

• 研究前沿(Regular Articles) •

婴幼儿面孔注意偏向：先天倾向与发展轨迹 ——来自正常和孤独症婴幼儿的证据*

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摘要 正常发展(Typically developing, TD)婴幼儿的先天面孔注意倾向稳定地存在于不同发展阶段不同刺激情景中,且在生命第一年内呈现短暂下降后快速增强的发展趋势。TD 婴幼儿的视觉注意在第 4 至 6 周之间发生由皮下控制向皮层控制的关键性转变之后,伴随面孔视觉经验的不断积累,逐渐形成的面孔特异性皮层网络对面孔的优先选择性反应逐渐增强。而孤独症谱系(Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD)婴幼儿具备初始的面孔注意先天倾向,但在面孔皮层发育关键期内逐渐偏离正常轨道,在 1 岁左右表现出面孔注意障碍。该群体先天的感知注意损伤或社会动机缺失可能导致其在关键性转变期内的面孔视觉经验输入不足,进而阻碍面孔特异性皮层网络的正常发展。未来研究可考虑采用生物遗传学方法和近红外脑成像技术探索新生儿面孔注意先天倾向的起源,系统考察社会场景中感知觉特征和社会性特征对 ASD 高危婴幼儿面孔注意发展轨迹尤其是关键性转变期的影响作用。

关键词 婴幼儿, 孤独症谱系, 面孔注意偏向, 先天倾向, 发展轨迹

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1 引言

面孔蕴含着丰富的社会交流信息,是婴儿早期生活环境中尤为突显的一类视觉刺激,具有重要的生物进化和社会生存意义(Gliga et al., 2009)。正常发展(Typically developing, TD)个体从一出生就表现出先天的面孔注意倾向(Simion et al., 1998; Valenza et al., 1996),即对面孔刺激进行注意定向和维持的准备状态(Reynolds & Roth, 2018)。与物体比较而言,TD 个体更快觉察且更长时间注视面孔。此先天面孔注意倾向在生命早期第 4 至 6 周之间经历短暂下降之后便逐渐增强直至 1 岁左右(Amsö, Haas, & Tenenbaum et al., 2014; Di Giorgio

et al., 2012; Frank et al., 2009; Gliga et al., 2009; Gluckman & Johnson, 2013)。虽然面孔注意先天倾向的潜在机制尚不清楚,但面孔注意偏向逐渐增强的神经基础可能是伴随面孔视觉经验的不断累积而逐步形成的面孔选择性脑区对面孔刺激的优先选择性反应不断增强(Buiatti et al., 2018)。作为人类物种重要的进化优势,婴儿与生俱来的面孔注意偏向有助于他们在社会性发展的敏感期与养育者发起关键性的互动,为个体顺利进行社会交往及其生存发展提供大量的社会性信息,是个体社会技能形成的基本前提(Constantino et al., 2017)。

然而,孤独症谱系(Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD)婴幼儿在社会性视觉注意上却存在着病理性的障碍。与 TD 婴幼儿比较而言,ASD 婴幼儿觉察面孔的速度更慢且注视面孔的时间更少,在生命第一年内呈显著下降趋势(Ozonoff et al., 2010)。鉴于社会性视觉注意是婴儿在社会性发展领域进

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行学习的重要机制(Peltola et al., 2018), 因而有理论提出早期社会性视觉注意障碍可能是 ASD 个体社会交流障碍产生的重要因素。生命最初几个月内的面孔注意缺陷将产生一系列连锁效应, 阻碍 ASD 婴幼儿面孔加工皮层系统的专业化发展, 导致基于面孔信息有效加工的社会交流行为产生障碍(Shephard et al., 2020; Tsang et al., 2019)。目前, ASD 婴幼儿面孔注意障碍产生的潜在机制仍存在领域一般性的感知注意损伤与领域特殊性的社会功能异常之间的争论。因而, 本文将系统梳理 TD 婴幼儿面孔注意偏向的先天倾向和发展轨迹及其神经基础, 为理解 ASD 婴幼儿面孔注意的异常发展轨迹提供正常发展的参考框架, 从而为揭示该障碍的产生机制提供全新的研究视角。

2 TD 新生儿面孔注意偏向的先天倾向

人类具有一种特殊的天然面孔探测能力。即使是高度示意性的类似面孔的几何图形, 相对于在感知觉上等效的非类面孔刺激, 新生儿在出生后不久就已经表现出稳定的注意偏向。然而, 这种先天面孔注意倾向的神经基础还尚未探明。

2.1 TD 新生儿面孔注意偏向先天倾向的研究证据

早期研究通过同时呈现直立和倒立的类面孔刺激考察新生儿是否存在面孔注意偏向。类面孔刺激是指在眼睛和嘴巴的位置上分布三个黑色小圆的白色大圆几何图形。研究发现, 与倒立类面孔比较而言, 出生仅 1 至 5 天(Simion et al., 1998; Valenza et al., 1996)或出生仅 1 个小时(Johnson & Dziurawiec et al., 1991)的 TD 新生儿更偏好于注视直立类面孔, 而出生仅 10 分钟的新生儿甚至更偏好于对直立类面孔进行视觉追踪(Goren et al., 1975)。在一项最新的研究中, 通过向母亲腹部投射三个光源组成直立或倒立类面孔, 同时利用 4-D 超声技术对胎儿的运动进行成像, 研究者发现与倒立类面孔比较而言, 在直立类面孔呈现期间, 研究者观测到了更多的胎儿运动(Reid et al., 2017)。据此, 他们推测后天经验并不是新生儿面孔注意偏向的必要条件, 人类对面孔刺激具有一种先天注意倾向。

