
H

Hemisphericity

John E. Mendoza
Department of Psychiatry and Neuroscience,
Tulane Medical School and SE Louisiana
Veterans Healthcare System, New Orleans, LA,
USA

Definition

Hemisphericity refers to a theoretical and controversial construct suggesting that some individuals have an innate superiority or habitual propensity for processing information with one or the other cerebral hemisphere, more or less independent of situational demands. This notion is predicated on the assumptions that (1) the two hemispheres differ in their ability to process certain types of information (e.g., verbal for the left, and emotional and visual-spatial for the right), and (2) the two hemispheres process information in fundamentally different ways. Thus, the left

hemisphere is thought to operate in a more analytical, logical, sequential manner, while the right hemisphere is seen as functioning in a more wholistic, intuitive, simultaneous manner. At the core of the controversy is whether individuals can be classified on an a priori basis as being either predominantly “right-brained” or “left-brained” and whether this has broader implications for their personality, mood, and general behavioral approach to their environment, as well as particular cognitive-perceptual abilities. According to this theory, left-brained individuals are expected to be more logical, organized, and less emotional than the right-brained, whereas the latter are more spontaneous, creative, and better able to “see the big picture.” Virtually no empirical support exists for this dichotomy.

Cross-References

► [Hemispheric Specialization](#)