Psychology

What influences recognition of emotion among college students?  *Shannon Mapes\*, Suzanne Savard, Kinetta Crisp, and Ilsun M. White*.  Neuroscience Program, Department of Psychology, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY 40351

In social situations, behaving appropriately requires the ability to discriminate emotional expressions accurately.  This study examined factors that influence the discrimination of emotions among college students, using the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Behavior (DANVA2), which consisted of four subsets of emotion-related stimuli. Each subset included visual stimuli (faces of adults or children) or auditory stimuli (voices of adults or children) conveying four emotions: happy, sad, angry, or fearful.  College students could more readily discriminate adult and child facial expressions conveying positive emotions rather than negative ones. This pattern depended on the type of emotion and the age of the stimulus subject, in that students could discriminate ‘sad’ faces of children with a high accuracy. No overall sex difference was obtained in discrimination of emotion. African-American students made a greater number of errors in discriminating ‘angry’ expressions, compared to Caucasians. Given that most stimuli were Caucasians, using emotion of face or voice of out-group members may have influenced discrimination accuracy. Taken together, our findings suggest that among college students the ability to discriminate emotions accurately varies with the nature of the emotional stimuli--stimulus type (adult or child), sensory modality (face or voice), emotional category (positive or negative), and ethnic background.