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ABSTRACT

A study examined the perceptions of appropriateness regarding four types of touch between college students and professors. Subjects included 382 students, 108 men and 202 women, enrolled in a basic speech communication course at a large midwestern university. Using video depictions, an analysis of variance was conducted exploring differences in responses using gender and dyadic combinations. The four categories of touch were support, compliance, attention-getting, and affection. The arm region around the elbow was the area for the placement of touch used in the study. Results indicated that differences exist between male and female respondents based on the type of touch being used and, when compared with the other categories, the support touch was viewed as the most appropriate by both males and females. Males found the attention-getting and the compliance touches as less appropriate than females did. Both males and females found the affection touch as the least appropriate. Also identified were differences in whether touches originated from a male or female professor to a male or female student. Findings suggest that differences do exist. Future research could examine different relationships i.e., other personal or professional relationships. Different categories of touches could also be examined, and more contextual study on the issue of touch is needed. (Contains 41 references and 2 tables of data.) (Author/CR)

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TO TOUCH OR NOT TO TOUCH: AN EXAMINATION OF
TACTILE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COLLEGE STUDENT AND PROFESSOR

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Running Head: Touching

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of appropriateness regarding four types of touch between college students and professors. Using video depictions, an analysis of variance was conducted exploring differences in responses using gender and dyadic combinations. The study's findings suggest that differences exist between male and female respondents based on the type of touch being used. Further, the study identifies differences in whether touches originated from a male or female professor, to a male or female student. The study concludes that differences do exist and recommends directions for future research.

TO TOUCH OR NOT TO TOUCH: AN EXAMINATION OF TACTILE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COLLEGE STUDENT AND PROFESSOR

Extant research has shown that touch is a vital part of both nonverbal communication processes and human development. Mehrabian (1971) found that touch is a basic form of approach in interpersonal relationships providing greater closeness between the interactants. Montagu (1978) described touch as a sensation to which basic human meanings become attached. Indeed, some have argued that the failure to use touch is indicative of interpersonal avoidance and lack of interpersonal closeness (Andersen & Leibowitz, 1978). Clearly, touch is fundamental to the development of human behavior, physical survival, effective communication, and his or her capacity for interpersonal relationships (e.g., Colton, 1983; Forer, 1972; Harlow, 1958; Keating, 1983).

The issue of touch, however, creates a "dual-edged" dilemma. This is especially true when it comes to professional relationships, such as student-teacher. On one hand, touch between student and teacher can promote healthy relational growth. For example, Clement and Tracy (1977) found that tactile reinforcement has a potential value in the classroom. Moreover, Anderson (1985) discovered that most teachers agree that positive physical contact has a positive impact on students. Later, Anderson (1986) argued that the use of touching by teachers demonstrates to students that teachers really care about them and accept them for who they are. He stated that tactile communication may vary because of many different variables including age, emotional maturity of student, and different types of touch. Other researchers have found that the use of tactile communication validates the value and existence of a person and is crucial to human's sense of security (Fallen & McGovern, 1978; Simon & O'Rourke, 1977). On the other hand, however, Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1989) believed that because of its strong arousal potential, its multiplicity of meanings, and the intense evaluation it elicits, touch may produce both positive and negative consequences. For example, Johnson and Edwards (1991) decided that ambiguity is an inherent element of tactile communication.

They maintained that touch cannot be taken out of its setting of other verbal and nonverbal communication. However, they suggested that people gain information from touches and that men and women sometimes differ in the information they receive from these touches.

What then, is the role of touch in our modern society? From a nonverbal communication viewpoint, does touch have any role in professional relationships (e.g., college student and teacher), or do prudence and social realities banish touching altogether? The exploration of these and other questions surrounding touch is the foundation of this study.

ATTACHING MEANINGS TO TOUCH

According to Jones (1994), there are several different variables which affect the quality of a touch and its meaning. These include duration, frequency, intensity, breadth, continuity, rhythm, and sequence. Other variables include the type used, body part involved, the setting in which touch occurs, the relation of touch to other communication signals, who initiates touch, whether touch is reciprocated, whether an expected touch is omitted, how individuals respond to touch, and, the relationship and roles of the individuals involved. All of these factors pertain to receptivity of the touch, and therefore, the meanings attached.

