

Emotional dysregulation facilitates emotion recognition independent of dwell time to faces

Emotional dysregulation (ED) is the inability to understand and modulate one's own emotional responses and has been proposed as the central feature of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Yet research suggests that people with BPD may actually be more accurate in detecting emotions in others than controls. This study examined whether ED is related to attentional biases towards facial cues of others when viewing emotional social scenarios. We predicted that participants scoring the highest for ED would be most accurate at identifying emotion. Furthermore, people who were most accurate were predicted to spend the greatest time fixating faces. We presented 5-second clips from unfamiliar soap operas which were positive, negative or neutral in emotional content, whilst eye movements were recorded. After each clip, participants (N=29) rated their emotional content on a scale from 1-7 (very negative – very positive), finally completing the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). As predicted, those with high ED scores were most accurate at emotion recognition. However, neither ED nor accuracy was related to time fixating faces. This suggests that ED may sensitize individuals to others' emotions but that this may be dependent on subtle attentional biases rather than greater dwell time to faces.

References

Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure, and initial validation of the difficulties in emotion regulation scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 26(1), 41–54. doi:10.1023/B:JOBA.0000007455.08539.94