

The University of Edinburgh
SCHOOL of PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY
and LANGUAGE SCIENCES



Psychology 3 Literature Review 2011-2012

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Dr Sharon Abrahams

1. Social cognition in neurodegenerative disease

What is social cognition (emotional perception, perception of social cues, theory of mind, understanding social norms). Review the literature on social cognition in the dementias including Alzheimer's Disease, Frontotemporal Dementia and other neurodegenerative conditions including Motor Neurone disease, Parkinson's disease. Can the study of these diseases tell us anything about social cognition?

References

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- Adenzato M, Cavallo M, Enrici I. (2010). Theory of mind ability in the behavioural variant of frontotemporal dementia: an analysis of the neural, cognitive, and social levels. *Neuropsychologia*;48(1), 2-12.
- Lough S, Kipps CM, Treise C, Watson P, Blair JR, Hodges JR. (2006). Social reasoning, emotion and empathy in frontotemporal dementia. *Neuropsychologia*, 44(6), 950-958.

2. Within clinical neuropsychology how can we assess dysfunction of the orbitofrontal and ventromedial prefrontal cortices?

A number of different experimental measures have been proposed as being sensitive to dysfunction of these regions. These appear to be quite disparate in the functions they assess. What are the most promising for development as tools for clinical neuropsychology? Are screening measures the way forward?

References

- Gleichgerrcht E, Torralva T, Roca M, Manes F. (2010). Utility of an abbreviated version of the executive and social cognition battery in the detection of executive deficits in early behavioral variant frontotemporal dementia patients. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*. 16(4), 687-94.
- Torralva T, Roca M, Gleichgerrcht E, Lopez P, Manes F. (2009). INECO Frontal Screening (IFS): a brief, sensitive, and specific tool to assess executive functions in dementia. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*. 15(5), 777-86.
- Torralva T, Roca M, Gleichgerrcht E, Bekinschtein T, Manes F. A (2009). Neuropsychological battery to detect specific executive and social cognitive impairments in early frontotemporal dementia. *Brain*. 132(Pt 5), 1299-309.

Professor Timothy Bates

1. Can we raise IQ?

You would review one or more claims regarding lasting increases in IQ.

These include:

- 1) Flynn's effect (increases of >15 points due to cultural changes) (Flynn, 2009).
- 2) "Permission" approaches in which students are given information suggesting they can do well on test; (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006; Cohen, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, Apfel, & Brzustoski, 2009; Duckworth, 2011; Duckworth, Quinn, Lynam, Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2011; Mischel et al., 2010; Walton & Spencer, 2009).

Similar ideas are discussed in an accessible form here: <http://goo.gl/J5sek>

3) Working memory training (Buschkuhl & Jaeggi, 2010; Jaeggi, Berman, & Jonides, 2009).

4) Strategies for problem solving (Fox & Charness, 2010; Freund & Hotting, 2011; Ruiz, 2011).

2. Facets or aspects of personality?

While many researchers agree that there are five major domains of personality, there is less agreement about the more focused levels beneath this. Here you would contrast the literature suggesting that each domain has 6-facets underneath it (NEO PI-R model) compared to a model in which each domain is characterized as having two major "aspects" (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007).

References

- Buschkuohl, M., & Jaeggi, S. M. (2010). Improving intelligence: a literature review. *Swiss medical weekly*, 140(19-20), 266-272. doi: smw-12852.
- Cohen, G. L., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., & Master, A. (2006). Reducing the racial achievement gap: a social-psychological intervention. *Science*, 313(5791), 1307-1310. doi: 10.1126/science.1128317.
- Cohen, G. L., Garcia, J., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Apfel, N., & Brzustoski, P. (2009). Recursive processes in self-affirmation: intervening to close the minority achievement gap. *Science*, 324(5925), 400-403. doi: 10.1126/science.1170769.
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- Duckworth, A. L., Quinn, P. D., Lynam, D. R., Loeber, R., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (2011). Role of test motivation in intelligence testing. *PNAS*, 108(19), 7716-7720. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1018601108.
- Flynn, J. R. (2009). *What Is Intelligence?: Beyond the Flynn Effect*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Fox, M. C., & Charness, N. (2010). How to gain eleven IQ points in ten minutes: thinking aloud improves Raven's Matrices performance in older adults. *Neuropsychology, development, and cognition*, 17(2), 191-204. doi: 10.1080/13825580903042668.
- Freund, P. A., & Hotting, H. (2011). How to get really smart: Modeling retest and training effects in ability testing. *Intelligence*, 39(4), 233-243.
- Jaeggi, S. M., Berman, M. G., & Jonides, J. (2009). Training attentional processes. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13(5), 191-192. doi: 10.1016/j.tics.2009.03.002.
- Mischel, W., Ayduk, O., Berman, M. G., Casey, B. J., Gotlib, I. H., Jonides, J., Shoda, Y. (2010). 'Willpower' over the life span: decomposing self-regulation. *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience*. doi: 10.1093/scan/nsq081.
- Ruiz, P. E. (2011). Building and solving odd-one-out classification problems: A systematic approach. *Intelligence*, 39(5), 342-350.
- Walton, G. M., & Spencer, S. J. (2009). Latent Ability. *Psychol Sci*, 20(9), 1132-1139. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02417.

