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Beauty and the Flirt: Male Physical Attractiveness and Approaches to Relationship Initiation

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Beauty and the Flirt:

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How individuals meet potential dating partners and initiate romantic relationships has intrigued researchers for years (Cunningham & Barbee, 2008; Mongeau, Serewicz, Henningsen, & Davis, 2006). The first verbal exchange at the onset of courtship influences whether a conversation will continue, and whether future interaction and/or a first date will occur. Past investigations of men's approach strategies, often called "pick-up lines" (Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke, Meeker, & Staneski, 1986) or "chat-up lines" (Bale, Morrison, & Caryl, 2006; Cooper, O'Donnell, Caryl, Morrison, & Bale, 2007), have explored different strategies' likelihood of receiving positive responses from women. Rather than attempt to test the effectiveness of all of men's approach strategies, the present manuscript uses relational communication theory (Dillard, Solomon, & Samp, 1996) to identify how message affiliation, dominance, and explicitness influence courtship outcomes and inform message interpretation. In addition, because men's physical attractiveness plays an important role in initiating courtship (Kurzban & Weeden, 2005), this manuscript explores the effect of male physical attractiveness on women's desire for conversation continuation and future interaction, and on women's perceptions of men's first date goals (Mongeau, Serewicz, & Therrien, 2004). In a series of three studies, this investigation explores how message affiliation, dominance, and explicitness influence strategy flirtatiousness (Study 1), how relational communication dimensions and physical attractiveness affect conversation continuance and desire for future interaction (Study 2), and how each informs women's perception of men's first date goals (Study 3). In doing so, this investigation seeks to extend past research on approach strategies by exploring how male physical attractiveness and relational message dimensions influence courtship outcomes.

Approach Strategies

Research on courtship initiation has identified many strategies for initiating romantic relationships (Clark, Shaver, & Abrahams, 1999). Research on approach strategies, more commonly known as pick-up lines, has shown that some strategies are more effective than others. In two studies, three categories of pick-up lines were identified and female preferences explored (Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke et al., 1986). Both studies confirmed that women dislike flippant pick-up lines such as, "I bet I can out-drink you," and prefer innocuous lines such as, "Hi" and "Do you go to school here?" that solicit self-disclosure. In two recent studies, pick-up lines gathered from television and film interactions were assessed for effectiveness (Bale, Morrison, & Caryl, 2006) and for preference (Cooper, O'Donnell, Caryl, Morrison, & Bale, 2007). Men and women both positively evaluated pick-up lines that demonstrated character, culture, and wealth (Bale et al., 2006) and humor (Cooper et al., 2007).

Although past research has been interested in identifying effective and preferred approach strategies, the present investigation seeks to extend past work by exploring the underlying relational communication dimensions of these strategies and the influence of these dimensions in communicating courtship goals. Rather than attempting to identify each individual courtship strategy and explore its effectiveness, the present research turns to relational communication theory (Dillard et al., 1996) to determine whether certain relational dimensions are more critical than others in communicating attraction and are thus more likely to receive a positive response from women.

Relational communication theory contends that interpersonal messages exchange content information and define the nature of the relationship between interactants (Dillard et al., 1996; Solomon, Dillard, & Anderson, 2002). The primary dimensions of a relational message are

affiliation (i.e., liking, positive regard, trust, & affection), dominance (i.e., control, authority, status, & power), and explicitness, which is described as a volume knob measuring message intensity (Dillard et al., 1996; Solomon, 2007). During courtship, all three dimensions are relevant in interpreting behavior and defining the nature of the relationship.

To successfully flirt, interactants must successfully convey a relational message that communicates affection beyond just positive regard and interest in future romantic interaction (Henningsen, 2004). To do so, the affiliative dimension is particularly relevant, in that parties are negotiating levels of attraction, mutual interest, and self-disclosure (Berger & Bell, 1988; Kunkel, Wilson, Olufowote, & Robson, 2003). Abrahams (1994) identified seven dimensions of affiliation relevant to the interpretation of a flirtatious message. Message dominance is also important during courtship, since one individual may attempt to persuade, cajole, or influence another. For example, Lannutti and Monahan (2002) found that dominance judgments were relevant in understanding a scenario where a man encourages a hesitant dating partner to have sex. Also, obtaining a phone number to further pursue a relationship can also be understood as compliance gaining, which engages the dominant frame (Dillard et al., 1996). On the other hand, Abrahams (1994) did not find a dominance dimension to be pertinent in interpreting romantic attraction. Finally, although often not considered a unique dimension of relational communication, Solomon (2007) found that explicitness was relevant to interpreting messages about sexual harassment: “because explicit messages demand that receivers respond to message content, the explicitness of sexual intent operates as an indicator of involvement” (p. 293). That is, explicit messages provided direct information about how to evaluate the behavior. The present investigation intends to identify which dimensions of relational communication convey romantic

interest in a way that increases the chance of future interaction, and whether each is relevant when clarifying the type of future interaction expected.

H₁ – Message affiliation, explicitness, and dominance will predict the degree to which an approach strategy is perceived as flirtatious.

RQ₁ – Which of the underlying relational dimensions of approach strategies are associated with conversation continuance and future interaction?

Physical Attractiveness and Mate Selection

A preference for attractive romantic partners is well documented (Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher, & Cate, 2000; Weaver & Harold, 2000). This preference alerts potential mates to good health and greater genetic fitness (Langlois et al., 2000). During the first stages of courtship, attractiveness plays a particularly important role (Kurzban & Weeden, 2005). Compared to an unattractive man, women are more likely to be interested in continuing interacting with a man they find attractive. More interaction increases the possibility of establishing both short- and long-term relationships (McDaniel, 2005; Regan & Dreyer, 1999).

H₂: Women will be more likely to continue a conversation with and agree to future interaction with attractive men in comparison to unattractive men.

Beyond good looks, attractive people are sought out more for interaction and their communication is considered more interesting and more enjoyable (Bull & Rumsey, 1988; McDaniel, 2005). It stands to reason that an approach strategy used by a more attractive man would be evaluated differently than one used by a less attractive man. Relational communication research helps to clarify why this may be. Even though the content of the message is the same, the relational meaning is different. That is, approach strategies used by attractive men may actually be judged to possess more of the positive dimensions and fewer of the negative

dimensions of affiliation in comparison to the exact same messages delivered by unattractive men. As a consequence, attractive men are able to use approach strategies that may be found to be off-putting or irritating if spoken by a less attractive men (McDaniel, 2005; Urbaniak & Kilmann, 2003). This manuscript will explore whether male attractiveness interacts with the dimensions of affiliation to produce additional advantages to attractive men (or disadvantages to unattractive men) when attempting to initiate courtship.

