

Study on gender and racial differences in emotional contagion



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When You're Smiling, Does the Whole World Smile with You?

Abstract

In the current study, a group of participants were tested on their level of emotional contagion depending on the confederates' gender and race. The confederates each smiled at 100 (50 female) participants and recorded the response of either smiled back or did not smile back. The number of smiles received from the participants is defined as their level of emotional contagion. As predicated, females were more susceptible to emotional contagion than males. It is also important to note that the confederates' gender and race had a significant effect on the participant responses.

When You're Smiling, Does the Whole World Smile with You? A Study on Gender and Racial Differences in Emotional Contagion

In a world of discontinuous human contact, the vanishing art of conversation, and the increase of social media as a replacement for communication; it can be quite refreshing to smile at a passerby and receive a smile in return. Is this feeling of human interaction refreshed for everyone though? Or are there certain demographics needed in order to acquire a free smile? In the current study, the effect of one's demographics will be investigated to see if it is related to emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is " the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person's and, consequently, to converge emotionally." (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993, p. 96)

In a study to test emotional contagion in discrete and time moderated intervals, participants were measured on their levels of emotional contagion. One of the tests showed the participants very discrete emotional faces, one test showed them many different emotional states on faces, some were shown for 1 second and some were shown for 5 seconds. In all scenarios, the participants all showed high levels of emotional contagion even when only viewing the face for 1 second. The study concluded that even when a participant is shown a face that barely has any emotion showing for 1 second, they will still experience emotional contagion (Lishner, Cooter, & Zald, 2008). It is important to note that emotional contagion can occur in such a short time frame because the current study will use similar time frames to trigger emotional contagion in the participants.

In a study conducted to test emotional contagion in men and women, results show that women experience more emotional contagion than men. In the study, Doherty, Orimoto, Singelis, and Hatfield (1995) tested the level of emotional contagion in a group of men and women with three different occupations. The occupations were student, physician, and Marine. These results showed that women, even with an occupation as a Marine, experienced more emotional contagion than men. Although the study shows that women are more susceptible than men when it comes to emotional contagion; it does not test if women can cause emotional contagion more than men. The current study will test to see if men can cause more emotional contagion than women.

In a study to test if heterosexual males and females found same-sex or opposite-sex faces more rewarding, results showed that in both males and <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-gender-and-racial-differences-in-emotional-contagion/>

females, both found the opposite-sex's face more rewarding. Spreckelmeyer, Rademacher, Paulus, and Gründer (2013) showed each gender a smiling face of the same sex and then the opposite sex and asked them to rate how rewarded they felt after seeing the face. Although both genders felt more rewarded after seeing the opposite sex's face, the women who viewed the smiling male had a higher score of feeling rewarded than did the men who reacted to the smiling woman's face. This supports the theory that a heterosexual is more likely to feel rewarded when they are smiled at by the opposite sex. This study supports two ideas in the current study: one is that women are more likely than men to experience emotional contagion (smile back) and two is that women are more likely to smile back at the opposite sex which is why men are predicted to receive more smiles.

In another study the level of threat one felt after viewing pictures of a Caucasian male versus an African American male was measured. Shapiro, Ackerman, Neuberg, Maner, Becker, and Kenrick (2009) established an anchor face (first face shown in a pair) and a target face (second face shown in the pair). The participants were tested on how threatened they felt by the target face after being paired with an angry face and then how they felt the target face was paired with a neutral face. The threat level felt of the neutral white male face followed by another neutral white male face was much higher than the angry white male face followed by a neutral white male face. So the angry to neutral face was less threatening than the neutral to neutral in the white male faces. When it came to the black male faces with the same scenario, the level of threat was the same on both target faces. The participants felt the same level of threat for both black faces whereas there

was a decreased level of threat felt for one of the white faces. It is also important to note that in the study the participants were all Caucasian, this means that Caucasians perceive male Caucasians as less threatening than African American males even if they are both smiling. This study supports the idea that race has an effect on emotional contagion.

In the current study, it is hypothesized that participants who receive smiles from a Caucasian man will experience more emotional contagion than the participants who receive smiles from a Caucasian woman, an African American woman, and an African American man.

Method

Participants

Four hundred people (50% female) were smiled at in a shopping setting between the hours of 10: 00 a. m. and 12: 00 p. m. on a Saturday. Each participant was randomly selected by the confederate and their smiles (emotional contagion) were measured.

Materials

Two Caucasian people (50% female) and two African American people (50% female), ages range 23 to 32 years old with a mean age of 28. 5 ($SD = 3. 9$), who volunteered for this study. Each confederate smiled at 100 people (50% female) who were not aware of this current study. A writing utensil and one “Smiling Tally Sheet” that was written on three 8. 5 by 11 inch white papers (See Appendix A). The paper included a place for the confederate to write

their assigned number, their race, their gender, the time of the experiment
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and the location. The paper also included a table with four columns titled "Number," "Gender," "Race," and "Smiled." The table also consisted of one hundred rows; the rows under the number column are number 1 through 100. The rows under the gender column had an "M" and an "F" where the confederate checked the participants' gender. Under race the confederate checked "C" for Caucasian, "AA" for African American or "O" for other to determine the participant's race. Under the smiled column the confederate checked "Y" for yes and "N" for no depending on the reaction of the participant.

