

氏 名 角谷 基文

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学位論文題目 Brain networks of social action-outcome contingency

論文審査委員 主 査 教授 柿木 隆介  
教授 定藤 規弘  
教授 磯田 昌岐  
教授 田邊 宏樹 名古屋大学

論文の要旨

Summary (Abstract) of doctoral thesis contents

Social interactions play a critical role in the development of social and cognitive skills. Social interactions can be facilitated by action-outcome contingency, in which self-actions result in relevant responses from others. Previous studies have indicated that the striatal reward system plays a role in generating signals associated with action-outcome contingency. How is this signal generated in the striatal reward system? The action-outcome contingency signal is dependent upon two types of signals: a signal representing the individual's own action and a signal associated with the outcome of that action. However, as these signals have not been evaluated separately in previous studies, the mechanisms wherein signals associated with self-actions and their outcomes are integrated in order to generate an action-outcome contingency signal are not well understood.

Among a distributed set of brain regions associated with processing of self-related information, the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) is consistently reported and thus proposed as a critical node of self-related processing. It has been proposed that the self-reference increases the coupling between brain regions that are assigned to different stages of information processing. This raises the possibility that signals from components of the self-related network such as the mPFC modulate the input of sensory signals of the outcome to value processing in order to generate action-outcome contingency signals.

In the present study, I conducted a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) experiment on 38 healthy human participants in order to test the hypothesis that local brain activity representing the self modulates connectivity between the striatal reward system and sensory regions that process the responses of others. I employed a social action-outcome contingency task in which the participant attempted to make a listener laugh by telling funny jokes. In this task, the utterance was regarded as the action, and the laughter was regarded as the outcome. Two factors were manipulated: the speaker of the joke (self or another) and the listener's response (a sound of group or single laughter and no laughter). The participants rated subjective pleasure after the listener's response in each trial. In the fMRI data analysis, I evaluated brain activity when the participant heard the listener's response to an uttered joke.

Participants reported more pleasure when greater laughter followed the utterance of their own jokes than those of another. This result indicates that action-outcome contingency increases subjective pleasure, consistent with previous findings that action-outcome contingency increases positive response to social interactions. As results of fMRI data analysis, the listener's responses to the

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participant's utterance produced stronger activation in the mPFC than those to another's utterance. Greater activation was observed in the auditory cortex when laughter followed the utterance, relative to no response following the utterance. Laughter activated the ventral striatum more strongly when the participants made the listeners laugh than when another did. Then, I conducted physio-physiological interaction (PPI) analyses in order to test the hypothesis that self-related activity in the mPFC modulates the functional connectivity between the auditory cortices and reward system. In the PPI analyses, the ventral striatum showed interaction effects with regard to signals extracted from the mPFC and auditory cortex. I also observed a significant correlation between the interaction term of subjective pleasure and PPI effect at the top peak coordinate of the left ventral striatum. These results provide supporting evidence for the hypothesis that the mPFC, which is implicated in self-related processing, gate sensory input of the other's response to value processing in the ventral striatum.

In conclusion, using a social action-outcome contingency task in which participants made a listener laugh by telling funny jokes, I found that the ventral striatum showed interaction of two signals: a signal from auditory cortex and a signal from mPFC that was sensitive to self actions. These results suggest that self-relevant signals from the mPFC modulate sensory input of the outcome to value processing in the reward system.

Summary of the results of the doctoral thesis screening

機能的磁気共鳴画像法（fMRI）を用いて、ヒトの脳機能を解析した研究である。

自分の行動と他者の適切な反応との因果関係性は、社会的随伴性と称される。先行研究では、線条体が随伴性に関係するとされてきた。しかし、自分の行動に関する脳活動と、他者の反応に対応する脳活動が、どのように統合され、随伴性に関する脳活動が生成されているのかについては、未だ不明である。角谷氏は、自己の行動に関わる大脳皮質領野の活動が、他者の反応に対応する聴覚野と線条体の機能的結合性を変化させることで、線条体における随伴性に関連する活動を生成するという仮説を立てた。

38名の健常被験者を対象とし、fMRIを用いた脳機能解析実験を行った。社会的随伴性を単純化し、「被験者は大喜利の回答をおもしろく読みあげ、それに対して観客が反応する」という実験課題を設定した。被験者はMRI装置の中で、画面上で指示された大喜利の回答を発話し、MRI外の観客に対してできるだけ面白く伝える。発話された大喜利に対して観客は、大笑い/小笑い/笑い無しという3段階の音声刺激を使って被験者に反応を返す。自身の行動(発話)の対照条件として、コンピュータが発話する大喜利に対して観客が笑いを返すのをただ眺める条件(PC条件)も設定した。他者の反応があった時点での脳活動を解析するとともに、その時点での嬉しさを被験者に報告させた。

被験者は、PC条件と比較して、自分が言った大喜利に対して観客の笑いが起こる場合の方が、嬉しさが増すと報告した。自身の関与には内側前頭前野、他者の反応の処理には聴覚野が関係していた。自分の行動に随伴して他者の笑いという反応が返ってきた場合に、報酬系領域である腹側線条体が強い活動を示した。加えて、活動の時系列データを用いて上記の脳領域間の機能的結合を検討した結果、腹側線条体と聴覚野の機能的結合は内側前頭前野の神経活動によって変調を受けることが明らかとなった。

これらの結果は、自身の関与に関連する内側前頭前野の活動が、他者の反応(笑い)を直接受容する聴覚野から、報酬系である腹側線条体への機能的結合の強さを調節することで、線条体における随伴性関連活動が生成されるという仮説を支持している。本研究は、社会的随伴性に伴う結果の価値処理に関わる脳内ネットワークを、初めて明らかにしたものであり、社会神経科学領域に新たな知見を付け加える重要な研究である。