H₃: In comparison to an unattractive man, an attractive man's communication will be evaluated more positively on the dimensions of affiliation.

RQ₂: Do the affiliative dimensions of approach strategies that predict relational outcomes vary as a function of the attractiveness of the speaker?

Approach Strategies: Implications for First Date Goals

When interpreting a man's approach strategy, a woman seeks to answer several questions including, is he attracted to me, does he want a relationship with me, and is he interested in me in a romantic way? (Henningsen, 2004). Determining whether a man's intention is sexual or romantic (or both) is at the core of decoding flirting (Henningsen, 2004). Mongeau and colleagues (2004; Morr & Mongeau, 2004) have provided a rubric of first date goals. Some first date goals refer to the development of a romantic relationship, including to investigate romantic potential and to learn more about the partner. Others focus on non-romantic aspects of dating, including having fun and friendship. The final first date goal is the pursuit of sexual activity. It stands to reason that different relational dimensions inferred from approach strategies are likely to communicate different first date goals. For example, explicit strategies communicate interest in sex (Solomon, 2007), and are less likely to imply an interest in friendship or learning about the

partner (Clark et al., 1999). Affiliative strategies likely to communicate an interest in learning more about the individual, in that they indicate positive regard and affection.

H_{4a}: Approach strategy explicitness will inversely predict: 1) romantic potential, and 2) friendship, and will directly predict 3) sexual activity first date goals.

H_{4b}: Approach strategy affiliation will directly predict: 1) romantic potential, and 2) reduce both uncertainty, and 3) fun first date goals.

H_{4c}: Approach strategy dominance will directly predict sexual activity first date goals.

Most studies on approach strategies attempt to delineate the effectiveness or value of approach communication in isolation from its source. When making an evaluation of another person, individuals often use a combination of cues (Pavitt, 2006), including physical attractiveness (Bull & Rumsey, 1988). Past research has demonstrated that men have a tendency to overestimate women's sexual desire (e.g., Abbey, 1982; Koeppel, Montagne-Miller, O'Hair, & Cody, 1993), but the influence of men's attractiveness on women's perceptions is less well understood. Are women more likely to infer positive relational messages from desirable partners than from less desirable ones? If women are influenced by similar processes as men, women would be more likely to believe that an attractive man is interested in exploring relational potential and less likely to seek friendship on a first date. Such a finding would demonstrate that men's attractiveness results in similar wishful thinking for women as has been shown in past research on men's perceptions.

H₅: Men's attractiveness will be positively related to the inference of 1) romantic relational intent, and 2) negatively related to friendship first date goals.

Study 1: Identification and Evaluation of Approach Strategies

METHOD

Identification of Approach Statements

Sample. Pick-up lines, approach strategies, and conversation starters were gathered from 330 participants ($N_{female} = 238$). Sixty percent of the sample was Caucasian, 15% Asian-American, 11% African American, 7% Latino/Hispanic, 5% mixed race, and 3% did not answer the question. The average age of participants was 24.3 ($SD = 2.34$).

Instrument. Participants were given partial course credit in exchange for completing a short online survey instrument that asked participants to imagine a scenario in which a man approaches a woman at a party and initiates a conversation. Male respondents were asked, “How would you approach this person you just met in a similar situation? What would you say?” Females were asked, “How do men typically approach you in similar situations? What do they say?” Respondents offered brief responses, typically less than two sentences.

Coding approach statements. All open-ended responses were separated into distinct thought units. For example, a respondent may have suggested both to compliment a woman and to ask whether she is a student. These two were separated into two different thought units, yielding a total of 546 thought units. In teams of two, the four study authors independently categorized 30% of the responses. Approaches were placed in the same categories when they shared similar characteristics, such as questions soliciting similar types of information. After completing coding half of the thought units assigned, the coders met to identify shared categories. If sufficient reliability was found when calculated ($kappa > .70$), coders continued to independently code the remainder of the thought units. If not, disagreement about coding was resolved by discussion. An overall Cohen’s kappa was estimated to be .73.

The most common approach involved soliciting personal information (67%): “what do you do?”, “where are you from?”, and “do you go to school/which one?” The second most common category involved asking context-related questions (28.8%), “what do you like to drink?”, “do you like the music?” and “are you having fun?” The third most common category involved questions about the woman’s personal interests (19.2%): “what do you do for fun?” The fourth most common strategy was for men to use non-specific strategies (14.7%): to “be funny”, and to “tease her” (see Table 1).

Selecting representative items. To evaluate statements based upon the three dimensions of relational communication, a small, non-redundant, and representative sample of thought units were selected. A proportional percentage of thought units from each category were selected. The final set included 47 approach strategies.

Evaluation of Approach Strategies

Five independent female coders, none of whom were study authors, evaluated the 47 approaches on the three relational communication dimensions: dominance, affiliation, and explicitness. The coders were given a brief description of the context used to solicit the approaches from respondents. Similar to instructions given to respondents in Dillard et al. (1996), coders were asked to “Consider what the line communicates and implies about the relationship between man and the woman.” Coders were asked to minimize the contextual cues and focus on the meaning of the line. Each approach was also evaluated on the degree to which it was considered flirting.

Measurement. Dominance, affiliation, explicitness, and flirting were rated on 10-point semantic differential scales. Three items measured dominance (Burgoon & Hale, 1987) (“The man is trying to dominate/influence/control the woman” and “The woman is

submitting/conceding/yielding to the man"). The items were reliable ($\alpha = .94$) and were summed. Four items measured affiliation (Burgoon & Hale, 1987) ("The man likes/thinks positive thoughts/shows affection/is attracted to the woman very much" and "The man does not like/thinks negative thoughts/shows disaffection/is not attracted to the woman."). The items were reliable ($\alpha = .94$) and were summed. The three items measuring explicitness were drawn from Solomon (2007) ("The man is being very direct/very clearly stating his feelings/very clearly stating his intentions" and "The man is being very indirect/very unclearly stating his feelings/very unclearly stating his intentions"). The items were reliable ($\alpha = .88$) and were summed. The four items measuring flirtatiousness were modified from Koeppel et al. (1993) ("The man is definitely sexually interested/certainly trying to pick-up/is being very flirtatious with the woman" and "The man is definitely not sexually interested/certainly not trying to pick-up/is not being very flirtatious with the woman"). The items were reliable ($\alpha = .92$) and were summed. To explore the array of approaches on the three relational dimensions, the coders' ratings were z-transformed.

