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Breadth of Emotion Vocabulary in Middle Schoolers

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Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

How many different emotion words can middle school st to describe common categories of emotional experience of emotion understanding and vocabulary use word reco The goal of this study was to assess emotion vocabulary prompted emotion word generation.

Methods

Participants: 5-8th graders, N=236, 96 males

• Emotion Understanding Ability Test:

Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test – Youth Version¹ • Emotion Vocabulary: open-ended questionnaire Target Emotion Categories: Happy, Sad, Relaxed, Nervous, Angry

"List all of the feeling words that come to mind that could describe someone who is feeling _____. Think of feelings (a range of feeling words) that describe someone who is either a little or very_____.

Step 1 Coding: assign each response to one of ten recognizable emotion categories, five target and five closely associated emotions;

Step 2 Coding: assign each non-emotion response to one of six datadrive content categories.

Coding Category	Examples	Total Unique Responses
Нарру	Glad, elated	54
Sad	Blue, depressed	44
Angry	Mad, agitated	44
Nervous	Fearful, anxious	27
Relaxed	Calm, serene	25

Step 1: Target Emotion Responses

Step 1: Associated Emotion Responses

Coding Category	Examples
Proud	Accomplished, established
Surprised	Shocked, startled
Embarrassed	Humiliated, ashamed
Disappointed	Discouraged, dissatisfied
Love	Cherished, cared for



Emotion Vocabulary in Middle Schoolers Ebert, M.¹, Ivcevic, Z.¹, Widen, S. C.¹, Brackett, M. A.¹, Linke, L. H.², and Hong, J.³

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Step 2: Non-Emotion Responses

Total Unique Responses				
9				
6				
6				
5				
4				

Coding Category	Examples	Total Unique Responses
Metaphors	Cold, like hell	201
Social Experiences	Underappreciated, bullied	157
Other Emotion Words	Bored, relieved	145
Personality Traits	Shy, friendly	113
Physical Expression	Crying, sweaty	86
Individual Activities	Daydreaming, taking a nap	49

Results

Emotion Vocabulary questionnaire:

Students produced 1472 unique responses (M=27.3, SD=10.9, range: 7-69 per participant), with Target Emotion responses accounting for 22.4 % (329 responses), M=12.23, SD=4.8; range: 1-26 per participant.

exuberant stressed sleepy furious embarrassed relaxed respected unhappy excited angry shy friendly frustrated safe rage 1 overiov hyper bad chill nice cool depressed proud excluded lonely free let anxious tense wonderful disappointed enraged loved energetic jumpy glad joy back agitated betrayed good joyful terrible extatic left confident **Sad** blue peaceful hurt dissapointed worried scared confused lazy mean supported cared Worried Scared scared hateful awesome joyous happy smiley frightened tired included tired woorred scared comfortable uncomfortable annoyed comfortable uncomfortable annoyed content included comfortable uncomfortable annoyed content insulted unsafe

Emotion Understanding Ability Test:

