Psychology Colloquium / Advanced Seminar in Psychology

Reading lessons from twins

Professor Brian Byrne
School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences
University of New England

1:30 pm (NSW time), Friday, 15 April 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. Our group has been conducting a longitudinal study of twin children as they develop in literacy and language. Behaviour-genetic studies of this kind are valuable in quantifying the mix of genetic and environmental factors that influence human characteristics such as variations literacy levels. The presentation begins with a brief tutorial on methods, and it then summarizes the main findings: We have shown substantial genetic influence on most aspects of literacy, starting prior to schooling, along with variable effects of the environment, from very modest to fairly substantial. We have also shown that the heritability of early literacy can vary with educational culture. Twin studies also furnish other kinds of information, such as the relative influence of teachers on variability in early literacy development. We have shown that this is more modest than is often assumed by educators and politicians. I address the educational implications of our findings.

About the speaker. Professor Brian Byrne's research is in the area of psycholinguistics, with an emphasis on reading acquisition, reading difficulties, and language development. He has a particular interest in understanding why some children have difficulties in learning to read. He has been involved in a large international study investigating the genetics of reading ability using twin methodology. This has been in cooperation with staff at the University of Colorado, U.S.A. and University of Linköping, Sweden.
See http://www.une.edu.au/staff/bbyrne.php

About the speaker's host. Dr Heather Winskel <heather.winskel@scu.edu.au>

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

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