RESULTS

The most dominant strategies included, "I don't like to mix words. I think we should have sex together tonight" ($M = 8.40$), and taunts, "Aren't you going to clean up after that spill you just made" ($M = 8.27$), and attempts to control the woman's behavior, "Did you come to this party with anyone? If not, you should stick around with me for a while" ($M = 7.20$). These approach statements were more than 1.5 SD above the mean dominance score. The least dominant lines included a compliment, "I love your necklace. Where did you get it?" ($M = 3.87$) and a joke ($M = 4.00$). Most approaches were clustered around the dominance scale mid-point.

The most affiliative lines were compliments, “I think you are beautiful” ($M = 9.55$), and requests for sexual activity, “What are the chances of you and me making out tonight?” ($M = 8.20$). Both lines were more than $1.5 SD$ from the mean affiliation score. The least affiliative lines included the comment about cleaning up the spill mentioned in the dominance section ($M = 3.55$), and a taunt/tease ($M = 4.15$). Both comments were more than $1 SD$ below the mean affiliation scores. On average, statements were rated slightly above the midpoint of the affiliation scales.

Finally, the most explicit lines were highly dominant or highly affiliative. Statements of sexual attraction and sexual interest were more than $2 SD$ above the mean explicitness. The least explicit lines were, “Are you from the area originally?” ($M = 1.80$), a joke ($M = 1.80$), and comments about television/movies ($M = 2.40$). On average, approaches were rated as slightly less explicit than the scale midpoint.

The relationship between the dimensions of relational communication and the flirtatiousness of the approach was explored. The three dimensions of relational communication were correlated with the measure of flirtatiousness. Explicitness ($r = .73, p < .001$) and affiliation ($r = .87, p < .001$) were significantly correlated with flirtatiousness, but dominance was not ($r = .15, p = ns$).

DISCUSSION STUDY 1

Study 1 identified specific approach strategies used in courtship initiation, and evaluated these strategies on the three dimensions of relational communication. Soliciting self-disclosure, talking about the party, and asking the woman about her personal interests were the most commonly used strategies. The use of compliments or generic pick-up lines was uncommon.

Two important lessons can be drawn from Study 1. First, most approach strategies were not obviously flirting. Making small talk about the party, the host, the music, and the drinks all were

not rated as highly flirtatious, but were very common. These approaches were not considered to be particularly affiliative either, even though showing interest in the woman's life is a preferred approach to relational initiation (Clark et al., 1999). The approach strategies that were most likely to be considered flirting were rare, highly affiliative, and highly explicit. Sexually aggressive comments and compliments were much more effective in communicating attraction than engaging in small talk. The dominance of a message did not appear to relate to whether a message was considered flirting. Strategies that attempt to tease, control, or belittle a woman clearly convey dominance, but were neither flirtatious nor affiliative.

Study 1 identified the prevalence of flirting strategies and explored the association between message dominance, affiliation, and explicitness with flirting. Study 2 will explore the effectiveness of approach strategies and male physical attractiveness in achieving courtship outcomes. Study 2 will explore H₃ and RQ₂ by exploring which of Abrahams' (1994) affiliation dimensions predicts courtship outcomes and whether these vary as a function of men's attractiveness.

Study 2: Approach Strategies and Male Physical Attractiveness

METHOD

Sample. Three hundred and sixty-one women participated in Study 2 by completing an online instrument in return for partial course credit. The sample was recruited from one large introductory communication course and one large sociology course at a mid-sized private university. Only single female participants 18 to 30 years of age were recruited and allowed to take the survey. Participants were excluded if they indicated that they were in a relationship, by responding to questions, "Are you currently dating someone exclusively?" or by indicating they were engaged or married. Participants were also excluded if they indicated their age as greater

than 30 or less than 18. Sixty-two percent of the sample was Caucasian, 11% African-American, 15% Asian-American, 7% Latino/Hispanic, 1% Native American and 5% multi-racial. The average age was 24.3 ($SD = 3.89$).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of 8 conditions (4 x 2): 4 approach strategies and 2 levels of attractiveness. An image of an attractive male and an unattractive male were selected and used with permission from the beautycheck homepage: <http://www.beautycheck.de/english>) (Figure 1). The 2 males do not in fact exist; they are morphed faces created electronically and verified by observers to vary in attractiveness (Braun, Gruendl, Braun, Marberger & Scherber, 2001). Four approaches were chosen from each of the 4 dimensions created by the explicit and affiliative axes from Study 1. According to Study 1, these 2 dimensions are most relevant in the communication of interest. *Praise* was chosen as an explicit/ affiliative approach (“You have such beautiful eyes”), and *Solicit Self-Disclosure* (“So, what do you do?”) was chosen from the non-explicit/affiliative approach. The explicit/non-affiliative approach was represented by the *Sexually Aggressive* line (“What are the chances of you and me making out tonight”), and the non-explicit/non-affiliative approach was represented by the *Elicit Defensive Reaction* (“I can not believe you and Sophie are friends”) (Sophie is the mutual friend identified in the vignette).

Instrumentation. Participants read a vignette about going to a party at the home of a friend and meeting a man in the kitchen. Participants were random assigned to be shown one of two photographs of the man, and then answered 4 questions about the man’s physical attractiveness (a manipulation check on attractiveness) (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). The items were reliable ($\alpha = .91$) and were sum scored. Participants were then randomly assigned to read one of the four approach statements, and evaluated the approach strategy based upon Abrahams’ (1994) dimensions of flirtatiousness, plus four other items. Specifically, participants were asked to

evaluate the man's statements on 10 7-point semantic differential scales: Sexual-nonsexual, non-aggressive-aggressive, embarrassing-not embarrassing, annoying-not annoying, playful-non-playful, funny-not funny, inviting-uninviting, appropriate-inappropriate, conventional-nonconventional, and direct-indirect (Table 2).

Participants were asked to imagine that "just as the man had made his comment, a close girlfriend who came to the party with you entered the room. She said 'hello' and looked like she wanted to talk." A 5-item scale measured continuing conversation was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = "I definitely would not do this" to 5 = "I definitely would do this"). Sample items included "Tell the man you just met thanks and you will 'see him later' and leave the kitchen to go talk with your friend," (reverse coded), "Ask the man in the kitchen to come join you and your friend in the next room." The items were reliable ($\alpha = .78$) and were sum scored.

Finally, participants were instructed: "Imagine that an hour passes. You have talked with your friend and the party is still going strong. Imagine that the guy you met in the kitchen passes you on the way out the door and he says, 'I have to go to another party tonight. Can I call you sometime?'" His photograph was again displayed. Participants were asked to provide a probability between 0% and 100% on an 11-pt scale to determine the likelihood of a future interaction (0 = 0%, 10 = 100%). Sample items included, "How likely is it that you would give him your accurate phone number if he asked for it?" and "What is the likelihood that you would go on a date with this man?" These three items were reliable ($\alpha = .90$) and sum scored.

