Discriminating facial expressions of emotion and its link with perceiving visual form in Parkinson's disease

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ABSTRACT

We investigated the link between the ability to perceive facial expressions of emotion and the ability to perceive visual form in Parkinson’s disease (PD). We assessed in individuals with PD and healthy controls the ability to discriminate graded intensities of facial expressions of anger from neutral expressions and the ability to discriminate radial frequency (RF) patterns with modulations in amplitude from a perfect circle. Those with PD were, as a group, impaired relative to controls in discriminating graded intensities of angry from neutral expressions and discriminating modulated amplitudes of RF patterns from perfect circles; these two abilities correlated positively and moderately to highly, even after removing the variance that was shared with disease progression and general cognitive functioning. The results indicate that the impaired ability to perceive visual form is likely to contribute to the impaired ability to perceive facial expressions of emotion in PD, and that both are related to the progression of the disease.

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1. Introduction

Although traditionally conceptualized a disorder of movement, Parkinson’s disease (PD) is associated with a range of non-motor symptoms, which include dysfunction in mood, sleep, cognition, and vision [54]. Many have questioned whether persons with PD are also impaired in their ability to perceive facial expressions of emotion. The findings from individual studies have been mixed; some studies have reported impaired perception of facial expressions of emotion in PD [5–7,9,10,12–16,22,32,34,35,38,44,47,50,51,58,59,68] whereas others have found no such impairment [2,18,20,31,45,53,60,63,65]. Despite mixed findings from individual studies, a recent meta-analysis by Gray and Tickle-Degnen [30] concluded that those with PD were impaired in perceiving facial expressions of emotion and that this impairment was unrelated to the ability to perceive visual form. The studies reviewed measured this latter ability with the Benton Face Recognition Test (BFRT; [11]) or a similar test, all of which are traditionally viewed as measures of face perception. The BFRT has been shown to be sensitive only to large impairments in facial identity recognition [21]. There have been reports that those with PD are impaired in perceiving facial information other than emotion [19,47,50]. Narme et al. [50] and Marneweck et al. [47] used psychophysical measures of extracting non-emotional facial information that might have been more sensitive to differences between PD and control groups. Furthermore, both Narme et al. [50] and Marneweck et al. [47] showed a positive correlation between the abilities to extract emotional and non-emotional information from faces [47,50]. Both the ability to perceive emotional and non-emotional information from faces might be affected by a more general impairment of the ability to perceive visual form. A range of low-level visual functions is known to affect visual form perception that requires encoding of local orientation information prior to integrating separate features into global shapes and separating them from their backgrounds [41]. Therefore, a link between low-level visual function and perception of emotional expressions in PD might be expected. Contrary to this hypothesis, Hipp et al. [33] found no correlation between measures of low-level visual function (contrast sensitivity and color discrimination) and perception of facial expressions of emotion in PD; however, these analyses were conducted with a sample of patients at an early stage of PD with little variation between patients in disease severity (UPDRS motor score $M = 8, SD = 4$). The potential link between low-level visual function and emotional expression perception requires further testing with patients at a range of stages of PD. Furthermore, the potential link between the ability to perceive visual form, which is likely affected by impaired low-level visual function, and the ability to perceive facial expressions of emotion in PD is yet to be tested.

In previous work we found large impairments in those with PD in discriminating emotional expressions of graded intensity from neutral expressions and discriminating variations in intensity of the same
emotional expressions of four commonly expressed emotions, anger, disgust, happiness, and sadness [47]. These psychophysical measures used a two-interval forced-choice (2IFC) procedure, with, on each trial, successive presentation of stimuli with brief stimulus durations and a brief interstimulus interval. Given previous reports of impairment in PD in working memory [39] and in the processing time of visually presented information [36], it is possible that the sequential stimuli in the 2IFC procedure and the brief stimulus durations exaggerated the impairment in PD.

