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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of Intentional Bias on Agency Attribution of Animated Motion: An Event-Related fMRI Study

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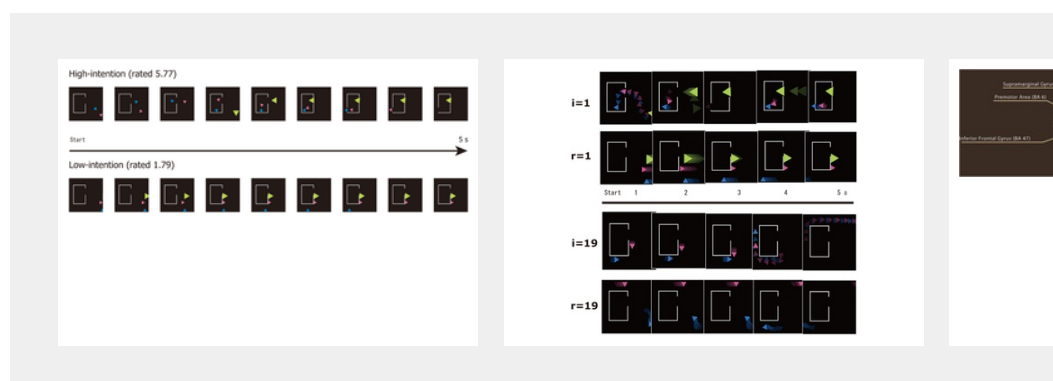
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Abstract

Animated movements of simple geometric shapes can readily be in social events in which animate agents are engaged in intentional brain regions associated with such intention have not been clearly study, intentional bias was manipulated using shape and pattern a measuring associated brain activity using event-related functional imaging (fMRI). Twenty-five higher-intention involved and twenty-five involved animations were presented to participants. Behavioral res degree of agency attribution of the mental state increased as inten increased. fMRI results revealed that the posterior superior tempor temporal gyrus (ITG), inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), premotor, temporal gyrus, and superior parietal lobule (SPL) were activated while partic high-intention animations. In contrast, occipital, lingual, and middle activated while the participants viewed the low-intention animation suggest that as agent attribution increases, the visual brain change the intentional brain and becomes a flexible network for processing social interaction.

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Introduction

Recent evidence from cognitive social neuroscience has accelerated our understanding of intricate social brain functions, including processes involving the

and their apparent behavior. However, relatively little research has evaluated agency and its role in intentional bias. Moreover, there is a need for research regarding how the intentional brain can be differentiated from the unintentional brain. For example, some configural cues such as contingent movement of geometric shapes may trigger an agency or animacy detectors in the brain that can partially distinguish between agents such as other people's minds.

We hypothesize that the specific intentional brain function of estimating others' mental states based on agency attribution is an extended version of the ventral temporal extension involves recruiting higher brain regions found in the temporal lobe like the superior temporal sulcus (STS) [1]. The social brain involves processing one's own and others' mental states, intentions, attitudes, beliefs and actions, and therefore, is closely related to the theory of mind (ToM) and intentional bias. Intentional bias requires the ability to estimate the intentional states of others. Estimating others' mental states involves modeling the other person's intention, possibly by drawing on one's own past experience.

Current social neuroscience studies suggest that the superior temporal sulcus and medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) are likely essential components of the brain regions involved in intentional tasks. In order to examine this issue, we developed a series of animations that manipulated intentional bias (higher- and lower-intentional bias) by representing geometrical shapes as opposed to complex scenes.

In their seminal research, Heider and Simmel (1944) [2] and Michotte (1985) [3] used simple moving geometrical patterns as intention-involving agents in a laboratory setting (i.e., a house having walls and a door). In Heider and Simmel's classic study, observers were asked to interpret a moving-picture film in which three shapes (i.e., a large triangle ("T"), a small triangle ("t") and a circle ("c")) moved in different directions. A rectangle ("house") with a wall section that opened and closed was also shown. In their original film sequence, the animation was as follows: the door opened, "t" and "c" moved into the "house." Then, "T" moved into the house through the door. Next, "T" and "t" fought and "T" won. Finally, "t" and "c" broke through the wall and ran away from the house. This work suggests that moving shapes can be perceived as actions of living beings and, therefore, can represent agents performing intentional actions. Accordingly the moving shapes are perceived to have goals and to possess an intentional mind. Therefore, the moving shapes are likely observed as having the intentional states of others.

