Speechless Attraction: An Investigation of Nonverbal Genderlects

Cameron Howser
Department of Theatre & Communication Arts

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In addition to the initial stages of social attraction, nonverbal communication plays a vital role in maintaining romantic relationships. A basic component for keeping a relationship is the sustained mutual attraction between the two individuals within that relationship. To accomplish this one must find ways to keep his or her partner engaged and interested in maintaining the relationship. The study of the role of nonverbal cues in sustaining romantic relationships will contribute to the development of communication signals that may be used to achieve this goal.
Many fail to recognize nonverbal cues that convey messages to their communicative partners.

Nonverbal cues are often unintentionally sent and received.

Failure to recognize these nonverbal cues can be detrimental to an individual’s relationships.
Purpose & Significance

- Provide the basic understanding of nonverbal cues within attraction.
- Identify and interpret nonverbal cues within attraction specific to a particular gender.
- Determine the reasoning and influence behind the gender specific cues.
- Majority of the population of people are attracted to another person, therefore this study examines one the many components within attraction.
Research Questions

- Are there gender specific nonverbal cues that indicate attraction, if so what are they?
- Are there specific cues that men exert more than women to indicate attraction and vice versa?
- What are the intended goals and reasoning behind these gender specific cues?
Deborah Tannen’s Genderlect Styles Theory
The examination of a variety of speech or sociolect that is associated with a particular gender.

Cooperative (support) vs. Competitive (status)
Rapport vs. Report

Instead on focusing on speech, we focused on nonverbal cues associated with a particular gender.
-Rapport- Indicate that women communicate with the intention to build and maintain relationships with others hoping to link and interweave thoughts with their communicative partners.

-Report- Suggest that men communicate with the intent to look good, strong, competitive, or independent to contribute to their power or status. (2) Cooperative vs Competitive

-Cooperative (support)- Examines the tendency of exerting explicit emotions and communicating with higher vulnerability usually associated with female communicators. This indicates that women view both parties within a communicative act as equals.

-Competitive (status)- Dictates that men communicate by utilizing a dominant presence and exerting assertive speech control, that determine the direction of the communicative act.
Artifacts: Contemporary romance movies

1. *Two Can Play That Game* (2001)
2. *He’s Just Not That Into You* (2009)

Movies are reflective images of reality. They are hypothetical situations that are used for entertainment.
Women
Eye:
Face Gaze
Gaze Aversions
Physical/Visual:
Excessive Touching
Forward Lean
Self-Adaptors
Excessive Smiling
Head Tilts
Attentive Listener
Oral/Vocal:
Lowered Voice
Nervous Laughter

Same
Eye:
Consistent Gaze
Staring

Physical/Visual:
Proximity
Isolation

Oral/Vocal:
None

Men
Eye:
Body Gaze
Periodic Gaze

Physical/Visual:
Deep Sighs
Initiate Interactions

Oral/Vocal:
More Talkative
Assertive Speech

*Recorded nonverbal cues presented by each gender concerning the beginnings of a heterosexual romantic relationship.
*The data was then categorized by gender and behavioral groups.
Males avoided eye contact to maintain power and status in the relationship (competitive).
Females initiated eye contact more often, which made them more attentive when the male was speaking (cooperative).
Males often initiated the social interactions with their female counterparts (rapport).
Females were much more prone to show facial expressions displaying her vulnerability (report).
Men used an assertive tone when speaking to his counterpart (competitive).
Women engaged in nervous laughter more than men (report).
Conclusions

Nonverbal cues within both genders communicate two very different goals.
Women intend to initiate and maintain closeness when communicating with their partners.
Men communicate with the to establish power and dominance within the interaction.
Gender roles influence the expression of nonverbal cues within a specific gender.
Women are expected to be overt and expressive.
Males are to be strong and dominant.
Works Cited