Jones and Yarbrough (1985) investigated both the meanings and perceptions of meanings because they found previous research lacking. For instance, in earlier studies (Andersen & Leibowitz 1978; Jourard 1966) the research focused on who touched whom, where, and how often it happened. It did not, however, examine the meaning the touches conveyed. Jones and Yarbrough also found that the methods used to study touches were based on misconstrued assumptions. Nguyen, Heslin, and Nguyen (1975) used hypothetical situations using verbal descriptions of circumstances involving touch. Summerhayes and Suchner (1978) examined photographs depicting touch and people were suppose to imagine how they would react to the behavior in the situation. In both studies, Jones and Yarbrough (1985) found their premises were based on the unsubstantiated assumption that people are aware of the touch experiences and can accurately recall and report them on self-report

instruments.

The meanings created by touch has been the focus of numerous studies, however the research has been contradictory in some ways. In the Nguyen, Heslin, and Nguyen's (1975) study, they found that certain types of touches create meanings for some. In particular, they discovered that, between sexes, touches conveyed warmth and love. They also studied the meanings of touches between married couples. Their research (1976) discovered that married men were significantly less likely to view sexual touching as pleasant than married women, arguing that married women had significantly different responses than unmarried women. The interpretation of the touches were found to be imprecise. An earlier study done by DeAugustinis, Isani, and Kumler (1970) tried to create concrete meanings for specific touches as well, however, testing could not verify this concept. They discovered no universal meanings were created for specific touches.

A decade later, Bradac, O'Donnell, and Tardy (1984) focused on the meaning of a touch for the receiver. Their research suggested that meanings can be both denotative and connotative. They argued that the meanings assigned to touches have not been thoroughly researched calling for an in-depth study into the realm of types of touch.

In their studies, Jones and Yarbrough (1985) tried to deal with such an issue, that is, the multiplicity of meanings to touch. In doing so, they found touches may not have one specific meaning for a specific touch, but rather, a touch could have a number of meanings or interpretations. They also found the meanings conveyed were imprecise. According to Bradac, O'Donnell and Tardy (1984), further exploration of the meanings of touch is needed, especially given the importance of such meanings in relational processes and the paucity of pertinent evidence.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Research has suggested that gender plays an important part in the ability and recitability of touching. In the early studies on touch during the 1960s and 1970s, it was found that

women initiate and accept touches more than men. One such study found that women are more accessible to touch than are men and initiate more touch than men in most types of relationships (e.g., Jourard & Rubin, 1968). Silverman (1973) discovered that female subjects placed in an experimental setting engaged in more intimate touches with other females than with males. In this same experiment, males avoided intimate touches with other males and engaged in far more intimate touches with females. In comparison, females were found more reluctant than men to touch persons of the opposite sex. Montagu (1971) reported that the American society discourages men from touching other men. This includes sons kissing or hugging their fathers. Furthermore, women were more likely to interpret touches to mean warmth/love and rarely expressing control or dominance, while men were more likely to perceive touches to mean sexual desire.

More recently, Bradac, O'Donnell, and Tardy (1984) obtained evidence of "within gender" dissimilarities in regards to the perceived pleasure of various touches. Males preferred either sexual or non-sexual touches from female touchers. They rejected strongly almost all touches from male touchers. Major distinctions could be made in the male respondents. Women, however, were more consistent. Their responses were dependent on the quality of perceived intimacy of the relationship. They found that women were more discriminating in both touch type and body region. This statement contradicts Nguyen, Heslin, and Nguyen's (1975) earlier findings. Nguyen, Heslin, and Nguyen suggested that gender is insufficient for predicting evaluative reactions to touch. The variables they used were birth order, level of communication apprehension, level of anxiety about touching, and if they knew the gender of the toucher and the extent to which he or she is liked.

In decoding nonverbal communication, Isenhart (1980) defended past research that found females to be better decoders than males. Also, Isenhart found that the more feminine the person, the less likely they were able to decode nonverbal cues. The reasons for this occurrence are unclear. Johnson and Edwards (1991) explained that both sexes have the ability

to discriminate the meanings of intimate touching behaviors in terms of relational commitment. They also found that men and women interpret touches differently as the level of intimate touches increases.