Dr Martin Corley

The little voice inside your head

Inner speech is thought to play a key role in a variety of cognitive activities, including personal thought, reasoning, and memory. But how is it implicated in those roles, and what does it sound like?

References

- Baddeley, A, Thomson, N, & Buchanan, M (1975). Word length and the structure of short-term memory. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 14, 575-589.
- Oppenheim, G. M., & Dell, G. S. (2008). Inner speech slips exhibit lexical bias, but not the phonemic similarity effect. *Cognition*, 106, 528-537.

Hesitations in speech: How do they affect comprehension?

Human speech is littered with *ums*, *ers*, and other signs of difficulty in planning. Some researchers have argued that hesitations such as these convey information about the speaker's current status and intentions; others, that the listener's attentional focus is affected.

References

- Arnold, J. E., Hudson Kam, C. L., & Tanenhaus, M. K. (2007). If you say *thee uh* you are describing something hard: The on-line attribution of disfluency during reference comprehension. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*, 33, 914-930.
- Fraundorf, S. H., & Watson, D. G. (2011). The disfluent discourse: Effects of filled pauses on recall. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 65, 161-175.

Dr Jennifer Foley

1. What makes memory better?

Memory can be impaired by a number of different disorders, including depression, brain injury and dementia. Many people believe that doing effortful mental tasks, such as crosswords or sudoku will help protect and/or improve memory abilities, but little evidence is available to support this.

This review will examine the evidence of what really can help memory and people with memory disorders.

References

Clare, L. & Jones, R.S.P. (2008). Errorless learning in the rehabilitation of memory impairment: A critical review. *Neuropsychological Review*, 18, 1 – 23.

Owen, A.M., et al. (2010). Putting brain training to the test. *Nature*, 465, 775 – 778.

2. How is cognition affected by Motor Neuron disease?

Motor Neuron Disease (MND) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the motor neurons. It leads to wasting of muscles, loss of movement in the limbs and problems with speech, swallowing and breathing. Recently, it has also been recognised that MND can lead to dementia. This review will examine how the abilities to concentrate, plan and organise are affected by this disease.

References

Abrahams, S., et al. (2000). Verbal fluency and executive dysfunction in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). *Neuropsychologia*, 38, 734 – 747.

Neary, D., Snowden, J.S., & Mann, D.M.A. (2000). Cognitive change in motor neuron disease/amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. *Journal of the Neurological Sciences*, 180, 15 – 20.

Dr Wendy Johnson

1. Where in the brain and what is intelligence?

References

Deary, I.J, Penke, L., & Johnson, W. (2010). The neuroscience of human intelligence. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 11, 201-211.

Jung, R.E., & Haier, R.J. (2007). The Parieto-Frontal Theory (P-FIT) of intelligence: Converging neuroimaging evidence. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 30, 135+.

Neubauer, A.C., & Fink A. (2009). Intelligence and neural efficiency. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 33, 1004-1023.

2. What is unique about human intelligence in the animal world?

References

Allman, J. (2000). *Evolving Brains*. New York: Scientific American Library.

Reznikova, Z. (2007). *Animal Intelligence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rumbaugh, D. M., & Washburn, D. A. (2003). *Intelligence of Apes and Other Rational Beings*. London: Yale University Press.

Dr. Peter Lamont

What has history got to do with psychological understanding?

The history of psychology has long been seen as an interesting, but ultimately unnecessary, project. However, the worth of an historical approach to psychological understanding is now widely recognised. Review the literature in order to explain the role of history in our understanding of psychological knowledge.

