# These OU psychologists strive to get in your face

Two Oakland University psychologists are studying hundreds of faces - angry faces, frightened faces, sad faces - to gain a better understanding of the processes

faces, sad faces - to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in repression.

Professor Ranald Hansen says the research is looking at emotion and its impact on memory and on the interaction of emotion and cognition (conscious appraisal of astimulus).

Hansen explains that repression involves a person's blocking out of certain memories, usuelly fairly intense negative emotions like fear, anger or embarrassment. The memories are there, you just cannot access them, 'he explains. The research is being conducted with a three-year, \$225,000 grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health under the direction of Ranald Hansen and his wife, Christine, who is an assistant professor of psychology. They are assisted by eight OU undergraduates who are running the psychophysiology laboratory in the department of psychology.

the department of psychology.
The researchers have studied nearly 300 subjects thus far. "The subjects" psychophysiological responses to other human faces ahowing primitive emotions are measured as frequently as 1,000 times a second. Eye, facil muscle, and psychological responses are churted," Ranald Hansen says.

The professor says he believes "paychophysiological measure-ments taken of the subjects will show that we have emotional reactions to another person's right-ened or angry face before we are fully aware of the emotion that the person is expressing. Another person's face triggers an immediate emotional reaponse."

Christine Hansen claims that "if these findings hold up under



Facing up: Oakland University student Mike Winters of Birmingham hooks up the necessary electrical connec-tions for student Morgan Caskey of Howell. This is part of a psychology experiement in which students chart reactions to pictures of human faces.

replication, they will lead us to question the conventional wisdom that a person must make a full conscious appraisal of a stimulus before having an emotional reaction." Instead, the findings support those who argue the emotions can be triggered by automatic processing of stimuli.

The Hansens say their research could present an important avenue for investigating repression, and Raneld Hensen notes that both subjects who are repressors and those who are not should show the same nonconcur facial responses to negative emotional stimuli but evidence a tesser facial response once conscious atten-

Was."
Ranald Hansen claims that "research demonstrating those of fects would clearly document operation of 'the core mechanism of repression: initial emotional reactivity to negative stimuli that is blunted or disappears at the conscious level of processing."
The two scientists claim that a better understanding of the interplay of emotion, memory, and cognition is crucial in learning more about repression, an important concept in clinical psychology. The relationship of emotion and cognition is also one of the basic questions of psychology, they feel.

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