

FutureMind: How Human Cognition Shapes the Way We Think About Our Futures

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Abstract

"FutureMind" is the composite human mental ability to imagine distant, large, complicated futures, often wildly unlike any human memory. It is an astonishing, ubiquitous, powerful, distributed ability, mostly absent from other species, yet mostly unstudied in Cognitive Science. It is indispensable for human activities from political systems to personal ambition. Our understanding of human history consists largely of notions of how previous generations used their own FutureMind. FutureMind relies on both deeply entrenched and highly creative mental operations. In this presentation, we outline a research program for a systematic science of FutureMind, with an initial theoretical framework. We present the cognitive mechanisms underlying FutureMind, which include framing, blending, compression, analogy, selective projection, viewpoint blending, and the construction of networks of mental spaces.