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## Submitter Information

Name	Jaehyun LEE
Affiliation / Department	KIST Brain Science Institute
Country	Republic of Korea
Mobile	+82-10-8577-4205
E-Mail	<a href="mailto:jhlee315@snu.ac.kr">jhlee315@snu.ac.kr</a>

## Author's Information

Authors	Category:Authors	Full Name	Institution
	Presenting Author	Full Name : Jaehyun Lee E-mail : <a href="mailto:jhlee315@kist.ac.kr">jhlee315@kist.ac.kr</a>	1
	Co-Author	Full Name : Seoyoung Kim E-mail : <a href="mailto:tjdud011@naver.com">tjdud011@naver.com</a>	1
		Full Name : Gyu-Hwan Lee E-mail : <a href="mailto:popcorn426@snu.ac.kr">popcorn426@snu.ac.kr</a>	1,2
		Full Name : Jaehoon Kim E-mail : <a href="mailto:jaehoonkim@kdi.re.kr">jaehoonkim@kdi.re.kr</a>	3
	Corresponder	Full Name : Jee Hyun Choi	1

Category:Authors	Eunhyun Lee	Institution
	eechoi@kist.re.kr	
No.	Institution	
1	Korea Institute Of Science And Technology	
2	Seoul National University	
3	Korea Development Institute	

## Abstract Information

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Cognition and Behavior

# The formation of free-riders from mouse groups in a reward-thr conflict situation is related to their mPFC-BLA-NAc activity

Jaehyun Lee<sup>1</sup>, Seoyoung Kim<sup>1</sup>, Gyu-Hwan Lee<sup>1,2</sup>, Jaehoon Kim<sup>3</sup>, Jee Hyun Choi<sup>1</sup>

Korea Institute Of Science And Technology<sup>1</sup>, Seoul National University<sup>2</sup>, Korea Development Institute<sup>3</sup>

Despite the well-known notion that mice are social animals, whether or not a group of a mouse living together establishes a clear division and if so, how the division temporally evolves, is largely unknown. Here, we developed a naturalistic foraging paradigm that balances the reward with the risk involved. In this setup, mice with limited food should approach a threatening spider robot to get food. In this experiment, we used the CBRAIN telemetry system (Kim et al., Sci Adv, 2020) to monitor brain activities in the BLA, NAc, and mPFC of individual mice. In fact, that all mice had the ability to forage throughout the training process, we observed a division in the behavior under the group conditions: actors were the individuals that actively engaged in the foraging (actor behavior), while the free-riders were the individuals who did not eat food, but rather took it from the others (free-rider behavior). Notably, as we repeated experiments there was an increase in individuals acting as free-riders, which was accompanied by a strengthening of a behavior of specific individuals among the actors to fetch food more frequently. Analysis of neural oscillation has found that the rate of oscillatory bursts in the beta (24 – 32 Hz) frequency bands in mPFC, BLA and NAc significantly elevated in the actors compared to the free-riders during the foraging period. Also, free-riders showed a decreased rate of oscillation over time while that of actors was maintained or increased. Moreover, our results show that the beta-to-gamma (72 – 92 Hz) burst ratio was significantly elevated in the actors compared to the free-riders in the foraging period. These findings suggest the possibility that oscillatory neural activity could regulate different behavior in group conditions. Taken together, our findings provide evidence that mPFC-BLA-NAc regulation is related to the social labor within a mouse society.

Keywords: Social behavior, Group behavior, Worker, Free-rider, Workload imbalance, naturalistic behavior

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President, Cheil Moon / Business license number : 119-82-73161

(Address) A-721, 95, Hangang-daero, Yongsan-gu, Seoul 04378, Republic of Korea

Tel : 82-2-871-1862~3 Fax : 82-2-790-1862 E-mail : [neuro@ksbns.org](mailto:neuro@ksbns.org)