Using Brain Science to Build Effective Social Interventions
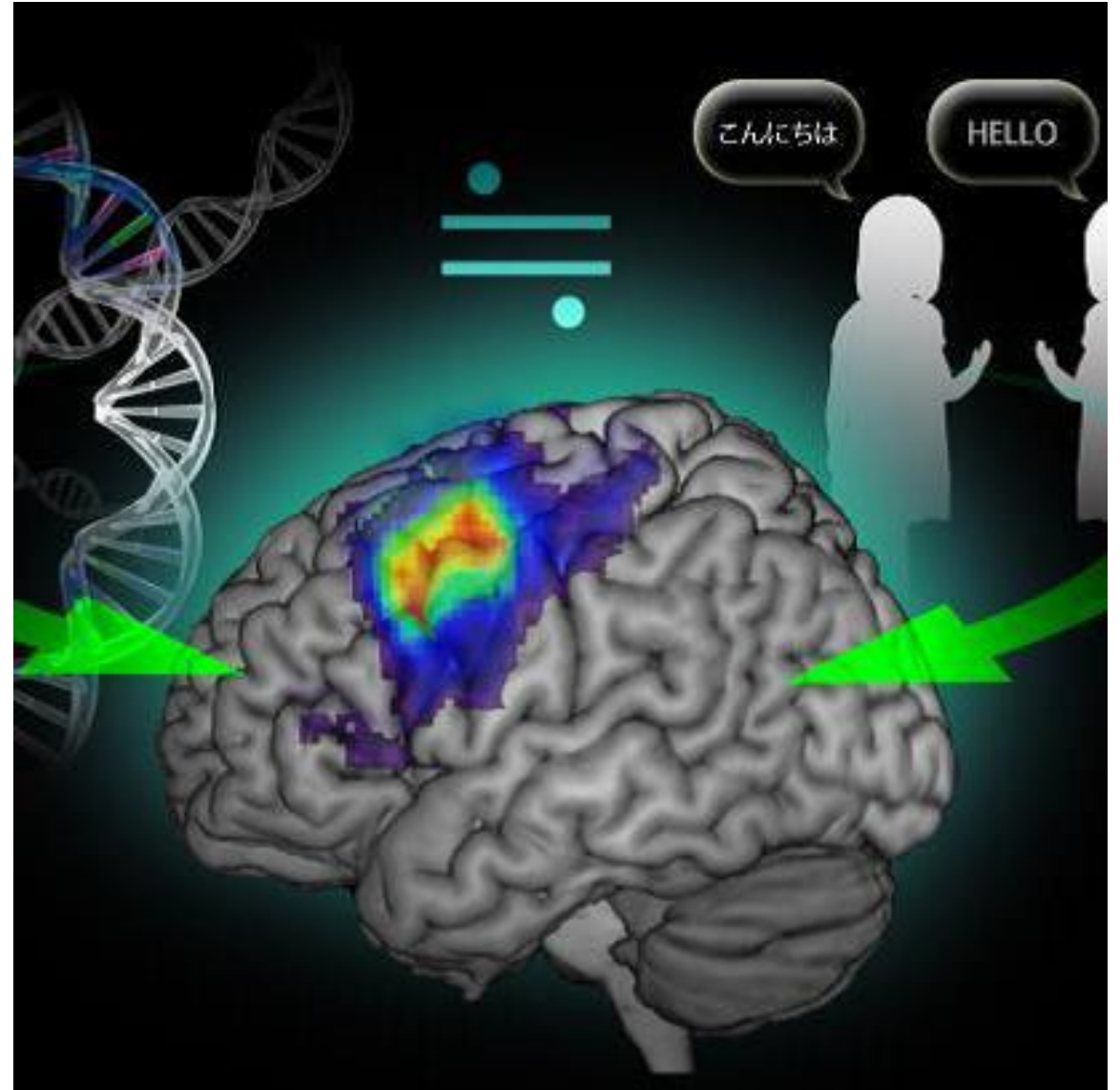
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Elisabeth Babcock, MCRP, PhD

Babcockstrategy@outlook.com

What is Brain Science?

- It is an umbrella term for the social and pure sciences examining the interactions between the mind and environment.

