



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Investigating the specificity of neuronal correlates for emotion processing deficits in conduct disorder and autism spectrum disorders

Third-party funded project

Project title Investigating the specificity of neuronal correlates for emotion processing deficits in conduct disorder and autism spectrum disorders

Principal Investigator(s) [Stadler, Christina](#) ;

Co-Investigator(s) [Herbrecht, Evelyn](#) ;

Organisation / Research unit

Bereich Psychiatrie (Klinik) / Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrische Entwicklungspsychopathologie (Stadler)

Department

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Emotion processing comprises the detection and recognition of emotional information as well as the experience of feelings evoked by this information. The experience of feelings evoked by negative emotional cues like fear or pain displayed in the faces of others is a prerequisite for social functioning and the inhibition of aggressive and antisocial behavior. On a neuronal level there is accumulating evidence that adolescents with conduct disorder (CD), in particular those with high callous-unemotional (CU) traits, are characterized by reduced responsiveness in brain areas important for processing facial cues ^[1,2]. However, deficient emotion processing is not only observed in CD, but also in other childhood disorders such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Consequently, deficient emotion processing may be a transdiagnostic symptom. However, the neuronal underpinnings that constitute the distinct mechanisms observed in both groups of adolescents remain subject to investigations. Importantly, projects have rarely directly compared individuals of both disorders within the same study, which is consequently hindering a direct conclusion on the specificity of findings. Furthermore, confounding factors that have been discussed to interfere with successful emotion processing and that may be a characteristic for one or even both disorders, above all the impact of attention to facial expressions, have not been sufficiently controlled. The goal of the planned project therefore is to elucidate the differences and commonalities in the neuronal characteristics underlying the emotion processing deficits observed in patients with CD compared to ASD.

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