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Pick-Up lines: To Use a Neg or a Flippant?

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A thesis presented to  
the faculty of the  
Department of Communication  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Masters of Arts in Professional Communication

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by  
Adrienne Hendon  
May 2012

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Keywords: pick-up line, flippant, neg, attractiveness, mating strategies, mate value

## ABSTRACT

Pick-Up lines: To Use a Neg or a Flippant?

by

Adrienne Hendon

Pick-up lines are a “ritual that tries to turn strangers into lovers” (Murray, 1985, p.17). By studying how pick-up lines are perceived by the population, we might learn how the phenomenon of short- or long-term mating is initiated. By taking into account mating strategies, mate value, attractiveness, and flirting strategies, a pattern of behaviors and reactions may be observed. This study examines perceived pick-up line appropriateness and effectiveness when the attractiveness of the man delivering them varies. To test the effectiveness of 2 different types of pick-up lines, an online survey featuring 1 of 4 videos was administered. Results indicated that a humorous pick-up line was perceived as more effective and favorable than a slightly insulting one. An attractive man was perceived to be more communicatively competent than an unattractive man. Men, regardless of attractiveness, were perceived as more socially attractive when using a humorous pick-up line.

## DEDICATION

For my family, friends, and professors who have pushed me to succeed when  
I have needed them the most. Thank you.

For Bailey and Woog

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Importance of the Study**

Pick-up lines are an important communication strategy used by people who are strangers. These lines are a communication phenomenon for humans who are trying to create new interactions with one another, especially when sexual contact is the objective of the interaction. The lines' purpose is to initiate communication and advance an interaction that could engage both individuals in a courtship.

Engaging in courtship ritual, which involves activities such as communicating attraction to the other person (Jackson, Kleiner, Geist, & Cebulko, 2011), can only happen if both individuals find something compelling about the other. One such compelling attribute is attraction that includes physical and social attraction. There are varying levels of both types of attractiveness for both men and women. Due to the to the variation in attractiveness of men, it can be assumed that there will be variation as to how effective a woman is going to perceive any given communication attempt to be, specifically pick-up lines. Being physically attractive will give the male initiator an advantage when choosing and using a pick-up line. The more attractive a male initiator is perceived to be, the more positively he is likely to be viewed in a mating context. The more positively viewed he is, the more freedom he has to say something outlandish while still having a reasonable probability of the interaction continuing.

Current pop-culture literature (Clink, 2004; Strauss, 2005) suggests that the use of a neg, or a pick-up line that vaguely or mildly insults a woman in a way similar to a backhanded compliment, For example, a male initiator would approach a female target and tell her, "well, you have a great body...and that makes up for a lot of other things" (Clink, 2004). This strategy

can be effective for a man to engage a woman in a mating interaction. Though people who write about pick-up artistry tout the neg as being exceptionally effective, even for unattractive men (e.g. Clink, 2004; Strauss (2005), there is little empirical evidence to suggest that the neg is in any way effective in real-world interactions. Flippant pick-up lines that are cheeky or humorous in nature, however, are given very little attention as a credible method by which a man may effectively engage a woman in a mating interaction.

### **Research Goal**

The goal of this study is to provide a systematic analysis of the effectiveness of two different pick-up lines. In combination with the evaluation of the effectiveness of these two types of pick-up tactics, the role of attractiveness in a mating interaction's success is also considered. Specifically, the relationship between a man's attractiveness and the extent to which he can successfully execute a pick-up line is the subject of study here. Findings will lend credibility to the pop-cultural belief that a male may be effective in picking up a woman, which will be referred to as the female target, even he chooses to break societal norms and use unconventional pick-up strategies to do so.

This study finds its niche in the area of interpersonal communication and social psychology. Humans must make decisions about how to make social acquaintances and be able to initiate social contact with others. The study helps to promote an understanding of possible mating interactions based on mating strategies with heterosexual couples, with the results influencing communicators' perceptions about their own mating strategies, particularly the short-term strategies.

An additional note should be made here regarding the boundaries around the goals of this study. In this study, courtship interactions are examined from a heterosexual viewpoint.



Homosexual relationships may provide different data given that the prevailing thought in evolutionary psychology is that the male pursues the female. Though the male-pursues-female dynamic does not exist in homosexual relationships, the communicative strategies involved in initiating courtship interactions between same-sex partners should be studied. Given, however, that the research driving the hypotheses to come later in this paper is rooted in evolutionary psychology, it is appropriate that the boundaries around this particular investigation are limited to heterosexual relationships. Future research should investigate whether the pick-up lines studied herein are similarly applicable in homosexual relationships. Such study would not only inform the method by which courtship interactions are initiated in homosexual relationships but also provide insight about whether the evolutionary assumption of male-pursues-female is still viable and appropriate.