The aims of the current experiment were two-fold. First, we explored the link between perception of visual form and perception of facial expression of emotion in PD. To investigate perception of visual form, we measured the ability to discriminate radial frequency (RF) patterns of varying modulations in amplitude from a perfect circle. RF patterns, first created by Wilkinson et al. [67], are a family of smooth closed shapes that differ from each other and each from a perfect circle in a well-defined way: different patterns can be created by modulating the amplitude (affecting the sharpness or depth of the lobe), radial frequency (the number of lobes) and the orientation (the direction of the lobe). To investigate the link between the abilities to perceive visual form and facial expressions of emotion in PD, we correlated measures of discriminating RF3 patterns from perfect circles with measures of discriminating graded intensities of angry from neutral expressions. As a second aim, we investigated whether impairment in PD in discriminating angry from neutral facial expression was present when measured with longer stimulus durations in a 2IFC procedure (to reduce any effects of slower visual processing times) and with a single-stimulus yes–no procedure (to reduce the working memory demands imposed by sequential stimuli).

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Participants

Forty-two participants (PD n = 24; Control n = 18) were tested. Table 1 shows the demographic and clinical characteristics of each group: groups were on aggregate well matched for age, sex, and scores on measures of general cognitive functioning (Montreal Cognitive Assessment, MoCA; [52]) and depressive symptoms (Geriatric Depression Scale, GDS, [57]). Although some participants from both groups (PD group: n = 7; Control group: n = 3) scored below the traditional cut-off (26) for mild cognitive impairment on the MoCA, these participants were not excluded as there is a growing consensus that the traditional cut-off is too high for older adults [26,27,37,40,43,56,64]. Studies have consistently shown that MoCA performance declines with healthy aging, and that the traditional cut-off score might ‘overpathologize’ cognitively intact older adults. A cut-off score of 20 for mild cognitive impairment in older adults has been proposed by Larner [37], Waldron-Perrine and Axelrod [27], and Godfrey et al. [64]. All control participants from this study scored above this cut-off score. Patients were diagnosed by a neurologist and recruited from the Edith Cowan University Parkinson’s Centre research database and from previous research participation. Control participants were recruited from the local community and from previous research participation. The Institutional Ethics Committee approved the experimental procedures and all participants gave written informed consent.

2.2. Stimuli and procedures

Participants completed in one session that lasted between 1.5 and 2 h psychophysical measures of (1) discriminating graded intensities of angry from neutral expressions in a 2IFC procedure and in a yes–no procedure with the Method of Constant Stimuli, and (2) psychophysical measures of discriminating RF patterns with varying amplitude modulations from perfect circles using a 2IFC procedure with the Method of Constant Stimuli; the RF pattern discrimination measure was always given prior to the emotion discrimination measures. Patients were initially assessed for severity of motor symptoms using the Movement Disorders Society-sponsored revision of the Unified Parkinson’s Disease Rating Scale (MDS-UPDRS, [281]). Patients completed the testing session approximately 2 h before their next antiparkinson medication.

For the measure of emotion discrimination, we selected four models expressing full-blown anger from the NimStim Face Stimulus Set [62]; we graded these expressions in emotional intensity by morphing full-blown anger expressions of each model with their neutral expression (see [46] for details). Given that our previous findings showed a similar level of impairment in PD for each of the four emotions (anger, disgust, happiness, and sadness), we only tested anger. Each face showing an angry or a neutral expression was set in a rectangular white background that was 6.8 cm high and 5.4 cm wide subtending visual angles of 6.6° and 5.2° at a viewing distance of 59 cm. The order of the 2IFC procedure and a yes–no procedure of the emotion discrimination measure was counterbalanced. On each trial of the 2IFC procedure, two faces of the same model appeared successively on a computer screen at a duration of 200 ms or 1000 ms with a 200-ms blank interstimulus interval. The face with the neutral expression appeared randomly in either the first or the second interval and the face expressing one of five levels of intensity of anger (set at 5, 9, 16, 29, and 52% of the full-blown expression) appeared in the other interval. On each trial participants signaled the interval containing the angry face by clicking either the left or right button on a mouse to indicate the first or second interval respectively. There were 10 randomized blocks of 40 trials (with a break after the fifth block), with each block containing five intensities of anger each expressed by each of the four models at two stimulus durations, giving 400 trials in total. For the emotion discrimination measure with the yes–no procedure, each trial showed one face either with a neutral expression or with an expression of anger at one of three emotional intensities (9%, 16%, 29%); each face was presented at a duration of 200 ms or 1000 ms. Participants indicated with mouse-click whether the face was emotional by clicking the left mouse button or neutral by clicking the right mouse button. There were ten randomized blocks of 48 trials (with a break given after the fifth block) with each block containing three neutral expressions and three intensities of anger by each of four models at two stimulus durations, giving 480 trials in total.