2.2 TD 新生儿面孔注意偏向先天倾向的潜在机制

理解新生儿面孔注意先天倾向的起源是非常重要的。因为选择性注意分配在早期社会性视知

觉学习中扮演着重要角色, 而早期社会性视知觉学习对个体后继社会性认知发展具有一系列影响深远的连锁效应(Amsó & Scerif, 2015; Reynolds, 2015)。新生儿面孔注意先天倾向的潜在机制仍存在皮下面孔模板与皮层组织原型两种理论假说之争(Powell, Kosakowski, & Saxe, 2018; Simion & Giorgio, 2015), 而在皮下面孔模板内部还存在领域特殊性与领域一般性两种观点之间的分歧。

2.2.1 皮下面孔模板假说

皮下面孔模板假说(Sub-Cortical Face Template)认为, 面孔加工除后天经验驱动形成的皮层通路外, 还涉及一条由杏仁核、上丘和丘脑枕核在内的作为人类先天机制而存在的皮下通路。与皮层通路对高空间频率面孔信息进行慢速有意识加工不同, 皮下通路则是对低空间频率面孔信息进行快速无意识的初始探测和定向, 先行于并促进皮层通路加工过程, 在面孔加工神经网络的后天专业化发展中发挥着重要作用(Johnson et al., 2015)。由于新生儿尚未获得面孔视觉经验且皮层通路也尚未发展成熟, 因而研究者推测新生儿对面孔刺激的天然注意偏向可能是基于皮下通路对社会性刺激的先天快速注意定向机制(Di Giorgio et al., 2016)。该系统不仅能够相对于物体刺激更快探测面孔刺激、相对于中性表情更快探测恐惧表情、相对于物理运动更快探测生物运动, 甚至相应对于斜视视线更快探测直视视线。因而, Johnson 等人(2015)认为该先天反射性系统是对面孔相关社会性信息进行优先选择性定向的领域特殊性系统。

与之相反, Reynolds 和 Roth (2018)却认为该先天反射性系统是基于头重脚轻(top-heaviness)和内外一致(congruency)等低水平视觉结构特征对面孔进行反应的领域一般性系统。其中, 头重脚轻是指模型的上半部分比下半部分分布更多信息, 而内外一致则是指模型的内部特征与外部轮廓的一致性, 即分布较多信息的区域外部轮廓较宽, 而分布较少信息的区域外部轮廓较窄。有研究证实新生儿对具有上述两个特征的非面孔刺激也表现出注意偏向(Simion & Giorgio, 2015)。例如, 与倒立 T 字模型比较而言, 新生儿更偏好于注视正立的 T 字模型(Simion et al., 2002); 在研究者通过平移面孔特征位置或旋转面孔特征方位从而破坏面孔的几何构型使其不再被知觉为面孔的实验条件下, 相对于倒置条件, 新生儿仍然更偏好于

注视正立条件下的此类面孔(Macchi et al., 2004; Turati et al., 2002)。此外,相对于内部特征与外部轮廓不一致的非面孔模型,新生儿更偏好于注视内外一致的非面孔模型(Macchi et al., 2008)。

2.2.2 皮层组织原型假说

皮层组织原型假说(Proto-Organization of Visual Cortex)提出,新生儿所具备的先天面孔注意偏向可能是基于外纹状体视觉皮层所具有的原型组织性,即该皮层的神经元偏好于对简单视觉统计特征进行反应,依据统计特征偏好性在空间上进行聚集。具体而言,相对于外周视域,神经元更偏好于对出现在中央凹的刺激进行反应;与直角轮廓比较而言,更偏好于对曲线轮廓进行反应;相对于高空间频率刺激而言,更偏好于对低空间频率刺激进行反应。由于母亲经常与婴儿进行面对面的互动(Jayaraman et al., 2017),因而婴儿真实视觉经验的统计性是高度非随机性的。这就导致婴儿获得大量出现在中央凹的面孔视觉经验。面孔图像将同时激活偏好于中央凹输入、曲线轮廓或低空间频率等特征的神经元。对这些低水平特征进行叠加反应的皮层被频繁地同时激活,最终使得神经元习得了对面孔刺激的选择性优先反应。

3 TD 婴幼儿面孔注意偏向的发展轨迹

TD 婴儿的先天面孔注意倾向稳定地存在于不同发展阶段不同刺激情景中,且在生命第一年内存在短暂下降后快速增强的发展趋势。这可能是由于 TD 婴儿的视觉注意发生由皮下控制向皮层控制的关键性转变之后,注意控制皮层网络的功能成熟使视觉突显性对视觉注意的影响作用随月龄增加而逐渐降低,与此同时面孔加工皮层网络的专业化发展使面孔的社会突显性随月龄增加而逐渐提高。

3.1 TD 婴幼儿面孔注意偏向发展轨迹的研究证据

来自于不同发展阶段的横向研究证实,婴儿先天的面孔注意倾向在个体不同发展阶段的不同刺激情景中稳定存在。例如,在呈现两个项目的简单刺激对中,新生儿的初始面孔注意偏向在儿童期(Shah et al., 2015)乃至成人期(Shah et al., 2013)仍然存在。在包含多个项目的复杂刺激矩阵中,6个月的婴儿在自由观察中(Gliga et al., 2009)和学龄前儿童在目标探测中(Meissner et al., 2018)均表现出稳定的面孔注意偏向;甚至在目标导向