RESULTS

Manipulation check. The attractive man was more physically attractive ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .65$) than the unattractive man ($M = 2.35$, $SD = .72$), $t(359) = 17.70$, $p < .001$. We expected that the 4 approach strategies would vary systematically on explicitness and affiliation. A one-way

ANOVA with planned post hoc comparisons demonstrate that the *Sexually Aggressive* approach was rated as more explicit ($M = 6.48$) than *Praise* ($M = 5.49, p < .001$), *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($M = 4.69; p < .001$) and *Elicit Defensive Reaction* ($M = 5.08, p < .001$). *Praise* was more explicit than *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($p < .001$), but only approaching a significant difference from *Elicit Defensive Reaction* ($p = .06$). As expected, *Sexually Aggressive* and *Praise* were perceived as explicit and *Elicit Defensive Reaction* and *Solicit Self-Disclosure* were perceived as less explicit. Message affiliation was measured using the invitingness measure. A second one-way ANOVA with planned post hoc comparisons demonstrated *Praise* ($M = 4.65$) was more inviting than both *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 3.35, p < .001$), and *Elicit Defensive Reaction* approaches ($M = 3.73, p < .001$). *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($M = 4.86$) was more inviting than *Sexually Aggressive* ($p < .001$), and *Elicit Defensive Reaction* approaches ($p < .001$), but was no more or less inviting than *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($p = ns$). As expected, *Sexually Aggressive* and *Elicit Defensive Reaction* approaches were less inviting, and *Praise* and *Solicit Self-Disclosure* were more inviting.

Attractiveness and Strategy on Conversation and Future Interaction

A MANOVA was conducted to estimate the effects of male attractiveness and approach strategy on conversation and future interaction. For conversational outcomes, there were significant main effects for attractiveness, $F(2, 352) = 39.26, p < .001$, *partial η²* = .10, and for approach strategy, $F(3,352) = 9.63, p < .001$, *partial η²* = .08, but no significant interaction effect ($p = ns$), offering support for H₂. Planned post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants were significantly more likely to include the man in conversation if the man used *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($M = 2.66$) than if he had used *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 2.08, p < .001$) or *Elicit Defensive Reaction* ($M = 2.31, p < .001$), but there was no difference between *Solicit Self-*

Disclosure and Praise ($M = 2.58$). Participants were also more likely to include the man in a conversation if he had used *Praise* compared to *Sexually Aggressive* ($p < .001$) or the *Elicit Defensive Reaction* ($p > .05$). Participants were more likely to continue having a conversation with the man using *Elicit Defensive Reaction* compared to *Sexually Aggressive* ($p < .05$).

For future interaction, results indicated that there were significant main effects for attractiveness, $F(2, 352) = 73.42, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .18$, and for approach strategy, $F(3, 352) = 5.73, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, and no significant interaction effect ($p = ns$), offering support for H₂. Participants indicated there was a greater chance they would agree to future interaction with the attractive male ($M = 4.74$), compared to the unattractive male ($M = 2.06$). Women were less likely to seek future interaction with males who used *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 2.37$) compared to all other strategies: *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($M = 4.11, p < .001$), *Praise* ($M = 3.85, p < .001$), or *Elicit Defensive Reactions* ($M = 3.40, p < .05$), but these three strategies did not significantly differ from one another.

Affiliation and Male Attractiveness

According to a second MANOVA, the ratings of the approach strategies were significantly influenced by the man's attractiveness, $F(10, 344) = 4.40, p < .001$, and by type of strategy, $F(30, 1038) = 21.40, p < .001$. There was no interaction effect ($p = ns$). Strategies used by an attractive male were rated as more inviting ($M = 3.53$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 4.19$), $F(1, 353) = 14.06, p < .001$, playful ($M = 3.42$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 4.08$), $F(1, 353) = 18.40, p < .001$, funny ($M = 4.84$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 5.21$), $F(1, 353) = 4.82, p < .05$, appropriate ($M = 4.05$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 4.50$), $F(1, 353) = 8.72, p < .01$, and less annoying ($M = 4.36$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 3.60$), $F(1,$

$F_{353} = 18.414, p < .001$. These results support H_3 , which predicted that the communication of an attractive man would be evaluated more positively on the affiliation dimension.

RQ₁ explored the relationship between the affiliation dimensions of approach strategies and courtship outcomes, and RQ₂ queried whether speaker attractiveness plays a role in which affiliation dimensions were predictors of outcomes. To make the 10 affiliation dimensions of flirting more manageable, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. From the results of the EFA, 4 sum scores were created: funny and playful, embarrassing and annoying, conventional and appropriate, and sexual and aggressive (for a similar procedure see Clark et al., 1999). Directness and inviting did not load on to each other or any prior factors, so single item measures of these two dimensions were retained. To explore the RQs, four sum scores and two single items were used to predict conversation continuation and future interaction. Interaction effects between the six relational communication dimensions and attractiveness were estimated in two separate regression analyses.

The more annoying/embarrassing the approach strategy was judged to be, the more likely women were to end the conversation ($\beta = -.41, SE = .01, p < .001$). Strategies that were more funny/playful ($\beta = .22, SE = .03, p < .001$) and more inviting ($\beta = .18, SE = .02, p < .001$) were more likely to lead to more conversation. These three dimensions of affiliation explained 30% of the variance in conversation continuation. Similarly, more embarrassing/ annoying strategies decreased the chance of future interaction ($\beta = -.33, SE = .48, p < .001$), and more inviting ($\beta = .22, SE = .94, p < .001$) and funny/playful strategies ($\beta = .18, SE = 1.17, p < .001$) increased the chance of future interaction. These three dimensions explained 26% of the variance in future interaction. The directness, conventionality, and the aggressiveness/ sexuality of the strategy were not relevant to predict conversation continuation and future interaction.

Finally, interaction terms were entered into separate regression analyses to explore whether the predictive dimensions of flirtatiousness varied as a function of male attractiveness. Results indicated that for conversation, only the sexual/aggressive dimension varied as a function of attractiveness ($\beta = .43$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$), wherein a more attractive man was more likely than an unattractive man to be included in the conversation when using sexually aggressive approach strategies. There were no significant interaction terms for predicting future interaction. Embarrassing/annoying, playful/funny, and inviting dimensions were significant predictors for attractive and unattractive men for both conversation and future interaction.