References

Lamont, P. (2010). Reflexivity, the role of history, and the case of mesmerism in early Victorian Britain. *History of Psychology*, 13(4), 393-408.

Lovett, B. J. (2006). The new history of psychology: a review and critique. *History of Psychology*, 9(1), 17-37.

Why have psychologists studied magic?

Psychologists have been studying conjuring as long as there has been an academic discipline of Psychology, yet the psychology of magic has never been integrated into the Psychology curriculum. Why have psychologists studied magic, and why has it never become a formal part of Psychology?

References

Lamont, P., Henderson, J. M., & Smith, T. (2010). Where science and magic meet: the illusion of a 'science of magic'. *Review of General Psychology*, 14(1), 16-21.

Dr Billy Lee

1. Lived experience and meaning making

Review qualitative studies of personal accounts of marginal experience, difference, or taboo. Possible topic areas include health, illness, identity, immigration, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Focus on studies using narrative, phenomenological, or thematic analyses.

Reference

Reid, K., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2005) Exploring lived experience, *The Psychologist*, 18 (1), 20–23.

2. Therapeutic dialogue and the "talking cure"

How is 'cure', temporary or long-term, brought about by talking and listening between a psychotherapist or counsellor and client? Review studies of therapeutic technique in counsellors and psychotherapists focussing on listening, empathy and dialogue.

Reference

Geller, J.D. (2005). Style and its contribution to a patient-specific model of therapeutic technique. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 42 (4), 469-482.

Dr Alison Lenton

1. What makes people feel authentic?

Review the empirical literature with the aim of identifying the factors that contribute to adults feeling authentic (like their "true self"). This review should also seek to identify the gaps between theory and existing evidence (i.e., some theories may propose that X or Y contributes to the feeling of authenticity, but is there any actual evidence for the proposal?).

References

Fleeson, W., & Wilt, J. (2010). The relevance of Big Five trait content in behavior to subjective authenticity: Do high levels of within-person behavioral variability undermine or enable authenticity achievement? *Journal of Personality*, 78, 1353-1382.

Heppner, W. L., Kernis, M. H., Nezlek, J. B., Foster, J., Lakey, C. E., & Goldman, B. M. (2008). Within-person relationships between daily self-esteem, need satisfaction, and authenticity. *Psychological Science*, 19, 1140-1145.

Prof Robert Logie

1. Remembering to do things: Prospective memory

Every memory function relies on remembering to carry out our intentions, whether it is to post a letter, meet a friend, turn up for a tutorial or take medicine. This ability is known as Prospective Memory. How we remember intentions at the appropriate time is not entirely understood, and it is known to decrease with age with laboratory tasks but not when tested in the home environment. This review could focus on any aspect of prospective memory.

References

Bailey, P.E, Henry, J.D., Rendell, P.G., Phillips, L.H., & Kliegel, M. (2010). Dismantling the "age-prospective memory paradox": The classic laboratory paradigm simulated in a naturalistic setting. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

Craik, F.I., & Bialystok, E. (2006). Planning and task management in older adults: cooking breakfast. *Memory & Cognition*, 34, 1236-1249.

Logie, R.H. & Maylor, E.A. (2009). An internet study of prospective memory across adulthood. *Psychology and Aging*, 24, 767–774.

Maylor, E.A. & Logie, R.H. (2010). A Large-Scale Comparison of Prospective and Retrospective Memory Development from Childhood to Middle-Age. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 63, 442-451.

Trawley, S.L., Law, A.S. & Logie, R.H. (2011). Event based prospective remembering in a virtual world. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*. DOI:10.1080/17470218.2011.584976.

2. Doing two or three or more things at once

Most people can walk and talk at the same time, but would have problems trying to hold a conversation while reading. One theoretical assumption (e.g. Barrouillet et al., 2004; Cowan, 2005) is that we have available a single, general purpose attention system that is of limited capacity. According to this assumption, increasing the difficulty of a task should stretch this

capacity to its limits and result in a breakdown in performance. Adding a second task should have an even greater effect on task performance. An alternative view (Baddeley & Logie, 1999; Logie & van der Meulen, 2009) is that we have different capacities available, and so if two tasks each use different cognitive abilities, then doing two tasks at once should be no more difficult than doing only one task at a time. This review will focus on the question of whether healthy human adults rely on a single, limited capacity attentional system, or if they can draw on several different cognitive resources, each with its own specific characteristics and its own limitations.

