How do you know what others feel? A psychophysiological study of social cognition and aging

Results:

In Study 1, the results indicate that older adults benefit from congruent multisensory information in social situations, which is expressed by higher accuracy in cross-modal congruent condition but not in conditions where emotions were presented only in one modality i.e. faces and voice on their own.

The analysis of fixation time looking at facial features in Study 2 revealed that younger and older adults spend a similar amount of time looking at the eyes, mouth and periphery of the face and both groups looked longer at facial features in the incongruent condition than in the congruent condition. Older adults who looked less at the eye and mouth region were better at making matching decisions about congruent stimuli. In contrast, younger adults who looked longer at the facial features, performed better in matching cross-modal congruence than younger adults who spent less time looking at the faces.

The results from Study 3 suggest that older adults performed significantly more poorly than younger adults on both Theory of Mind tasks presented to multiple sensory modalities (video) and a single modality (text).

Published work:

Full papers
Hunter, E.M., Phillips, L.H., & MacPherson, S.E. (2010). Effects of Age on Cross-Modal Emotion Perception. Psychology and Aging, 25(4), 779-787.

Area(s) of interest:

Aging, emotion perception, multisensory integration

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