Qualitative Differences of Ambivalent and Supportive Relationships

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Social relationships have been reliably related to lower rates of morbidity and mortality (Cohen, 1998 and House, Landis, and Umberson, 1988). Research also indicated that relationships can have negative influences on health outcomes depending on the quality of the relationship experience (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). The goal of this study is to explore the qualitative differences that emerge between two different types of relationships: supportive (extremely helpful and not at all upsetting) and ambivalent (both helpful and upsetting) socialties. The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC2001) was used, a linguistic coding program, to identify and categorize the words used to describe these relationships and their links to more general psychological relationship processes. We predict that supportive relationships will be described by words that classified within the categories of positive emotions, positive feelings, certainty, social processes, and communication. And those relationships that were identified as ambivalent will be described within all the categories, such as anxiety or fear, negative emotions, but also positive feelings. Understanding the qualitative differences of these two types of relationships will benefit researchers studying the health effects of different types of relationships.