

Are emotional faces of handsome and ugly peers processed differently?

Evidence showing liking moderates affective reactions in affective priming paradigm

Abstract

Facial expressions of expressers are processed differently depending on other social features (e.g. race, gender, and age) that convey information about them and our relationship with them. Prior studies showed that intergroup relations determine whether we experience concordant emotions or discordant emotions when we see emotional faces of the expressers. In the current study, we used an affective priming paradigm to investigate whether fearful and happy faces expressed by likable and dislikable people within the same social group impact upon our affective responses to emotion-charged pictures in different patterns. Faster evaluation of negative targets following fearful faces happened only when the expresser is liked, while faster evaluation of positive targets following happy faces was observable in all liking levels. Our findings suggest that facial emotionality speeds up congruent affective evaluations when the expresser is likable and when the facial emotion is positive.

Keywords: emotional contagion, emotional convergence, affective priming, liking