

# I CAN SEE IT ON YOUR FACE:

## How Levels of Psychopathy, Anxiety & Emotional Intelligence Predict Detection of Negative Emotions

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### BACKGROUND

Psychopaths display marked deficits in distinguishing emotions in others, which may be exacerbated by their predisposition to have low emotional intelligence (EI) and low anxiety across a variety of contexts. EI is a central skill that allows individuals to accurately identify and respond to emotional stimuli. Psychopaths have a tendency to score poorly on measures of EI (Malterer, Glass, & Newman, 2008), which is not surprising considering that they tend to display little empathy towards others or remorse for their actions (Hare, 1996). Further, these features may be associated with low trait anxiety, such that disregard for how their actions may impact others emotionally is related to their lack of stable feelings of worry or uneasiness (Gillespie et al., 2015). Previous studies have established that those high in psychopathic traits show difficulties in detecting fear in others (Montagne et al., 2001; Blair et al., 2004), yet few studies have assessed recognition of other negative emotions (i.e., sadness, disgust, anger). It is important to examine the range of negative expressions, as the lack of proper emotion identification coupled with the presence of low trait anxiety may play a crucial role in the maintenance of antisocial behaviours. For example, psychopaths often fail to consider the suffering of their victims, but it is unclear as to whether part of this may arise from deficits in correctly detecting emotional states in others. Further, it is not well established whether emotion veracity would play a role in emotion detection. The present study was designed to evaluate psychopaths' identification accuracy in relation to real and feigned expressions of fear, anger, sadness, and disgust in relation to levels of EI and trait anxiety.

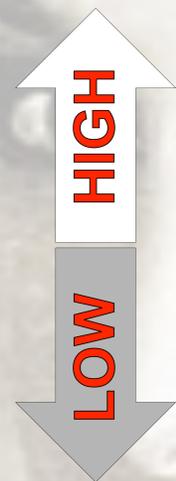
Psychopathic Traits

Level of Anxiety

Emotional Intelligence

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS  
(Genuine & Feigned)

% ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION &  
SIGNAL DETECTION RATES



STATE v TRAIT  
ANXIETY and  
HIGH/LOW  
Levels



ANGER

FEAR

DISGUST

SADNESS

All participants will be presented with a series of facial images where the task is to (1) identify the emotion expressed, and (2) indicate if the emotional expression is genuine or feigned

### PREDICTIONS

**Psychopathic Traits:** High levels of psychopathic traits should correspond to lower rates of accurate identification, regardless of emotion type or veracity.

**Anxiety:** Low levels of trait anxiety should correspond to lower rates of accurate identification, regardless of the emotion expressed or the veracity.

**Emotional Intelligence:** Those high in emotional intelligence will have more success in detecting negative emotions, and should be able to determine veracity better as well.

Psychopaths who display high levels of EI but little or no anxiety may be more adept at correctly identifying negative emotions, and identification accuracy may vary as a function of the type of negative emotion.