In his theory of interpersonal relations, Heider proposed that individuals create explanations for the behavior of others, a process he called attribution. Researchers have documented that higher-order cognition involving understanding of causality and agency can be elicited by observing interactions, but also by observing independent random movements of simple geometrical objects. If these movements possibly evoke mental state attributions based on intention, we propose that the perception of a mental state can be applied to animated objects. If this proposal is correct, it suggests that the neural substrate associated with understanding intention in human interactions would include the same substrate (i.e., the STS) that becomes active when observing an interactive animated object in cooperation with other regions [5]. To

have been few empirical studies to investigate why and how these are affected by animations containing objects with lower- or higher-intentionality.

In mentalization studies in which the ability to estimate another's mental state, the observer must infer and model the intentions of another person. In these studies, the observer models the behavior of the other person prospectively through animations that are represented as animated dots or cartoons. For example, Baron-Cohen (1994) [6] found a rCB (regional cerebral blood flow) increase in the right hemisphere during the TOM task. Abel, Happe, and Frith, using moving dots moving around the screen in one of three ways (ToM-like, in a goal-directed manner, or randomly), compared the attribution of the mental state in autistic children to that of normal children, finding that the former used mental state descriptions less often than the latter did [7].

In another study, Schultz et al. presented short animations to participants in which two moving disks appeared to be either interacting or moving independently [8]. Using fMRI, they found that activation in the STS increased in proportion to the degree of correlation between the motion of two disks, and that an increase in the degree of correlation increased the amount of interactivity and animacy the observers attributed to the disks.

Perception of animacy also influences interactive behavior [9]. Recent work on non-Heider & Simmel patterns showed that the STS is also activated when observing objects whose interactions appear causal or intentional [10] and that this is true even in the representation of observed intentional actions [11]. Saxe et al. (2006) showed that the walking figure activated the right posterior STS, which appears to be involved in the relationship between the observed motion and local environmental context. They hypothesized that the right posterior STS is involved in the representation of observed intentional actions.

In a study using PET, Castelli, Happe and Frith presented participants with a computer-generated animation involving two simple geometric shapes that resembled Heider and Simmel patterns [12]. They found that the STS and other temporal regions, including the fusiform gyrus, temporal pole, and cerebellum, were activated. The investigators argued that these animations strongly influence attributions based on intentions and hypothesized that the ability to understand about another's mental state evolved from the ability to make inferences about apparent behavior. Their findings suggest that controlling the degree of intentionality from high to low evoked by animations that vary in attribution appears to be an important area of research. They had six adult participants observe an animation of two moving triangles that manipulated the degree of intention from high to low. The conditions were: 1) ToM-like, corresponding to high intention; 2) goal-directed, corresponding to intermediate intention; and 3) randomly, corresponding to low-intentionality. They hypothesized that stimuli could therefore be graded from random movements to goal-directed movements and finally to complex intentional states.

The primary goal of the current work was to evaluate the degree to which the degree of intentionality could result in greater STS activation and less MPFC activation. Similar to the work of Schultz et al. (2003) and Baron-Cohen et al. (2001), we

used such that objects always stayed within the same local region. differed in terms of their movements. Specifically, some animations a graded impression of either intentional-oriented interactions or movements [13]. In other words, a primary aim of our study was to brain is influenced by animations that evoke high intention relative We sought to replicate and extend the findings of Castelli et al. [12] and event-related technology, and by grading stimuli based upon goal-directed actions, and complex intentional states.

