No differences between autistic and non-autistic adults with respect to social and non-social influences on risky decision-making

Lydia J. Hickman¹, Connor T. Keating¹, Jennifer L. Cook¹, Elliot A. Ludvig²

Introduction

Knowledge of previous choices made by others influences risky decision-making¹
Different risky decision-making has been observed when choosing for oneself compared to others¹,²
Social influence has been found to be less effective in autistic individuals when the social information is presented using social stimuli such as faces³
Autistic individuals exhibit difficulty switching between representations of oneself and others⁴

Methodology

20 x autistic adults; 20 x matched controls (matched on age, gender, alexithymia and non-verbal reasoning)

1. Sample decision

2. Sample feedback

3. Risky decision

4 blocks of 25 trials; different levels of influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Levels of Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recipient</td>
<td>Influence type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Non-social</td>
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</tbody>
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Results

Risky decision-making ANOVA (GROUP x RECIPIENT)

Influence ANOVA (GROUP x INFLUENCE TYPE x DIRECTION x STRENGTH)

- Direction (p = .012); Group (BF₁₀ = 3.9); Influence type (BF₁₀ = 7.4); Strength (BF₁₀ = 6.0)

Discussion

Risky decision-making did not differ when deciding for oneself compared to others for either autistic or non-autistic adults
No difference in the effect of influence was found based on the type of influence (social or non-social) or group (autistic or non-autistic)
The direction of influence played a role in the decision-making process, with significant influence exerted when the influence directed individuals towards the less risky option.

Implications

Theories of autism should account for no differences in social influence when information is presented conceptually

Models of the decision-making process should incorporate the direction of sources of influence

References


@LydiaJHickman