DISCUSSION STUDY 2

The goal of Study 2 was to explore the role of men's attractiveness and approach strategies in conversation continuation and future interaction. In support of H₂, attractive men have a considerable advantage in courtship outcomes. Women are more likely to include the attractive male in the conversations, and more likely to give an accurate phone number and go on a date. Regardless of what approach strategy used, women estimated that there was a 47% chance of seeking future interaction with the attractive male, more than twice the chance given to the unattractive male (i.e., 21%). These results reinforce past findings regarding the advantages of male attractiveness in courtship (McDaniel, 2005; Urbaniak & Kilmann, 2003). Supporting H₃, male attractiveness also changed the interpretation of the approach strategy. Women perceived that whatever an attractive male said was more inviting, playful, funny, appropriate, and less annoying, compared to the same statements said by an unattractive male. These findings suggest that attractive men have an advantage over unattractive men because their statements are judged as more affiliative on the dimensions of flirtatiousness (Abrahams, 1994).

Regression analyses explored which affiliation dimensions predicted conversation and future interaction. In response to RQ₁, the degree to which an approach strategy is annoying/embarrassing, funny/playful, and inviting are the most important predictors for conversation continuation and future interaction for both attractive and unattractive men. In response to RQ₂, in comparison to an unattractive man, attractive men can also elicit a positive outcome when their strategies are sexually aggressive. Attractive men may be able to express sexual interest more aggressively because their advances are more likely to be received positively for short-term mating (Regan et al., 2000; Regan & Dreyer, 1999).

There are limitations to Study 2. Although other experimental conditions were rated in the expected directions, the *Solicit Self-Disclosure* approach was not significantly more explicit than the *Elicit Defensive Reaction* approach, which meant that the experimental manipulation was not completely effective. In addition, measures of affiliation, dominance, and flirting were not collected due to a data collection error, so the inviting item was used as a manipulation check. Study 3 measures message dominance, explicitness, and affiliation of the approach strategies to explore whether these dimensions inform flirtatiousness and first date goals.

Study 3: Approach Strategy and First Date Goals

METHOD

Sample. Three hundred and ninety-six women, drawn from three samples, participated in Study 3. One sample was drawn from a mid-sized private university in the western US ($N = 138$), the second from a large public university in the Midwest ($N = 197$), and the third from a second public university in the Midwest ($N = 61$). Only female participants 18 to 30 years of age were recruited ($M = 19.9$, $SD = 2.11$), and individuals who were in long-term relationships or

engaged or married were excluded. Seventy-four percent of the sample was Caucasian, 3% African-American, 13% Asian-American, 5% Latino/Hispanic, and 4% were multi-racial.

Instrumentation. The procedures of Study 2 were duplicated with some changes. The 396 females were randomly assigned to one of ten conditions (5×2): 5 approach strategies and 2 levels of attractiveness. Participants read the same vignette about going to a party used in Study 2. After viewing a photograph of either the attractive or unattractive man, participants evaluated his physical attractiveness on a 4-item scale, which was reliable ($\alpha = .91$). To ensure that the results of Study 2 were not limited to the particular approach strategies, four different strategies than those used in Study 2 were used. Four approach statements were chosen from each of the 4 dimensions created by the explicitness and affiliation axes according to Study 1, and one statement was chosen from the center of both dimensions: *Solicit Self-Disclosure* (“When you are not at crazy parties like these, what do you do?”). The explicit/high affiliation approach was represented by the *Sexually Aggressive* line (“What are the chances of you and me making out tonight”). The non-explicit/high affiliation approach was represented by *Notice Body* (“I couldn’t help but notice that you had a tattoo on your lower back. When did you get that?”). The non-explicit/low affiliation approach was represented by *Ask about Host* (“I’m dying to know what Sophie was like when she was in high school”). The explicit/low affiliation approach was represented by *Taunt* (“Aren’t you going to clean up after the spill you just made?”). Participants then evaluated the approach strategies on the same affiliative dimensions as Study 2, and the 3 dimensions of relational communication used in Study 1. Measures of relational communication were reliable and summed (affiliation $\alpha = .78$; dominance $\alpha = .84$; explicitness $\alpha = .74$) (Table 2). Flirting was measured using Study 1 item (Koeppel et al., 1993), which were reliable ($\alpha = .82$) and summed.

Using the vignette from Study 2, participants were asked to imagine a friend entered the room and asked to evaluate the likelihood of continuing the conversation on the same 4-item scale ($\alpha = .73$). Participants were asked to imagine being approached by the man later in the party who asked for the participant's phone number, and to evaluate the likelihood of future interaction on a 3 item, 11-point scale (0% = 0) and (100% = 10), this measure was reliable ($\alpha = .77$). In addition, participants were asked to imagine that they actually went on a date with the man in question, regardless of their actual likelihood of doing so. Using Mongeau et al.'s (2004) first date goal inventory, participants evaluated the man's goals on this date. The following five goals were measured: *relationship goal* 12 items ("To deepen our relationship" and "To test me out as a relational partner" $\alpha = .93$), *sex goal* 10 items ("To kiss me" and "To have sex with me" $\alpha = .94$), *learning goal* 7 items ("To get to know me" and "To find out more about me" $\alpha = .93$), *fun goal* 5 items ("To have fun" and "To have a good time" $\alpha = .82$), and *friendship goal* 3 items ("Because he wants a friend" and "To develop a friendship" $\alpha = .88$). See Table 2.

RESULTS

Manipulation check. The attractive male was rated more physically attractive ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .77$) than the unattractive male ($M = 2.04$, $SD = .62$), $t(379) = 19.88$, $p < .001$. The 5 approach strategies varied systematically on the explicitness and affiliative dimensions. Approach strategies were different in explicitness, $F(4, 382) = 34.05$, $p < .001$. *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 5.15$, $SD = .93$) was rated as more explicit than all other approach strategies ($p < .001$). *Notice Body* was more explicit than the 3 remaining strategies ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .95$, $p < .001$). *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.04$) was more explicit than *Ask about Host* ($M = 3.49$, $p < .01$) and *Taunt* ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .96$, $p < .05$). Approach strategies were rated differently on the overall affiliation measure, $F(4, 383) = 5.89$, $p < .001$. *Notice Body* ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .81$), *Solicit*

Self-Disclosure ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .95$), and *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.01$) were rated as more affiliative than *Taunt* ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.16$) and *Ask about Host* ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.17$).

The affiliation dimensions were consistent with the intended experimental dimensions (Table 2).