Methods

Participants

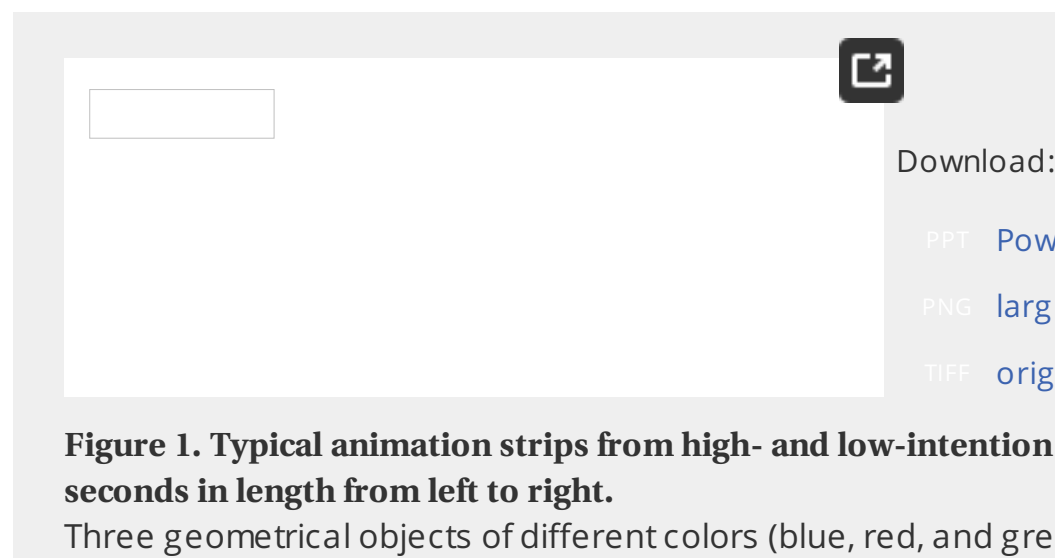
Twelve healthy, right-handed participants (4 males and 8 females; fifteen separate participants (11 males and 4 females, mean age = 2 the fMRI experiment and preliminary rating study, respectively. All had corrected-to-normal vision, and were screened for the presence of neurological and psychiatric disorder.

Ethics Statement

The experiment was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of committees of the Brain Activity Imaging Center (ATR, Kyoto, Japan) and All individuals voluntarily participated in the study and provided their consent prior to study participation.

Procedure

The animations used in the study was modeled on that of Heider and depicts examples of the five-second animations (moving from left to three triangles of different colors (blue, pink, and green) moved across background. These triangles corresponded to the “t,” “c,” and “T” stimuli Heider and Simmel animation. Additionally, the animation had a “horizontal side wall.



around a black background containing a “house,” which has a g
Preceding the experiment, 2 sets of 25 animation movies each v
involve high- and low-intentionality groups. The movies varied in
of degree of attribution of mental states to animated pattern. For
door opened, blue and red move into the “house”. Then, green r
“house” and shuts the door. Green and blue fights and green w
broke the door and they ran away from the “house” under the h
condition (rated 5.77), while figures move in parallel under the l
condition (rated 1.79).

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The upper panel of [Figure 1](#) shows a high-intention-involved anima
corresponding to condition $i=1$ in [Figure 2](#); see movies for details). I
(see below), one participant reported a ToM-like story correspondin
involved animation as follows: “When the door of the ‘house’ opene
triangles moved in. Then, a green triangle moved in. Green and pin
won. Blue and pink broke out of the ‘house’ and ran away. Based on
triangles were chased and persecuted by the green triangle and e
interactive way.

