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Looking at controversy in the face: The N170 fight

In 2007, my collaborators and I challenged the established idea that a peak of event-related brain potentials - the N170 - is selective to images of the human face. Immediately thereafter, our paper came under a virulent attack from specialists in the field. Since then, my group has conducted about 10 studies which have replicated and considerably extended our original findings. In this talk, I will present the results of our three other experiments which have been met with extraordinary resistance (15 rejections and three years of scientific exchanges). Beyond the realm of scientific controversy, our results argue strongly for early categorisation of an object as a face of presentation within the first 100 ms following image onset and make an even more compelling case against the N170 as an index of face categorisation. These experiments reveal critical methodological shortcomings in the previous literature: (a) the lack of comparability between experimental conditions in terms of stimulus variability and low-level properties such as contrast and luminosity; (b) the unquestioned use of cropped faces as stimuli, i.e., images of faces that have been extracted out of the head; (c) the use of inadequate control conditions in the testing of face inversion effects.

Czwartek (18 maja) | Aula A (bud. E) | 13:15