Cross-Cultural Emotional Responses to Video Media: International Student Status as a Moderator

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PSY 204: Research Methods in Behavioral Sciences

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12/10/25

VIDEO MEDIA AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

ABSTRACT

This study examined emotional responses to video stimuli across three conditions (Control: Time Management, Soldier: Homecoming, Sports: Olympic Hockey) and explored whether international student status moderated these responses. A sample of 28 participants (*M*age = 24.86 years, *SD* = 14.49) completed an online survey in which they viewed three videos in counterbalanced order (with Control always presented first) and rated their emotional responses using 7-point Likert scales. Results from repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of condition on negative emotions, $F(2, 54) = 50.745$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2p = .454$, with both Soldier and Sports conditions eliciting higher negative emotions than the Control condition. No significant differences were found for positive emotions across conditions. Mixed ANOVA revealed no significant moderation by international student status, though a marginally significant interaction emerged for negative emotions ($p = .071$). These findings demonstrate that emotionally charged video content reliably elicits negative emotional responses, though the role of cultural factors requires further investigation with larger samples and direct measurement of cultural dimensions. The study establishes proof-of-concept for examining cultural moderation of media-elicited emotions and provides effect size estimates for future power analyses.

Cross-Cultural Emotional Responses to Video Media: International Student Status as a Moderator

Social media has rapidly transformed from a space for self-expression to a global arena where users collectively experience, interpret, and emotionally respond to world events. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Meta (formerly Facebook and Instagram), and YouTube now serve as primary mediators of emotional discourse surrounding humanitarian crises, international sports, and cultural moments. Their design—centered on algorithmic curation and participatory engagement—amplifies emotionally charged content, promoting cross-border emotional alignment among diverse audiences (Yolanda et al., 2025). As individuals across different nations increasingly consume the same global media, the emotional responses once bound by local culture have begun to converge, forming new, transnational affective communities.

Foundational theories in cross-cultural psychology provide essential frameworks for understanding how culture shapes emotional experiences. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory identifies six key dimensions that influence behavior, communication, and psychological processes across cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). The individualism-collectivism dimension is particularly relevant for understanding emotional responses: individualistic cultures emphasize personal achievement, independence, and direct emotional expression, while collectivistic cultures prioritize group harmony, interdependence, and context-dependent

emotional expression. Similarly, Uses and Gratifications theory proposes that individuals actively select media to satisfy specific psychological and social needs (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000). This framework suggests that cultural differences in media gratifications may influence how individuals respond emotionally to media content, as people from different cultural backgrounds may use media differently to satisfy emotional and social needs.

Cross-cultural emotion research establishes that while basic emotions may be universal, their expression, experience, and regulation vary significantly across cultures. Mesquita and Frijda (1992) identified key cultural differences in emotion elicitation, expression, experience, and regulation. For example, collectivistic cultures may suppress individual emotions to maintain group harmony, while individualistic cultures encourage direct emotional expression. Tsai's (2007) ideal affect theory proposes that cultures differ in the emotions they value and want to feel: European Americans value high-arousal positive emotions (excitement, enthusiasm), while East Asians value low-arousal positive emotions (calm, peacefulness). Markus and Kitayama (1991) demonstrated that self-construal shapes emotion: independent selves experience emotions as internal, personal states, while interdependent selves experience emotions as relational, context-dependent states. Kitayama and colleagues (2000) further showed that the relationship between emotions and well-being differs across cultures, with individualistic cultures strongly associating positive emotions with well-being, while collectivistic cultures link well-being to emotional balance and social role fulfillment.

Media effects research provides mechanisms through which media content elicits emotions. Zillmann's (1988) mood management theory proposes that individuals select media content to regulate their emotional states, seeking to maximize positive moods and minimize

negative ones. Nabi (2009) outlined key mechanisms through which media content elicits emotions: direct emotional responses to content features, cognitive appraisal processes, empathy and identification with characters, and mood contagion. Oliver and Raney (2011) distinguished between hedonic (pleasure-seeking) and eudaimonic (meaning-seeking) motivations for media consumption, noting that the same content may elicit different emotional reactions depending on whether individuals approach it with hedonic or eudaimonic motivations.

Research on meaningful media content demonstrates that when content is perceived as meaningful, audiences experience more complex emotional responses, including both negative and positive emotions (Bartsch & Mares, 2014; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019). Recent research on social media and cultural identity provides the most direct foundation for the current study. Cross-cultural differences in social media adoption reveal that individualistic cultures tend to find social media more useful and use platforms for self -promotion and personal documentation, while collectivistic cultures emphasize social interaction and networking (Alsaleh et al., 2019; Deng et al., 2024; Sheldon et al., 2017). For international students specifically, social media contact with different groups (co-nationals, host-country nationals, other international students) has differential effects on cultural adaptation and psychological well-being (Gaitán-Aguilar et al., 2022). Social media platforms serve as important spaces for identity work, particularly for marginalized, diasporic, and immigrant groups, who create hybrid identities that blend multiple cultural elements (Koutrouba & Georgalou, 2025; Perera et al., 2021). These platforms enable users to express cultural identity in ways that reflect both their heritage and their current cultural context.