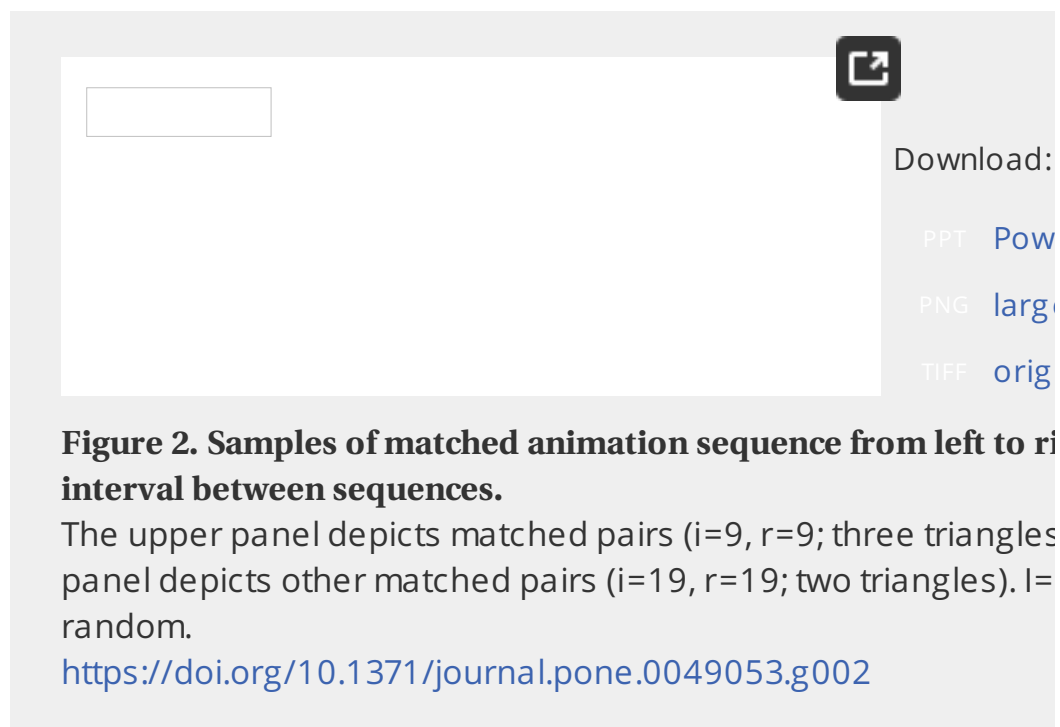


Figure 2. Samples of matched animation sequence from left to right interval between sequences.

The upper panel depicts matched pairs ($i=9$, $r=9$; three triangles
panel depicts other matched pairs ($i=19$, $r=19$; two triangles). I=
random.

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The lower panel of [Figure 1](#) depicts a low-intention-involved anima
corresponding to condition $r=1$ in [Figure 2](#); see movie file in detail).
study (see below), a typical response to a story corresponding to o
involved animations as follows: “Triangles moved merely randomly
interaction”. By varying the motion path of the triangles, 25 differen
one high- and one low-intentionality animation were designed for a
Interactive motion (two triangles chased and persecuted by the thir
by the experimenter. In order to test the effect of the number of obje
triangles in all but six pair in which the green triangle did not appea
created and encoded using Adobe Flash CS3 (30 frames per second)

Preliminary study

In the preliminary behavioral study, 15 participants rated each animation an intentionality score. The intentional score was rated using a Likert scale (1: not at all intentional; 7: highly intentional). Next we selected 25 “high intentionality” animations. Observers were asked to rate intentional objects and the other objects based on their mutual actions.

Pairs of high- and low-intention animations were created. Their paths are shown in Figure 2. The highest-intention animation was created in a manner similar to the Simmel [2] pattern (Figure 1 upper panel, which corresponds to the highest intention animation in Figure 2). The lowest intention (i.e., random) animation was made by a random path (lower panel, which corresponds to $r=1$ motion path in Figure 2). We created 25 pairs of different intermediate animation pairs for a total of 25 pairs ranging from $i=1, r=25$ to $i=25, r=1$, where i and r indicate intention and random, respectively. Each animation was designed to have a similar motion path length and time for all triangles. Based upon this design, it was expected that participants would judge the two objects in a pair (for example, $i=19, r=19$ shown in Figure 2) to be somehow different in terms of intentionality, while triangles in another pair (for example, $i=1, r=1$ (lowest) shown in Figure 1 and 2) would be much different from each other. We created a total of 25 graded steps of stimulus pairs. Of the 25 animations, the mean intentionality score was 5.77 in the “high” group and 1.79 in the “low” group.