## CHAPTER 2

### MATING STRATEGIES AND ATTRACTION LITERATURE

Humans are flexible in their mating strategies depending on whether they are seeking a short-term or long-term mate. Taken from evolutionary psychology, the term “mating strategies” refers to the patterns humans use to acquire a mate based on humans’ evolutionary advantages. These strategies operate under the assumption that modern humans had ancestors that were successful at mating (Buss, 1994). Mating strategies are founded on “desires and help to determine who we are attracted to and who is attracted to us” (Buss, 2002, p.47). Based on strategies such as “selecting a fertile mate or out-competing rivals to a mate” (Buss, 2002, p. 47), the relationship length is based on the desires of the individuals involved. Short-term mating relationships, also called “one-night stands, brief affairs or temporary liaisons” (Buss & Schmitt, 1993, p.204) are characterized by low levels of commitment and the simultaneous courting of multiple mates. Short-term mating is classified as such because there is no desire to commit to the partner. Long-term mating strategies, on the other hand, usually involve high degrees of commitment and monogamy with the intention of child-rearing as a long-term objective. Though both sets of strategies can be found in both sexes, men show a stronger preference for short-term mating strategies (Back, Penke, Schmukle, & Asendorpf, 2011), and men tend to base their mate selection on physical attractiveness for short-term mating interactions (Confer et al., 2010). This study focused on the aspects of short-term mating for heterosexual relationships from the viewpoint of the male.

According to Schmitt, Shackelford, and Buss (2001) men actively pursue and seek out short-term mates more than do women. A male’s sexual desires include the need for variety. Research indicates that sexual variety plays a role in men’s search for short-term mates, so it

stands to reason that men will employ short-term mating strategies more frequently than long-term strategies so as to increase their number of potential sexual partners and therefore increase the variety of short-term mates. Men also seek out short-term mates who have higher mate value so the odds of having genetically viable offspring will increase (Schmitt et al., 2001). This practice of seeking out more short-term mates for reproducing value also helps to satisfy the need for variety.

By assessing a female target's physical attractiveness a man is able to determine the potential length of the relationship he wants with a specific female target (Confer, Perilloux, & Buss 2010). Confer et al. (2010) researched whether men place emphasis on the attractiveness of a woman's face or body in determining the length of the relationship they wish to establish with a given female. Their data indicate that men looking for long-term relationships were looking for the most attractive female face. The men looking for short-term relationships selected the female with the most attractive body (Confer et al., 2010). This may make sense given that short-term mating focuses on sexual engagement with a female target, and the attractiveness of a woman's body is of greater importance than is the attractiveness of her face when sex is the sole objective of an interaction. Additionally, research suggests that because a large number of men are likely to be in competition for the same pool of women with high degrees of bodily attractiveness, a man is benefitted by approaching a woman in a way that is going to increase his odds of capturing her attention and securing her as a mate before any of his competitors do. Given this, it stands to reason that this competition may motivate an increase in the riskiness of the communicative tactics men employ when attempting to engage a highly attractive female target.

Sacco, Brown, Young, Bernstein, and Hugenberg (2011) investigated why socially-included (as opposed to socially-excluded) men engage in risky mating behaviors. Social

inclusion is the concept of having a secure inclusion in a social group with whom an individual has formed relationships. Sacco et al. (2011) predicted that men who are socially included would be highly likely to engage in riskier mating strategies. Relatively risky mating strategies are those that violate social norms, such as insulting attractive women. More specifically, men's risky mating strategies feature higher levels of aggressive pursuit than would be typical or expected in a mating interaction. Initial evidence suggests that men who feel high degrees of social inclusion spend more time on mating than other social activities. Because his social group has accepted him and he is included in his social network, a socially included man is free to spend a larger portion of his time in search of a mate. He no longer faces the challenges of acceptance. Rather, he faces the challenges of mating, which involves high degrees of competition from other equally desirable males.

Given this, socially excluded men are also benefitted by adopting mating strategies that are relatively more risky and aggressive because of competition for short-term mates and having to put more energy into finding a mate. It follows that the socially excluded unattractive man will spend more time trying to acquire a mate than an attractive man and is therefore more likely to use a strategy that is seen as risky but with the higher payoff of attracting an extraordinary attractive woman. Presumably, the more risky a man's pick-up approach, the larger his payoff may ultimately be. Similar to the rationale for say, buying a \$20 lottery ticket as opposed to a \$1 lottery ticket, the larger the bet, the larger the highest possible payoff will be. The same is true of risky mating strategies. An individual choosing to use a high risk approach in approaching a particularly attractive woman would reap high rewards (that is, securing the attention of and possible opportunity to engage in sexual contact with an especially attractive woman) if the approach is successful. Physical attractiveness is the main factor men base their mate selections

on for short-term interactions (Confer et al., 2010), and it is assumed by men that the more attractive women are the ones more reproductively valuable. The use of risky strategies may increase the effectiveness of mating interactions for men who are seeking mates in an environment where there is a high level of competition for the pool of higher mate value female targets (Sundie et al., 2010).