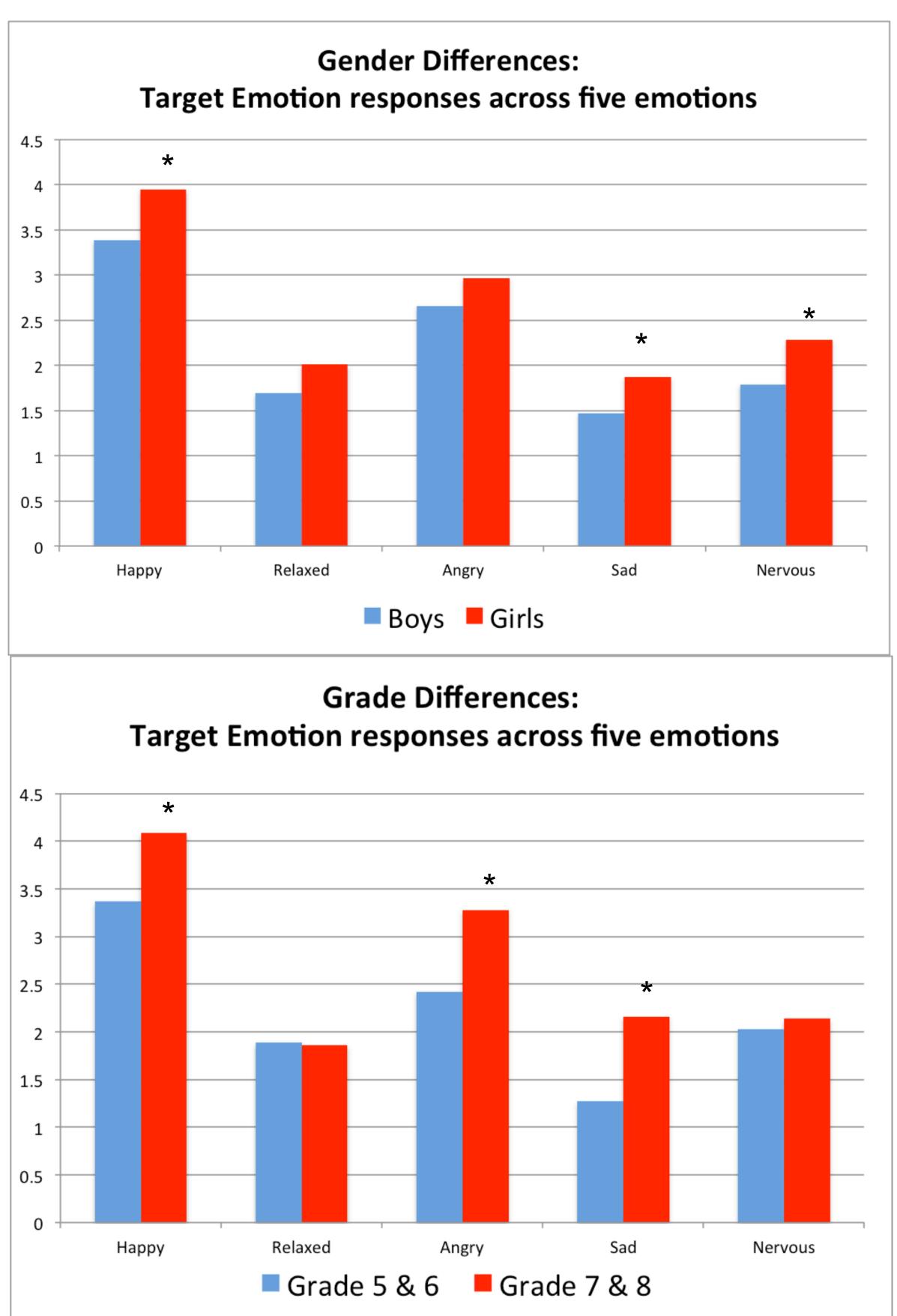
• Girls (*M*=114.34, *SD*=7.71) had significantly higher scores than boys (*M*=110.95, *SD*=12.09), *t*(223) = -2.57, p=.01; • Grades 5&6 and 7&8 did not differ significantly, t(223) = -.75, p=n.s