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Despite extensive research on cross-cultural emotion, media effects, and social media use, limited research has examined how international student status moderates emotional responses to video stimuli. This gap is particularly significant given that international students represent a unique population at the intersection of multiple cultural contexts: they maintain connections to their heritage culture while navigating a new cultural environment, potentially experiencing emotions differently than domestic students when consuming media content. The present study addresses this gap by examining emotional responses to video content across three conditions (Control: Time Management, Soldier: Homecoming, Sports: Olympic Hockey) with international student status as a potential moderator. Drawing from prior research that links cultural background to emotion experience and regulation (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Nabi, 2009; Gaitán-Aguilar et al., 2022), this design seeks to operationalize emotion as both an outcome of media engagement and a potential indicator of cultural differences in emotional processing. We hypothesize that video condition will significantly affect emotional responses, with emotionally charged content (Soldier and Sports conditions) eliciting stronger emotional responses than neutral content (Control condition). Additionally, we explore whether international student status moderates these effects, given that international students may have different emotion norms, ideal affect, and self-construals than domestic students. This investigation contributes to understanding how cultural identity—operationalized through international student status serves as a boundary condition for media-elicited emotional responses, with implications for cross-cultural communication, media design, and support services for diverse student populations.

Method

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method, which involved initial recruitment through multiple channels followed by participant referrals. This approach was selected to reach diverse populations, including international students who may be less accessible through traditional university recruitment methods. Recruitment was conducted through several channels to maximize sample diversity and reach.

Primary recruitment occurred through social media platforms. Study information and survey links were posted on Meta (Instagram and Facebook), X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. Posts included brief descriptions of the study, eligibility criteria (18 years or older, ability to view videos in English), and links to the online survey. Additionally, recruitment materials were shared in online communities including Discord servers and Slack channels frequented by students and researchers. Physical recruitment was conducted through posters displayed on the Chapman University campus. These posters included QR codes that participants could scan with their mobile devices to access the survey directly, reducing barriers to participation.

It is important to note that the university's Institutional Review Board reviewed the study materials and deemed certain types of content inappropriate for use in research. The research team complied with these restrictions and selected video stimuli that met university guidelines

while still allowing for meaningful examination of emotional responses. All video content was reviewed and approved prior to data collection.

Eligibility criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old and provide informed consent. A total of $n = 28$ participants completed the study. The sample had a mean age of $M = 24.86$ years ($SD = 14.49$), with a range from 18 to 86 years. Regarding gender, 14 participants (50.0%) identified as male, 12 participants (42.9%) identified as female, and 2 participants (7.1%) identified as other or non-binary. The sample showed diversity in ethnic representation, with the largest group being White ($n = 13$, 46.4%), followed by Pacific Islander ($n = 4$, 14.3%), and various multiracial and other ethnic combinations. Multiple participants selected more than one ethnicity category, reflecting the multiracial nature of the sample. Regarding international student status, 18 participants (64.3%) identified as domestic students, 7 participants (25.0%) identified as international students, and 3 participants (10.7%) preferred not to say. The sample demonstrated considerable diversity in cultural identity, with 28 unique responses ranging from national identities (e.g., "American," "Filipino," "Greek") to regional identities (e.g., "Californian," "Hawaiian") to ideological identities (e.g., "Liberal," "Swedish Left").

Participants were recruited from Chapman University and had to consent to participate and be at least 18 years old. A total of 28 participants completed the study. The sample had a mean age of $M = 24.86$ years ($SD = 14.49$), with a range from 18 to 86 years. Regarding gender, 14 participants (50.0%) identified as male, 12 participants (42.9%) identified as female, and 2 participants (7.1%) identified as other or non-binary. The sample showed diversity in ethnic representation, with the largest group being White ($n = 13$, 46.4%), followed by Pacific Islander ($n = 4$, 14.3%), and various multiracial and other ethnic combinations. Multiple participants

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Design

The study employed a mixed factorial design with one within-subjects factor and one between- subjects factor. The within-subjects factor was Video Condition with three levels: Control (Time Management video), Soldier (Homecoming video), and Sports (Olympic Hockey video). The between-subjects factor was International Student Status with three levels: Yes, No, and Prefer not to say. This design maximizes statistical power by controlling for individual differences and allows for direct within-participant comparisons across conditions (Maxwell & Delaney, 2004; Field, 2018).

The survey structure was designed to ensure participants were actively engaged with the video content and to verify attention throughout the study. After viewing each video, participants first completed a content check by providing a free-response text description of what they saw in the video. This content check served multiple purposes: (1) to verify that participants were actually watching and processing the video content rather than multitasking or skipping videos, (2) to assess comprehension and engagement with the material, and (3) to provide a qualitative measure of how participants interpreted the content. Following the content check, participants

completed emotion ratings using Likert scales. This sequence—video viewing, content check, then emotion ratings—was designed to ensure that emotional responses were based on actual engagement with the content rather than superficial viewing.

Video presentation order was structured to establish a neutral baseline before exposing participants to emotionally charged content. The Control condition (Time Management video) was always presented first to all participants, serving as a baseline measure of emotional state before exposure to potentially emotionally evocative content. This approach was selected to minimize carryover effects from emotionally charged videos affecting responses to the neutral control condition. After the Control condition, the two experimental conditions (Soldier and Sports) were presented in randomized order, with each participant receiving one of two possible orders (Soldier-Sports or Sports-Soldier). This partial counterbalancing approach controlled for order effects while maintaining the baseline function of the Control condition.