One way that men engage in risky mating strategies is to exaggerate their apparent mate value. A person's mate value refers to the extent to which mating with them, and retaining them as a partner, would increase an opposite-sex person's ancestral reproductive success (Miner, Starratt, & Shackelford, 2009). Individual characteristics that contribute to a person's overall mate value include physical attractiveness, personality, intelligence, emotional stability, and access to resources (Fisher, Cox, Bennett, & Gavric, 2008). Bailey, Durante, and Geary in 2011, had male participants look and choose the more attractive women in sets of photographs. The results of the data indicated that men weigh women's physical attractiveness higher relative to other traits, such as income, when assessing mate value. This study data also indicate men prefer to approach women who are more attractive than they view themselves (Bailey et al., 2011). Fisher et al.'s (2008) research indicates that men tend to place a high preference on females who are youthful and attractive, as they are reliable indicators of reproductive value. If a woman looks young, fit, and attractive, she can be seen as a good mate to reproduce with to pass on those traits to her offspring, so it stands to reason that the more attractive females are seen as having better reproductive value so they will get approached more and asked out more times, thus creating competition among men for access to the same women.

Though a man's mate value is comprised of a range of characteristics, including his physical attractiveness, women tend to ascribe higher mate value to men who have access to significant financial resources (Sundie et al., 2010).

Men are generally mindful that women value resources in determining a man's mate value. A man, then, knows that the appearance that he has resources will influence his likelihood to successfully complete a mating interaction with a woman. One way that men may exaggerate or create the illusion that he has financial resources in order to attract a potential mate is that they engage in conspicuous consumption (Sundie et al., 2010).

Conspicuous consumption is a behavior that concerns self-presentation. Self-presentational concerns override the desire to obtain goods at bargain prices, which results in showy spending (Sundie et al., 2010). This spending appears to be part of the mate signaling system (concerning access to resources) that benefits a man whose goal is to engage in short-term mating. Conspicuous consumption, while it creates the impression that a man has disposable financial resources, is a risky mating strategy as he may run the risk of not being able to sustain the consumption that piqued the interest of the potential mate. He is willing to accept this risk, however, because he has a short-term orientation toward this particular female target, and feels confident that he will not have to sustain the high spending on a long-term basis.

Given existing research on resources and conspicuous consumption, a man is willing to engage in large financial risk to acquire a short-term mate, it stands to reason that he would also engage in behavior with high social risks to acquire a short-term mate. His large social risk could include the use of a pick-up line that could be seen as unconventional at best and offensive at worst. A male who does not engage in risky behaviors would likely use the traditional, direct approach of simply saying hello. However, if a man is willing to incur significant financial risk

to attract a mate, it seems plausible that he may also use a nontraditional pick-up line to secure a short-term relationship with a woman who has high mate value traits such as attractiveness.

### **Attraction**

Attraction is a characteristic that both sexes value in determining a target's mate value. Attraction is a state that causes someone to think, feel, and behave in a positive manner toward a person (Bersheid, 1985). There are two types of attractiveness that carry a strong influence in and are relevant to mate selection behaviors. Physical attractiveness is the most obvious indicator of attraction and the part that carries the most weight. Humans make their instinctive, first impression mating decisions based on physical attractiveness alone (Barelds, Dijkstra, Koudenburg, & Swami, 2011).

Physical attractiveness is the extent to which an observer finds an individual pleasing to the eye in terms of appearance. Symmetry of the face, waist-to-hip ratio, body mass index, muscularity, breast size, and leg length all contribute to physical attractiveness. All of these traits, combined with the desires of the individual, result in the prioritizing of acquiring certain mates (Confer et al., 2010). In general, physical attractiveness is regarded as important for promoting sexual attraction and initial attraction. Even though it is not the first-valued mating characteristic, women do place an emphasis on physical attractiveness (Barelds et al., 2011). Given this, it stands to reason that an attractive man will have more success at acquiring a short-term mate than an unattractive man. Therefore,

*H1: An attractive man will be perceived as more effective at getting a date than will an unattractive man.*

Physical attractiveness is an observable trait and contributes to the mate value of both sexes (Bailey et al., 2011). Physical attractiveness is both an observable trait and a positively

valued cue in the mating context (Back et al. 2011). This trait also revolves around self-perception and how much the male or female understands his or her own physical attractiveness compared to that of the specific target selected for mating. A person's perception of his or her own physical attractiveness can influence the decisions about which mate targets he or she selects for mating.

A male initiator approaches his selected female target to pursue a possible short- or long-term relationship and the man knows that his words and actions will be used to gain what he wants. Opening communication is a process in which the sender tells the receiver his or her intentions, while the receiver gathers all the available information and makes a decision to engage in an interaction (Grammer, Kruck, & Magnusson, 1998). A male initiator will approach a woman with the hope that she has received his signals as a possible short-term mate and proceed with an interaction of a flirtatious mate seeking display, such as with a pick-up line or flaunting resources. The strongest predictor for male mating selection is female attractiveness. Men are searching for women more attractive than themselves, physical attractiveness is an important factor to foster sexual attraction and initial interpersonal interactions (Barelds et al., 2011).

