Tell Me About Your Relationship Status

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The Annual Mary Lou Fulton Mentored Research Conference showcases some of the best student research from the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. The mentored learning program encourages undergraduate students to participate in hands-on and practical research under the direction of a faculty member. Students create these posters as an aide in presenting the results of their research to the public, faculty, and their peers.
Methods: We used the Paul Eckman facial coding system to code micro expressions seen on interviews from the Marital Paradigms survey. Micro expressions of basic emotions were categorized as positive, negative and neutral. Fear, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Contempt are negative. Happy is positive and Surprise is neutral. These emotions happen very quickly and usually only show for about 1/15-1/25th of a second. Most of the movement occurred in the mouth, eyes and bridge of the nose.

Participants: In this case study 5 participants between ages 18-30 from a Midwestern University were interviewed via Skype about their views on marriage. 2 participants were male and 3 were female.

Limitations: Micro expressions can indicate very slight emotion, a leakage of emotion, or an emotion that is emerging. These show hints at what the participant is feeling but doesn’t explain why they feel that way.

Discussion: We found a correlation between how a participant feels about his or her relationship what their views on marriage are. This is interesting to remember when studying how a population perceives marriage today.

Measures: We selected two out of about twenty questions that were asked during interviews
- “Tell me about your current relationship status”
- “Do you see any connection between your thoughts and beliefs about marriage and any other decisions you make on a daily basis?”

We coded the microexpression to the first prompt about relationship status. Then we compared their reaction, from the first prompt to the answers we got from the second question.

Results: Out of the case study of 5 participants we found that attitudes about marriage seemed to match what emotions we were able to code regarding their relationship status. If the relationship status answer had a negative emotion associated with it their answers for the marriage connection tended to be more self-focused. If the relationship status question garnered a neutral or a more positive response their answers about the marriage connection tended to be more others focused.