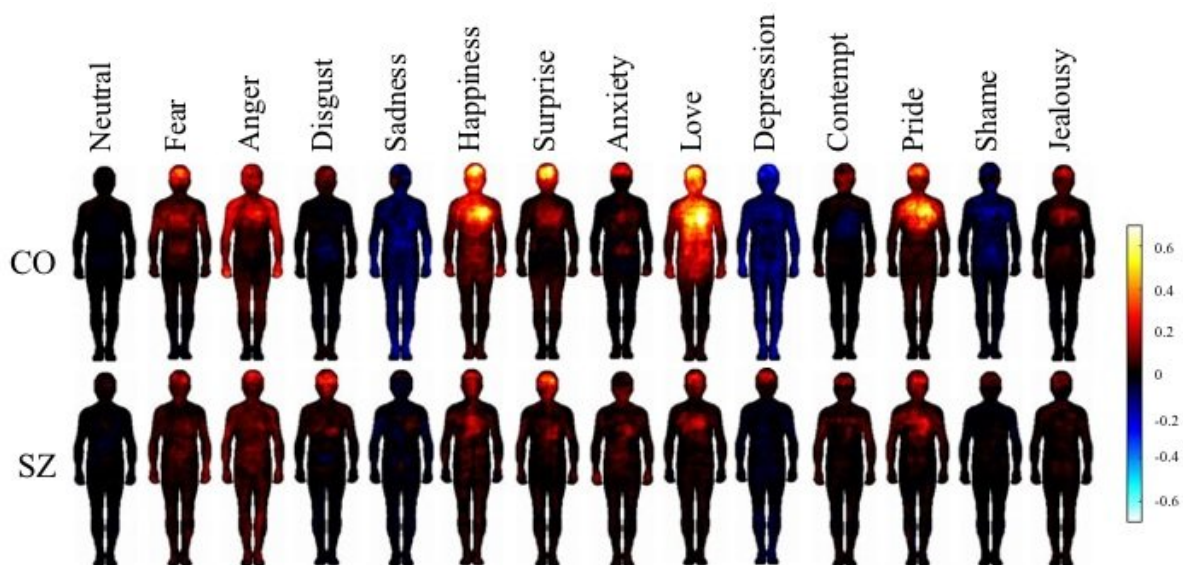


People with schizophrenia experience emotion differently from others, 'body maps' show

December 21 2018, by Heidi Hall



This graphic compares body maps of the control group (top) and of people with schizophrenia (bottom). Credit: Sohee Park

Colorful figures of the human body are helping Vanderbilt University researchers understand how people experience emotion through their bodies and how this process is radically altered in people with

schizophrenia.

Sohee Park, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Psychology, and Ph.D. student Lénie J. Torregrossa compared individuals with schizophrenia with matched [control participants](#), asking each to fill in a "body map" in a way that correlates to the way they physically experience emotion. They used a computerized coloring task to locate where participants feel sensations when they experience, for example, anger or depression.

The outcomes differed radically between groups, with the [control group](#) showing distinct maps of sensations for 13 different emotions, indicating specific patterns of increased arousal and decreased energy across the body for each emotion. However, in individuals with schizophrenia, there was an overall reduction of bodily sensation across all emotions.

The study also found that individuals with schizophrenia don't differentiate on their [body](#) maps for varying emotions. That may pose a problem for them in identifying, recognizing and verbalizing their emotions or trying to understand the emotions of others.

Torregrossa said the research will allow the team to move forward in developing ways to help people with schizophrenia process emotions, which, in turn, could improve interpersonal relationships.

"The main outcome of this research is that we have a better understanding of why people with [schizophrenia](#) might have trouble interacting with others," she said. "What we can do now is help them learn to attend to physiological sensations arising from their bodies and use them to process emotions."

More information: Lénie J Torregrossa et al, Anomalous Bodily Maps of Emotions in Schizophrenia, *Schizophrenia Bulletin* (2018). [DOI:](#)

[10.1093/schbul/sby179](https://doi.org/10.1093/schbul/sby179)

Provided by Vanderbilt University

Citation: People with schizophrenia experience emotion differently from others, 'body maps' show (2018, December 21) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-people-schizophrenia-emotion-differently-body.html>

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