Procedure

The setting was a shopping area between the hours of 10:00 a. m. and 12:00 p. m. on a Saturday. The researcher told each confederate to go to the shopping area and find a place to sit or stand. They were instructed to smile at 50 males and 50 females that walk by them. The confederates were told to record every response they received along with the other demographic information needed on the tally sheet. The confederates were told what the researcher considered a smile and that they must have been noticed by the participants for the response to count.

The researcher measured the amount of smiles that each confederate received and compared it to the confederate's race and gender. The number of smiles received back was the value of emotional contagion each confederate was able to produce in the participants.

Results

To test if emotional contagion is affected by a person's race and gender, a logistical regression test was conducted. The independent variables are gender with the levels of male and female and race with the levels of Caucasian and African America. The dependent variable is the amount of emotional contagion a group experiences. The operational definition of amount of emotional contagion (whether the participant smiles or not) is the number of smiles that a confederate receives from a randomly selected group of 100 respondents (50 females) after smiling at each respondent. A smile is defined as an upward curvature of the lips. The results of the study showed that of the participants who smiled back, 60.3% were female participants ($M = 1.53$, $SD = .5$), the confederate gender who received the most smiles back were females ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .49$), and the confederate race that received the most smiles was African American with 55.4% of the smiles ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .498$). The results of the logistical regression show that the model fit $-2 \log$ likelihood was 513.068.

Discussion

Although the hypothesis was not confirmed, there were some significant relationships between gender and emotional contagion as well as race and emotional contagion. As predicted, females reported a higher level of emotional contagion than did males. Race also had a significant effect on smiles received and smiles given, more participants smiled at African American confederates but 77% of those smiles were from African American participants. Gender also had a significant effect on emotional contagion, 71% of the male participants smiled back at female confederates and 68% of female participants smiled back at the male confederates. This shows that <https://assignbuster.com/study-on-gender-and-racial-differences-in-emotional-contagion/>

people are more likely to smile at the opposite sex. Overall the current study supported the research and confirms that race and gender have significant effects on emotional contagion.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study were that there was no way to know the participants' "true" race; this was the perception of the confederate. Also there is no way for the confederates to know the sexual orientation of all of the participants which might affect the results of the opposite sex experiencing more pleasure from the other opposite sex's face. Another limitation is the small amount of participants and that there was a limit on geographic locations.

Future goals for this study would be to find more participants and more confederates. Better results could be found by having a controlled area or region of the country as well as eventually testing other geographical locations. A trained group of confederates would also enhance this study. The overall findings of this study showed that it does matter what your gender and race are when it comes to emotional contagion. It is fascinating that something as small and automatic as a smile might actually have a large amount of bias behind it.

References

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Appendix A

Confederate # _____

Race _____

Gender _____

Time _____

Location _____

Numb	Gender	Race	Smile
er	er		d

1 M____ C____ Y____

AA____ N____
F____ O____

2 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

3 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

4 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

5 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

6 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

7 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

8 M____ C____ Y____

AA____ N____
F____ O____

9 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

10 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

11 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

12 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

13 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

14 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

15 M____ C____ Y____

AA____ N____
F____ O____

16 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

17 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

18 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

19 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

20 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

21 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O____

22 M____ C____ Y____

AA____ N____
 F____ O____

23 M____ C____ Y____
 AA____ N____
 F____ O____

24 M____ C____ Y____
 AA____ N____
 F____ O____

25 M____ C____ Y____
 AA____ N____
 F____ O____

Numb	Gend	Race	Smile
er	er		d

26 M____ C____ Y____
 AA____ N____
 F____ O____

27 M____ C____ Y____
 AA____ N____
 F____ O____

28 M____ C____ Y____
 AA____

F____ O____ N____
M____ C____ Y____
29 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
30 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
31 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
32 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
33 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
34 AA____ N____
F____ O____

35 M____ C____ Y____
AA____

F____ O____ N____
M____ C____ Y____
36 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
37 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
38 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
39 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
40 AA____ N____
F____ O____

M____ C____ Y____
41 AA____ N____
F____ O____

42 M____ C____ Y____
AA____

F____ O__ N____
M____ C____ Y____
43 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
44 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
45 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
46 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
47 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
48 AA____ N____
F____ O__

49 M____ C____ Y____
AA____

F____ O__ N____
M____ C____ Y____
50 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
51 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
52 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
53 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
54 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
55 AA____ N____
F____ O__

56 M____ C____ Y____
AA____

F____ O__ N____
M____ C____ Y____
57 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
58 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
59 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
60 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
61 AA____ N____
F____ O__

M____ C____ Y____
62 AA____ N____
F____ O__

63 M____ C____ Y____
AA____

64 F____ O___ N____
M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O___

65 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O___

Numb Gender Race Smile
er er d

66 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O___

67 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O___

68 M____ C____ Y____
AA____ N____
F____ O___

69 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

70 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

71 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

72 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

73 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

74 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

75 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

76 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

77 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

78 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

79 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

80 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

81 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

82 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

83 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

84 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

85 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

86 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

87 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

88 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

89 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

90 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

91 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

92 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

93 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

94 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

95 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

96 M___ C___ Y___
AA___ N___
F___ O___

97 M___ C___ Y___
AA___
N___
F___ O___

98 M___ C___ Y___
AA___
N___
F___ O___

99 M___ C___ Y___
AA___
N___
F___ O___

100 M___ C___ Y___
AA___
N___
F___ O___