Successful interpersonal interactions can only take place if the woman finds the man to have communication competence. Communication competence is defined as the ability to choose a communicative behavior that can accomplish his or her interpersonal goals during an encounter (Wiemann, 1977). The importance of communication competence is that it helps an individual to attain goals, including social ones. A communicatively competent man will be able to hold interactions better with others and in a way that helps him to manage his identity in a way that the group he desires to be a part of will perceive him as a desirable inclusion. Research has



shown that there is a positive correlation between physical attractiveness and social skills (Zakahi & Duran, 1984). Given this, the same can be true in a mating interaction. Men who are better at communicating with others and managing their identities in a way that potential mates will perceive them as desirable have a greater likelihood of having a successful mating interaction. As attractiveness influences communication competence, it also increases the opportunity for an interaction. Attractiveness is a motivational state that causes individuals to want to interact with another individual; it is likely that the more attractive individual will have more opportunities to engage in communication with others. As more opportunities are provided, the more the attractive individual is able to develop and refine his or her communication skills (Zakahi & Duran, 1984). Thus, an attractive man is benefitted twice as much in a mating interaction over an unattractive man because he is both physically attractive and he can communicatively manage his identity as a desirable mate for a potential female target. Thus, the more attractive a man is, the higher his perceived communication competence (Zakahi & Duran, 1984). Therefore,

*H2: An attractive man will be perceived as more communicatively competent than will an unattractive man.*

Clearly, then, if the above is true, an attractive man has to do considerably less work to increase his apparent mate value to a female target than does an unattractive man. If a man is viewed as unattractive, his only recourse for attracting a mate is to engage in behaviors that would increase his social attractiveness. Social attractiveness is the extent to which individuals desire a specific social interaction with a chosen individual. Social attractiveness can be affected by how an individual conducts himself or herself in social interactions and is not unrelated to communication competence. If a man conducts himself in a socially attractive manner, it shows

that even though he is not physically attractive, he possesses traits of social attractiveness. She would want to socially associate with him, increasing his mate value.

### **Flirting as a Method of Improving Social Attractiveness**

Flirting can be used a way to increase one's social attractiveness. Flirting is defined as "behaviors that receivers interpret as indicating an affiliative desire for another person" (Henningesen, Braz, & Davies, 2008, p. 484). Research has shown that verbal exchanges in cross-sex interaction when flirting is used have the goal of working toward a successful joint activity, such as getting acquainted, dancing, or leaving the location (Saint-Dizier de Almeida & Agnoletti, 2010). This means individuals are attempting to receive attention from the opposite sex. Flirting is a motivational behavior that can fall into categories such as fun, instrumental, esteem, or sex (Henningesen, 2004). The main flirting category this study focuses on is the sex motivation. Flirting with sexual motivation is associated with sexual intent and sexual assertiveness. Research has found that flirting can actually foster people's mating success (Back et al., 2010), but research has not yet determined if flirting is an actual indicator of a person's mating interest or if flirting functions as a behavior that is strategic in nature simply to gather information while hiding any intentions of the person doing the flirting (Back et al., 2010). This merely means that flirting could be just a way of initiating an interaction by a person with the intent to receive information about the other person without having to reveal information about herself or himself.

However, other flirting research has shown that men do tend to view women's behaviors as more sexual and that women tend not to flirt with a man if there is a lack of attraction for the person (Henningesen, 2004). If a man is flirting with a sexual motivation with a woman, he is most likely trying to promote sexual contact or relationship advancement, as men see flirting

behaviors such as nodding, smiling, and laughing as more sexual in nature (Henningesen et al., 2008). Many behaviors associated with flirting are also associated with intensifying relationships (Henningesen, 2004). These behaviors can be seen as a part of courtship behavior that could ultimately lead to a sexual interaction (Henningesen et al., 2008).

Flirting plays a role in mating strategies because the male initiator who selects a mate has to be able to communicate his attraction to a female target. Research has shown that flirting is viewed as a way to initiate advancement of a relationship, but that flirting can be perceived as superficial and exploitative of one's appearance and sexuality (Kray & Locke, 2008). If a male fails to communicate his attraction to a potential mate, either with a failed first communication attempt or he seems too shallow, the chance of the relationship progressing past the first line of communication greatly decreases. The potential mate will dismiss the male and will wait for another male who can communicate his attraction. Even though this positions the female in a passive role, previous research as looked at the lines being delivered and the reactions of the females, not taking into account the actions or active role that females could possess in flirting or communicating attraction.

Back et al. (2011) found that a person's flirtatiousness can predict whether or not someone will flirt with the individual. If an attractive woman is seen as extraverted and flirts with many men at a location, it is likely that more men will continually approach her. Two types of people were found to flirt the most. Extraverts, which are people that have a high interpersonal orientation and high levels of social skills (Back et al., 2011), and people who have high sociosexuality, which is the extent to which there are individual differences in willingness to engage in uncommitted sexual relations (Webster & Bryan, 2007). What this means is the more flirtatious a male extravert is the more women will be inclined to flirt with him in an interaction.