References

- Baddeley, A.D. & Logie, R.H. (1999). Working memory: The multiple component model. In A. Miyake & P. Shah (eds.) *Models of Working Memory*, pp28-61. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barrouillet, P., Bernardin, S. & Camos, V. (2004). Time constraints and resource sharing in adult's working memory spans. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, General*, 133(1), 83-100.
- Barrouillet, P. & Camos, V. (2007). The time-based resource-sharing model of working memory. In N. Osaka, R. H. Logie & M. D'Esposito (Eds.) *The cognitive neuroscience of working memory* (pp 59-80). New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Cowan, N. (2005). *Working memory capacity*. Hove, East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press.
- Logie, R.H. (2011). The functional organisation and the capacity limits of working memory. *Current Logie, R.H., Cocchini, G., Della Sala, S. & Baddeley, A.D. (2004). Is there a specific executive capacity for dual task co-ordination? Evidence from Alzheimer's Disease. Neuropsychology*, 18, 504-513.
- Logie, R.H. & Duff, S.C. (2007). Separating processing from storage in working memory operation span. In N. Osaka, R.H. Logie, & M. D'Esposito (Eds.) *The cognitive neuroscience of working memory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp 119-135.

Dr Graham MacKenzie

1. How many processes help us to retrieve information from episodic memory?

Episodic memory is the cognitive system that allows humans to reflect upon past experiences; it is commonly investigated in the laboratory using recognition memory tests, in which participants are required to discriminate between studied and new items. There is a debate about the number of retrieval processes that support recognition memory, with some *dual process* models stating that items can be recognised either because they feel familiar or because information associated with the item has been recollected from its encoding context. This review will investigate the validity of dual process models by assessing literature from a range of domains including experimental psychology, neuropsychology and cognitive neuroscience.

References

- Rugg, M.D., & Curran, T. (2007). Event-related potentials and recognition memory. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11, 251-257.
- Yonelinas, A.P. (2002). The nature of recollection and familiarity: A review of 30 years of research. *Journal of Memory & Language*, 46, 441-517.

2. How are familiar and unfamiliar faces processed differently?

Bruce and Young (1986) proposed a cognitive model of person identification that is still widely cited today and inspires interpretation of neuroimaging data (Haxby, Hoffman & Gobbini, 2000). Familiar faces can be recognised relatively easily while unfamiliar face recognition is quite poor (Megreya & Burton, 2008). The Bruce and Young model specifies a number of processes that are involved in the recognition of familiar faces but the way that a novel face becomes familiar is not well understood. This review will consider how familiar and unfamiliar faces are processed and focus on how to reduce the difference in face recognition performance between the two.

References

- Bruce, V., & Young, A. (1986). Understanding face recognition. *British Journal of Psychology*, 77, 305-327.
- Haxby, J. V., Hoffman, E. A. & Gobbini, M. I. (2000). The distributed human neural system for face perception. *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 4, 223-233.
- Magreya, A.M., & Burton, A.M. (2008). Matching faces to photographs: Poor performance in eyewitness memory (without the memory). *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 14, 364-372.

Dr Rob McIntosh

1. Through the looking glass: what can mirror-writing teach us about perception and action?

Mirror-writing, the writing of letters or words in mirror-reversed form, is common amongst children learning to write, can arise spontaneously after brain damage, and is intentionally practiced by some rare individuals (Leonardo Da Vinci, Lewis Carroll). This intriguing phenomenon has received relatively little neuropsychological investigation, though we have recently begun a research project on the topic in the visuomotor lab: you can watch a short BBC film about this research at: http://www.psy.ed.ac.uk/people/rmcinto1/BBC_mirror_writing.wmv. This goal of this literature review is to summarise the research literature on mirror writing and to evaluate how the evidence bears upon the major theories that have been proposed to explain the phenomenon.

References

Della Sala S, Cubelli R (2007) 'Directional apraxia': A unitary account of mirror writing following brain injury or as found in normal young children. *Journal of Neuropsychology*, 1, 3-26.
Schott GD (2007) Mirror writing: neurological reflections on an unusual phenomenon. *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry*, 78, 5-13.

2. Attention and action: assessing the evidence for the premotor theory of attention?

Attention is a key concept in experimental psychology; but what is happening in our brains when we attend to specific parts of the world? An influential idea is that we move attention around in space by programming an eye-movement (or other movement) towards the target location. According to this "premotor theory of attention", we move our attention just like we move our eyes and hands, using the same motor systems in our brains, the only difference being that we do not actually execute the movement. This idea has intrinsic appeal, and it makes good evolutionary sense to suggest that our capacity for spatial attention should be built upon a prior capacity for bodily movement. But how strongly does the experimental evidence support the premotor theory?