Predicting Conversation and Future Interaction

A MANOVA was conducted to estimate the effects of attractiveness and approach strategy on conversation and future interaction. For conversation outcomes, there were significant main effects for attractiveness, $F(1, 387) = 52.35$, $p < .001$, $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .12$, and for approach strategy, $F(4, 387) = 6.56$, $p < .001$, $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .07$, and no significant interaction effect ($p = ns$). Planned post hoc comparisons indicated that participants were significantly more likely to include the male in conversation if he used *Solicit Self-Disclosure* ($M = 2.55$) than if he used *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 1.99$, $p < .001$) or *Elicit Defensive Reaction* ($M = 2.11$, $p < .001$), but there was no difference between *Solicit Self-Disclosure* and *Notice Body* ($M = 2.39$) or *Ask about Host* ($M = 2.43$). Participants were more likely to include the male in a conversation if he had used *Notice Body* compared to *Sexually Aggressive* ($p < .001$) or the *Elicit Defensive Reaction* ($p > .01$). Participants were equally likely to include the male using *Elicit Defensive Reaction* compared to *Sexually Aggressive* ($p = ns$).

For future interaction, there were significant main effects for attractiveness, $F(1, 387) = 157.47$, $p < .001$, $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .30$, and for approach strategy, $F(4, 387) = 6.77$, $p < .001$, $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .07$, and no significant interaction effect ($p = ns$). Planned post hoc comparisons indicated that participants were significantly less likely to include the male in conversation if he used the *Sexually Aggressive* approach ($M = 2.86$, $p < .001$) than using other approaches, and there were no differences between the 4 other approach strategies ($p = ns$).

Rating the Strategies. In support of H₃, the ratings of the approach strategies were influenced by the man's attractiveness. Strategies used by an attractive male were rated as less annoying ($M = 4.01$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 4.74$), $F(1, 379) = 24.53, p < .001$, less embarrassing ($M = 3.51$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 4.05$), $F(1, 377) = 16.60, p < .001$, funnier ($M = 3.85$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 3.35$), $F(1, 376) = 11.05, p < .001$, more appropriate ($M = 4.03$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 3.61$), $F(1, 377) = 8.72, p < .001$, and more inviting ($M = 4.37$) compared to an unattractive male ($M = 4.01$) $F(1, 377) = 6.08, p < .05$. None of the interactions between the man's attractiveness and the approach strategies were significant. These results replicate results found in Study 2.

Regression analyses regarding the dimensions of affiliation predictive of conversational and future interaction were conducted. Results demonstrate that message invitingness positively predicted conversational outcomes ($\beta = .20, SE = .03, p < .001$) and message annoyance/embarrassment negatively predicted conversational outcomes ($\beta = -.43, SE = .03, p < .001$). In combination, two dimensions explained 31% of the variance in conversation continuation. The second regression analysis demonstrated that message funniness/playfulness positively predicted future interaction ($\beta = .12, SE = .13, p < .05$) and message annoyance/embarrassment negatively predicted future interaction ($\beta = -.39, SE = .14, p < .001$). In combination, both affiliation dimensions explained 25% of the variance in future interaction. Message dominance, affiliation, explicitness, conventionality, and sexual aggressiveness predicted neither conversational continuation nor future interaction outcomes.

Interaction analyses demonstrated that the annoyance/embarrassment dimension predicted conversation continuation for both attractive and unattractive men, and only one significant interaction emerged. The invitingness of an approach strategy spoken by an attractive man

increased the likelihood of continuing the conversation ($\beta = .52, SE = .05, p < .001$). Interaction analyses on future interaction indicated that the annoyance/embarrassment dimension also predicted future interaction for both men, and again one significant interaction effect was revealed. Specifically, the playful/funny dimension conferred an additional positive influence on future interaction when spoken by the attractive man ($\beta = .15, SE = .17, p < .05$).

Flirting and First Date Goals

To follow up on Study 1, approach strategies were analyzed based upon the degree to which they were considered flirting. A MANOVA demonstrated that the different strategies, but not the man's attractiveness, were significantly different on whether the man was perceived to be flirting, $F(9, 347) = 13.95, p < .001$. Planned post hoc tests demonstrated that women believed the man was flirting when he used *Sexually Aggressive* ($M = 5.46$) and *Notice Body* ($M = 5.18, p < .01$), in comparison to the other 3 strategies. When the man *Solicited Self-Disclosure* he was rated as more flirtatious ($M = 4.73$) than when he used a *Taunt* ($M = 4.12$) or *Asked about Host* ($M = 3.88, p < .001$). Further analyses sought to replicate the finding of Study 1 that suggested that approach affiliation and explicitness, but not dominance predicted whether raters believed the approach was flirtatious. In Study 3, participants were asked to judge how certain they were that the man was flirting with them after evaluating the relational communication dimensions, including explicitness, dominance, and affiliation and Abrahams' (1994) dimensions of flirting. Regression analysis indicated that degree to which the approach was affiliative ($\beta = .38, SE = .05, p < .001$), and the degree to which it was explicit ($\beta = .37, SE = .05, p < .001$), but not the degree to which it was dominant was related to whether the man was perceived to be flirting. This offered partial support for H₁ but replicated the findings of Study 1. One additional measure

provided unique information about whether a strategy was flirtatious: more sexual/aggressive approaches were likely to be perceived as flirtatious ($\beta = .20, SE = .04, p < .001$).

We expected the 5 different first date goals to be related to message affiliation, dominance, and explicitness. To test these relationships, the three relational dimensions and men's physical attractiveness were separately regressed onto each of the five first date goals (FDG). Results indicate support for H_{4a}. Message explicitness was positively related to sexual activity FDG ($\beta = .23, SE = .04, p < .001$), and inversely related to investigating romantic potential ($\beta = -.19, SE = .04, p < .001$) and friendship FDGs ($\beta = -.23, SE = .05, p < .001$). H_{4b} was also supported: message affiliation was positively related to romantic potential ($\beta = .29, SE = .04, p < .001$), learning ($\beta = .23, SE = .04, p < .001$), and fun FDGs ($\beta = .23, SE = .03, p < .001$). In support of H_{4c}, results indicated that message dominance was a consistent predictor of sexual activity FDG ($\beta = .23, SE = .04, p < .001$). Approach strategy dominance was negatively related to romantic potential ($\beta = -.17, SE = .03, p < .01$), fun ($\beta = -.27, SE = .03, p < .001$), learning ($\beta = -.32, SE = .03, p < .001$), and friendship FDGs ($\beta = -.17, SE = .04, p < .01$). Finally, men's physical attractiveness was unrelated to women's perceptions of men's FDGs, so H₅ was not supported.