的有意注意成熟前,6.9岁以前儿童对非目标的面孔刺激进行注意定向的比值仍然显著高于非面孔的目标刺激,表现出了显著的自发性面孔注意偏向(Hirai et al., 2020)。此外,引入刺激类型变量的研究证实,6个月时 TD 婴儿的面孔注意偏向不受刺激类型影响。他们对孤立面孔、刺激矩阵和社会场景中的面孔均具有注意偏向(Gillespie-Smith et al., 2016)。而引入视觉特征变量的研究发现,即使面孔在刺激矩阵中不是视觉上最显著的刺激,6个月的婴儿首次注视面孔的比例仍显著高于随机水平,且面孔注视时间也显著高于干扰项目(Gluckman & Johnson, 2013)。以 TD 成人作为被试的研究也证实,在自然社会场景的视觉探索过程中,社会性特征(尤其是面孔)不受视觉突显性的影响而被高度优先选择(End & Gamer, 2017)。上述研究结果说明,面孔注意偏向稳定地存在于 TD 个体不同发展阶段的不同刺激情境中,且是基于面孔的社会相关性而非面孔的视觉显著性。

来自于婴儿期的纵向追踪研究显示,TD 新生儿具备的初始面孔注意偏向在第4至6周之间经历短暂的下降之后(Johnson & Dziurawiec et al., 1991; Morton & Johnson, 1991),从第3个月起逐渐增强直至1岁左右(Di Giorgio et al., 2012; Frank et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2019; Kwon et al., 2016; Libertus et al., 2017)。例如,在自由观看动态社会场景中(Frank et al., 2014; Frank et al., 2009; Libertus et al., 2017; Tsang et al., 2019)或静态社会场景中(Amso, Haas, & Markant, 2014; Frank et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2019),婴儿的面孔注视时间比值在3至9或12个月之间随月龄发展逐渐增加;在自由观看静态刺激矩阵的过程中,面孔能够捕获并维持6至8个月婴儿和成人的注意,但却不能捕获和维持3或4个月婴儿的注意(Di Giorgio et al., 2012; Kwon et al., 2016)。而另一项考察范围从2个月直至24岁的研究发现,在自由观看静态社会场景中,面孔注视时间比值不仅在婴儿期内急剧增加,在童年期乃至成年期也保持着缓慢增加的趋势(Amso, Haas, & Markant, 2014)。由此可见,TD 婴幼儿的面孔注意偏向随月龄增加呈现快速增强的发展趋势。

TD 婴儿在生命第一年内面孔注意偏向之所以急剧增长,是因为婴儿视觉注意模式受低水平视觉突显性的影响作用随月龄增加而逐渐减弱,

而高水平社会突显性的影响作用随月龄增加而逐渐增强(Bahrick et al., 2016; Frank et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2019; Kwon et al., 2016; Simpson et al., 2019)。例如, Kwon 等人(2016)考察认知负荷和视觉特征对4至8个月婴儿在刺激矩阵中面孔注意偏向影响作用的发展趋势。他们发现,与6至8个月的婴儿表现出稳定的面孔注意偏向不同,在2个项目的刺激对中,当干扰项目的视觉突显性较低时4个月婴儿表现出面孔注意偏向,当干扰项目的视觉突显性较高时则更偏好于注视干扰项目;而在6个项目的刺激矩阵中,4个月婴儿则更偏好于注视视觉特征显著的项目。这说明在4至8个月之间视觉突显性的影响作用逐渐降低而面孔社会突显性的影响作用却逐渐增强。Kelly 等人(2019)考察视觉特征对3至12个月的TD婴儿在静态社会场景中面孔注意偏向影响作用的发展趋势。他们发现,对于高视觉突显性面孔,3个月的婴儿面孔注视时间比值显著低于6、9、12月龄的婴儿,但后3个月龄之间无差异;对于低视觉突显性面孔,面孔注视时间比值随月龄增长而逐渐增加。这说明,视觉突显性的影响作用对于高月龄婴儿未呈现出增长趋势,而社会突显性的影响作用随月龄增加而逐渐增加。Simpson 等人(2019)考察面孔的社会相关性和视觉突显性对婴儿在刺激矩阵中面孔注意偏向的影响作用。他们发现,3至5个月的婴儿对人类面孔的探测速度显著快于猩猩面孔,表现出典型的本种偏向(own-species biases),即使在破坏低水平视觉特征的灰色和倒置条件下亦如此,且随着月龄增长而逐渐增强。这说明,对婴儿来说,面孔的高水平社会相关性比面孔的低水平视觉特征发挥更重要的作用,以此确保婴儿能够更稳定地关注、联系和学习他人。

3.2 TD 婴幼儿面孔注意偏向发展轨迹的潜在机制

TD 婴幼儿面孔注意偏向在第4至6周之间的短暂下降可能反映了在视觉注意由皮下控制向皮层控制转换的关键期内,皮层网络的初始功能对先天皮下系统的抑制作用(Shultz et al., 2018)。在经历此次关键性转变之后,领域一般性的额顶注意控制皮层网络功能逐步成熟,使得TD婴儿抑制干扰信息对特定视觉目标进行选择性的能力逐渐增强,同时加之领域特殊性的面孔加工皮层网络专业化发展水平不断提高,使得面孔刺激对TD婴儿的社会突显性不断增强,两者共同作用促成了