Status seems to also play a role in predicting gender differences. According to Major (1989), five earlier studies have been conducted in regards to a person of higher status touching males and females. The findings of these studies suggested that when the toucher is of obviously higher status than the recipient, both males and females respond positively. For example: 1) Aguilera (1967) studied resident psychiatric patients; 2) Pattison (1973) examined female college students and female counselors; 3) Friedman (1970) revealed that both sexes of college students reported positive feelings about the male interviewer who touched them; 4) Alagna, Witcher, Fisher, and Wichas (1979) found that both sexes of college students evaluated a counseling session more favorably when they were touched than when they were not touched, while cross-sex touch was found to be the most positive; and, 5) Silverthorne, Noreen, Hunt, and Rota (1972) suggested that both men and women view brief touch from a higher status person, male or female, as role-appropriate and positive.

Because of the extensive research, this study focuses and extends the research on the categories of touch, while at the same time examining the appropriateness of these touches. Therefore, from the literature, the following two hypotheses are formulated for this study.

H1 - There will be no differences in gender perceptions of the appropriateness of the categories of touch.

H2 - There will be no differences between the dyads in perception of appropriateness.

METHODOLOGY

SUBJECTS

Subjects included 382 students enrolled in a basic speech communication course of a large midwestern university. Of the total, 180 were men and 202 were women. Most of the participants were single ($n = 344$), 19 were married, three people were divorced, and one was

widowed.

PROCEDURE

This study used video depictions of touches to gather data. Prior to actual collection, several steps were taken to ensure the greatest amount of validity and reliability was preserved. The first step involved the writing and creating of scenarios for the video portrayal to include on the video tapes which illustrated the different categories of touch. This helped subjects realize such items as: 1) the type of relationship the professor and student had in the video portrayal; 2) where the touch was occurring; and 3) what categories of touch were included. The gender of the dyads illustrated numerous contextual situations that could happen (e.g., complementing students for achievement, consulting students on a particular class problem, etc.). Therefore, performers representing professors and students were males in one depiction and females in another to create four different dyadic combinations (e.g., male professor - male student; male professor - female student; female professor - female student; female professor - male student). However, both professors used the same touch in the same category.

These videos were shown to subjects who completed the questionnaires. They viewed all the scenarios for a given touch and completed each corresponding item on the survey. After each video scenario, a subject would complete the level of appropriateness for that type of touch. Also, all students viewed each of the different types of dyads of gender (e.g. female-female, male-male, male-female, female-male).

INSTRUMENTATION.

Each item in the questionnaire dealt with one category of touch and one meaning scale. Below is a discussion on the development of these scales.

Categories of Touch

The different categories of touches were operationalized by using the definitions created by Jones and Yarbrough (1985). They concluded that there are 18 categories of meaning for touches. They adapted their test from Scheflen and others' contextual analysis method which

uses meanings-in-context of touches reported by persons from their daily interactions. Jones and Yarbrough stated this is the first type of test done in this way so validity may be judged “according to the degree to which they are unobvious and intuitively satisfying” (p. 50).

The following four categories of touch were chosen because either sex can initiate them. The categories are: SUPPORT, which means the touch serves to nurture, reassure, or promise protection; COMPLIANCE, a touch which attempts to direct behavior and oftentimes also attitudes or feelings of others; ATTENTION-GETTING, which serves to direct the recipient’s perceptual focus; and, AFFECTION, which expresses generalized positive regard beyond mere acknowledgement. All of these definitions were taken from Jones and Yarbrough (1985).

Meaning Scale

The likert-type seven-point meaning scale rated the level of appropriateness of the touch. Each scale of category of touch used "1" being the least and "7" being the most appropriate.

Placement of Touch

Research on different regions of the body reveal that responses differ according to placement of the touch. The arm region around the elbow was the area used in this study. According to Jones and Yarbrough (1985), this area is part of the nonvulnerable area of the body and therefore should not skew the results.

DATA ANALYSIS

The responses were summed for each respondent across all categories of touch regarding its appropriateness. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for each different categories of touch, with gender of professor.

RESULTS

GENDER DIFFERENCES

The data were analyzed to examine significant gender differences regarding each of the four categories of touch. The results of the ANOVA revealed significant differences (F [1,

9161] = 135.003, $p = .0001$) between males and females perceiving the SUPPORT touch to be appropriate. As shown in Table 1, males reported the touch to be less appropriate ($M = 5.266$) than females ($M = 5.677$). When compared with the other four categories, the SUPPORT touch was viewed as the most appropriate by both males and females.

In the ATTENTION-GETTING TOUCH, a significant main effect was also discovered between males and females ($F [1,9161] = 78.864$, $p = .0001$). As indicated, males found the ATTENTION-GETTING touch to be less appropriate ($M = 4.828$) than females ($M = 5.187$).

