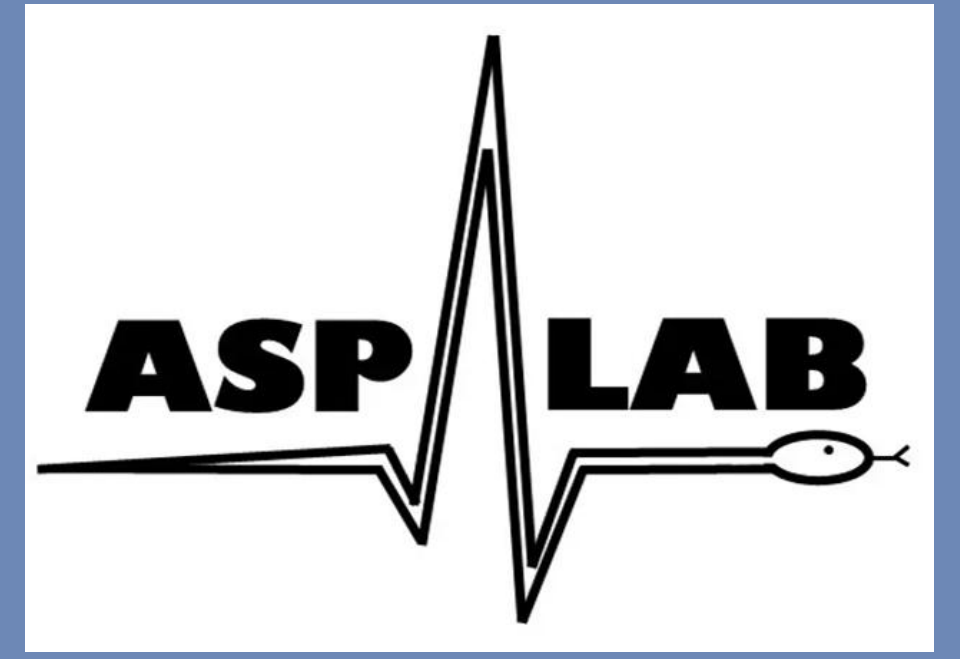


Anxiety and Depression Symptomology in Relation to Emotion Perception Biases

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Introduction

- Anxiety and depression are debilitating disorders that affect many people.
- Individuals with depression have a persistent depressed mood⁵, while individuals with anxiety have a constant fear of something that may be seen as dangerous.^{3,5,6}
- Emotion perception is how individuals view others' and their own emotions.
- Past research has shown that individuals with anxiety and depression have biases in emotion perception^{1,2}

Predictions

- We predicted that we would see biases in emotion recognition among individuals higher in anxiety and depression symptomology.

Results

- On average, participants remembered the faces as being more different than they actually were, with an increased difference of approximately 11% morph ($M=10.94$, $SD=12.59$); $t(110)=9.15$, $p<0.001$.
- Individuals with greater anxiety or depression symptom severity had significantly reduced biases in their memory of the faces, though only for ambiguous happy expressions.

	Happy Condition		Sad Condition	
	r	p	r	p
Anxiety	-0.420	0.001*	-0.050	0.717
Depression	-0.284	0.034*	-0.039	0.775

Discussion

- Most people misremember ambiguous expressions as more happy/sad than they were in reality, but this bias is reduced among those with heightened anxiety and depression symptoms when it comes to ambiguous happy expressions.
- Individuals with heightened anxiety and depression symptoms may not engage with more typical emotion processing mechanisms that bias individuals toward remembering ambiguously happy faces as more happy than in reality.
- This is consistent with past work showing emotion perception is biased to be more negative among those with anxiety or depression.^{1,2}

Methods

Participants

- 126 participants via Prolific (www.prolific.co)

Questionnaires

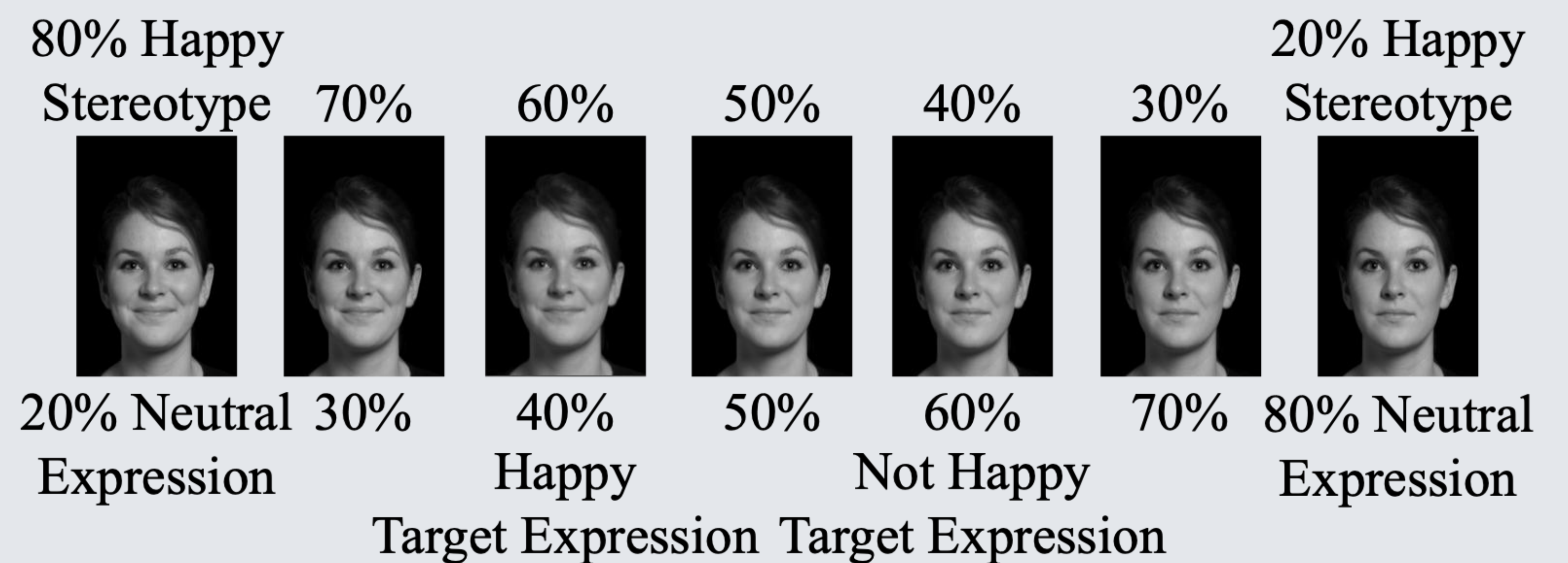
Anxiety Symptom Severity (GAD-7)

- Individuals rated how often they felt anxiety symptoms the past 2 weeks on a 4-point scale⁶

Depression Symptom Severity (PHQ-8)

- Individuals rated how often they felt depression symptoms the past 2 weeks on a 4-point scale⁴

Face Perception Task



Emotion Condition

- Participants were randomly assigned to either neutral-to-happy or neutral-to-sad facial morphs

Training

- Target expressions shown one at a time, and participants identify each expression
- 10 trials with immediate feedback

Testing

- 35 trials with faces shown one at a time (from 20% neutral/80% happy [sad] to 80% neutral/20% happy [sad])
- Identify each face as one of the target expressions or neither of the target expressions without feedback

Outcome Measure

- Difference between expressions most frequently identified as the target expressions by each participant during the Testing Phase

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