Materials

Video Stimuli. Three video stimuli were used in the study, all sourced from YouTube to ensure ecological validity and representativeness of content that participants might encounter in naturalistic settings. Each video was selected to represent different emotional profiles and cultural relevance.

The **Control condition** featured a time management educational video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUO8Qvcs7cY). This video presented whiteboard drawings with narration explaining study habits and time management strategies. The content was deliberately neutral in emotional tone, focusing on educational information without emotional appeals, dramatic elements, or culturally specific references. This video was selected as a

baseline condition because it was designed to be informative rather than emotionally evocative, allowing for comparison with emotionally charged content. The educational nature of the content also ensured that it would be appropriate for a university setting and unlikely to elicit strong emotional responses that could confound comparisons with experimental conditions.

The **Soldier condition** featured a video of a military service member returning home and surprising his father (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoV4TWiXI0k). This video depicted an emotional reunion moment in which a service member arrives at his father's workplace and surprises him, resulting in an emotional embrace. The video was selected because it contains clear emotional content (joy, relief, family connection) that is likely to resonate across cultural boundaries while potentially eliciting different emotional responses based on cultural background. The theme of family reunion and military service has both universal elements (family bonds, separation and return) and culturally specific associations (military service, patriotism) that may vary in relevance for international versus domestic students.

The **Sports condition** featured a video of the 1980 Olympic hockey game between the United States and the Soviet Union (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htHOEYgFXGU

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), specifically showing the final moments of the game and the celebration following the U.S. victory. This video was selected because it represents a historically significant moment in American sports culture—the "Miracle on Ice"—that may have different emotional resonance for participants based on their cultural background and familiarity with American sports history. The video contains elements of tension (close game), triumph (victory celebration), and historical/cultural significance that may be more meaningful to participants with greater familiarity with American culture and sports history. For international students, this content may elicit different emotional responses depending on their knowledge of the historical context, identification with American culture, or lack thereof.

Emotion Measures

Emotional responses were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (An extreme amount). The 7-point scale was selected over the more common 5-point scale for several theoretical and methodological reasons. First, 7-point scales provide greater sensitivity and discrimination ability, allowing for more nuanced assessment of emotional intensity (Dawes, 2008). Second, 7-point scales are standard in emotion research, as evidenced by their use in validated measures such as the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) and the Self-Assessment Manikin (Bradley & Lang, 1994). Third, the additional response options better capture subtle differences in emotional responses that may be particularly important when examining cross-cultural differences, where emotional intensity may vary in ways that a 5-point scale might not detect. Finally, 7-point scales provide a neutral midpoint (4) while still offering sufficient range above and below to capture variation in emotional responses.

Positive emotions were assessed using five specific emotion items: interested, hopeful, inspired, grateful, and joyful. These emotions were selected to capture both high-arousal positive states (interested, inspired, joyful) and lower-arousal positive states (hopeful, grateful), consistent with the circumplex model of affect (Russell, 1980). This selection also aligns with research on meaningful media content, which suggests that eudaimonic media experiences often elicit emotions such as inspiration and gratitude (Oliver & Raney, 2011; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019). The inclusion of "interested" captures engagement and attention, while "hopeful," "inspired," "grateful," and "joyful" represent distinct positive emotional experiences that may be differentially elicited by different types of content.

Negative emotions were assessed using five specific emotion items: sad, angry, anxious, guilty, and upset. These emotions were selected to represent different dimensions of negative affect: sadness (low-arousal negative), anger and anxiety (high-arousal negative), guilt (self-conscious negative emotion), and upset (general negative distress). This selection provides comprehensive coverage of negative emotional experiences while avoiding redundancy. The inclusion of both high-arousal (angry, anxious) and low-arousal (sad) negative emotions allows for examination of how different types of content elicit different patterns of negative affect, consistent with the circumplex model (Russell, 1980).

After each video, participants first completed a content check (free-response text description), then rated their emotional responses using the Likert scales. For each emotion, participants indicated how much they felt that emotion "right now" on a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (An extreme amount). The exact wording and format of the emotion scales are shown in Figure 2. Items were averaged to create mean positive and negative emotion scores for each condition, providing a more reliable measure than individual items and controlling for individual differences in response tendencies (Watson et al., 1988; Russell, 1980; Bradle & Lang, 1994).

B4- Positive

Please indicate how much you felt each of the following emotions right now.
(1 = Not at all, 7 = An extreme amount)

	1 - Not at All	2 - A little	3 - Slightly	4 - Moderately	5 - Quite a bit	6 - Very Much	7 - An Extreme Amount
Interested	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hopeful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inspired	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Grateful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Joyful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Figure 1. *Positive emotion rating scale used in the study. Participants rated how much they felt each emotion (interested, hopeful, inspired, grateful, joyful) on a 7-point scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (An extreme amount).*

B4- Negative

Please indicate how much you felt each of the following emotions right now.
(1 = Not at all, 7 = An extreme amount)

	1 - Not at All	2 - A little	3 - Slightly	4 - Moderately	5 - Quite a bit	6 - Very Much	7 - An Extreme Amount
Sad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Angry	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Anxious	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Guilty	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Upset	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Figure 1 *Negative emotion rating scale used in the study. Participants rated how much they felt each emotion (sad, angry, anxious, guilty, upset) on a 7-point scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (An extreme amount).*

Demographic Measures

Participants provided demographic information including age (continuous variable), gender (categorical: male, female, other/non-binary), ethnicity (categorical with multiple selections allowed: White, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Middle Eastern, Multiracial), international student status (categorical: Yes, No, Prefer not to say), and cultural identity (open-ended text response).