- These science disciplines include:
  - Neuroscience
  - Medicine
  - Genetics
  - Behavioral Psychology
  - Behavioral Economics
  - Human Development
  - Education

These Sciences paint a convergent picture of how the cumulative stresses of poverty, trauma, and oppression impact key behaviors and thinking

The stresses of poverty, trauma, and oppression often compromise core decision-making and behavior management skills (so-called executive function, "soft", or "21st century," skills)
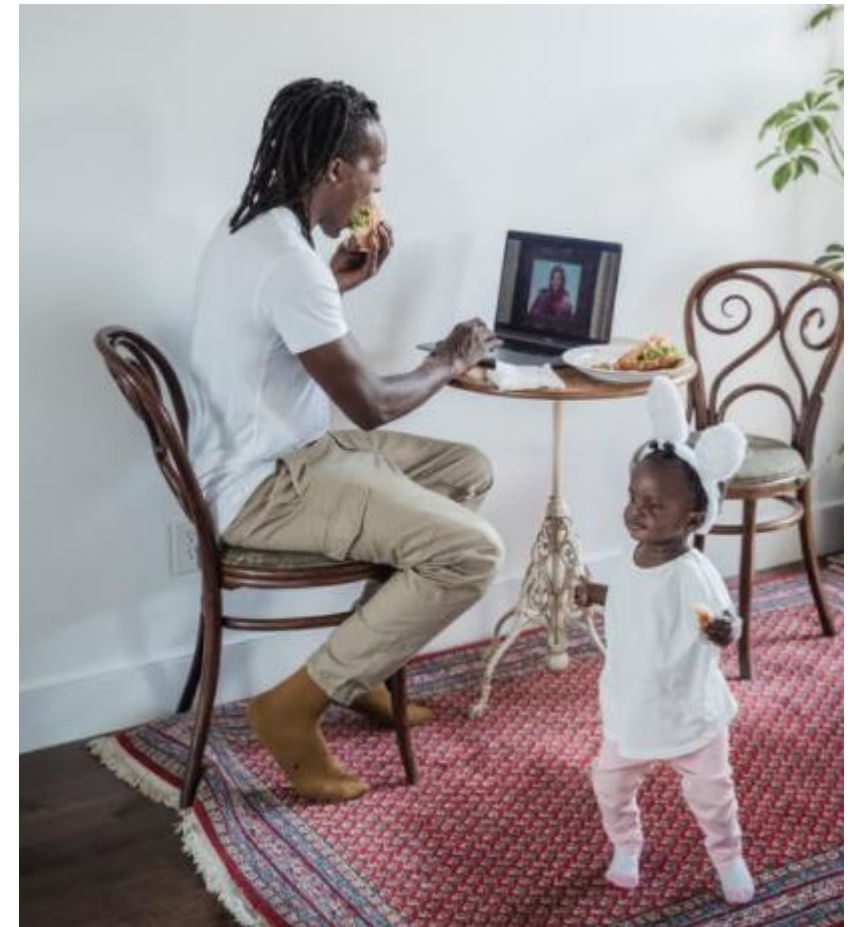
They frequently swamp our executive analytic capabilities, compromise our abilities to think about the future, and affect our self-control

What are these Executive Function, "Soft", 21st Century Skills?

They are the core skills for being a successful worker and parent:

- Exercising patience and resilience in the face of challenges;
- Understanding and working with others;
- Problem-solving skills;
- Organizational skills;
- Future orientation;
- Ability to set and attain goals.

The Harvard Center on the Developing Child refers to them as the brain's "Air Traffic Control System"

Brain Science research provides evidence for improved design of social interventions:

- Elevating participant as the key authority/expert in their own self-assessment and goals process
- Leveling power dynamics between "professional staff" and client (change to coach/mentor and mentee)
- Coaching for skill-building in problem-solving and goal-setting as well as desired social outcome
- Multi-dimensional coaching across personal, career, and financial domains
- Using goal-setting frameworks and other organizational tools to help with execution of tasks and goals attainment
- Understanding that sustained skill-building and significant social improvements take time and consistency

Research has shown that application of these approaches can improve outcomes including statistically significant gains in:

- Earnings and employment gains

- Education achievement

- Mental health improvement and sustained work for those with mental health disabilities

- Increased savings and reduced debts

- Family stability and child outcomes

- Housing stability and reduced homelessness

- Cost/benefit of social interventions