

PROJECT FACT SHEET

The Origin and Nature of Stress Responses in Women and Men

Investigator: Tara Perrot-Sinal
Associate Professor
Psychology & Neuroscience
Dalhousie University

Researchers have proven that men and women have different brains, and respond to stressors differently.

Statistics Canada reports that women are more likely to voice their stress than men and that they react to different types of stressors. While women are more stressed by time constraints, meeting others' expectations, and family-related issues, men are more affected by work-related stressors and financial difficulties. These behavioural differences are likely partly due to chemical and/or structural differences in the brain, and many of these responses are programmed in the brain at an early age.

Tara Perrot-Sinal, Associate Professor, Psychology & Neuroscience Department at Dalhousie University, has contributed to our understanding of these differences in stress-related responses. Her study, partially funded by the NSHRF, looked at the changes in the brain that occur in the early years of development.

Dr. Perrot-Sinal's key findings included insights into the chemical realities behind early stress response programming and the process by which the brain becomes 'male' versus 'female' (termed sexual differentiation)

"Our findings show that parental care has a significant impact on the development of stress responses," says Dr. Perrot-Sinal.

"These results also have important implications that can affect policy on child development, poverty, education, and intervention for at-risk family situations," she noted.

As well, understanding stress is important to health researchers exploring how to treat the multiple medical conditions that stress can cause or aggravate, and to determine whether women and men require different types of treatment.

Contact information:
Tara Perrot-Sinal
Psychology & Neuroscience
Dalhousie University
Phone : (902) 494.1875
Phone : (902) 494.8340
Email : Tara.Perrot-Sinal@Dal.Ca