DISCUSSION STUDY 3

The results of Study 3 replicate those of Study 2 by demonstrating that message affiliation and explicitness inform message flirtatiousness (H₁), and that approach strategies that are affiliative are more effective than explicit or dominant strategies. Results suggest that attractive men are more likely to encounter positive courtship outcomes regardless of the strategy used (H₂), are more likely to be evaluated positively on the dimensions of affiliation (H₃), and that positive dimensions of flirting, specifically messages that are inviting and playful/funny, additionally benefit attractive men (RQ₂). Finally, all three dimensions of relational

communication affect perceived partner first date goals (H_{4a-c}), but male attractiveness does not (H_5).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Study 1 demonstrated that soliciting self-disclosure, talking about the social event, and asking a woman about her personal interests were common approach strategies. Soliciting self-disclosure and seeking common interests are strategies found in past research on relational initiation (Clark et al., 1999) and the development of closeness (Hess, Fannin, & Pollom, 2007). The use of compliments was less common and the use of generic pick-up lines was very rare. In terms of the relational communication, the strategies that solicited information were rather inexplicit. This confirms past research that suggested most approach strategies do not directly state the intentions of the speaker (Kunkel et al., 2003). For example, soliciting self-disclosure and seeking commonality were approaches that tended to cluster toward the middle of the affiliation scale and were generally inexplicit. Strategies that were rarely used were evaluated more extremely. Sexually aggressive comments were very unlikely upon first meeting a woman, but were the most dominant, affiliative, and explicit. Offering compliments was the only approach strategy that was somewhat commonly used, offered by 10% of respondents, and highly affiliative and explicit.

The results of Study 1 and Study 3 demonstrated that explicitness and affiliation, but not dominance, were related to message flirtatiousness, reinforcing Abrahams (1994). Why does message explicitness, but not dominance, inform message flirtatiousness? Similar to Solomon's (2007) findings on sexual harassment, explicitness draws attention to the desired relationship between communicators. On the other hand, dominant approaches may prompt women to distance themselves if the strategy attempts to control a woman's behavior or taunt the woman.

This suggests that the difference between dominant and explicit approaches is the expression of sexuality. As Study 3 demonstrated, the sexual aggressiveness of an approach strategy provides information about whether it is flirtatious. Dominant approaches that are non-sexual often are also not very explicit, while dominant approaches that are sexual tend to be quite explicit.

Relational Communication and Outcomes

In Study 2 and Study 3, three affiliative dimensions of the strategy predicted courtship outcomes: a woman's evaluation of embarrassing/annoying, inviting, and playful/funny. These three dimensions explained nearly a third of the variance in courtship outcomes. Additionally, these results cannot be attributed to the selection of particular approach strategies because Study 3 found similar results using four different approach strategies than those used in Study 2. The importance of avoiding approach strategies that women may find embarrassing and annoying speaks to the importance women place on flirting that conveys sincere interest (Hall, Carter, Cody, & Albright, 2010), and common complaints that many of men's approach strategies are off-putting (Cunningham, 1989). In addition, the value of more funny and playful approach strategies may emphasize the value that both men and women place on a potential partner's sense of humor (Bressler, Martin, & Balshine, 2006), and reinforce Cooper et al. (2007) who found that humor is valued in chat-up lines. Overall, these results emphasize the importance of men expressing affiliation through flirting in ways that are positive and enjoyable.

The regression analyses exploring the differences in the judgments of the affiliative dimension based upon attractiveness condition demonstrate further advantages attractive men have when flirting. For an attractive man, sexually aggressive approach strategies (Study 2) and message invitingness (Study 3) were positively related to continuing a conversation, and for an unattractive man more embarrassing and annoying decrease the likelihood of further interaction

(Study 3). Although a more consistent interaction pattern between studies would offer stronger evidence of the additional benefits of attractiveness on the interpretation of approach strategies, two studies with different samples and different approach lines demonstrated similar results. A clearer demonstration of the benefits of men's attractiveness was found in judgments of approach strategy when compared by attractiveness. Results demonstrated that when spoken by the unattractive man, approach strategies were rated as more annoying and more embarrassing. For the attractive man, strategies were rated as funnier and more inviting. These results emphasize that negatively predictive dimensions of flirtatiousness-- embarrassing and annoying --are more likely to be interpreted in the actions of an unattractive man, and more positively predictive dimensions-- inviting and funny --are more likely to be interpreted in the communication of an attractive man, regardless of approach strategy.

This investigation showed that various strategies can demonstrate different degrees of success. Of the nine approaches studied, *Soliciting Self-Disclosure* and *Asking about Host* are most successful in being included in conversations and increasing the chance of future interaction. *Praise* and *Notice Body* were somewhat less effective. To praise or to notice the body of a woman were more explicit and more affiliative strategies than soliciting self-disclosure and asking about the host. This suggests that affiliative and somewhat explicit messages help to convey relational interest in courtship without strongly diminishing the likelihood of desired courtship outcomes. Not surprisingly, men who used the *Elicit Defensive Reaction* and *Taunt* were not particularly successful at being included in further conversations or in securing phone numbers. The least effective approach was the *Sexually Aggressive* approach. It was surprising that tactics such as *Taunt* or *Elicit Defensive Reaction* were not as fatal as the *Sexually Aggressive* strategy. Why? Both strategies tease the participant, and may be seen as a direct

challenge to the women's self-presentation. This tactic baits a women to defend herself, which may operate effectively in one of two ways: (i) to ensure a dialogue as the female defends herself, and (ii) men who use this tactic may make a memorable impression on females. The strategy is very rare according to Study 1 and may violate expectations about what men typically say. It also may be interpreted in a humorous light, especially if the man is attractive.

Past research demonstrates that flirting tactics are positive or negative or effective or ineffective based upon the quality of the tactic, not on the quality of the source (Bale et al., 2006; Cooper et al., 2007; Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke et al., 1986). Our results suggest that both the source and the strategy matter. The differences between the attractive and unattractive man in terms of future interaction are particularly striking. Regardless of strategy used, the results of Studies 2 and 3 demonstrate that on average women gave the attractive man a 47-55% chance of future interaction and for the unattractive man on average only a 20-25% chance.

First Date Goals

The exploration of FDGs indicates that approach strategy, but not men's attractiveness is related to what women expect during a first date. This investigation demonstrates that Mongeau et al.'s (2004) FDGs can be inferred from verbal communication during courtship initiation. Using an explicit strategy clearly communicates interest in sexual contact on the first date, and not romance or friendship. Alternatively, message affiliation was positively related to romantic potential, learning, and having fun on a first date. The relationship between approach strategy and the other FDGs demonstrates an interesting interplay between communicating romantic versus platonic relational interest. Asking about the host of the party, a supposed mutual friend, communicates an interest in developing a friendship or learning more about the participant. For the notice body approach, which is more explicit and more affiliative than soliciting self-

disclosure or asking about the host, women interpreted the man's behavior as sexually motivated, rather than an attempt to develop a relationship and a friendship. The difference between these two strategies speaks to the challenges of communication during courtship. When using more polite and commonplace strategies, men may be unable to convey romantic and potential sexual interest, but the use of more sexually explicit strategies yields very negative outcomes, especially for unattractive men, although it clearly communicates sexual intent.