TABLE 1
TABLE OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR APPROPRIATENESS OF
FOUR CATEGORIES OF TOUCH BY GENDER

Type of Touch By Gender	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
SUPPORT		
Male	5.266	(1.813)
Female	5.677	(1.57)*
ATTENTION-GETTING		
Male	4.828	(2.005)
Female	5.187	(1.872)*
COMPLIANCE		
Male	4.652	(1.936)
Female	4.969	(1.817)*
AFFECTION		
Male	4.539	(2.054)
Female	4.869	(1.948)*

*Significant at .0001 level.

In the third category, the COMPLIANCE touch, the analysis of the data shows significant differences existed between males and females and their perceptions of appropriateness of using that particular touch ($F [1,9161] = 65.384$, $p = .0004$). Males again perceived the touch as less appropriate ($M = 4.652$) than females ($M = 4.969$).

In the final category, the AFFECTION touch, it was determined that significant

differences exist between genders and the perception of appropriateness ($F [1,9161] = 62.089$, $p = .0001$). Males reported the AFFECTION touch to be the less appropriate ($M = 4.539$) than females ($M = 4.869$). Notably, both males and females rated the AFFECTION touch as the least appropriate of all four categories.

DYADIC DIFFERENCES

The data were also analyzed to examine differences regarding all subjects reported levels of appropriateness based on the depictions of touch between male-female dyadic combinations (e.g., male touching male, male touching female, female touching male, female touching female). There were significant main effects between the dyads and the use of the SUPPORT touch ($F [3, 9159] = 61.583$, $p = .0001$). For example, in ascending order, subjects viewed the male-male dyad as the least appropriate ($M = 5.247$), followed in the by the male-female dyad ($M = 5.252$), and the female-male dyad ($M = 5.645$). The female-female dyad was the most appropriate ($M = 5.789$).

Significant differences were also discovered in the dyadic portrayals and reported appropriateness by subjects in the ATTENTION-GETTING touch ($F [3, 9159] = 70.255$, $p = .0001$). Subjects again reported the male-male touch was the least appropriate ($M = 4.622$). It was followed by the male-female dyad ($M = 4.901$), the female-male dyad ($M = 5.134$). Subjects determined the most appropriate dyad was female-female ($M = 5.413$).

Significant differences between the dyads and the COMPLIANCE touch were also discovered ($F [3, 9159] = 41.007$, $p = .0001$). As with the other categories of touch, the male-male dyad was observed as the least appropriate ($M = 4.524$). The second least appropriate dyad was the male-female ($M = 4.702$), and the third was the female-male dyad ($M = 5.015$). The female-female dyad was reported to be the most appropriate ($M = 5.038$).

Finally, there are significant differences between the dyads and the AFFECTION touch ($F [3, 9159] = 29.117$, $p = .0001$). The male-male dyad was found to be the least appropriate ($M = 4.463$). The male-female dyad was the second least appropriate ($M = 4.584$) and the

female-male dyad ranked third ($M = 4.889$). Subject reported the female-female dyad was the most appropriate ($M = 4.918$).

TABLE 2
TABLE OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR APPROPRIATENESS OF
FOUR CATEGORIES OF TOUCH BY DYADIC TYPE

Type of Touch By Dyads	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
SUPPORT		
F-M	5.645	(1.596)
M-M	5.247	(1.865)
F-F	5.789	(1.475)
M-F	5.252	(1.775)
(Teacher-Student)		
ATTENTION-GETTING		
F-M	5.134	(1.864)
M-M	4.622	(2.114)
F-F	5.413	(1.734)
M-F	4.901	(1.958)
(Teacher-Student)		
COMPLIANCE		
F-M	5.015	(1.763)
M-M	4.524	(2.032)
F-F	5.038	(1.777)
M-F	4.702	(1.889)
(Teacher-Student)		
AFFECTION		
F-M	4.889	(1.905)
M-M	4.463	(2.136)
F-F	4.918	(1.918)
M-F	4.584	(2.017)
(Teacher-Student)		

DISCUSSION

The focus of this study examines four different categories of touch. By having both genders view touches between professor and student, comparisons were made as to the level of appropriateness for all categories. On a different level, this study also focuses on the dyads involved in the touches. This involves the level of appropriateness for males touching males,

males touching females, females touching females and females touching males. Significant findings were discovered. This section concentrates on reasons why the significant differences occurred. It also poses possible explanations and compares these findings to previous research.