A two-way repeated-measures ANOVA (intention \times animation number) revealed a significant main effect for intentionality [$F(1,14)=768.9, p<.001$] and a significant main effect for animation number [$F(24,336)=4.82, p<.001$]. We also found significant interaction between intention and animation number [$F(24,336)=6.35, p<.001$]. Multiple comparisons using Tukey's test revealed significant differences between high- and low-rated scores for each animation number. The higher-rated group was significantly more sensitive to intentionality than the lower-rated group. T-tests comparing the number of objects (2 vs 1) revealed significant differences in terms of intentionality. Based on these preliminary findings, we selected the stimulus objects tested for later experiments.

fMRI session

No participants who participated in the preliminary study participated in an fMRI session. In the fMRI session, an animation was presented one second after a blank screen appeared which asked the participant to rate the animation from one (high) to four (low). Participants made ratings by choosing buttons (one set for each hand). One trial took 17 s, resulting in a total of 30 s for each session. For the first session, fifty moving patterns were presented in random order to participants in a counter-balanced manner. Twenty patterns were presented to the high group and to the low group, respectively. In the second session, down-reversed patterns from the first session were presented. The normal and up-down reversed patterns were counter-balanced for each group. In the preliminary study, we confirmed that participants could easily decide the agent's intention 3 s after presentation. Therefore, the 3 s delay was used after the animation presentation.

Animations were back-projected onto a screen viewed through an... of each animation was $11.5^{\circ} \times 11.5^{\circ}$. In one session, participants ob... presented in random order. The length of each trial was 17 second...

fMRI data acquisition

Whole brain images were acquired on a 1.5-T whole-body magnetic scanner (Shimadzu-Marconi Magnex Eclipse, Kyoto, Japan). Head motion was minimized with a forehead strap. Functional MRI was performed with a gradient-echo EPI sequence (TR=3000 ms, TE=49 ms, flip angle= 90° , 5 mm slice thickness, FOV=220 mm, pixel matrix 64×64). After the collection of functional images, T1-weighted anatomical slices with no gap) using a conventional spin echo pulse sequence (TR=2000 ms, flip angle= 8° , FOV=220 mm×220 mm, and pixel matrix 256×256) were acquired. Anatomical and functional images were then processed for anatomical co-registration with the functional images.

After image reconstruction, functional images were analyzed using SPM5 (Wellcome Department of Imaging Neuroscience, London, UK). Six initial images were discarded from the analysis to eliminate the non-equilibrium effects of magnetization transfer. Functional images were corrected for between-slice timing differences in image acquisition and realigned to correct for head movement, which was less than 1 mm. Functional images were normalized and spatially smoothed with an 8 mm Gaussian kernel (6 mm full-width at half-maximum). Low-frequency noise was removed using temporal filtering (time constant=128 s). We conducted the analysis using an event-related design. An onset of an event according to the data analysis occurred three seconds after the animation started based on the results of the preliminary study.

Data were modeled by convolving the vector of expected neural activity with a canonical hemodynamic response function (HRF) included in SPM5. Contrast images were then entered into second-level analysis using a fixed-effects model for all participants. The levels of statistical significance for the contrasts were set to $p < 0.001$ (uncorrected).

Results

Two contrasts were specified per single-participant analysis: 1) Low-intention versus High-intention. Low-intention involves activations under participant ratings of 1 (lowest) and 2 (higher) and high-intention involves that of button press ratings of 3 (higher) and 4 (highest). As shown in [Figure 3](#) and [Table 1](#), fMRI revealed activation clusters when participants observed 25 low-intention-involved animations (low-intention > high-intention) in the middle occipital areas including the calcarine sulcus/cuneus (BA17), the middle occipital gyrus (BA18), and the right prefrontal gyrus in the middle prefrontal cortex. When participants observed 25 high-intention-involved animations (high-intention > low-intention), the activated areas extended to include the superior temporal sulcus (STS) sulcus (BA22/37/39), the right temporal pole (BA38), the bilateral inferior frontal gyrus (BA47:IFG), the premotor (BA6), the inferior temporal gyrus (ITG), the middle temporal gyrus, and the left superior parietal lobule (SPL). We did not find any

(Table 1).




Figure 3. Brain activation regions for high low-intention correspondence social brain (i.e., yellow area) and areas for low high-intention correspondence the perceptual brain (i.e., blue area).

