



# Love in the Club



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Students: Jordan Glenna, Kaitlyn Ford, Katey Wrobel, Kyle Bacon, Maggie Nelson ♥ Mentor: Mary Hoffman ♥ Organizational Communication ♥ University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire

## Abstract and Review of Literature:

The objective of this project was to determine what young adults, 18-25, look for in nonverbal cues regarding attractiveness of the opposite sex in social settings. We investigated specific nonverbal factors including facial expression and clothing choices. A UCLA study, estimated that 55% of communicative impact is through non-verbal cues and 93% of all communication is non-verbal. (Henningesen, et al, 2009) Facial expression in particular can affect how people judge attractiveness. Women and men are picky when it comes to details of a person's face (Cunningham, 1990). Finally, existing literature indicated that clothing has a strong effect on perceptions of attractiveness. According to Gueguen (2012), the color red has been found to increase the sexual and physical attractiveness of a female more than other colors such as green, and blue.

## Research Question:

RQ1: What attributions do young adults make about others based on non-verbal characteristics?

RQ2: What non-verbal factors influence young adults' levels of romantic sexual interest in members of the opposite sex?

## Methods:

We developed a survey to gather data regarding young adults and their first impressions of the opposite sex. The questions in our survey included a general section regarding age, sex, and attraction to the opposite sex. Depending on how a person answered we used skip logic to narrow our audience to people who are heterosexual between ages 18 and 25. Participants then answered a series of questions about perceived nonverbal preferences during initial encounters. Finally participants viewed photos of opposite sex models and responded to questions concerning facial expression, and clothing choices. We coded responses first individually and then through group discussion.



## Results and Conclusions:

Three primary conclusions emerged from the coding process:

- ❖ Participants reported that eye contact was the most important perceived indicator of opposite-sex attraction in social settings.
  - “Eye contact, if they can look you in the eye it shows they are interested and want to talk to you”
  - “Eye contact and smiling. Obviously they wouldn't be looking at you if they were not interested.”
- ❖ When asked to respond to the photos, participants made judgments about personality and temperament, and linked those judgments to nonverbal characteristics.
  - “No, the hand on the hip shows that she is not open to meet other people.”
  - “I would be less likely to approach him because he looks in a bad mood and I would be worried.”
- ❖ Although past research led us to expect strong reactions to color, the most common responses focused on positive reactions to a team name, and more frequent negative judgments associated with an organizational logo.
  - “Go Bucky. Frat boy may be too much.”
  - “I'm a sports fan and fraternities have a negative appeal to me.”
- ❖ Participants perceived models in casual clothing as more approachable than models dressed in “sexy” clothing.
  - “Nicely dressed and conservative look. Not attracted to the partying style.”
  - “She looks good in the clothes she wears while being modest at the same time which I find attractive.”

## Implications:

- Those seeking to meet an opposite-sex partner in a social setting should attend carefully to nonverbal factors. Since participants responded strongly to team and Greek logos, those seeking dates may wish to make conscious choices about how clothing may reveal affiliation.
- Responses to items on clothing and color may have been influenced by regional factors. Scholars should study both national and sample, regional samples to discover any regional influence on perceptions.

## References:

Cunningham, M. R., Barbee, A. P., & Pike, C. L. (1990). What do women want? Facialmetric assessment of multiple motives in the perception of male facial physical attractiveness. *Journal Of Personality & Social Psychology*, 59(1), 61-72.  
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Henningesen, D., Kartch, F., Orr, N., & Brown, A. (2009). The perceptions of verbal and nonverbal flirting cues in cross-sex interactions. *Human Communication*, 12(4), 371-381.