CATEGORIES OF TOUCH AND GENDER

As reported, there were significant differences between how males and females view the various categories of touch. Throughout the study, females found the categories to be more appropriate than males. Even though their levels of appropriateness did differentiate, females found the SUPPORT touch, the ATTENTION-GETTING touch, the COMPLIANCE touch and the AFFECTION touch more appropriate than males did.

When comparing the categories of touch using the gender variable, a consistent pattern of appropriateness occurred. Both males and females found the AFFECTION touch to be the least appropriate. It was followed by the COMPLIANCE touch. The ATTENTION-GETTING touch was next, and the most appropriate touch was the SUPPORT touch.

There may be several reasons as to why both sexes exhibit the same pattern in categories of touch. According to Jones (1994), the AFFECTION touch usually happens in a close relationship. It can be argued that professor/student relationships are not usually perceived as close, therefore students took this into account when selecting their answers. Also, according to Jones, the AFFECTION touch has no other purpose or inner meaning; it is used just to show liking. Because this type of touch might not be used very often in the work or non-social environment, the results might suggest that this type of touch is deemed less appropriate. Looking at the relationship between professor and student, the relationship usually is arguably not strong or close enough to find this type of touch acceptable to most.

The COMPLIANCE touch was found to be the second least appropriate by both genders. Perhaps it appears at this level because it is a power touch. Again according to Jones (1994), this touch “involves a straight forward attempt to influence the other person’s

behavior” (p. 124). Because the power status is plausibly involved in the professor/student relationship, it is probably deemed inappropriate to enhance the situation or promote the differences between professor and student. According to a study by Nguyen, Heslin, and Nguyen (1975), women were more likely to find touches to mean warmth or love and rarely expressing control or dominance. Also, they found that men perceived touches to mean sexual desire more than women. Major and Heslin (1976) found that the same touch can express both warmth and dominance or control. They believed that men focus on the dominance or control and consequently interpret a touch as a ‘put-down’. Furthermore, they reported that women may be more attuned to the warmth cue and therefore find the touch warm and friendly.

The ATTENTION-GETTING touch was placed more appropriate than the affection and compliance touch, but less appropriate than the SUPPORT touch. There are several plausible explanations for this as well. Jones and Yarbrough (1985) found that this touch is always initiated, and the initiator verbalizes the request which clarifies the purpose of the touch. Therefore, they argued that this touch has minimal involvement and requests minimal behavior. Because of this, the ATTENTION-GETTING touch can happen in any type of relationship and has a non-risky nature. In later research, Jones (1994) found this touch to be a power play touch, and not as negative as the COMPLIANCE touch.

Finally, the SUPPORT touch was found to be the most appropriate by both sexes. This perhaps demonstrates how students are more susceptible to this type of touch from professors. The SUPPORT touch might display what Anderson and others find critical as to why a professor might employ this type of touch with their students. Even though most universities have a “no-touch” policy, Anderson (1986) nonetheless believes that the use of this particular type of touch by teachers show students that they really care about them and accept them for whom they are. Other researchers found that the use of tactile communication validates the value and existence of a person and it is crucial to humans sense of security (e.g., Fallen & McGovern, 1978; Simon & O’Rourke, 1977). According to Jones and Yarbrough

(1985), this type of touch “usually or generally occurs in situations which either virtually require or make it clearly preferable that one person give comfort or reassurance to another” (p. 36). In other words, the touch is given because in some way it is asked for by the person being touched. The SUPPORT touch is used to reassure and nurture the person being touched. Because reassuring and nurturing are two vital ideas which professors do for students, this could be inherently a good touch. Basically, this statement suggests how professors could show reassurance to their students and how it nurtures the students. Another reason why this touch could be used is because it can affect the way students work in a class. According to Jones (1994), the SUPPORT touch is always personal to some extent but can influence how people work. If done in a positive and correct way, it might be argued that this touch could promote better work from a student.

The concept of gender differences in tactile communications has been studied by many researchers in many different ways. Because of this, reasons for gender differences are several. Also, the differences stated could affect many different parts or a combination of parts of this research. For example, males do not always respond positively when a female of the same status touches them. This might affect how males view the female-male dyad, yet it also might affect the differences between males and females in regards to the category of SUPPORT. Therefore, many of the studies which illustrate differences are examined at this point because they can affect the reasons behind the rest of the results.

Because touching between professor and student deals with the concept of higher status, certain areas about this idea need to be examined. According to Major (1981), several studies have found that both males and females recipients respond positively to touches from a higher status person.