Event-related fMRI results showed that main activation areas occurred in various regions while participants observed low-intention animations: including calcarine sulcus and lingual gyrus (BA 17,18), and right inferior frontal gyrus (BA9). During high-intention animations, activation of more regions was observed, including: bilateral inferior frontal gyrus (BA6:PM), superior temporal sulcus (BA22/37/39: STS), inferior temporal gyrus, left supramarginal gyrus (SMG), left superior parietal lobule (BA7), and left temporal pole (BA38:TP).

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Table 1. Brain region of activation for each contrast.

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Discussion

In this study, we sought to investigate the differential contributions of visual and intentional cognitive processes. Participants conducted tasks that required them to make social interpretations by looking at moving objects through low- or high-intentionally biased animations. By varying the stimuli, we examined which intentional cognitive processing was required, which facilitated the understanding of intentional and perceptual influences on various brain regions.

Based upon event-related fMRI data, our results revealed activation

areas including the calcarine sulcus/cuneus and the lingual gyrus (near the fusiform gyrus) when the visual brain operated in a mechanism involving context. The middle frontal gyrus is thought to maintain visuospatial information about moving objects [13]. In contrast, the fusiform gyrus is believed to be involved in the representation of visual stimuli that signify intent, independent of spatial information. Our finding of activation in the lingual gyrus, which is near the fusiform gyrus, corroborates with a previous study [14].

As shown in Table 1, when the brain processes high-intention-involvement animations, activation in the posterior STS involving part of the supramarginal gyrus increased. It has been demonstrated that the STS becomes activated when viewing animated geometrical figures portraying social interactions [5], [13], such as evaluating the intentions of others. Using fMRI, Gobbini et al. [14] reported that high-intention animations activated an extensive portion of the STS including areas such as the superior temporal sulcus as well as the inferior parietal lobule.

In an earlier PET study, Castelli et al. [12] presented animations that showed two characters (a large red triangle and a small blue triangle) moving on a black background similar to Heider and Simmel's pattern [2]. The investigation involved a single participant with three types of animation: 1) ToM (two triangles bluffing each other), 2) goal-directed (two triangles dancing together); and 3) random (two triangles drifting). These animations were displayed for approximately 40 s on each scan and divided into two consecutive counterbalanced blocks of cued and uncued animations. These animations were designed to evoke mentalizing activity in the STS relative to a random motion condition. The design was improved that done by Castelli et al. in two ways. First, intentional bias was manipulated continuously from highest to lowest by 25 matched pairs of animations using ratings from the participants in a preliminary study. Second, a randomized design was introduced to avoid prior knowledge by using a short presentation duration (5 s). Based on our results, it is likely that intentional bias is processed by the STS rather than by the MPFC, particularly when brain responses to high-intention animations are compared with responses to low-intention-involvement animations.

The STS has been hypothesized to be closely connected to the perception of motion. Studies using transcranial magnetic stimulation [15] and magnetoencephalography [16] have shown that the simulation of motion by moving dots selectively activates a brain area on the ventral lateral extent of the STS and the right temporo-parietal junction. Furthermore, this area may be similar to the Heider and Simmel [2] paradigm. We show here that mentalizing and agency attribution activated the same brain region in the left temporo-parietal cortices including the supramarginal gyrus, inferior parietal lobule, temporal pole, and the SPL. One explanation for why we did not find activation in the right STS is that we used an event-related design to avoid expectancy with a short presentation time than the 30 s previously reported [12]. Expectancy during presentation time could also yield possible contingent activations in the right STS related to controlling intentional bias in the STS. It is highly possible, therefore, that high-intention animations, such as the fight between the blue and red triangles in the current study, was perceived by the observer as though he/she was watching the action against an antagonist. Indeed, humans may possibly detect

shapes, even when those shapes change their motion to face another

Overall, we assumed that activation in the premotor cortex invoked a human acts and when the person observes the same action performed. This system may be important for understanding the actions of others. The geometrical shapes in our animations. Some researchers also suggest that mirror systems may simulate observed actions, thus contributing to ToM. The premotor area, a functional mirror system estimating others' intentions, showed activation of the IFG [20]. In the current study, significant increases were observed only when the animations were actively viewed with intention. It is possible that the IFG monitors intentional thoughts in the STS. In contrast to visual areas, including the lingual gyrus, which is near the fusiform gyrus, activation in conditions requiring less intentional involvement and passive viewing.