For the measure of discriminating RF patterns with varying amplitude modulations from perfect circles (with a 2IFC procedure with the Method of Constant Stimuli), RF patterns were created by application of a sinusoidal modulation to the radius of a perfect circle, with three cycles of modulation around the full 2π radians, producing an RF3 pattern (see Fig. 1). The distance from the center to a specific point in the modulated pattern, r′, is given by: \( r' = R_0 \times (1 + A \times \sin (w \times \phi + \phi_0)) \), where R0

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is the unmodulated radius of the pattern, $A$ is the maximum modulation amplitude expressed as the proportion of the radius of the unmodulated pattern, $\angle$ is the polar angle that defines a direction in the frontal parallel plane relative to the center of the pattern, $\phi$ is a polar angle that allows the pattern to be rotated in the frontal-parallel plane, and $w$ is the frequency of modulation. Five depths of amplitude modulation were created: .002, .004, .008, .016, and .032 in proportion to the radius of the circle. There were four variations of each amplitude modulation such that the apex of the RF3 pattern appeared either at the top, left, right, or bottom of the pattern. The Weber contrast was set to $-0.7$ to avoid visible persistence of the first stimulus which was present at higher contrast. The stimulus size, viewing distance, and interstimulus interval were identical to those in the 2IFC measure of emotion discrimination; the stimulus duration was set at 200 ms. One each trial, the perfect circle appeared in either the first or second interval and the RF3 pattern with one of five amplitude modulations appeared in the other interval. Participants indicated with a mouse-click whether the RF3 pattern appeared in the first or the second interval by clicking the left or right button, respectively. There were 10 randomized blocks of 20 trials, with each block containing the five variations of amplitude modulation each with four apex orientations, giving 200 trials in total.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Individual data obtained with the 2IFC psychophysical measures of discrimination of angry expressions and RF3 patterns were fitted with Cumulative Gaussian functions which generally fitted the individual data well; the median $R^2$ value was .94 for both discriminating angry from neutral expressions and for discriminating RF3 patterns from perfect circles. Absolute thresholds were taken as the stimulus level at which 75% correct performance was reached. For the emotion discrimination measure, there were two determinations for each participant, one for each of the two stimulus durations, giving 84 determinations in total. For the RF3 pattern discrimination measures, there was one determination for each participant giving 42 determinations in total. Thresholds could not be obtained for six of the 84 determinations for the emotion discrimination measure (two of which came from the same participant) and for one of the 42 determinations for the RF3 pattern discrimination measure, because the range of constant stimuli did not capture the complete psychometric function or because the fit to the individual data points was poor. One of the determinations in the emotion discrimination and RF3 pattern discrimination respectively for which thresholds could not be obtained came from one of the PD patients. For the emotion discrimination measure, seven thresholds (200 ms duration: $n = 3$; 1000 ms duration: $n = 4$) that were obtained from patients exceeded 100; these thresholds were set arbitrarily to 100, which is conceptually equivalent to a full-blown emotional expression. For the emotion discrimination measure with a yes–no procedure, we calculated d-prime as a measure of sensitivity for each of the three intensities of angry expressions. For both emotion discrimination measures, we conducted mixed ANOVAs (between subjects factor: group; within-subjects factor: stimulus duration). For the RF3 pattern discrimination measure, we conducted an independent samples t-test. To quantify group differences, we report measures of effect size (Hedges' $g$) on emotion discrimination measures (for each stimulus duration) and RF3 pattern discrimination measures. To quantify the relationship between emotion and RF3 pattern discrimination in PD, we report Pearson correlation coefficients with 95% confidence intervals. Instead of using absolute threshold scores in the correlations between 2IFC measures of RF3 pattern and emotion discrimination, which could not be obtained for all patients, we use mean percent correct scores across stimulus durations and stimulus levels; we exclude the lowest stimulus level at which most participants performed at chance. We similarly use the mean d-prime values across stimulus duration and stimulus level (excluding the lowest stimulus level) of the emotion discrimination measure with the yes–no procedure for its correlation with RF3 pattern discrimination. There was little or no correlation between measures of emotion discrimination and depressive symptoms and daily levodopa dose equivalent (LED), with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) overlapping zero; for brevity, these are reported in the Appendix A (Table A1).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Discriminating anger from neutral expressions

