

The Effects of Race-Related Rejection Sensitivity on Detection of Emotion in Faces

Sinclair Scales

Abstract

Research has indicated that both implicit and explicit forms of racial rejection can have adverse effects on psychological, physiological, and cognitive health. As a defense to various forms of discrimination, minority group members, such as Black/African Americans, may expect to be rejected because of their race in certain situations. This is termed race-based rejection sensitivity (RS-race). The goal of this study, was to determine whether the extent of a minority group members' RS-race was associated with differential ascriptions of positive and negative emotions in Black and White faces. To address this, 121 Black/African American participants were recruited for an online study. Participants completed an RS-race questionnaire measure, and then completed a task wherein they classified various versions of Black and White faces that expressed two different percentages (intensities) of happiness or anger. Interestingly, higher RS-Race scores were associated with higher anger ratings for White faces, a trend not found for Black faces. However, there was no association between RS-race scores and the detection of happiness on Black or White faces. Participants detected happiness on White faces at higher intensities, significantly more than those at lower intensities. However, participants detected an even greater significant difference between Black faces at higher intensities and Black faces at lower intensities. The combination of null and significant results highlights the importance of future research in disentangling the link between RS-race and emotion detection.

Keywords: Race-Based Rejection Sensitivity (RS-Race), Emotion Detection