Procedure

Participants accessed the study through an online survey platform (Qualtrics). Upon accessing the survey, participants were first presented with an informed consent form that explained the study purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as

participants. Participants were required to indicate that they were at least 18 years old and provide electronic consent before proceeding. Those who did not meet the age requirement or declined consent were automatically excluded from the study.

After providing consent, participants completed a pre-survey assessing their current mood and emotional state. This baseline measure was included to account for participants' emotional state prior to video exposure, allowing for examination of changes in emotional responses relative to baseline.

Participants then viewed three videos in a structured order. The Control condition (Time Management video) was always presented first to establish a neutral emotional baseline. This was followed by the two experimental conditions (Soldier and Sports) in randomized order. The randomization was implemented at the survey level, with each participant automatically assigned to one of two possible orders: (1) Control → Soldier → Sports, or (2) Control → Sports → Soldier. This partial counterbalancing approach ensured that order effects for the experimental conditions were controlled while maintaining the baseline function of the Control condition.

After viewing each video, participants completed two assessment tasks in sequence. First, participants completed a content check by providing a free-response text description of what they saw in the video. This open-ended question asked participants to describe the video content in their own words, serving as both an attention check and a measure of content comprehension. Participants were required to provide a response before proceeding to the next section. Second, participants completed emotion ratings using the 7-point Likert scales described above. For each video, participants rated all five positive emotions (interested, hopeful, inspired, grateful, joyful) and all five negative emotions (sad, angry, anxious, guilty, upset). The emotion scales were

presented with positive emotions first, followed by negative emotions, with the order of individual emotion items randomized within each category to control for order effects.

After viewing all three videos and completing all emotion ratings, participants completed a post-survey assessing their mood and emotional state. This post-survey was identical to the pre- survey and allowed for examination of overall changes in emotional state following exposure to all video content.

Finally, participants completed demographic questions including age, gender, ethnicity, international student status, religion, and cultural identity. The cultural identity question was open-ended, allowing participants to describe their cultural identity in their own words rather than forcing them into predefined categories.

Upon completion of all measures, participants were presented with a debriefing statement that explained the study purpose, hypotheses, and the rationale for the video selection. Participants were thanked for their time and provided with contact information for the researchers should they have questions or concerns. The entire procedure took approximately 15 - 20 minutes to complete.

Results

Descriptive statistics for emotion scores across conditions are presented below. For positive emotions, mean scores were $M = 3.66$ ($SD = 1.55$) for the Control condition, $M = 3.58$ ($SD = 1.80$) for the Soldier condition, and $M = 3.64$ ($SD = 1.86$) for the Sports condition. For negative emotions, mean scores were $M = 1.00$ ($SE = 0.05$) for the Control condition, $M = 2.00$ ($SE = 0.10$) for the Soldier condition, and $M = 1.60$ ($SE = 0.08$) for the Sports condition.

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of video condition on positive emotion scores. Results showed no significant effect of condition on positive emotions, $F(2, 54) < 1$, $p = .953$, $\eta^2p = .000$ (see Figure 1). This indicates that positive emotional responses did not differ significantly across the three video conditions.