This strategy of engaging in flirtatious behavior amounts to an increase in social attractiveness. If an unattractive man can use his flirting behavior along with other traits such as humor, it is likely that his perceived social attractiveness will increase (Back et al., 2011), thus increasing his opportunity to mate with partners with high mate value.

Even though a man's physical attractiveness has a large influence on mate value and is his easiest accessed tool in his mate-acquiring tool set, he still can better his chances of acquiring a mate with improving his social attractiveness. Social attraction can increase by way of communication skills (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). The social attractiveness scale developed by McCroskey and McCain (1974) assesses how socially attractive an individual finds another individual by way of items evaluating the extent to which the respondent views a specific other fits into his or her circle of friends, possesses desirable friendship characteristics, or is desirable for a friendly chat. By improving communication skills such as flirting and using a type of flirting termed pick-up line, it is possible for an unattractive man to increase his social attractiveness by flirting.

## CHAPTER 3

### PICK-UP LINES AS A TYPE OF FLIRTING

An individual, who uses either flippant or neg pick-up lines that are sometimes referred to as chat-up lines, is perceived to put on a sexual display of his qualities to better determine if he is a long- or short-term mate (Bale, Morrison, & Caryl, 2005). The first sentence a man speaks to a woman when trying to initiate an interaction is of the utmost importance. This sentence, often termed a pick-up line, can be the initial communication of attraction (Murray, 1985). By communicating attraction, a male initiator can create a new relationship with the female target. If the male initiator does not communicate his attraction to the female target, it stands to reason that his interaction and short-term mating attempt will fail. Given that the interaction fails, the male initiator not only has to search for a new female target but also has to possibly analyze his own communication competence.

Men who use a variety of pick-up lines on women usually get a variety of answers and actions (Cunningham, 1989). There are many different types of pick-up lines. Even though the desired outcome of each type of line is to acquire a potential mate, the lines each have their own set of verbal pathways to relay the outcome. In 1985 Murray did a study on the language used at singles' bars. He notes that the language of the singles refers to opening lines as "scheme-on's" (Murray, 1985, p. 20). One example of a "scheme-on" is the line, "What skillful-looking hands" (Murray, 1985, p. 22). Murray recorded and classified the scheme-ons he observed singles using as a part of their mating strategies. All of the lines he recorded could be placed into two categories: conversation starters or sexual propositions, both of which entail gathering information from both parties. He also concluded that most of the lines recorded were creative and humorous. The creative and humorous lines could serve as a buffer from rejection from the

female target for the failed male display. Given that, if the line was not taken seriously, it could be played off as a joke. The use of a humorous line serves to not only communicate interest, but also to buffer from rejection. With the line being humorous and likely having the goal of making the female target laugh, it also serves to suggest communication competence and would increase social attractiveness.

Pick-up lines are seen as a strategy of flirting and communicating attraction with the opposite sex. Flirting, as discussed earlier, constitutes one way to indicate interest or establish intimacy or sexual intentions (Weber, Goodboy, & Cayanus, 2010). There are three categories of pick-up lines Weber et al. (2010) studied. First is the direct line. This is a straightforward communication attempt, with the conversation initiating from a simple introduction such as, “Hi. My name is Bronston.” The second category is the innocuous line. This is a line that is vague, implicit, and seen as harmless. An example would be, “Can you pass me the bowl of peanuts?” (pg. 185) The last category is flippant pick-up lines. These are lines that are said to be cute and funny. For example, a man might approach a woman and say, “You must be tired. You’ve been running through my mind all day” (pg. 185). Weber et al. (2010) gathered data that revealed negative responses to the humorous lines that may be because the lines were considered socially awkward. This is an interesting finding because it comprised a significant proportion of the total lines collected in Weber et al.’s (2010) study. Research, surprisingly, suggests that a man is willing to use a socially awkward or unfavorable line that brings about the idea that men might not know the lines are perceived this way. This incurs a significant risk of failing to achieve his goals. Not unlike the somewhat socially awkward flippant line, a backhanded compliment or a neg carries the same risk of failure, yet both of these lines are either commonly reported as a strategy men use or a strategy men should use in their attempts to secure mating interactions with

women. The goal of the data collection in this paper is to assess empirical rather than anecdotal responses to both of these two types of lines.

*The flippant pick-up line.*

Flippant lines are defined as preplanned clichés that appear cute and funny (Cunningham, 1989; Kleinke & Dean, 1990; Weber et al., 2010). Weber et al.'s (2010) data indicate that lines involving humor and jokes received poor ratings. Flippant lines were rated as having low degrees of humor, but they were rated better overall than compliments or sex lines, suggesting that while they are not the ideal pick-up strategy, there are worse ones that may be employed. The line also can be framed as a humorous challenge, with a line such as, "I'm easy, are you?" (Cunningham, 1989). The flippant line is disliked by women more than men (Kleinke & Dean, 1990). The flippant line can also be used as a simple way for the man to show his interest and let his looks determine the outcome of the interaction (Bale et al., 2005). Despite the lack of preference for flippant lines by women, it may be the case that if a male is very attractive and uses a joking pick-up line, the female is likely to forgive the less than ideal interaction error because the attractiveness trait is still stronger. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that an attractive male who approaches a female and uses a flippant pick-up line will have successfully initiated an interaction because his physical and social attractiveness are positively valued over the incompetent pick-up line. If the line fails and the woman does not respond, the man can downplay the situation into a friendly joke or simply walk away with no harm done.

