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Facial Recognition: Training Participants to Detect Genuine Smiles

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Facial Recognition: Training Participants to Detect Genuine Smiles

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Nonverbal behaviors have the ability to affect how we perceive social communications. One of these nonverbal behaviors, a smile, is not always genuinely expressed. Our experiment attempted to improve discernment between genuine and fake smiles by manipulating training and feedback. The training/feedback group received feedback for each video and training. Our control was the no training/no feedback group, in which participants viewed a PowerPoint that presented smile information not relevant to distinguishing among smiles. The training group was given applicable information, through PowerPoint, on distinguishing among smiles along with viewing two videos of genuine and fake smiles. Prior to training, participants viewed 10 smile videos and marked whether they believed the smile was genuine or fake. Following training, the participants viewed 10 new videos. Our sample was comprised of 98 participants from the General Psychology course at Valparaiso University. The results indicated that a very brief and simple training program improved participants' ability to distinguish between genuine and fake smiles. Surprisingly, our feedback manipulation did not improve detection.

Information about the Authors:
Ryan, Nate, Paul, and Alyssa are all junior psychology majors at Valparaiso University and plan on attending graduate school after their undergraduate experience.

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