

Unveiling Social Cognition: When the Internal World Meets the External World

Speaker: Dr. WANG Yang

Research Associate, City University of Hong Kong, Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences

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Abstract

As social animal, we don't need to rely solely on ourselves to understand the dangerous environment for survival. Information from the external resources, i.e., other people, often brings us essential information that may guide our subsequent behavior for a better chance of survival. The first study examined how does our brain code internal and externally based information in complex social situation (i.e., conformity). This differentiation between internal and external input becomes particularly crucial in conditions such as schizophrenia, which is characterized by auditory verbal hallucinations (AVH). Schizophrenic patients with AVH may struggle to distinguish internally generated speech from external voices. The second study delved into the impact of emotion on the initial stage of this process with potential implications for understanding schizophrenia symptoms. In addition, individuals exhibit diverse approaches to processing external information. For instance, children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often display heightened sensitivity to non- social stimuli and hyposensitivity to social stimuli. They tend to extract regularities from external world by utilize all available information, even when extracting rules does not necessitate considering subtle details (e.g., extracting emotion from speech). The third study examined how children with ASD pre-attentively detect changes of various external information using Event-related Optical Signal (EROS). The inflexible processing style and specific deficit for processing external stimuli shed light on our understanding of ASD symptoms.

Biography

Dr. Yang Wang is currently a Research Associate in the Department of Social and Behavioral Science at City University of Hong Kong. She earned her Ph.D. in Psychology from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research covers various areas, including cognitive, social, and clinical neuroscience, with a focus on how we process external information and integrate it into the internal world in both typical and special populations. She employs a multi-modal imaging approach, utilizing techniques such as Electroencephalogram (EEG), Event-related Optical Signal (EROS), and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS).

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