*The neg pick-up line.*

A neg is defined as a "mildly insulting statement to a very attractive woman, being said in the form of a compliment" (Clink, 2004, p.90). The purpose of a neg is to make the woman question herself and her attractiveness in the presence of the man who has just insulted her.

These lines not only serve to possibly shock and awe the woman but also to get the woman thinking about the man who just insulted her, including ideas such as why she is not up to his standards and why he did not compliment her like all the other men she typically interacts with. Because physical attractiveness is the highest valued trait when a man is looking for a short-term mating interaction (Bailey et al., 2011), a woman who is especially attractive will receive most of the attention from the men at a location, whether it is at a bar or the grocery store (Kleinke et al., 1986). “A woman who is spending more time thinking about a man is more likely to find him sexually attractive” (Clink, 2004). An example of a neg pick-up line would be, “Your dress is nice...I think I’ve seen you around before and you were wearing it then, too” (Clink, 2004, p.93). This can be viewed as an insult because even though the male noticed the dress, his comment suggest he has seen it before and this can be interpreted as her not truly dressing her best with “an already been seen” dress.

The male using the neg pick-up line risks rejection because the neg pick-up line has the potential to collapse. A failed neg would mean that the woman does not respond to the false compliment and is likely to ignore the individual. The neg pick-up line is a pick-up line that is meant to disregard the social norms of an interaction. It puts the individual who is being ‘negged’ in an unpredictable situation. Because the individual saying the line has violated the social norms, there are consequences to breaking them. The male initiator has now become harder for the female target of the neg to predict. The female target can do one of two things: she can reject the advancer or she can entertain the neg line by the advancer.

However, once the neg has been delivered, the female target will become curious about the advancer. Clink (2004) contends that a neg is best used and most effective line to pick-up an exceptionally attractive woman. Using a neg to pick-up an especially attractive female target is



the strategic way to stay on the female target's mind, causing the target to mentally dwell upon the individual using the neg pick-up line. Exceptionally attractive individuals are accustomed to hearing compliments, so a neg is a way to stand out from a typical pick-up approach (Clink, 2004). By standing out from everyone else who has talked to the target that evening, the advancer now stands out as different. Not only is a neg line used to stand out from the crowd, it also creates a barrier from rejection. In an initial interaction, there is a high desire to predict the behavior of each party. With the use of a neg, there is no way to predict exactly how the female target will react to the line. Therefore, if the neg line is used and the advancer is turned down, he has violated the societal norms so rejection could be expected.

Both lines serve to buffer an individual from rejection to some degree, but with the flippant pick-up line, the interaction is more acceptable. By using a humorous line, the objective is to make the female target laugh. With the neg line, the objective is to insult the target, thus decreasing herself perceptions about her mate value. This strategy of using a neg is risky and seems unlikely to work because the individual is not only breaking societal norms, but also is insulting and possibly offending the female target. At least when the flippant line is used, it can be made into a joke or just an awkward social interaction. No one's personal mate value is being called into question with the use of a flippant pick-up line. Therefore,

*H3: A flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more effective than a neg pick-up line.*

*H4: A flippant pick-up line will be perceived more favorably overall than a neg pick-up line.*

Given that attractive men receive more practice with communicating and experience more interactions, research would suggest that the more attractive men are able to better communicate their attraction to a female target.

*H5: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more communicatively competent than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

Humans learn about their mate value through interactions with others and learn how their desired attributes are responded to by the opposite sex (Bailey et al., 2011). If a male is perceived as being socially or physically attractive by a potential female mate and the male approaches her, there are social consequences and affordances that are important to consider. Unattractive men learn that in order to compensate for their moderate to low physical unattractiveness, their strength in acquiring a mate comes from their social attractiveness. If the man is not very attractive and uses the flippant line successfully, his social attractiveness should rise because he is displaying other personality traits. These traits, such as humor and sensitivity, though not as highly valued as physical attractiveness, can still encourage the female target to determine that he has high mate value. The unattractive male would therefore benefit from using the flippant line. However, it stands to reason that an attractive man is not necessarily benefitted from using a flippant pick-up line. This is because the attractive man could be regarded as goofy and this self-presentation could undermine his perceived communication competence. The attractive man also should be able to initiate a mating interaction with more direct means because of his higher (perceived) communication competence. Using the flippant line for a mating strategy is likely to be inconsistent with the attractive man's ability to attract women solely on the basis of his looks. Therefore,

*H6: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line is going to be more effective than an attractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line.*

*H7: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line is going to be perceived as more socially attractive than will an attractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line.*

*H8: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more socially attractive than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

When using the neg pick-up line, attractive males will be seen as insulting and the female will likely not continue the interaction. However, the neg line is designed to implant the thought of the male insulter into the female target's head so she thinks about the attractive man who has just seemingly insulted her. Eventually, the female target will want to get control back in their interaction and confront the attractive male, continuing the interaction with her own free will (Clink, 2004). This is exactly what this line is designed to accomplish.