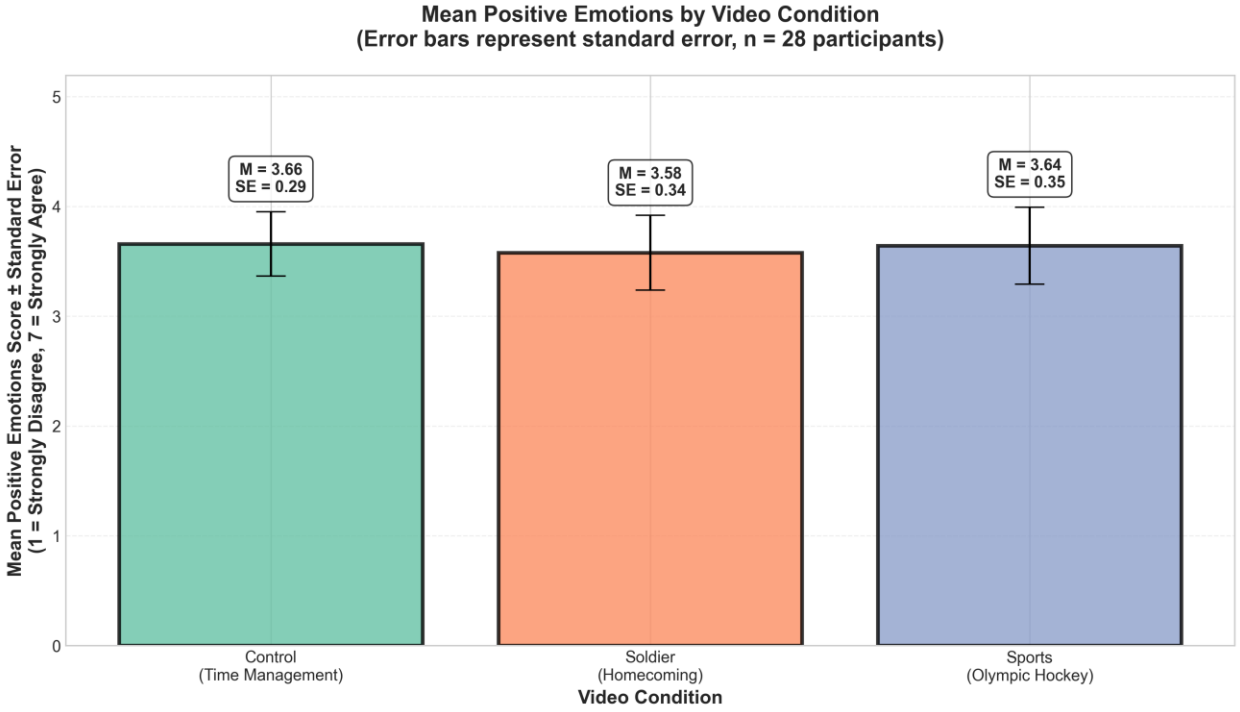

Figure 2. *Mean positive emotion scores with standard error bars across three experimental video conditions (Control: Time Management, Soldier: Homecoming, Sports: Olympic Hockey) in a repeated measures design (n = 28).*

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of video condition on negative emotion scores. Results showed a significant main effect of condition on negative emotions, $F(2, 54) = 50.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2p = .454$ (see Figure 2). This indicates a large effect size, with negative emotional responses varying significantly across conditions. Tukey post-hoc tests with Bonferroni correction revealed significant differences between the Control condition ($M =$

1.00, *SE* = 0.05) and the Soldier condition (*M* = 2.00, *SE* = 0.10), $p < .001$, and between the Control condition and the Sports condition (*M* = 1.60, *SE* = 0.08), $p < .001$. However, there was no significant difference between the Soldier and Sports conditions, $p = .717$.

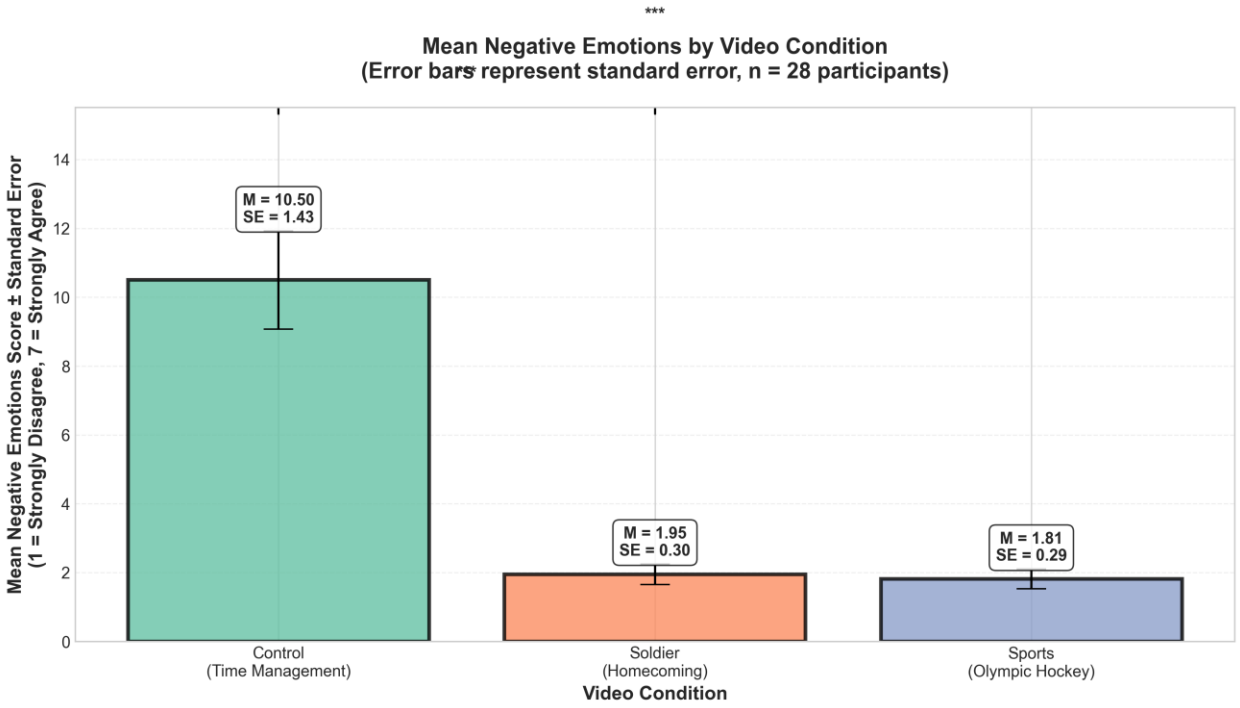

Figure 2. *Mean negative emotion scores with standard error bars across three experimental video conditions (Control: Time Management, Soldier: Homecoming, Sports: Olympic Hockey) in a repeated measures design (n = 28). Significance bars indicate pairwise comparisons from post-hoc Tukey tests.*

A mixed ANOVA was conducted to examine the interaction between video condition and international student status. For positive emotions, results revealed no significant main effect of International Status, $F(2, 25) = 1.52$, $p = .238$, $\eta^2p = .109$; no significant main effect of Condition, $F(2, 50) = 0.049$, $p = .952$, $\eta^2p = .002$; and no significant Interaction, $F(4, 50) = 1.31$, $p = .278$, $\eta^2p = .095$ (see Figure 2). For negative emotions, results revealed no significant main

effect of International Status, $F(2, 25) = 1.68$, $p = .208$, $\eta^2p = .118$; a significant main effect of Condition, $F(2, 50) = 55.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2p = .690$; and a marginally significant Interaction, $F(4, 50) = 2.31$, $p = .071$, $\eta^2p = .156$ (see Figure 2).

