
Social modulations of action control and adaptive behaviour

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Abstract

Without often being consciously aware of it, we are involved in interactions with other people throughout the day. We greet our neighbors, meet with people at work, pass people in crowded shopping areas, or do the dishes together with our partner. When observing these social interactions in more detail, it is remarkable how complex the involved cognitive processes are in that individuals not only have to plan and monitor their own actions, but they also have to keep track of and anticipate the actions of the person they are interacting with. Moreover, they have to flexibly adapt their motor plans online to the behaviour and possible mistakes of their co-actors, generate adequate adaptive behaviour in response to their actions, and integrate the social context in which the interaction is taking place. Humans are social animals and adequate social behavior is thus crucial for efficient daily functioning. Consequently, disturbances in social behavior seriously impair one's quality of life. Severe disturbed social behavior is importantly evident in different psychiatric disorders. Hence, investigating these clinical populations from a social neuroscience perspective may importantly advance our knowledge of these often still poorly understood disorders. I will present data from recent studies in which we investigated the cognitive and neural mechanisms of different forms of social adaptive behaviour in healthy individuals and in patients with psychiatric disorders characterized by serious deficits in social functioning, like psychopathy and major depression.

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