If the unattractive male uses the neg line, it is most likely that the female will not respond and will not continue the interaction past that point. He was unattractive to begin with and now he has simply insulted the possible mate so his social attraction has now plummeted.

Unattractive men have less permission to be insulting, as the first impression that a female target has of them is that they are unattractive. If a man who is already perceived as unattractive insults his possible mate target, he has lost all chance of saving the interaction. With using a neg, the unattractive man has exacerbated low perceptions of his mate value by verbally abusing his female target, thus lowering his communication competence, thus lowering his social attractiveness. However, the first impression of an attractive man is that he is attractive. This gives him more permission to use a line that is funny or even insulting because his attractiveness is favored over his communication competence. Therefore,

*H9: An attractive man delivering a flippant line is perceived as more socially attractive than when he is delivering a neg.*

*H10: A neg pick-up line will be perceived more favorably when delivered by an attractive man than when delivered by an unattractive man.*

Given that the flippant pick-up line is a line designed to make the woman laugh, research would indicate that an unattractive man making a woman laugh and not insulting her as the neg line does would make the unattractive man appear more attractive in general. Therefore,

*H11: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more attractive, overall, than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

Even though the neg pick-up line is delivered as a back-handed compliment, a man's attractiveness should still be taken into consideration by the woman who has received the pick-up line. Therefore,

*H12: An attractive man delivering a neg pick-up line will be perceived as more effective at getting a date than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

As men are using either a flippant-pick up line or a neg pick-up line, the desired outcome is still the same. The perceived effectiveness and favorability of the line will be based on the man being attractive or unattractive. As physically attractive men are seen as having more communication competence, the flippant pick-up line will not benefit them. However, unattractive men, in order to make up for lacking physical attractiveness, stand to benefit from using a flippant pick-up line as it should increase social attractiveness. Although the neg pick-up line is insulting, it can be presumed that the physically attractive man will be more effective due to having physical attractiveness. The neg pick-up line when used by an unattractive man will not be successful, as his communication competence is already in question and he insulted the female target.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The participants for this study were undergraduates and graduate students enrolled in a midsized southeastern university. Instructors in the communication department were emailed about the study and asked to recruit their students to participate. Students volunteered to participate in this study, and were entered into a drawing for a small nominal value gift card in exchange for their participation.

### *Procedure*

Upon arriving, each participant was randomly assigned to complete one of four versions of the study survey on a computer. Participants were placed at a computer and began the survey with information about the purpose of the study and the informed consent information. Participants then watched a 10-second video clip of a man delivering a pick-up line to a woman standing at a bar and answered the survey questions that followed. Following the completion of the survey, participants were asked to proceed to another computer where they entered their name in the drawing for a gift card for their participation. Participants were debriefed if they had any questions about the study.

### *Design*

The study was implemented using a 2x2 factorial design. The first variable is attractiveness and it has two levels, attractive and unattractive. The attractive man and unattractive man were determined through a pilot study in which photographs of men were evaluated by a group of students using the physical attractiveness part of the attraction scale. The two men in the videos were selected using the highest attraction score and lowest attraction score.

The second variable is a pick-up line and it also has two levels, flippant and neg. The flippant line was pulled directly from an article that classified pick-up lines into various types (Bale, Morrison, & Caryl, 2005). The flippant line was delivered as stated.

Man: Excuse me, do you know how much a polar bear weighs?

Woman: No.

Man: Enough to break the ice. I'm (name).

The neg pick-up line was written by the author based on characteristics of negs described in pick-up artistry literature. The neg line was delivered as stated.

Man: Excuse me, did you know your left eye is bigger than your right?

Woman: Um, no.

Man: I just wanted to let you know.

Attraction and pick-up line type were crossed, generating four categories: an attractive man delivering a flippant line, an attractive man delivering a neg, an unattractive man delivering a flippant line, and an unattractive man delivering a neg. A 10-second video clip representing each condition was produced by the author and used as the stimulus material in each condition.

### *Instrumentation*

*Communication competence scale.* For this study the communication competence scale created by Wiemann (1977) was used. Perceived communication competence of the man in the video was measured using a 12-item Likert-type scale with a seven-point response format. Higher scores indicate greater communication competence. This scale produced a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ .

*Attraction scale: social and physical.* For this study, the attraction scale created by McCroskey and McCain (1974) was used. Only the social and physical parts of the scale were

used in this study as the task attractiveness component was irrelevant to the hypotheses being tested. Perceived attraction of the man in the video by the participant was measured using a 10-item Likert-type scale with a seven-point response format. Higher scores indicate greater attractiveness. This social attraction part of this scale is reliable because when tested, the scale produced a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ . The physical attraction produced a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ . The overall Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$  for social and physical attraction reliability.

