

Nonverbal communication: a mechanism of psychopathic individuals' social adaptation?

Despite emotional deficits, some psychopathic individuals seem capable of engaging in socially adapted behaviors, appearing trustworthy and consequently attaining high-status positions in the labor market (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Babiak Neumann & Hare, 2010; Stevens, Deuling & Armenakis, 2012). However, the ability to adapt socially is, at least apparently, in contradiction with the callous nature of psychopathy. Grounded in neurocognitive models, some theories state that nonverbal communication is a major part of the ability to interact with others. Within this framework, individuals have access to a set of nonverbal behaviors encoded as mental representations that they can use to understand others as well as convey information or emotions to them. Previous studies examining nonverbal cues of vulnerability have found that psychopathic individuals were assessing vulnerability by mentioning the victim's gait (Book, Costello & Camilleri, 2013; Dinkins, 2015), suggesting that psychopathic individuals are sensitive to nonverbal behaviors. Consequently, they may have access to mental representations depicted in the neurocognitive models, which they could employ in order to communicate an emotional message to their interlocutors. As such, it is argued that nonverbal communication could represent an underexplored mechanism of psychopathic individuals' social adaptation, allowing them to overcome other emotional and interpersonal deficits.

Measuring psychopathic individuals' persuasiveness through their nonverbal cues

Scholars have argued that some psychopathic characteristics can promote socially adapted behaviors and trustworthiness, leading certain psychopathic individuals to attain high-status positions in the labor market (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Babiak Neumann & Hare, 2010; Stevens, Deuling & Armenakis, 2012). Nevertheless, the mechanisms allowing them to appear credible and convincing despite their emotional and interpersonal deficits are still poorly understood. Previous research in communication,

marketing and psychology has found that nonverbal communication was an important determinant in persuasive communication. Consequently, psychopathic individuals' persuasiveness might be linked to their nonverbal cues display. To test this hypothesis, a new highly ecologic methodology will be developed. Psychopathic individuals will be asked to narrate anecdotes during which they will be recorded. The set of stimuli created will be modified to obtain stimuli displaying only the body, only the face or the face and the body. In a second phase, this visual material will be presented (with or without sound) to online participants who will assess their credibility. This methodology will not only study the effect of nonverbal communication on psychopathic individuals' persuasiveness but also the communication channels they use the most to convince.