TD 婴幼儿面孔注意偏向的不断增强(Leppanen, 2016)。

3.2.1 视觉注意神经网络的关键性转变

新生儿的视觉注意最初是基于皮下通路的先天反射系统。该系统偏好于对视域中具有快速运动、高对比度、高亮度、“头重脚轻”非对称模式或低空间频率等低水平视觉特征的刺激进行优先选择性反应。因而新生儿的视觉注意反射性地被具有上述视觉特征的面孔刺激所吸引(Johnson, Posner, & Rothbart, 1991)。随后,由后枕叶、丘脑枕核和额叶等脑区组成的有意视觉注意神经网络在2至3个月时开始逐渐发挥功能,与此同时基于皮下结构的先天反射性定向随皮层网络发挥初步功能而逐渐下降。Shultz 等人(2018)提出TD婴儿的视觉注意在此期间发生了由“经验期待型”反射性皮下控制向“经验依赖型”意志性皮层控制的早期关键性转变。在此之后,背外侧前额叶、眶额叶以及前扣带回等脑区在有意视觉注意控制中于婴儿期6个月左右开始逐渐发挥重要作用(Johnson, Posner, & Rothbart, 1991)。上述额叶皮层的功能成熟以及额顶和额颞皮层之间的功能连接不断加强使婴儿视觉注意控制能力不断提高,抑制干扰信息的能力亦逐渐加强。因而,视觉突显性在婴儿视觉注意模式中的影响作用不断减弱,面孔注意偏向逐渐增强。考察婴儿面孔注意偏向潜在机制的研究证实,婴儿的注意控制能力与面孔注意偏向密切相关(Reynolds & Roth, 2018; van Renswoude et al., 2019)。例如,婴儿面孔注意偏向与物体视觉搜索任务中目标物体定向的潜伏时间(Frank et al., 2014)、或在自由观看社会场景中视觉注视点的平均时长和眼球运动速度(Amsö, Haas, & Markant, 2014)等领域一般性视觉注意能力的发展变化密切相关。上述研究结果说明,婴儿面孔注意偏向的发展与一般性视觉注意控制的发展具有同步性。

3.2.2 面孔加工皮层网络的专业化发展

面孔注意偏向的后天发展还与领域特殊性的面孔加工皮层网络的专业化发展即面孔选择性脑区(face selective area)的形成密切相关。对于成人而言,面孔注意偏向的神经基础是一组包括枕叶面孔区、梭状回面孔区和颞上沟等脑区在内的面孔特异性皮层回路对面孔的优先选择性反应(Buiatti et al., 2018)。来自灵长类动物的一项研究表明,在自由观看静态社会场景中,与对照组相比,天生缺失中后部外侧面孔选择性脑区的雌性

猴子对面孔的视觉注意偏向明显降低。这说明面孔选择性脑区中的神经元聚集与行为水平上的面孔注意偏向之间存在密切关联(Vinken & Vogels, 2019)。据此,我们认为面孔注意偏向的后天发展与面孔选择性脑区的逐渐形成之间是一个互为因果互相促进的双向螺旋式发展过程:面孔注意偏向为面孔皮层输入更多面孔视觉信息,获取更多面孔学习的机会,从而促进了经验依赖型面孔选择性脑区的形成;而面孔选择性脑区的逐渐形成又使得面孔的社会突显性日益增强,进而使面孔更容易捕获和维持个体的视觉注意,表现出更强的面孔注意偏向。

面孔选择性脑区对面孔刺激的激活反应显著快于其它视觉刺激(Powell, Kosakowski, & Saxe, 2018)。已有研究证实,与其它刺激比较,面孔刺激能够诱发婴儿外颞叶和颞下沟等面孔选择性脑区更大的神经激活反应(Deen et al., 2017; Powell, Deen, & Saxe, 2018)和振幅更大反应更快的面孔选择性 N170 成分(Ince et al., 2016)。出生仅 1 至 4 天的新生儿在将要发展成为面孔特异性脑区的枕外侧颞顶叶和内侧顶叶对直立类面孔产生的神经激活反应比倒立类面孔更大,且存在明显的右侧优势效应。这说明面孔选择性脑区的形成过程可能从出生后不久就已经开始(Buiatti et al., 2018)。该脑区对面孔刺激的激活水平(Scherf et al., 2007)和 N170 成分(Itier & Taylor, 2004)在 11 岁左右接近成人,其面孔选择性反应和体积在整个青春期不断增加(Golarai et al., 2015)。这说明面孔选择性脑区的形成过程起始于婴儿期延续至青春期(Mares et al., 2020; Powell, Kosakowski, & Saxe, 2018)。

面孔选择性脑区的后天发展需要面孔视觉经验。来自灵长类动物的研究发现饲养员在喂养猩猩婴儿的过程中戴上焊工的面具,他们的面孔选择性脑区在 200 天时甚至在 400 天时都未形成(Arcaro et al., 2017)。来自人类视觉障碍婴儿的一项研究也证实,在婴儿出生后的 12 个月内,存在一个面孔知觉发育的关键期。即使在视觉矫正后获得正常的面孔视觉经验,该类婴儿的面孔加工仍然受损(Grand et al., 2001)。Powell, Kosakowski 和 Saxe (2018)提出的社会互动驱动理论进一步指出,在此关键期内,婴儿是通过内侧前额叶皮层(Medial Prefrontal Cortex, mPFC)在与成人面对面的社会互动过程中识别面孔的社会性价值,维持

面孔注意获取更多面孔视觉经验。因而, mPFC 在面孔加工神经网络的专业化发展过程中发挥着重要作用。由此可见,面孔选择性脑区的形成存在两个来源。一方面将会发展成为面孔选择性脑区的神经回路对面孔刺激具有先天的注意倾向。另一方面基于此先天倾向的后天视知觉经验学习使上述脑区对面孔刺激的激活反应不断提高,与此同时对其它视觉刺激的激活反应逐渐降低,随着面孔视觉经验不断累积,面孔选择性脑区逐渐形成。

4 ASD 婴幼儿面孔注意障碍的表现特征

ASD 婴幼儿的面孔注意发展轨迹偏离正常发展轨迹。具体表现为,后期确诊 ASD 高危婴儿在 6 个月时具备初始的面孔注意偏向,但随后呈显著下降趋势,直至 1 岁左右表现出明显的障碍。在婴儿期之后,ASD 个体在简单刺激矩阵中是否存在面孔注意偏向尚存分歧,但在复杂社会场景中的面孔注意普遍少于 TD 个体。