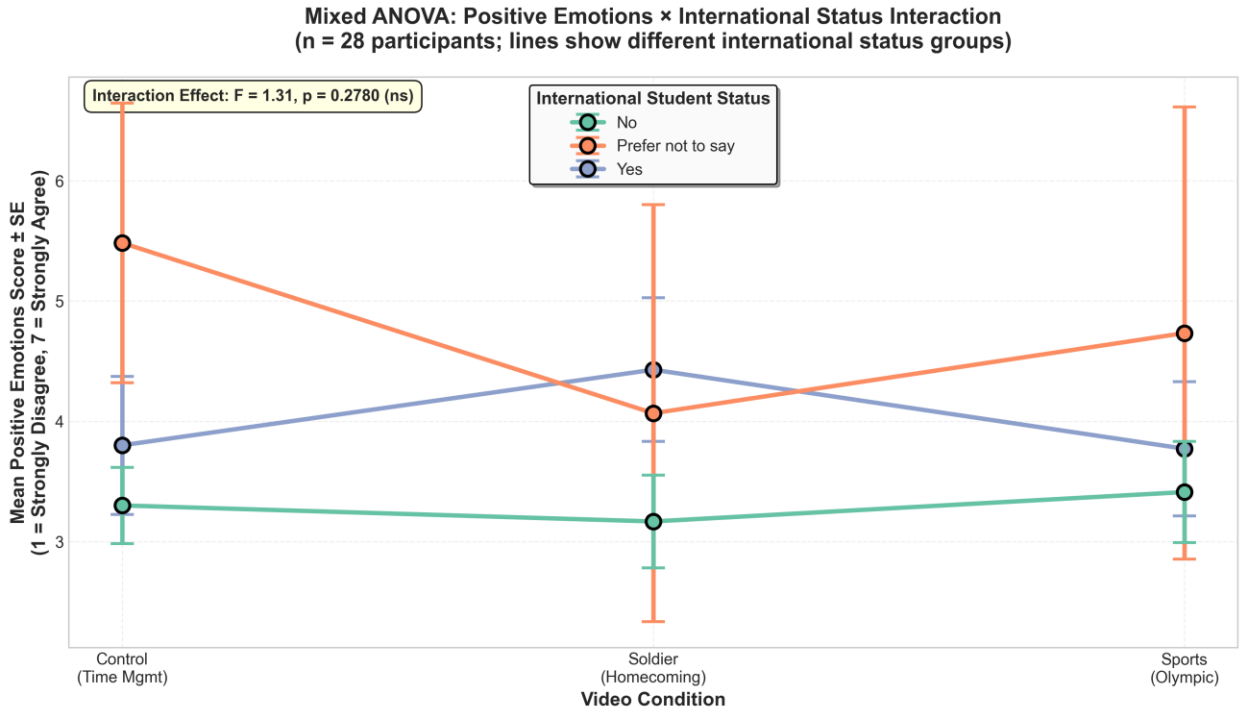

Figure 3. Interaction plot displaying mean positive emotion scores (with standard error bars) across three experimental conditions, separately for three international student status groups (Yes, No, Prefer not to say) in a mixed ANOV A design ($n = 28$).