References

Rizzolatti, G., Riggio, L. and Sheliga, B.M. (1994). *Space and selective attention*. In C. Umiltà & M. Moscovitch (Eds.), *Attention and Performance XV* (pp. 231-265). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Craighero, L., Nascimben, M. and Fadiga, L. (2004). Eye position affects orienting of visuospatial attention. *Current Biology* 14, 331-3.

Dr Alexa Morcom

I'm interested in the following topical questions in cognitive neuroscience – let me know what you think current research has to say about them:

1. Does schematic support help memory more in older than younger adults?

What is 'schematic support'? Do older adults fare better on episodic memory tests when they have it? If so, how might it work? Evaluate the evidence for and implications of this idea.

References

Castel, A. D. (2005). Memory for grocery prices in younger and older adults: the role of schematic support. *Psychol Aging*. United States, 2006 Apr. 20, 718-721.
Naveh-Benjamin, M., Z. Hussain, et al. (2003). "Adult age differences in episodic memory: further support for an associative-deficit hypothesis." *J Exp Psychol Learn Mem Cogn* 29(5), 826-837.
Also
Shing Y.L., Werkle-Bergner M., Brehmer Y., Muller V., Li S.C., Lindenberger U. (2009). Episodic memory across the lifespan: The contributions of associative and strategic components. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev* 34, 1080-1091.

2. Has brain imaging helped to differentiate true from false memories?

Is a true memory fundamentally different from a false memory? Discuss whether evidence from recent brain imaging studies has helped to answer this question.

References

Baym C.L., Gonsalves B.D. (2010). Comparison of neural activity that leads to true memories, false memories, and forgetting: An fMRI study of the misinformation effect. *Cogn Affect Behav Neurosci*. 10(3), 339-48.
Okado, Y., C. E. Stark (2005). Neural activity during encoding predicts false memories created by misinformation. *Learn Mem* 12(1), 3-11.

Schacter, D. L., Buckner, R. L., Koutstaal, W., Dale, A. M., & Rosen, B. R. (1997). Late onset of anterior prefrontal activity during true and false recognition: an event-related fMRI study. *Neuroimage* 6, 259-269.

Dr Lars Penke

Can body built explain anger, aggressiveness and social dominance?

Is it possible that individual differences in aggressiveness, anger and related personality traits - textbook examples of psychological constructs – are partly or perhaps completely caused by physical differences in body built? Some recent studies suggest so.

References

Lukaszewski, A. W., & Roney, J. R. (2011). The Origins of Extraversion: Joint Effects of Facultative Calibration and Genetic Polymorphism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(3), 409-421.

McCormick, C. M., & Carre, J. M. (2008). In your face: facial metrics predict aggressive behaviour in the laboratory and in varsity and professional hockey players. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences*, 275(1651), 2651-2656.

Price, M. E., Kang, J. S., Dunn, J., & Hopkins, S. (2011). Muscularity and attractiveness as predictors of human egalitarianism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50(5), 636-640.

Sell, A., Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (2009). Formidability and the logic of human anger. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 106(35), 15073-15078.

Developmental stability and cognitive abilities

It is often claimed that a sound mind rests in a healthy body. The developmental stability of a body, its ability to resist developmental disturbances, is sometimes estimated from its fluctuating asymmetry, which is the overall amount of small deviations from bilateral symmetry across various parts of the body. Does fluctuating asymmetry relate to individual differences in cognitive ability and mental health? And can such relationships help us understanding these constructs?

References

Banks, G. C., Batchelor, J. H., & McDaniel, M. A. (2010). Smarter people are (a bit) more symmetrical: A meta-analysis of the relationship between intelligence and fluctuating asymmetry. *Intelligence*, 38(4), 393-401.

Van Dongen, S., & Gangestad & S. W. (in press, published online ahead of print). Human Fluctuating Asymmetry in Relation to Health and Quality: A Meta-analysis. *Evolution and Human Behavior*.

Prof Martin Pickering

Do people predict what other people are going to say?