Fig. 2 shows functions fitted to mean data points for PD and control groups for the 2IFC measure of discriminating angry from neutral expressions with 200 ms and 1000 ms stimulus durations. All functions increased monotonically with increasing differentiation of the expressive from the neutral face. The figure also shows that the PD group performed more poorly than the control group at both stimulus durations, and that an increase in stimulus duration made little or no difference to performance in either group. There was a significant main effect of group ($F(1, 35) = 12.64, p < .05$), but no main effect of stimulus duration ($F(1, 35) = 3.85, p > .05$), and no interaction between stimulus duration and group ($F(1, 35) = 1.36, p > .05$) on absolute thresholds. Table 2 shows that the mean absolute thresholds were higher for the PD group than the control group, with very large effect sizes for the group differences at both stimulus durations. The table also shows that there was greater variability in thresholds in the PD group than in the control group, and that some in the PD group had thresholds similar to some of the best-performing controls.

Fig. 3 shows mean d-prime values for both groups for each of the three intensity increments at each stimulus duration for emotion discrimination with the yes–no procedure. Sensitivity to expressions of anger increased with increasing intensity of the expression. The PD group showed lower sensitivity than the controls at both stimulus durations. As was the case for the 2IFC emotion discrimination measure, there was a significant main effect of group ($F(1, 40) = 19.94, p < .05$), with large effect sizes of the mean group differences across intensity increments for both stimulus durations (200 ms $g = 1.35$; 1000 ms $g = 1.00$). Although there was a significant effect of stimulus duration ($F(1, 40) = 25.40, p < .05, g = .48$), indicating a greater
sensitivity to angry expressions at the longer stimulus duration (which is shown in Fig. 3), there was no significant interaction between stimulus duration and group \( F(1, 40) = .05, p > .05 \), indicating that the longer duration was no more beneficial for the PD group than the control group.

3.2. Discriminating RF3 patterns from perfect circles

Fig. 4 shows functions fitted to mean data points for PD and control groups for the measure of discriminating RF3 patterns of varying amplitude modulations from perfect circles. Functions of both groups increased monotonically with increasing amplitude modulation, with the PD group performing more poorly than the controls. As was the case in the measure of emotion discrimination, absolute thresholds were higher and more variable in the PD group \( (M = .031, SD = .025) \) than in the control group \( (M = .009, SD = .003) \), with a large effect size for the significant group difference \( (t(40) = 3.60, p < .05, g = 1.03) \). Again, some with PD performed as well as some of the best-performing controls (PD range: .005, .075; Control range: .004, .017).

3.3. The link between perceiving emotional expressions and perceiving visual form

The correlations of discriminating RF3 patterns from circles with discriminating anger from neutral expressions with the 2IFC and yes–no procedures were significant, positive and moderate to large \( (2IFC r = .86; 95\% CI: .70, .94, p < .05, and yes–no r = .61; 95\% CI: .28, .81, p < .05) \). Table 3 shows that the progression of the disease, as measured by the motor score on the MDS-UPDRS, correlated moderately and negatively with the 2IFC measures of emotion and RF3 pattern discrimination; the correlation coefficient was smaller, with CIs just overlapping zero, between the MDS-UPDRS motor scores and the emotion discrimination measure with the yes–no procedure. The correlation between discriminating RF3 patterns and angry expressions remained significant, positive and moderate to large after removing the common variance shared with disease progression and general cognitive functioning \( (2IFC r = .80; 95\% CI: .59, .91, p < .05; yes–no r = .51, .95) \).

