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# An Experiment on the Factors That Influence Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication can be used in a voluntary or involuntary setting. Some of the more common ways to use nonverbal communication is through posture, tone of voice, facial expression, volume, etc., and it is something we use everyday whether we realize it or not. Many types of nonverbal communication are how we analyze a certain situation, person's mood, or atmosphere.

Society has taken certain actions of nonverbal communication and set social standards that a community must follow; however, my experimentation with defying these social norms has been quite the opposite of society's comfort zone. Human touch can easily be misinterpreted, so I decided to break some of these haptic rules. The standard rule for touching is pretty obvious; if you have just met, a handshake is probably the only thing that is acceptable. If you have been friends for a while, hugging and touching seems to come at ease, and if you are dating another person, physical touch is nothing too out of the ordinary.

I began with taking the safe route and trying it first on my boyfriend. We were having a casual conversation while walking back to our rooms, and as we departed ways for Camden East and West, I gave him a hug. I hadn't really expected anything different since we are used to physical contact, so this was the reaction that I would have normally expected. He simply smiled and we said our goodbyes. This is a typical reaction that I would have expected from someone that I am already very close to, so this action didn't feel out of the ordinary or uncomfortable at all.

The second person I decided to try this out on was one of my close friends. We were having a normal conversation and I slightly grazed her arm mid-conversation. This is when I knew that this was not an action approved by society, because she stopped talking and gave me a strange look as if to say, "What are you doing?" This is not normally how I'd interact with any of my friends, so even initiating this act was kind of uncomfortable for me as it was for her. After touching her arm, I began to crack a smile because I knew that what I just did was very awkward in nature and obviously looked out of place.

Lastly, I tried my final haptic experiment on a stranger. For this part of the experiment I was definitely nervous to see the results. I am not one that is normally physical in nature, so I knew right off the bat that my approach was going to be very awkward. It took me a while to find a stranger I'd feel comfortable enough to casually use this method on, so I didn't end up going

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through with it until near the end of the day. I finally decided to violate my social norm in the athletic training room, since I had plenty of opportunities to break this rule. I had started a casual conversation with an athlete about their injury, and as soon as I had the chance, I placed my hand on his arm. His face was kind of hard to read, but I think that he just played it off like I was naturally a touchy type of person, which I knew was obviously false. Immediately after, the conversation seemed to become shorter and shorter, and eventually we ran out of things to talk about so I ended up carrying on about my day.

This experiment has definitely been a learning experience, because I had to be able to get out of my own comfort zone in order to achieve the results I was looking for. It was interesting to see who would react in a way that I was not expecting, and who would feel just as uncomfortable as I was. I was especially interested with my interaction with a stranger, because he just played it off as if he didn't want to hurt my feelings for being "overly nice." This social norm has been interesting to break; however, I don't think I'll ever be able to naturally go about being touchy with anyone I'm not particularly close to.

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