

Endophenotypes in psychopathology research: where do we stand?

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Abstract

Endophenotypes for psychopathology have been conceived as latent, unobserved, but measurable manifestations of phenomena that causally connect genetic liability to clinical disorder. Several decades of research have led to refinement of the construct and identification of some candidate endophenotypes, but rather limited progress on finding the genes involved or the mechanisms by which endophenotypes are driven by genetic and environmental factors and in turn drive psychopathology. Currently promising avenues for research involve development of transdiagnostic concepts not limited to traditional diagnostic categories, measures of endophenotypic and manifest psychopathology that have higher validity than those categories, and methods for modeling complex relationships among diverse contributors to etiology. With more grounding in animal neuroscience and other aspects of basic biological and psychological science, exemplified in the Research Domain Criteria initiative, there is every reason to anticipate that the endophenotype concept will grow more central in the psychopathology literature.