Much research in psychology of language suggests that readers and listeners interpret language as soon as they encounter it. But recent work suggests that they may try to "get ahead of the game" and predict what they are likely to encounter. Do they do this, and if so, how

References

DeLong, K.A., Urbach, T.P. & Kutas, M. (2005). Probabilistic word pre-activation during comprehension inferred from electrical brain activity. *Nature Neuroscience*, 8, 1117-1121.

De Ruiter, J.P., Mitterer, H. & Enfield, N.J. (2006) Projecting the end of a speaker's turn: A cognitive cornerstone of conversation. *Language*, 82, 515-535.

Pickering, M.J., & Garrod, S. (2007). Do people use language production to make predictions during comprehension? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11, 105-110.

Van Berkum, J.J.A., Brown, M.C., Zwitserlood, P., Kooijman, V. & Hagoort, P. (2005). Anticipating upcoming words in discourse: Evidence from ERPs and reading times. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 31, 443-467.

2. Why are people so successful at holding conversations?

Dialogue "should" be harder than monologue, because the interlocutors have to switch between speaking and listening, decide when to speak, respond to their interlocutor on the fly, and so on. But it does not seem to be. Is it because interlocutors somehow share representations?

References

Garrod, S. & Pickering, M.J. (2004). Why is conversation so easy? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8, 8-11.

Menenti L., Gierhan S.M.E., Segaert K. & Hagoort P. (in press) Shared language: Overlap and segregation of the neuronal infrastructure for speaking and listening revealed by fMRI. *Psychological Science*, doi:10.1177/0956797611418347.

Sebanz, N., Bekkering, H., & Knoblich, G. (2006a) Joint action: Bodies and minds moving together. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 10, 70-76.

Stephens G.J., Silbert, L.J. & Hasson U. (2010). Speaker-listener neural coupling underlies successful communication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107, 14425–14430.

Dr Letitia Slabu

1. Easy on the mind, easy on the task: Similarities and differences between processing fluency and flow

Every cognitive task, from reading a newspaper to recalling your last holiday can be described along a continuum from effortless to highly effortful, which in turn will give you a sense of fluency or disfluency. Processing fluency is the subjective experience of the ease with which people process information; it plays an important role in human judgment. Flow refers to a subjective experience involving total absorption in an activity (e.g. work, sport, hobbies, and school). The person is fully immersed and engaged in what she or he is doing: flow is generally reached when there is a match between the challenge of the task and the person's skill. This review will focus on the similarities and differences between processing fluency and flow.

References

Alter, A. L., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2009). Uniting the tribes of fluency to form a metacognitive nation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 13, 219-235.

<http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~aalter/tribes.pdf>

Engeser, S., & Rheinberg, F. (2008). Flow, performance and moderators of challenge-skill balance. *Motivation and Emotion*, 32(3), 158-172.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/l802343355157515/fulltext.pdf>

Dr Sue Widdicombe

The social psychology of collective action

How can we explain collective actions such as riots, protests, or demonstrations - situations in which people in a crowd seem to 'act as one'? What are the psychological mechanisms that enable such behavior? What are the antecedents? Does social identity or disadvantage have anything to do with it? In the aftermath of the London riots, what can social psychologists teach us?

References

Van Zomeren, M., Spears, R. & Leach, C.W. (2008). Exploring psychological mechanisms of collective action: Does relevance of group identity influence how people cope with collective disadvantage? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47(2), 353-372.

Van Zomeren, M. & Iyer, A. (2009). Introduction to the Social and Psychological Dynamics of Collective Action. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(4), 645-660. (You could also consult the other articles in this special issue).

Drury, J. & Reicher, S. (2000). Collective Action and Psychological change: The emergence of new social identities. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 39, 579-604.

Social psychology and intergroup conflict

Social psychologists have had a longstanding interest in intergroup conflict and ways to resolve conflicts between groups. This review will describe and evaluate current social psychological research and, perhaps, ask how useful such findings in the light of contemporary conflicts are (e.g. in Libya, Syria).

References

Hewstone, M. & Greenland, K. (2000). Intergroup conflict. *International Journal of Psychology*, 35(2), 136-144. This provides a useful summary of research and theorising up to 2000, so this

could be a useful starting point for considering what social psychologists have been doing in the last ten years.

Livingstone, A. & Haslam, A.S. (2008). The importance of social identity content in a setting of chronic social conflict: understanding intergroup relations in Northern Ireland. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47(1), 1-21.

Egins, R.A., Haslam, S.A. & Reynolds, K.J. (2002). Social identity and negotiation: Subgroup representation and superordinate consensus. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(7), 887-899.