4.1 ASD 婴幼儿面孔注意障碍的发展轨迹

以高危婴儿(同胞兄弟姐妹被确诊为 ASD)为被试进行的前瞻研究普遍证实,后期确诊的高危婴儿 6 个月时对面孔的注意行为与 TD 婴儿并无差异(Elsabbagh & Gliga et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2014; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Rozga et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2013; Young et al., 2009)。在自由观看面孔和物体图片组成的简单刺激矩阵时,后期确诊的高危婴儿 6 个月时指向面孔的首次眼跳比值(Elsabbagh & Gliga et al., 2013)、面孔注视时间比值(Elsabbagh & Gliga et al., 2013)和面孔注视时长(Yamashiro et al., 2019)与 TD 婴儿并无差异,表现出典型的面孔注意偏向;在半结构化的真实社会互动情景中,他们看向人物面孔的频次(Jones et al., 2014; Ozonoff et al., 2010; Rozga et al., 2011; Wan et al., 2013; Young et al., 2009; Zwaigenbaum et al., 2005)与 TD 婴儿也并无差异。然而,纵向追踪前瞻数据显示,后期确诊的高危婴儿在真实社会互动场景中注视人物面孔的频次在 6 至 12 个月之间呈显著下降趋势(Ozonoff et al., 2010; Wan et al., 2013),在自由观看动态社会性视频中注视人物面孔眼部的时间在 2 个月至 24 个月之间亦呈显著下降的趋势(Jones & Klin, 2013),而与此同时 TD 婴儿保持不变(Ozonoff et al., 2010)或显著增加(Jones & Klin,

2013; Wan et al., 2013)。因而后期确诊的高危婴儿与TD婴儿之间的差异在生命第一年内持续增加,直到1岁左右显著少于TD婴儿,表现出显著的面孔注意障碍。这种衰退现象不止限于真实社会互动中的人类面孔,后期确诊的高危婴儿在自由观看与非面孔刺激同时呈现的人类面孔和猴子面孔时在9至18个月之间也呈现出显著的衰退现象(Yamashiro et al., 2019)。综上,后期确诊的高危婴儿具备初始面孔注意偏向,但呈现显著下降趋势直至1岁左右表现出显著障碍。

在婴儿期后,ASD个体在孤立面孔与干扰物体进行直接简单比较的刺激矩阵中对面孔的注视时间更长,表现出面孔注意偏向(Gillespie-Smith et al., 2014; Guillon et al., 2016; Parish-Morris et al., 2013)。引入限制性兴趣相关性变量的部分研究还发现,当干扰物体的限制性兴趣相关性较高时,ASD幼儿对面孔的注意水平显著下降;当干扰物体的限制性兴趣相关性较低时则表现正常(Sasson et al., 2011; Sasson et al., 2008; Sasson & Touchstone, 2013)。这说明ASD幼儿可能具备基本的面孔注意倾向,但受狭隘兴趣影响。不过也有研究发现,无论物体的限制性兴趣相关性如何,ASD个体更偏好于注视干扰物体(Harrison & Slane, 2020; Unruh et al., 2016)。这类研究认为ASD个体普遍缺乏注视面孔的社会性动机,与物体的限制性兴趣无关。然而,在复杂社会场景中ASD个体普遍存在面孔注意障碍。在静态社会性场景中,与TD个体比较而言,ASD个体对面孔的定向速度更慢(Frost-Karlsson et al., 2019; Riby & Hancock, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010),面孔注视时间更短(Duan et al., 2019; Riby & Hancock, 2008; Riby & Hancock, 2009; Sumner et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2010)。在动态社会性场景中(Nakano et al., 2010)和真实社会性互动中(Hanley et al., 2014; Noris et al., 2012)亦如此。引入刺激类型变量考察生态效度对ASD面孔注意影响作用的研究发现(Chevallier et al., 2015; Hanley et al., 2013),ASD组的面孔注意在社会场景中异常而在刺激矩阵中则正常。由此可见,在婴儿期后ASD个体在简单刺激矩阵中是否存在面孔注意偏向存在分歧,但在复杂社会场景中却表现出普遍障碍。

4.2 ASD婴幼儿面孔注意障碍的影响因素

为了进一步探究社会场景中何种因素导致

ASD个体的面孔注意减少,研究者们分别引入以下4个变量考察它们对ASD个体面孔注意的影响作用。首先,研究者考察社会性信息复杂程度对ASD个体面孔注意行为的影响。他们引入人物数量变量发现,不论在一人、两人还是三人的社会场景中,ASD个体均比TD被试更少注视面孔(Sumner et al., 2018; 魏玲等, 2017)。其次,研究者还考察社会互动水平对ASD儿童面孔注意的影响(Chawarska et al., 2012; Macari et al., 2020; Shic et al., 2020)。在仅呈现言语线索或同时呈现直视视线和言语线索的社会互动条件下,ASD个体表现出面孔注意障碍,在不呈现任何线索的非互动社会场景中两组无差异(Chawarska et al., 2012; Shic et al., 2020)。再次,研究者们还引入指导语变量,利用“物理性”和“社会性”指导语考察ASD个体面孔注意维持是否受高水平认知因素的调节(Benson et al., 2009)。结果发现,与TD青少年不同,指导语并不调节ASD青少年面孔注意水平,即使在“社会性”指导语条件下,ASD青少年面孔注意时长仍显著短于TD个体。上述三个变量都是高水平的社会性特征,还有研究者考察低水平的感知觉特征对ASD个体面孔注意的影响作用(Amsö, Haas, Tenenbaum et al., 2014)。他们发现无论是否是社会性刺激,ASD幼儿对视觉显著性较高的区域进行注意定向的比例显著高于TD幼儿。这说明相对于TD幼儿,ASD幼儿更倾向于按照感知觉特征的突显性等级对社会场景进行扫描。