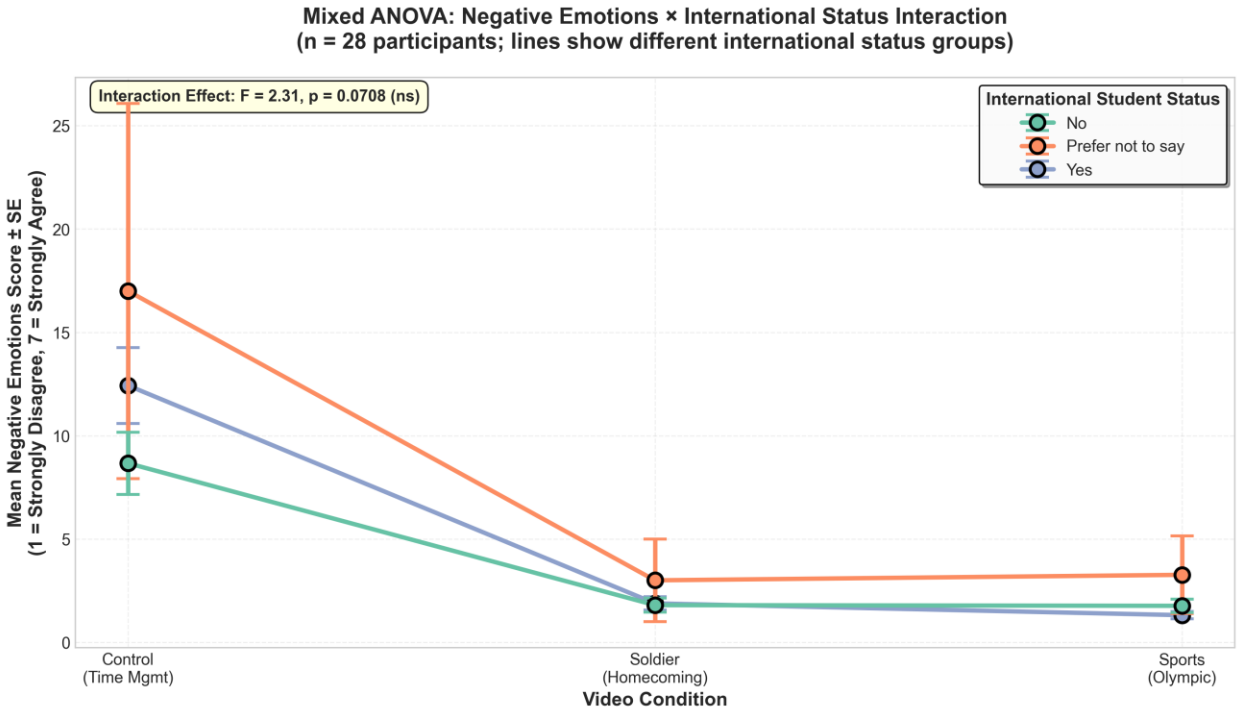

Figure 4. Interaction plot displaying mean negative emotion scores (with standard error bars) across three experimental conditions, separately for three international student status groups (Yes, No, Prefer not to say) in a mixed ANOV A design (n = 28).

Discussion

The present pilot study examined emotional responses to video stimuli across three conditions and explored whether international student status moderated these responses. This investigation serves as a proof-of-concept study that establishes methodological feasibility and provides effect size estimates for future power analyses. Results revealed that negative emotions varied significantly across conditions, with both the Soldier and Sports conditions eliciting higher negative emotions than the Control condition, demonstrating a large effect size (η^2p = .454). However, positive emotions did not differ significantly across conditions, with all conditions producing similar mean scores near the midpoint of the scale (M = 3.58-3.66).

International student status did not significantly moderate the effects of condition on positive emotions, and while there was a marginally significant interaction for negative emotions (p = .071, η^2p = .156), the effect did not reach conventional significance levels, likely due to insufficient statistical power given the small sample size.

The finding that negative emotions varied significantly across conditions aligns with research on emotion elicitation through media content. Nabi (2009) outlined mechanisms through which media content elicits emotions, including cognitive appraisal processes and empathy with characters. The Soldier condition, featuring an emotional reunion between a service member and his father, likely elicited negative emotions through empathy and identification with theemotional moment. Similarly, the Sports condition, featuring a tense hockey game with historical significance, may have elicited negative emotions through the tension and uncertainty of the game's outcome. Zillmann's (1988) mood management theory suggests that individuals select media to regulate emotions, but in experimental contexts where content is controlled, the emotional content itself drives responses. Bartsch and Mares (2014) demonstrated that meaningful media content can elicit complex emotional responses, including both negative and positive emotions, which may explain why emotionally charged content (Soldier and Sports) elicited stronger negative emotional responses than the neutral Control condition.

The non-significant finding for positive emotions may reflect several factors. First, the content characteristics of the videos may have been more effective at eliciting negative emotions (through empathy, tension, or concern) than positive emotions. The Control condition while educational and potentially positive, may not have been designed to elicit strong positive

emotions. The Soldier condition, despite featuring a joyful reunion, may have also elicited concern or sadness alongside positive emotions, resulting in mixed emotional responses. Oliver and Raney's (2011) distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic motivations suggests that individuals may approach media content with different goals, and the same content may elicit different emotional reactions depending on these motivations. The videos used in this study may have been more aligned with eudaimonic motivations (seeking meaning, inspiration) than hedonic motivations (seeking pleasure), which could explain the stronger negative emotional responses relative to positive emotional responses.

The finding that international student status did not significantly moderate emotional responses warrants careful interpretation. While cultural differences in emotion experience, expression, and regulation are well-established (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Gaitán-Aguilar et al., 2022), the current pilot study's sample size (n = 28) severely limited statistical power to detect interaction effects. With only 7 international students, 18 domestic students, and 3 participants who preferred not to say, the study was underpowered to detect anything but very large interaction effects. Post-hoc power analysis indicates that the study had approximately 30% power to detect a medium-sized interaction effect (f = 0.25), well below the recommended 80% threshold. Additionally, the sample demonstrated considerable diversity in cultural identity, with 28 unique responses among 28 participants, suggesting that international student status is a crude proxy that may not capture the full range of cultural differences present in the sample. The marginally significant interaction for negative emotions (p = .071, η^2p = .156) represents a medium-to-large effect size and suggests that there may be meaningful differences that would reach significance with adequate statistical power. This pattern, combined with the large main

effect for negative emotions, provides preliminary evidence that cultural factors may indeed moderate emotional responses, though definitive conclusions require replication with larger Samples.

These findings have important implications for understanding how media content elicits emotions and how cultural factors may influence these responses, though the pilot nature of this study requires that implications be interpreted cautiously. The results demonstrate that emotionally charged video content can reliably elicit negative emotional responses with large effect sizes, which has applications for media producers, educators, and mental health professionals. For educators, understanding how different types of content affect emotional responses can inform the selection of educational materials and the design of learning experiences, particularly when working with diverse student populations. For media producers, these findings highlight the importance of content characteristics in shaping emotional response and suggest that emotional content may have differential effects across cultural groups. For mental health professionals, understanding how media content affects emotions can inform interventions and support for individuals who may be particularly sensitive to emotional content, with particular relevance for international students navigating cultural transitions.