Finally, message dominance conveys interest in sex during a first date and decreases the communication of interest in any other FDG. Similar to results found by Lannutti and Monahan (2002), dominance conveys sexuality through the assertion of relational control, independent of message explicitness. The dominant approach strategies coded in Study 1 often communicate disapproval or aggression. These strategies may convey sexual interest because they reduce ambiguity about how a man regards a woman and what sort of relationship he intends to pursue.

Conclusions

To summarize this multi-study investigation on approach strategies, we offer the following three conclusions. First, results strongly support the conclusion that affiliation and explicitness are relevant dimensions in the communication of attraction. Results extend research on relational communication (Dillard et al., 1996), particularly those found by Solomon (2007) on explicitness. When courtship initiation is construed as a relational action, then explicitness of the message clarifies the message's content as liking a woman in a *different way*. Similar to the case of sexual harassment (Solomon, 2007), an explicit approach strategy conveys liking, but not just friendly or innocuous liking, but sexual liking, which is particularly evident in the analysis of FDGs. In the case of romantic communication, a highly explicit message demands recognition

by the receiver as something beyond liking. This suggests it does not merely turn up the volume on how much the man likes a woman, it communicates a different sort of attraction altogether.

Second, the present research extends past research on pick-up lines (Bale et al., 2006; Cooper et al., 2007; Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke et al., 1986) by taking into account source characteristics and relational outcomes. More importantly, the present research supports the conclusion of Mongeau et al. (2006) in their review of sex differences in romantic relationships: “the basis of women’s variation in sexual interaction lies in social and situational factors” (p. 349). In the present investigation, women adjusted their inferred FDGs based upon partner communication behaviors rather than partner attractiveness. This is not to diminish the effects of physical attractiveness on courtship outcomes, which in this investigation were marked. Instead, taking into account the attractiveness of the source, women’s expectations of future behavior by men appear to be more strongly influenced by what is said rather than the attractiveness of suitor during courtship initiation.

Finally, the results help to explain why despite the overall ineffectuality of generic approach strategies and direct sexual strategies found in this and other past studies (Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke et al., 1986), women still encounter such behaviors and men sometimes report success when approaching women in this way. As Regan and Dreyer (1999) report in their investigation of young women’s rationale for short-term mating, attractive men may be able to approach women in assertive and/or flippant ways because some young women excuse men’s behavior when the man is particularly attractive. In the present study, when attractive men asked, “What are the chances of you and men making out?” women reported a 36% (Study 2) and 23% (Study 3) chance of giving her phone number and going on a date, and this approach strategy is perceived as less off-putting (i.e., annoying/embarrassing) and more inviting when spoken by an

attractive man. As a consequence, attractive men may find efficient short-term mating success in communicating in this manner because it clearly conveys sexual intent and wastes little time in sorting out women who respond positively to this strategy from those who are less receptive. If men are successful by doing so, they may speak to other male friends about their strategies, leading other men to attribute success to the pick-up lines' effectiveness not to the characteristics of the speaker. Although this conclusion is speculative, future research may be able to determine whether men who are able to achieve short-term mating success by using such strategies are also particularly attractive men.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary limitation of the present investigation is the use of single approach strategies in a scenario-based experimental design that utilized only a photo of an imagined partner. These features of study reduce this investigation's ecological validity. Flirtatious exchanges develop through an ongoing interplay between communicators, and few studies have explored the verbal and nonverbal give-and-take of initial romantic interactions (for an exception see Grammer, Kruck, Juette, & Fink, 2000). In addition, this investigation's focus on verbal communication in the absence of nonverbal communication removes a very important component in the communication of romantic interest (Moore, 1985). Given the difficulty of observing verbal behavior in environments where potential partners meet, few studies have explored the role of verbal behavior as it actually occurs. This limitation suggests that the results of this manuscript may be limited to the context of a first meeting at a party, and may have limited application to behavior in other environments. Nonetheless, the use of relational communication theory has helped to identify the specific dimensions of men's behavior that are predictive of women's positive responses. Future research using observational behavioral methods may be able to

determine whether the embarrassing, inviting, and playful dimensions of men's flirtatious behavior are predictive of positive reception by women.

A second limitation is the use of only female participants. The purpose of the present investigation was to explore the way that women interpret men's behavior. Limiting participation to only women was a choice made to follow the typical sex role script where men are the primary verbal initiator of conversation (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Mongeau et al., 2006). In doing so, only one half of courtship was investigated here. Future research may explore how women's verbal behavior influences men's goals and attraction.

The present investigation concludes with one final issue. In this study and others (e.g., Clark et al., 1999; Cunningham, 1989), women state that conventional approaches that solicit self-disclosure and conduct polite conversation are preferred, and in this investigation, these strategies resulted in the most positive courtship outcomes. However, results indicate that these strategies are more likely to convey friendship FDGs and less likely to convey sexual or relational FDGs. Although other strategies, such as compliments and comments about a woman's body may be more effective at raising a woman's awareness of interest beyond friendship, these strategies have costs. The theoretical challenge for future research on flirting is to determine whether approach communication strategies frame relationship expectations in ways that guide and limit future romantic development. Conventional approaches, such as small talk, may imply a friendship, rather than a romantic frame. If so, this may result in difficulties when attempting to escalate a relationship beyond friendship. Future research may determine whether one of the costs of using relational initiation strategies preferred by women results in men being framed as friends, rather than potential romantic partners.

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Figure 1

Attractive and Unattractive Male



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Table 1
All approach categories and examples

<i>Soliciting personal information</i>	67%
What do you do? (General)	
What school do you go to?	
Where do you work?	
Where are you from? (Past)	
Where do you live? (Present)	
What is your major?	
<i>Content-related questions</i>	28.8%
You having fun?	
Drink-related comments/questions	
Want to hang out with me?	
Do you want to dance?	
What are you doing after the party?	
<i>Ask about interests</i>	19.2%
What do you do for fun?	
What kind of media (music/TV/movies) do you like?	
What do you like to do?	
Did you go to the last game?	
<i>General strategies</i>	14.7%
Anything to make her laugh	
Anything to maintain conversation	
Nonverbal - touch, proxemics	
Teasing/ negative comments	
Be aggressive	
<i>Ask about mutual friend</i>	12.3%
How do you know her?	
<i>Compliments</i>	9.6%
Attractiveness/Looks	
Compliment clothes, smell, etc.	
<i>Comments about other people at party</i>	7.6%
Who did you come with?	
Find someone in common	
<i>Others</i>	6.2%
Pick-up lines	
Talk about weather	
Talk about church	

Note: Percentages listed as percent of respondents offering strategy ($N = 330$).