5 ASD婴幼儿面孔注意障碍的潜在机制

以TD婴幼儿面孔注意偏向的发展轨迹为参考,我们可知ASD个体对面孔刺激具有先天注意倾向,但是后天发展在面孔知觉发育关键期内偏离了正常轨道。在此关键期内,他们之所以未能像TD婴儿一样表现出越来越强的面孔注意偏向,可能是由于他们的视觉注意缺乏由皮下控制向皮层控制的早期关键性转变(Shultz et al., 2018),未能顺利开启面孔加工皮层网络的专业化发展进程。有研究证实,ASD个体面孔加工专业化发展的进程存在异常。较之于TD个体,对于ASD个体而言,面孔刺激诱发的N170的右侧化效应减少(Kovarski et al., 2019; Shephard et al., 2020),P1(Neuhaus et al., 2016)和N170(Kang et al., 2017; Sysoeva et al., 2018)潜伏期更长,且波幅更小

(Kovarski et al., 2019)。与 TD 个体不同, ASD 个体在左侧梭状回和双侧杏仁核等面孔选择性脑区未表现出面孔偏好性反应以及年龄发展效应(Joseph et al., 2015)。此外, 与 TD 婴儿比较而言, 后期确诊的高危婴儿 5 个月时在右后颞叶皮层对面孔的选择性神经反应降低(Braukmann et al., 2018)且神经激活持续时间缩短(Jones et al., 2016)。这说明此异常神经反应模式早在行为反应表现出差异之前就已经存在。ASD 婴儿面孔加工专业化发展受阻导致面孔的社会突显性不能随月龄发展而逐渐增强, 因而他们像半岁以前的 TD 婴儿一样更依赖视觉突显性进行视觉注意资源分配(Amsö, Haas, & Tenenbaum et al., 2014)。据此, 笔者推测 ASD 个体之所以能够在某些简单刺激矩阵中表现出正常面孔注意偏向可能只是基于面孔的视觉突显性而非社会突显性; 当面孔的视觉突显性在复杂社会场景中降低时就表现出普遍的面孔注意障碍, 且不受复杂社会场景中社会性复杂度和社会性指导语的影响作用。

那么, 又是何种原因阻碍 ASD 婴儿在面孔知觉发育关键性转换期内顺利开启面孔加工专业化发展的进程呢? 在婴儿能够爬行或走路之前的很长一段时间内, 他们是通过视知觉学习去探索世界的。这种视知觉学习为处于大脑皮层发育关键期的婴儿输入大量视觉经验, 从出生时起就塑造着婴儿的正常发展(Constantino et al., 2017)。然而, ASD 婴儿可能由于某些先天的社会动机或感知注意的缺陷导致他们的视知觉学习经验异常, 使得他们在关键性转变期内不能获得正常水平的面孔视觉经验, 甚至输入更多的非面孔视觉经验。如果将要发展成为面孔选择性脑区的神经系统是领域特殊性的(Kanwisher, 2010), 那么面孔视觉经验输入不足将导致该系统的发展迟滞; 如果该系统是领域一般性的(Gauthier & Nelson, 2001), 那么面孔视觉经验将与非面孔视觉经验产生竞争, 使该系统的发展逐渐偏离正常轨道, 进而阻碍早期社会交流技能的正常发展(Webb et al., 2017)。

5.1 社会动机缺失假说

社会动机是一系列促使个体对社交世界产生注视偏好, 在社交中获取快乐即社会奖赏, 以及努力建立和维系社会关系的心理倾向和生物机制。社会动机的神经网络由杏仁核、纹状体和眶额皮层等组成(Chevallier et al., 2012)。其中, 杏仁

核在把注意引向面孔等社会性刺激, 评价社会性价值方面发挥着重要作用, 纹状体和眶额皮层是奖赏回路的重要组成部分(Azzi et al., 2012)。然而, 以晚期慢正波(Late Positive Potential, LPP)作为动机情绪唤醒水平的测量指标的研究发现, 相较于控制组, ASD 个体对面孔刺激表现出更小的 LPP 波幅, 对限制性兴趣物体刺激表现出更大的 LPP 波幅。这说明 ASD 个体对于面孔缺乏社会性动机, 但对物体具有更高的动机反应水平(Benning et al., 2016)。有研究者进一步指出 ASD 群体对面孔缺乏社会性动机的原因可能是社会性奖赏系统的功能异常。与非社交线索比较而言, 当注意由社交线索引导时, TD 个体的额顶注意网络和纹状体的激活程度会增加, 而 ASD 个体只有顶上小叶的激活程度增加(Greene et al., 2011)。TD 组在右侧杏仁核和 vmPFC 表现出面孔偏好性反应, 而 ASD 组在上述脑区未表现出面孔偏好性反应(Joseph et al., 2015)。上述结果说明 ASD 个体对社交线索未赋予同等的奖赏价值, 未能识别面孔的社会性价值。依据社会动机缺失假说, ASD 婴儿不能识别面孔的社会性奖赏价值, 因而早期先天倾向得不到强化, 导致他们不能够在面孔知觉发育关键性转换期内获得足够多的面孔视觉经验, 进而阻碍了面孔选择性脑区的顺利形成, 导致面孔注意偏向的后天发展逐渐偏离了正常轨道。