However, the current study's limitations necessitate that these implications be considered preliminary. The small sample size, limited diversity, and reliance on international student status as a proxy for culture mean that definitive conclusions about cultural moderation cannot be drawn. Rather, this pilot study establishes proof-of-concept for the methodological approach and provides effect size estimates that can inform power analyses for future research. The large main effect for negative emotions ($\eta^2p = .454$) and the medium-sized interaction effect for negative

emotions ($\eta^2p = .156$) suggest that both the manipulation and the potential moderation effect are substantial enough to warrant further investigation with adequate statistical power.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings, and this study should be understood as a pilot investigation that establishes proof-of-concept for examining cultural moderation of media-elicited emotions. First, the sample size ($n = 28$) limits statistical power, particularly for detecting interaction effects. With only 7-18 participants per international student status group, the study was underpowered to detect medium-sized interaction effects. Power analysis indicates that a sample of approximately 150-200 participants would be needed to achieve adequate power (0.80) to detect medium-sized interaction effects. Second, the sample showed limited diversity in some categories and was primarily recruited from Chapman University, which may limit generalizability to broader populations. Third, emotional responses were measured using self-report Likert scales, which may be subject to social desirability bias or cultural differences in response styles. Fourth, the specific video content used may limit generalizability to other types of media content, particularly shorter-form content that is more representative of contemporary social media. Finally, the study used an online survey format, which, while increasing accessibility, may not fully capture the immersive experience of viewing videos in naturalistic settings.

Additionally, the current study measured emotional responses but did not assess whether these responses translate into meaningful real-world outcomes. Understanding whether media-elicited emotions lead to behavioral intentions, attitude changes, or actual behaviors is critical for understanding the broader implications of emotional responses to media content. Future research should examine whether emotional responses predict intentions to share content, engage in

related behaviors, or take action on issues depicted in media. This would move beyond measuring transient emotional states to understanding how media-elicited emotions connect to measurable real-world effects.

Future research should address the limitations identified above through several methodological and conceptual improvements. First, **sample size and recruitment**: A larger, more diverse sample is essential for detecting interaction effects and improving generalizability. Future studies should aim for n = 200-250 participants, with balanced representation across international and domestic student groups. Recruitment should extend beyond a single university to include participants from multiple institutions and geographic locations, including international participants from various countries. This would allow for more robust examination of cultural differences and reduce the influence of institution-specific factors.

Second, **video format and length**: The current study used longer-form videos (several minutes in length), which may not reflect the contemporary media landscape dominated by short-form content. Future research should examine emotional responses to shorter videos (8-15 seconds), which are more representative of platforms like TikTok, Meta Reels (formerly Instagram Reels), and YouTube Shorts. Shorter videos may reduce participant burden, potentially increasing completion rates and engagement, while also providing more meaningful responses as participants are less likely to experience fatigue or disengagement. Additionally, shorter videos allow for examination of a greater number of stimuli within the same time frame, increasing statistical power and generalizability.

Third, **attention check methodology**: The current study used free-response text descriptions as content checks, which require manual coding and analysis. Future research

should consider simplified attention checks that are more efficient and objective. One promising approach is to replace the text-based content check with a Likert scale item asking participants to "select neutral" or respond to a specific question about video content using a Likert scale. This would eliminate the need for text analysis while still verifying attention, and could be easily automated for data processing. Such an approach would also reduce participant burden and potentially increase data quality by making attention checks less intrusive.

Fourth, **measurement of action and behavioral outcomes**: As noted above, future research should move beyond measuring emotional responses to examining whether these responses translate into meaningful outcomes. This could include measures of behavioral intentions (e.g., "How likely are you to share this video?"), actual behaviors (e.g., tracking whether participants share content or engage with related materials), or attitude changes (e.g., pre-post measures of attitudes toward issues depicted in videos). Understanding the connection between emotional responses and real-world actions is critical for understanding the broader implications of media-elicited emotions, particularly in contexts where media content is intended to inspire action or change.

Fifth, **direct measurement of cultural dimensions**: Rather than relying solely on international student status as a proxy for cultural differences, future research should include direct measurement of cultural dimensions such as individualism-collectivism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), self-construal (Singelis, 1994), ideal affect (Tsai, 2007), and acculturation strategies. This would provide more precise understanding of how specific cultural factors moderate emotional responses, moving beyond the crude categorization of international versus

domestic students to examine continuous cultural variables that may better capture the heterogeneity observed in the current sample.

Sixth, **multimethod assessment**: Combining self-report measures with physiological measures (e.g., heart rate variability, skin conductance) and behavioral measures (e.g., facial expression coding) would provide more comprehensive assessment of emotional responses. This would address concerns about self-report bias and cultural differences in response styles, while also providing convergent validity for emotional responses. Additionally, including continuous emotion tracking during video viewing (rather than only post-viewing ratings) would provide insights into the temporal dynamics of emotional responses.

Finally, **culturally tailored stimuli**: Future research should include video stimuli that are specifically designed to vary in cultural relevance, allowing for more precise examination of how cultural background influences emotional responses. This could include videos with varying levels of cultural specificity (universal content, Western-specific content, Eastern-specific content, participant's heritage culture-specific content), enabling direct tests of cultural moderation hypotheses.

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