accepted in the medical community for a quite a while. Some convicted sex offenders have even been treated with anti-androgen therapy, in hopes of lowering aggression caused by testosterone. Although this correlation has been proven to a certain extent, psychologists have also found the opposite to be true in some cases.

One study found that the blood testosterone levels of a group of five males, confined on a ship for two weeks, changed over time as the men established a dominance-aggression ranking order. The higher the man was ranked, the higher his testosterone became. This suggests that our external environment can actually change the chemical composition of our bodies—allowing us to become the people we need to be in order to fulfill our roles.

4 The Dark Triad

Scientists believe that our personality traits are largely genetic, and therefore inherent in our biology. One group compared fraternal and identical twins on the basis of five personality traits, including extroversion, emotional stability, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. The results were largely predictable: identical twins were far more similar to one another than fraternal twins. This implies that our personality traits are at least partially genetic.

But what happens if your personality is determined by a nasty batch of genes? Psychologists have deemed this outcome The Dark Triad. The three traits implicated are known as Machiavellianism

(being a bad-ass manipulator), psychopathy (exhibiting a lack of empathy and a high level of impulsivity), and narcissism. A person unlucky enough to be home to the dark triad in the extreme generally becomes a merciless, cunning, and cold-hearted criminal. In fact, individuals exhibiting these personality traits make up the main demographic of convicted felons.

3 What is Beautiful is Good

Most people would agree that beautiful people reap extra benefits in our society. Although on the surface we know that attractiveness doesn't suggest any personality trait in particular, most of the time we're still fooled. In Canada and the US, attractive people are generally viewed as happier, more intelligent, and more socially skilled than the rest of us.

Most of us just don't want to be seen as superficial, and we therefore play down the importance of physical attractiveness. Of course, it's possible that our perceptions are accurate, since they tend to be self-fulfilling. Attractive people may indeed be happier and more socially skilled—because they have been favored by the rest of us throughout their lives.

2 Physiological Arousal

Hollywood romances are melodramatic, to say the least. Love always seems to ignite spontaneously in the most inconvenient places—like the middle of a war zone, for instance. But according to psychologists, these tense situations may actually be catalysts for attraction. A recent study had an attractive woman interview male university students as they walked across a rickety and flimsy bridge. The same woman interviewed men walking across a sturdy and stable bridge. The woman gave every man her phone number, and told them that they could call her if they had any questions regarding the survey. The men interviewed on The Bridge of Death were much more likely to call.

It's possible that the men traversing the rickety bridge experienced heightened general arousal, and subconsciously attributed this arousal to the woman, thereby increasing their attraction

And Last but not the Least..

1 Love



How do you know you're in love?
Certain psychologists have pinned it down to the presence of five

distinct elements: a need for intimacy with the person; a feeling of passion towards them; obsessive thoughts about them; emotional dependency; and a feeling of ecstasy if the person appears to reciprocate. The fourteen-year-old girls among us are no doubt nodding vigorously.

So what makes you fall in love with someone? Apart from the obvious factors such as physical appearance and facial symmetry, it also seems that we generally love people who are similar to ourselves. One study found that a majority of long-lasting couples were similar to each other in appearance, ideology, and intelligence. Apparently, opposites don't attract after all.

Website: <http://listverse.com/2013/06/02/10-psychological-theories-that-prove-were-mindless-robots/>