![Fig. 3.](image_url) Mean d-prime indices (+/− 1 standard error) for PD (gray) and control (black) groups when discriminating graded intensities of anger from neutral expressions using a yes–no procedure. Dashed lines show data for stimulus durations of 200 ms, and solid lines show data for stimulus durations of 1000 ms.

![Fig. 4.](image_url) Functions fitted to mean percent correct scores for PD (gray) and control (black) groups when discriminating RF3 patterns of varying amplitude modulations from perfect circles.

CI: .14, .76, p < .05). Therefore, after removing the common variance shared with disease progression and general cognitive functioning, RF3 pattern discrimination shared 64% and 26% of variance with emotion discrimination as measured by the 2IFC and yes–no procedures respectively.

3.4. Potential effects of reported side of onset of PD symptoms, general cognitive functioning, and fatigue on discriminating angry from neutral expressions in PD

Absolute thresholds for the 2IFC emotion discrimination measure were higher, and more variable, in the group that reported PD symptom onset on the right side \( (M = .39, SD = .24) \) than that which reported PD symptom onset on the left side \( (M = .25, SD = .10) \), whereas d-prime values for the yes–no emotion discrimination measure were similar between these two groups \( (M = .6, SD = .5; left-side symptom onset M = .5, SD = .3) \). Group differences on both emotion discrimination measures were not statistically significant \( (2IFC r (17) = −1.49, p > .05, g = .66; yes–no r (21) = −.42, p > .05, g = .17) \) with small to moderate effect sizes. Furthermore, we found no significant correlation between side of PD symptom onset and emotion discrimination measures \( (2IFC r = −.14, 95\% CI: −.51, .28, p > .05; yes–no r = .09, 95\% CI: −.33, 48, p > .05) \). Together, this suggests little contribution of side of onset of PD symptoms to impaired discrimination of emotional expressions.

Performance on both emotion discrimination measures (with 2IFC and yes–no procedures) was worse, and more variable, in the group with MoCA scores of 26 or below \( (2IFC M = 41, SD = 29; yes–no M = .5, SD = .5) \) than in the group with MoCA scores above 26 \( (2IFC M = .30, SD = .8; yes–no M = .7, SD = .4) \); these differences were not statistically significant \( (2IFC r (18) = 1.2, p > .05, g = .52; yes–no: t (22) = −.93, p > .05, g = .43) \) with small to moderate effect sizes. Finally, we found no significant correlation between MoCA and emotion perception performance \( (2IFC r = .28, 95\% CI: −.14, .61, p > .05; yes–no r = .29, 95\% CI: −.13, .62, p > .05) \), all of which suggest little

![Table 2](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>PD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200 ms duration</td>
<td>17 (6; 7–28)</td>
<td>38 (23; 10–100)</td>
<td>1.13a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 ms duration</td>
<td>16 (4; 9–24)</td>
<td>32 (21; 11–100)</td>
<td>1.00a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* Indicates statistical significance, \( p < .05 \).

![Table 3](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2IFC procedure</th>
<th>Yes–no procedure</th>
<th>RF3 pattern discrimination measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotion discrimination measure</td>
<td>−.59*</td>
<td>−.38</td>
<td>−.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes–no procedure</td>
<td>−.59*</td>
<td>−.68, .02</td>
<td>−.80, .25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF3 pattern discrimination measure</td>
<td>−.80, .25</td>
<td>−.80, .25</td>
<td>−.80, .25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates statistical significance, \( p < .05 \).
contribution of general cognitive functioning to impaired perception of facial expressions of emotion in PD.

Since emotion discrimination measures were taken after the RF3 pattern discrimination measure, impairment in PD might have been due to fatigue. However, we found that mean performance by patients remained relatively stable between the first- and last-half of the trials for each of the emotion discrimination measures (2IFC first-half \( M = 67, SD = 9, t(23) = -46, p > .05, g = 0 \); yes–no first-half \( M = 59, SD = 7, t(23) = -96, p > .05, g = .16 \), which suggests little to no effect of fatigability.

