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Nazaret Suazo

Variants of Emotional Expressivity & Complexity Across Cultural Groups

Emotions are largely considered to be universal, suggesting that their expression should be similar across cultural groups (Ekman, 1972; Ekman et al., 1987). However, some studies indicate that variability exists in the way emotions are expressed, perceived, and rated across differing racial and ethnic groups (Matsumoto & Ekman, 1989). These differences may occur as a result of differing customs and beliefs regarding culture and group identity. While previous research has compared differences in emotional experiences between White and Asian samples, few studies have looked at these differences by comparing other racial and ethnic groups. The current study extends previous work by using a sample of 434 participants stratified by race and ethnicity (i.e., 25% identifying as Hispanic, Black, Asian, White). These participants completed self-report questionnaires that assess emotional experiences and regulation, in addition to questions about cultural identity and beliefs. Significant differences regarding the experiences and regulation of emotion were found between the aforementioned groups. Moreover, indices of cultural identity and beliefs were found to differentially relate to emotional experiences and regulation among the racial and ethnic subsamples. These findings suggest the need for considering cultural factors in research on emotional experiences and regulation.