reading impairment. Twenty-two children with dyslexia were compared to 22 controls on an attentional blink task with the dyslexia group exhibiting impaired performance regardless of the temporal lag between targets. These deficits appeared tied to general dual-target RSVP performance rather than the attentional blink and group differences fell below significance when controlling for general performance factors. A review of previous attentional blink studies is consistent with this conclusion with no evidence (group-lag interaction) for a prolonged attentional blink in dyslexia.

Can memes be studied experimentally?

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In The Selfish Gene (1976) Richard Dawkins proposed that cultural practices and behavioural traits are transmitted in populations as “memes” by the non-genetic process of imitation. Memes are replicators that work in a manner analogous to genes: natural selection determines whether a meme (e.g. the use of mathematics, belief in God, performing the Maori haka by New Zealand sporting teams) survives in a given population. Examination of the arguments of Susan Blackmore, a prominent psychological advocate of a science of memetics (The Meme Machine, 1999) shows that memes have no place in psychology or social anthropology because they are empty constructs, reifications based on fundamental logical confusion.

The comparison of happy and sad music on mood and task-switching

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This study aimed to compare happy and sad music on mood arousal and task-switching. Twenty-eight undergraduates participated in both music conditions which were administered on different days. In each condition, positive and negative affect were measured by PANAS before and after music exposure. Finger tapping was obtained during music listening. Error rates and response times in task-switching were measured immediately after music exposure, but before the PANAS post test. Results showed that listening to sad music significantly decreased positive affect but listening to happy music did not improve the positive affect. Both types of music did not induce significant changes in negative effect. Participants tapped more in happy music than in sad music, but there were no differences in both response times and error rates between the two music conditions. Different types of music may selectively affect only certain emotions, and can have differential effects on various behavioural and cognitive measures.

Levels of processing with schematic faces: Emotional content or affective context?

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Processing of faces can occur via global or local details. The aim of this research was to investigate whether the observer’s mood (as a contextual factor) and facial expressions (emotional content) affect the way that faces are processed. Moreover, the interaction of the contextual factor and content on the level of processing (global/local) for face stimuli was studied. The participants were induced in to sad or happy moods through musical pieces conveying such moods. They then completed a computer-based task that contained schematic emotional faces by counting specific parts of the faces (local level task). Reaction times to happy and sad faces were significantly slower than to neutral faces (sad slowest). This suggests that the global level of emotional facial expressions captures attention rendering slower reaction times to the local level task. No effect of context was found in the initial study, but effects of mood manipulation will be discussed.

Seeing is believing: Neural mechanisms of action perception are biased by team membership

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Sports fans are familiar with the feelings of frustration that accompany apparently erroneous decisions made against members of their own team. For the first time we show that neural mechanisms associated with action perception can be directly influenced by social context. Volunteers who were randomly divided into two teams judged the actions of their own team members as roughly 30 ms faster than identical actions of other-team members. Crucially, brain imaging with fMRI showed that this bias arose from