Major (1981) also found that when the toucher and the recipient are of equal or ambiguous relative status, women generally respond positively to being touched whereas men generally react neutrally or negatively, particularly if the toucher is female. These research

findings contradict what will be examined later. Fisher, Rytting, and Heslin (1976) explored how a touch from a library worker affects the perception about the library. Males who were touched evaluated the library less positively than males who were not touched. Females who were touched evaluated the library more positively than no-touch females. Concepts like this could affect several different situations in this research. Witcher and Fisher (1979) examined touches between nurses and patients in a preoperative teaching session. Females who were touched reported less anxiety, tended to see the (female) nurse as more interested in them, tended to have lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure in the recovery room following surgery than females who were not touched. In contrast, males who were touched reported significantly more anxiety about their upcoming surgery and tended to have higher systolic and diastolic blood pressure in the recovery rooms than males who were not touched. In the present study, men responded negatively to females touching them. This concept could be a part of the reasons behind gender differences for the SUPPORT TOUCH.

There are other plausible reasons why females respond more positively to touch. For example, Major (1981) stated that women are touched more often than men. "Thus, the experience of being touched is both more familiar to women than it is to men and is more consistent with women's roles in our society than men's" (p. 32). The results might indicate that the women subjects who participated in this study were comfortable watching the touches because they are more susceptible to getting touched than their male counterparts. Past research suggests that touches from a man are active while touches from a woman are reactive. For example, LaFrance and Mayo (1978) characterized men's nonverbal behavior as proactive such as initiating a touch and women's behavior as reactive such as allowing oneself to be touched. Therefore, this might address the issue of power and dominance or warmth and friendliness which plays a part in the issue of appropriateness. Also, researchers reported that women are more likely than men to initiate hugs and touches that express support, affection, and comfort, and men more often use touch to direct others, assert power, and express sexual

interest (e.g., Deaux, 1976; Leathers, 1986). Because of these definitions, the categories of touch could be affected due to women being more expressive in SUPPORT and AFFECTION touches while men use ATTENTION-GETTING and COMPLIANCE more. This suggests that the subjects are more familiar with women doing certain touches than men and for some categories they are more familiar to men doing the touches than women.

In regards to the assignment of meanings, Isenhart (1980) found that women were able to decode nonverbal cues better than men. This might have to do with how often women are touched and the meanings behind those touches. Also, this might aid women in viewing touches more positively while men, who according to this research, have difficulty deciphering nonverbal cues, and are more defensive about their meanings. According to Hall and Veccia (1990), men more often initiate hand touches or arm around touches, and that women initiate other types of touches more frequently such as arm linking. This concept could show that men are more comfortable with the touches examined in the videos because they all were hand touches.

In research by Touhey (1974), he reported that women did not always perceive a touch from a man as pleasant. When assisted by a man who touched them, women were the least attracted to the man. The present study addresses the issue that the sexes do differentiate between the touches received. According to Poire, Burgoon and Parrott (1992), because of masculine socialization, men are often taught that invading personal spaces of others can be used for power purposes. This idea suggests that differences between genders might exist because of societal standards. While it may be true that males are uncomfortable when touched by other males in certain situations or that females are uncomfortable when males touch them in certain situations, it also could be true because society has shown people that they should be aware of the situation and therefore uncomfortable because of it.

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several different directions which further research on touch could focus. For

one, future research could examine different relationships. While this study examined how student perceived the appropriateness of the touches, a similar study could examine how professors perceive the touches and if their answers correspond with the students. Also, other relationships could be considered. According to Nguyen, Heslin, and Nguyen (1975), most touches occur between opposite-sex friends. This relationship, along with other professional and personal relationships, could be explored.

The second direction for future research relates to the categories. This research focused on four categories of touches created by Jones and Yarbrough (1985). They are SUPPORT, COMPLIANCE, ATTENTION-GETTING, and AFFECTION. However, as stated previously, this is only four out of eighteen that were presented. Different categories of touches could be examined of Jones and Yarbrough's or any other researcher's categories.

Finally, more contextual study on the issue of touch is needed. Arguably, tactile communication does not occur in a vacuum, but rather occurs within a wide array of other variables that may impinge on the perceptions of appropriateness. This would give the touches the situational and circumstantial variables which are lacking in this study.

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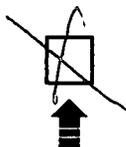
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