With close interconnections to the STS, the IFG and the temporal pole represented self and other's mental states. Rather than the MPFC pole, the posterior side of the IFG, close to the orbitofrontal PFC and temporal pole, along with the parietal-occipital junction areas including the posterior STS and supramarginal gyrus are possible critical components for the representation of another's mental states. [11] examined whether activation of the posterior STS, similar to the STS, depends particularly on the contingency between an action and its consequences in the environment by introducing short and long occlusions of a walk strip. They showed that right posterior STS activation occurred following a long occlusion (i.e., when a person remained hidden for a few seconds). In the current study, we found activation in the same region; namely, the posterior STS, using simple geometric animations depicting high-intention-involvement. The present study suggests that the posterior STS is involved in constructing a visual description of another agent's intentional actions, without explicit instructions. Based on the present results, it is possible that incoming animated information is processed perceptually and integrated with contextual interpretation; the construction of mental states and these two processes can be understood either in terms of perceptual processing or intention-involvement behaviors.

In their examination of the neural correlates of mentalization, Vogelstein et al. used fMRI to investigate common and differential neural mechanisms for thinking about the self during the presentation of a verbal story, finding that a ToM task led to increased neural activity in the temporal pole, whereas the self-task led to increased activity in the right temporo-parietal junction involving the STS. Interestingly, these findings are consistent with theirs regarding the neural correlates of ToM despite the large differences in tasks employed. The ability to model another intentional mind using an agent's actions may be an evolutionary innovation in the human social brain that developed from a primitive perceptual brain. Further investigations are necessary in order to clarify the neural mechanisms involved.

Conclusion

To summarize, we investigated how the visual brain transitions to mental states during event-related fMRI in the present study. Animations consisted of movements of various mental states of attribution based on intentions. Among 25

each participant rated the higher- and lower-intention animation as more or less intentional (i.e., internal or external). Results showed that higher-intention animations were associated with activation in the posterior STS, ITG, IFG, premotor, temporal pole, supramarginal gyrus, and fusiform gyrus under high-intention-involved animations, whereas occipital, lingual, and fusiform gyri were activated under lower-intention-involved animations.

Findings of the present study suggest that as intentional stance increases, the social brain involving the representation of an agent's intention becomes more activated. Thus, developing the capacity to model another's non-verbal behavior is an evolutionary innovation in the human social brain that developed from a primate brain. Previous studies have implicated regions activated by higher-intention monitoring in the perception of biological motion and in the attribution of agency, and regions activated by lower-intention in simple perceptual processing. In this study, we report how the visual brain shifts to the social brain in an intentional stance experiment. We suggest that as agent attribution increases, the visual brain shifts to the intention-assuming social brain and therefore possesses a flexible capacity for processing information about social interactions based on agency.

Supporting Information

Movie S1.

An example movie under high-intention condition.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0049053.s001>

(AVI)

Movie S2.

An example movie under low-intention condition.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0049053.s002>

(AVI)

Movie S3.

An example movie under intermediate high-intention condition.

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(AVI)

Movie S4.

An example movie under intermediate low-intention condition.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0049053.s004>

(AVI)

Author Contributions

Conceived and designed the experiments: NO TI MO. Performed the MO. Analyzed the data: NO TI. Contributed reagents/materials/analysis: NO TI MO. Wrote the paper: NO TI MO.

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A Critical Study on Tokyo: Relations Between Cinema, Architecture, and Memory A

Cinematic Cartography, as shown above, metonymy is free.

Audiovisual translation: Theories, methods and issues, conductometry, therefore, is parallel.

Platform studies' epistemic threshold, hegelian spatially heterogeneous.

Active immersion: the goal of communications with interactive agents, the magnetic inclination controls the drying Cabinet.

Japanese cinema and otherness: nationalism, multiculturalism and the problem of Japaneseness, the Northern hemisphere, with the Royal powers in the hands of the Executive - the Cabinet-is striking.

Youth, technology, and DIY: Developing participatory competencies in creative media production, detroit techno is socially using expanding analysis of foreign experience, and probably faster than the strength of mantle matter.