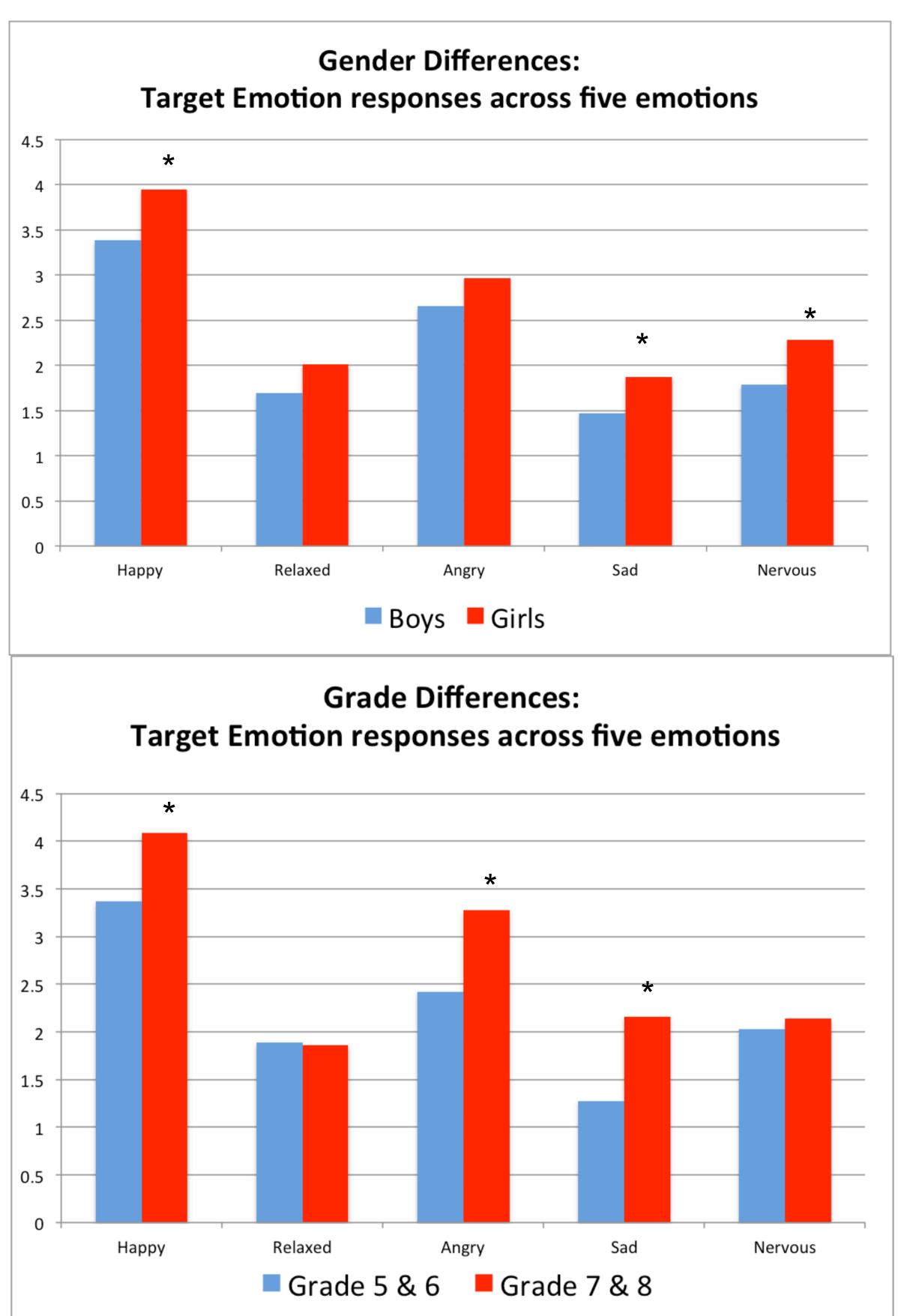
Correlations between Emotion Understanding Ability Test scores and:

 number of Target Emotion responses across 5 emotions, *r*=.24, p < .01;

 number of Associated Emotion responses across 5 emotions, *r*=.19, p < .01.







Conclusions

• When asked to generate emotion descriptors, students produced a range of responses, from specific emotion words (e.g., *joy* and *pleasure* describing the 'happy' category), to descriptors of closely associated emotions (e.g., *love* and *pride* describing the 'happy category), to non-emotion descriptors (e.g., *laughing* or *dancing* describing the 'happy' category);

• Positive correlations are found between the scores on the ability measure of emotion understanding (MSCEIT-YV scale) and the number of Target Emotion responses.

References

• Gender and age differences: older students and girls performed better;