

Psychology Colloquium / Advanced Seminar in Psychology

I know you, but I cannot recognize your face: Congenital prosopagnosia

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2:30 pm, Friday, 1 July 2011
Lecture Hall D350 (Coffs Harbour campus)
Video-linked to Lecture Hall P158 (Lismore campus) and to
A223 (Tweed Heads Gold Coast Riverside campus)

All welcome

About the colloquium. One's face gives lots of information to anyone who looks at it, including sex, age, health, beauty, mood, and identity. The ability of people to decode that information is important for communication and survival, allowing them to understand one's emotional states, to interpret one's intentions, and, critically, to know who one is.

Remarkably, some people are impaired in recognizing faces but are normal in recognizing other categories of objects such as houses and trees. This is known as prosopagnosia. There are two types. Acquired prosopagnosia arises from damage to specific parts of the brain. Congenital prosopagnosia appears to be genetic; it runs in families. Individuals are impaired from birth in recognizing faces, but have no neurological damage and have intact visual and intellectual functions. It occurs in 2.5% of the population, making it more common than acquired prosopagnosia.

I will review studies of prosopagnosia to reveal the brain mechanisms that mediate face recognition and to understand how to approach rehabilitation. I will give some suggestions on one of the main problems facing the study of congenital prosopagnosia: diagnostic criteria. I'll present new results from studies on recognizing faces in those with and without prosopagnosia and show how the results are useful for rehabilitation.

About the speaker. Associate Professor Roberta Daini has long-standing interests in the relationship between perception and attention in neurologically healthy people and in brain-damaged patients. In particular she has studied normal and pathological face recognition, disturbances of visual perception resulting from brain injury, attention and consciousness, and unilateral spatial neglect. She earned her PhD from the University of Rome-La Sapienza, mainly dealing with perception (visual illusions) and neuropsychology. She has been visiting scholar in the Department of Neurology, University of Pennsylvania and in the Department of Psychology, Macquarie University. She is the author of 25 publications, including book chapters and articles in national and international peer-reviewed journals, and has given more than 60 presentations at conferences.

See http://www.psicologia.unimib.it/03_personale/scheda_personale.php?personId=57

About the speaker's host. Professor Robert P. O'Shea <robert.oshea@scu.edu.au>

About Psychology Colloquia. See www.scu.edu.au/psychologycolloquia