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DISTINGUISHED LECTURER SERIES

Friday, November 15, 2019 - 2:30 PM • Kinesiology 101
Post-talk reception at Urquhart Lounge, Faculty Club, 4:00-5:30



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TALK: Free Will, Agency, and Strategies
for Building Developmental Neural Models

ABSTRACT

Over the course of my career, I have found that the construct of free will repeatedly arises in different guises, as Determinism when teaching history of psychology, and as Agency when teaching child maturation and brain development. It is also a central but vaguely defined construct in my research involving cognitive and affective psychophysiology. In this talk, I will attempt to integrate these 3 perspectives for a more unified view of this complex but central aspect of human behaviour and experience. Within neuroscience, discussion is often sidetracked by arguing against outdated notions of Cartesian Dualism, either by referring to free will as an illusion or by referring to complexity as a way of dismissing Determinism. I will propose a model that is, I believe, consistent with these varied perspectives and outline how, with the new technologies recently available for studying brain electrophysiology, we can begin to operationalize this construct so as to address a developmental agenda, as well as, possibly, an agenda in psychopathology and everyday psychology.

BIOGRAPHY

Sid Segalowitz is a professor in the Psychology and Neuroscience programs at Brock University, having earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees at McGill and Cornell universities, respectively. He is the founding and current director of the Centre for Lifespan Development Research at Brock, and served as Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Brain and Cognition* from 2002 to 2014. He has published extensively in the fields of psychophysiology and developmental neuropsychology, focusing in the last decade on individual differences in personality and development as reflected in brain electrical patterns as measured in the EEG. Of special interest are functions of the medial frontal cortex, a region known to be central to one's attention control and ability to monitor one's own behaviour for purposes of corrective action. He is now extending his work to issues of very early stages of processing of visual information (such as emotional faces and words). Current work is also focusing on advanced computational technologies to expand the information that can be drawn from human electrocortical responses to reflect aspects of information processing and brain growth.