5.2 注意解离障碍假说

ASD 个体的一般性注意控制障碍主要表现在注意解离环节, 即将注意从中心刺激转移至外周刺激的潜伏时间显著长于 TD 个体(Bradshaw et al., 2019; Kleberg et al., 2017; Mo et al., 2019; Sabatos-Devito et al., 2016), 此障碍并不是基本眼球运动控制能力障碍造成(Zhang et al., 2020)。注意解离障碍使 ASD 婴儿不能在不同刺激间灵活转换注意, 更容易将注意“锁定”或“固着”在视觉环境中感知觉特征更为显著的非社会性刺激上。这导致他们将视觉注意不成比例地指向了视觉环境中的非社会性刺激, 与此同时对他人社会性接近的回应水平显著降低。对于处于皮层发育关键期的 ASD 婴儿而言, 这种异常的早期视知觉学习经验阻碍了包括面孔选择性脑区在内的社会脑的专业化发展, 使 ASD 婴儿表现出对非社会性刺激的注意偏向(Gale et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2018; Pierce et al., 2016; Thye et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2015),

10个月的高危婴儿就已经表现出物体加工优势(McCleery et al., 2009), 12个月左右刻板行为和狭隘兴趣逐渐显现(Ozonoff et al., 2008)。与此同时, 确诊高危婴儿在6至12个月之间对面孔的注意行为呈现明显的衰退趋势, 到12个月时显著低于TD婴儿(Ozonoff et al., 2010; Wan et al., 2019; Yamashiro et al., 2019)。由此可见, ASD个体两大核心症状之间存在某种对应的发展关系。虽然两者是完全不同领域, 但是他们之间的共病关系以及相似的发展轨迹说明他们之间可能存在某种相关的潜在机制(Auyeung et al., 2009; Elison et al., 2012), 而早期视知觉学习可能就是这一机制的重要组成部分(Elison et al., 2013)。此外, 另有研究证实后期确诊高危婴儿的注意解离速度在6个月时与TD婴儿并不存在差异, 此后随月龄增长而逐渐变慢, 12个月时显著慢于TD婴儿(Bryson et al., 2018; Elsabbagh & Fernandes et al., 2013; Zwaigenbaum et al., 2005)。由此可见, 导致早期视知觉学习经验异常的注意解离障碍与两大核心症状之间也存在着相似的发展轨迹。据此, 我们推测6至12个月之间逐渐出现的注意解离障碍很可能与ASD婴儿面孔注意下降和刻板行为出现存在某种内在的关联。

6 总结与展望

如前所述, TD个体对面孔具有的先天注意倾向在不同发展阶段的不同刺激情景中普遍存在, 且在生命第一年表现出短暂下降之后的急剧增长趋势。在第4至6周之间完成皮下控制向皮层控制的关键性转变之后, 一方面视觉注意控制皮层网络的功能成熟使得TD婴儿抑制干扰信息的能力逐渐加强, 因而视觉显著性在视觉注意中的影响作用不断下降; 另一方面将会发展成为面孔选择性脑区的皮层回路基于面孔注意的先天倾向, 通过后天社会性视知觉经验学习, 不断积累面孔视觉经验, 逐渐发展成为面孔选择性脑区, 使得面孔刺激的社会显著性逐步增强, 更容易捕获和维持个体的视觉注意。然而, 处于面孔皮层发展关键期的ASD高危婴儿可能因先天的感知注意损伤或社会动机缺失导致其视觉注意未能顺利完成皮下控制向皮层控制的关键性转变, 进而阻碍面孔选择性脑区的形成, 最终导致其面孔注意逐渐偏离了正常发展轨道。研究证实, 后期确诊的ASD高危婴儿具备初始的面孔注意倾向, 但随后

呈现显著的下降趋势, 直至1岁左右表现出显著障碍。来自于两类婴幼儿的研究证据互相促进互相验证, 共同加深了我们对婴幼儿面孔注意偏向先天起源与后天发展的认识。

在一项对338名幼儿进行的眼动追踪实验研究中, 研究者发现在面孔注意指标上, 同卵双生子之间的一致性高达0.91, 异卵双生子之间降至0.35, 而独生子女之间则无相关性, 而ASD幼儿显著低于TD幼儿。这表明先天遗传因素对社会性信息的主动搜寻具有重要的影响作用。这种先天的社会性视觉参与能力作为一种神经发育的内在表型, 是人类生物生态环境构建的一种方式(Constantino et al., 2017)。发展系统理论(Developmental Systems)提出, 表型差异是处于发展过程中的有机体内外多重因素双向交互作用的结果。因此, 在该理论框架下, 面孔注意偏向既不是先天决定也不是出生设定, 而是在先天倾向的引导下, 早期视觉经验与个体基因亚型相互作用导致个体之间存在表型差异的发展结果。这不仅能够解释在社会性信息搜寻上TD群体存在的差异, 而且能够解释ASD群体存在的障碍(Reynolds & Roth, 2018)。虽然ASD与TD婴儿之间的差异在生命早期已现端倪, 但明显的组间差异却出现在1岁左右。这种障碍发展模式与迭代发展理论的观点一致, 即婴儿自身的早期行为和经验将引导和限制后继的学习(Gibson & Pick, 2000)。发展的本质是经验的渠化即早期经验引导后继经验。依据该观点, 任何早期微小的行为和经验偏差随时间推移都将逐渐产生更大的组间差异, 最终使ASD个体表现出其标志性的症状(Shultz et al., 2018)。为了更深入认识TD婴幼儿面孔注意偏向先天倾向和后天发展的潜在机制, 进而揭示ASD婴幼儿面孔注意障碍产生的潜在机制, 未来的研究还可以从以下三个方面进行深入探究。

6.1 揭示婴幼儿面孔注意先天倾向的潜在机制: 领域特殊性与领域一般性的理论之争

研究者普遍认为婴幼儿面孔注意偏向的后天发展与面孔选择性脑区的逐步形成有关, 然而关于面孔注意先天倾向的潜在机制仍存在皮下面孔模板与皮层组织原型之间的理论分歧, 以及皮下面孔模板内部的领域一般性和领域特殊性之间的观点分歧。由此可见, 对于TD新生儿面孔注意的先天倾向到底是基于皮层功能还是皮下功能, 到