4. Discussion

The results show large impairments in PD than control groups in discriminating graded intensities of anger from neutral expressions at brief and long stimulus durations on the 2IFC and yes–no procedures and in discriminating RF3 patterns of varying amplitude modulations from perfect circles, with positive and moderate to large correlations between these abilities, even after controlling for the progression of the disease and general cognitive functioning.

The positive and moderate to large correlations between the abilities to perceive facial expressions of emotion and visual form are incongruent with the conclusion from the Gray and Tickle-Degnen meta-analysis [30] that these abilities are unrelated. This conclusion was based on evidence from individual studies that the ability to perceive visual form, measured with the BFRF or a similar test, was intact in PD. The measures of visual form perception in these studies, however, were insensitive to differences between PD and control groups. Here we show impaired visual form perception in PD on a measure of discriminating RF3 patterns from perfect circles. RF patterns are considered a powerful tool to investigate the intermediate stages of visual form processing that underlie the transformation from low-level features, such as edge orientation, to high-level object representations such as faces [41], for a review.

The impairment in RF3 pattern discrimination in PD also adds to the current body of literature that shows impairment in a range of low-level visual functions [4].

The strength of the correlation between the ability to perceive emotional expressions and the ability to perceive visual form remained relatively unchanged after removing the common variance shared with the progression of the disease and general cognitive functioning. After removing this variance, there remained 64% shared variance between 2IFC measures of RF3 pattern discrimination and emotion discrimination, and 26% shared variance between measures of RF3 pattern discrimination and emotion discrimination with the yes–no procedure. The greater shared variance between the 2IFC procedures is presumably due to their common procedural elements. The 26% of shared variance between RF3 pattern discrimination and emotion discrimination with the yes–no procedure after removing the variance associated with disease progression indicates the extent of common variance between these measures that is not attributable to the similarity of the procedures.

Meaningful interpretation of visual forms, including emotional facial expressions, is a multistage process [41], any of which might be impaired in PD, thereby contributing to impaired perception of emotional facial expressions. Perceiving visual form initially requires accurate encoding of local orientation information, and then integrating separate features into global forms and segregating them from their backgrounds [42,67,69]. RF pattern discrimination is thought to tap intermediate stages of visual form processing [41], where separate features are pooled into global forms. Therefore, the present findings suggest that the disruption present at intermediate stages of visual form processing in PD contributes to impaired perception of facial expressions of emotion. The link found by Narme et al. [50] between configurational face processing and perception of emotional expressions in PD similarly supports a role of disruption at the intermediate visual form processing stage in impaired emotional expression perception. Many cortical regions have been implicated in intermediate visual form processing, including V4, the fusiform face area, inferotemporal cortex, and lateral occipital cortex [23,24,55,66]. Processing in some or all of these regions might be disrupted in PD, thereby contributing to impaired perception of visual forms including facial expressions of emotion. It is possible that disrupted processing at these intermediate visual-form processing regions can be due to poor input from more peripheral visual processing, which is known to be impaired in PD [4]. Findings from Hipp et al. [33] are not in line with the possible role of peripheral visual processing in emotional expression perception; however, their sample of patients was not representative, because the patients were only at an early stage of PD with little variation in disease severity. Therefore, the role of poor input from peripheral visual processing in impaired emotional expression perception in PD cannot yet be ruled out. It is also possible that disrupted processing at some intermediate visual-form processing regions, particularly fusiform face and inferotemporal regions, is partly due to their interconnections with the denervated basal ganglia in PD [3,25,49]. In summary, peripheral and intermediate stages of visual form processing might be disrupted in PD, thereby contributing to impaired emotional expression perception. Disrupted processing at the intermediate visual-form processing regions in PD might be partly a consequence of poor input from peripheral stages and of impaired processing in the basal ganglia’s interconnections with these regions.

