

THE EMOTION-PARADOX

Abstract

The emotion-paradox in schizophrenia describes a dissociation between the grossly impaired perception of emotion and relatively preserved experience thereof. Most posit that the emotion-paradox arises from a generalized emotion perception impairment. Others counter that it represents an artefact of methodological restrictions or a separate dissociation between explicit and implicit emotion. This thesis aimed to explain the emotion-paradox in schizophrenia and resolve the competing interpretations of its root. Two studies were conducted to this end. The studies drew from the same sample, including 45 persons with schizophrenia of various symptomatology, and 45 controls with no psychiatric anamnesis or familial history of schizophrenia. The groups did not differ in age, gender, education or music education. In Study 1, the participants listened to musical stimuli and rated their perception and experience of the valence and arousal that these stimuli relayed. In Study 2, the participants completed a newly developed emotional Stroop task, in which they identified the colour of a series of neutral and negative descriptors of positive, negative, or no symptoms of schizophrenia. Findings of Study 1 indicated: a) that persons with schizophrenia recognize musical emotions as accurately as controls, b) that they demonstrate an association between the perceived and experienced component of a musical emotion as strongly as controls, and c) that they may perceive and experience musical emotions with higher intensity than controls. Study 2 suggested that persons with schizophrenia demonstrate a healthy level of interference towards negative words, but may exhibit increased reactivity towards emotional stimuli which describe their specific symptomatology. The results support the second alternative interpretation of the emotion-paradox in schizophrenia, suggesting that it describes a dissociation between the impaired explicit and the relatively preserved

THE EMOTION-PARADOX

implicit emotion. Future research should aim to identify the point of this split. This goal might be achieved by adding more measures of musical emotion processing, or by manipulating the presentation of emotional Stroop stimuli. The findings of this thesis may have several other, more practical implications. They may help explain and improve the effects of music therapy, assuming that the observed characteristics of musical emotion in schizophrenia can transfer onto other emotional processes. The emotional Stroop task could see use in prognostic studies, given that increased reactivity to disorder-related information may relate to a worse outcome.

Keywords: Schizophrenia, emotion-paradox, implicit emotion, musical emotion, emotional Stroop task