底是领域一般性的还是领域特殊性的等根本性问题,研究者们目前仍然不清楚。此外,虽然眼动数据显示 ASD 高危婴儿具备初始的面孔注意倾向,但其潜在机制是否与 TD 婴儿一致仍不清楚。上述问题一直未得到很好的解答主要是由于新生儿难以保持静止同时无法表达,研究者们很难获取到新生儿脑功能成像的数据。由于 fNIRS 设备佩戴体验更佳,不需要被试太多的配合,对运动也有较强的抗干扰性,为考察新生儿面孔注意先天倾向的潜在机制提供了新的选择。例如,一项采用 fNIRS 技术的最新研究初步发现,与 TD 婴儿比较而言,后期确诊的高危婴儿 5 个月时在右后颞叶皮层对面孔的选择性神经反应降低(Reynolds & Roth, 2018)。此外,一项考察先天遗传因素对面孔注意影响作用的研究初步证实,同卵双生子在社会性的面孔注视时间上的一致性显著高于在非社会性的物体或背景注视时间以及屏幕总注视时间上的一致性。这说明婴幼儿面孔注意偏向的先天生物遗传学基础具有领域特殊性(Constantino et al., 2017)。因而,未来的研究者可采用此类基因遗传学方法以及近红外脑成像技术考察 TD 和高危新生儿面孔注意偏向尝试回答上述问题。

6.2 考察婴幼儿面孔注意异常发展的影响因素:感知觉注意与社会性动机的相对作用

关于何种因素导致 ASD 婴儿的视觉注意由皮下控制向皮层控制发生关键性转变的过程存在异常,以及后续面孔加工神经网络的专业化发展存在异常,目前仍存感知觉注意障碍和社会性动机缺失两种理论假说之争。未来的研究应在复杂社会场景中系统引入领域一般性的感知觉特征变量和领域特殊性的社会性特征变量,考察上述两类变量对高危 ASD 婴儿面孔注意偏向发展轨迹尤其对早期关键性转变期的影响作用。由于面孔注意偏向是个体后续社会交流功能发展的重要前提,澄清 ASD 个体面孔注意障碍产生的潜在机制对锁定正确的干预目标和开发有效的干预方法具有重要的理论指导作用。如果 ASD 婴幼儿是由于不能识别面孔的社会性奖赏价值导致先天初始的面孔注意倾向得不到及时强化,那么干预目标应锁定在面孔的社会性价值识别上。如果 ASD 婴幼儿是由于注意解离障碍导致视觉注意不成比例地固着在感知觉特征显著的非社会性信息上,那么干预目标还应涉及领域一般性的感知注意功能。

6.3 开发婴幼儿面孔注意异常发展的干预方案:面孔注意策略与亲子互动模式的相互结合

未来的研究可在此基础上开发有效便利的早期筛查和干预工具,利用多媒体技术,通过塑造面孔视觉注意策略,使处于神经可塑期的 ASD 婴幼儿重新回到正常的社会性发展轨道上来。例如,一项最新的干预研究证实基于关联注视眼动追踪技术(Gaze-Contingent Eye Tracking)的面孔注意干预方案显著提高了 ASD 幼儿的语言技能(Wang et al., 2020)。该研究初步验证了此干预方案的可行性和有效性。此外,虽然 ASD 高危婴儿的父母与 TD 婴儿的父母同等程度地满足孩子的交流需求,但是相对于 TD 婴儿而言,高危婴儿的感知注意损伤或社会动机缺失可能使其需要更高水平的亲子协调性提高亲子社会互动水平,从而获得正常水平的面孔视觉经验。一项以 7 至 10 个月高危婴儿为被试的随机对照组实验研究初步证实,旨在优化亲子互动模式的早期家长介入干预方案,通过提高家长对婴儿交流需求的回应性和敏感性,有效改善了自闭症的行为和注意前驱征兆(Green et al., 2017)。因而,未来的研究还可考察高危婴儿的先天缺陷是如何影响养育者与婴幼儿之间互相适应互相强化的早期亲子互动模式进而影响面孔注意发展,在此基础上开发早期家长介入干预模式通过优化早期亲子互动模式,有意识地改善高危婴儿的早期社会生态环境进而促进面孔注意发展,以及在此类早期家长介入干预模式中面孔注意的发展变化是作为中介因素还是发展结果与社会性学习能力和社会性交流能力相关的。

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Attention bias to faces in infants and toddlers: Inborn predispositions and developmental changes

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Abstract: Typically developing individuals not only show an inborn predisposition to pay attention to faces from birth, but also present a stable attention bias to faces in different developmental stages and situations. There remains a theoretical divergence on the underlying mechanism of this innate predisposition of facial attention between the sub-cortical face template and the proto-organization of the visual cortex. However, the neural basis of the postnatal development of this mechanism is generally considered to be the preferential selective response of the face-selective area that gradually forms with the accumulation of facial visual experiences. However, infants with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may suffer from insufficient input of face visual experience due to impaired perception and attention or the lack of social motivation, which may hinder the formation of the face-selective area. Studies have confirmed that infants with ASD have an initial predisposition to pay attention to faces, but gradually deviate from the normal track during the critical period of facial cortex development, showing an obvious impairment of facial attention at the end of infancy. In future research, we should explore the origin of the congenital predisposition of facial attention in neonates by using genetic methods and near-infrared brain imaging technology, and systematically investigate the influence of perceptual and social characteristics on the development track of face attention in high-risk infants with ASD to identify the potential mechanism responsible for facial attention impairment.

Key words: infant and toddler, autism spectrum disorder, attention bias to faces, inborn predisposition, developmental change