After taking into account the variance that is shared with the impaired ability to perceive visual form, there still remains variance that is unaccounted for in emotion discrimination with the 2IFC and yes–no procedures respectively. Thus the impaired ability to perceive emotional expressions in PD is not entirely explained by the impaired ability to perceive visual form. Our previous work [47] showed a link between voluntary control of facial musculature and the ability to perceive emotional expressions in PD. This link is consistent with an embodied simulationist account of emotion perception (see [29], for a review) that motor systems that are engaged by voluntary control of facial musculature and simulation of observed facial expressions are disrupted in PD, thereby impairing both voluntary control of facial musculature and perception of facial expression of emotion. Together these findings support the likelihood of a multifactorial contribution to impaired perception of facial expressions of emotion in PD.

The impairment in PD in discriminating graded intensities of anger from neutral expressions replicates previous findings by our group [47]. Previously, we showed that those with PD were impaired in discriminating emotion from neutral expressions with emotional intensity increments sampled from a narrower range (5 to 35% of the full-blown expression) than we used here (5 to 52% of the full-blown expression). We show that the relative impairment in PD is present with higher intensities of the expression. Although we have shown that general cognitive functioning contributes little to impaired perception of emotional expressions in PD, consistent with our previous research [47], we cannot determine the role of specific cognitive declines in perception of emotional expressions. Nevertheless, there was also a similar level of impairment in PD on a measure of emotion discrimination with a single-stimulus yes–no procedure, which unlike the 2IFC procedure, does not require the ability to hold information from the first stimulus while processing that of the second stimulus; this suggests that the impairment in PD in emotion discrimination as reported here and previously on the measure with the 2IFC procedure was not exaggerated by working memory demands. The impairment in PD was also present with longer stimulus durations on both emotion discrimination measures, which indicates that brief stimulus durations did not exaggerate the impairment in emotion discrimination in PD. Although longer stimulus durations were no more beneficial for PD than control groups, performance across groups generally improved with increasing stimulus duration on the yes–no procedure but not on the 2IFC procedure; sensitivity was greater in both groups at the longer stimulus duration in the...
yes–no procedure but not in the 2IFC procedure. One of the key differences between the 2IFC and yes–no procedures is that the 2IFC procedure allows a visual comparison of the emotional and neutral expression. The yes–no procedure requires recollection of an emotional expression of emotion without having the familiarity that is given by visual comparison. Nevertheless, the level of impairment in PD is similar at brief and longer durations in both 2IFC and yes–no procedures. This indicates that the impairment in PD in discrimination of facial expressions of emotion as measured here was not exaggerated by slower visual processing times or working memory demands required by sequential stimuli.

In summary, the work described here showed impaired discrimination of facial expressions of emotion with the progression of PD, as was measured with 2IFC and yes–no procedures at brief and longer stimulus durations. Disrupted processing at both peripheral- and intermediate visual-form processing stages might contribute to impaired discrimination of facial expressions of emotion in PD. Perceiving accurately the facial expressions of others’ emotions contributes to social integration [1], which in turn is essential for mental [48] and physical well-being [17]. Therefore, the impaired ability to perceive facial expressions of emotion in PD is likely to be detrimental to the regulation of individual and social behavior. Finally, the ability to meaningfully interpret objects, requiring intact processes of visual perception and visual cognition [70], has been associated with visual hallucinations in PD, the latter of which have been proposed to stem in part from impaired visual processing of environmental stimuli [8].

**Conflict of interest.**

There is no conflict of interest.

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**Appendix A**

**Table A1**

| Correlation coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses) of measures of emotion discrimination with two-interval forced choice and yes–no procedures and measures of RF3 pattern discrimination with measures of depressive symptoms, as measured by the GDS, and levodopa dose equivalent (LED, [61]) in PD (n = 24). |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| GDS | LED |
| Emotion discrimination measures |  |  |  |
| Two-interval forced choice procedure | –.05 (–.44, .36) | .02 (–.39, .42) |  |  |
| Yes–no procedure | .06 (–.35, .45) | .35 (–.65, .07) |  |  |
| RF3 pattern discrimination measure | –.12 (–.50, .30) | .22 (–.57, .26) |  |  |

*Indicates statistical significance, p < .05.

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