*General perception of pick-up line.* This was tested using a 3-item semantic differential with a 7-point response format where higher scores indicated more favorable perceptions of the pick-up line. The scale was authorized by the researchers. Reliability assessments produced a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$ . This scale was originally comprised of four items, but a reliability assessment on the 4-item scale was unacceptably low ( $\alpha = .47$ ). Examination of scale attributes when individual items were deleted suggested that the removal of one item would improve the reliability of the scale to better than acceptable levels, thus the remaining three items comprise the final version of the scale and was used in all subsequent statistical analyses.

*Perceived effectiveness.* Participants evaluated the effectiveness of the pick-up line by way of a single-item measure with a dichotomous response set. Participants simply indicated whether or not the woman in the video was likely to have consented to going out with the man.

## **Results**

*Participant data.* The number of participants were  $N=101$ . The mean age of the participants was 22.73 years. Sixty-one females and 40 males completed the survey. The majority of the participants were single ( $n=74$ ). Fifteen participants reported being married. The rest of the participants ( $n=12$ ) were widowed, divorced, in a domestic partnership, or preferred not to answer about their relationship status.

*Hypotheses testing.* This study had 12 hypotheses, four main effects and eight interaction effects.

**Main Effects**

*H1: An attractive man will be perceived as more effective at getting a date than will an unattractive man.*

A chi-square test assessed the difference in the likelihood that an attractive man will be more effective at obtaining a date than an unattractive man. The chi-square value was  $\chi^2(1) = 0.78, p = n.s.$  The chi-square value was not statistically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

Table 1  
*Attraction and Effectiveness of Interaction*

Attraction	Ineffective	Effective
Unattractive	45	6
Attractive	41	9

*H2: An attractive man will be perceived as more communicatively competent than will an unattractive man.*

A *t*-test was performed to assess the difference in perceived communicative competence between an attractive man and an unattractive man. The *t*-test value was  $t(99) = -3.74, p < .01.$   $M_{\text{attractive}} = 4.06, M_{\text{unattractive}} = 3.37.$  The *t*-test value was statistically significant, thus the data are consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H3: A flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more effective than a neg pick-up line.*

A chi-square test assessing the frequency with which a neg pick-up line was perceived as likely to have resulted in the man in the video getting a date with the woman as compared to the frequency with which the flippant line was likely to have resulted in a date. The value of the chi-



square test was  $\chi^2(1) = 6.14, p < .05$ . The chi-square value was statistically significant, thus the data are consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

Table 2  
*Flippant Pick-Up Line and Neg Pick-up Line*

Pick-up Line	Ineffective	Effective
Neg Line	47	3
Flippant Line	39	12

*H4: A flippant pick-up line will be perceived more favorably overall than a neg pick-up line.*

A t-test was performed to assess the difference in the extent to which the neg was perceived as favorable as compared to the flippant line. The *t*-test value was  $t(99) = -7.65, p < .01, M_{\text{flippant}} = 4.39, M_{\text{neg}} = 2.24$ . The *t*-test value was statistically significant, thus the data are consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

### ***Interaction Effects***

*H5: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more communicatively competent than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

A t-test assessing the difference in perceived communication competence for an unattractive man when delivering a flippant line as compared to a neg was conducted. The *t*-test value was  $t(49) = -1.56, p = \text{n.s.}, M_{\text{neg}} = 3.18, M_{\text{flippant}} = 3.55$ . The *t*-test value was not statistically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H6: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line is going to be more effective than an attractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line.*

A chi-square test comparing the effectiveness of the flippant pick-up line when delivered by an attractive man as compared to an unattractive man was conducted. The chi-square value was  $\chi^2(1) = 0.21, p = \text{n.s.}$  The chi-square value was not statistically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

Table 3  
*Attraction and Pick-up Line Effectiveness*

Attraction	Ineffective	Effective
Unattractive	21	4
Attractive	18	8

*H7: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line is going to be perceived as more socially attractive than will an attractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line.*

A *t*-test evaluating the difference in the level of social attractiveness of an attractive man delivering a flippant line as compared to an unattractive man delivering the same line was calculating. The *t*-test value was  $t(49)=-0.16$ ,  $p<.05$ .  $M_{\text{unattractive}}=3.41$ ,  $M_{\text{attractive}}=4.65$ . The *t*-test value was statistically significant, thus the data are consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H8: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more socially attractive than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

A *t*-test was calculated to assess the difference in the perceived social attractiveness of a physically unattractive man when delivering a flippant line as compared to when he delivers a neg. The *t*-test value was  $t(49)=-1.67$ ,  $p=\text{n.s.}$ ,  $M_{\text{neg}}=2.78$ ,  $M_{\text{flippant}}=3.41$ . The *t*-test value was not statistically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H9: An attractive man delivering a flippant line is perceived as more socially attractive than when he is delivering a neg.*

A *t*-test assessing the perceived difference in social attractiveness of an attractive man when delivering a flippant line as compared to a neg was performed. The *t*-test value was  $t(48)=-2.70$ ,  $p<.05$ .  $M_{\text{neg}}=3.83$ ,  $M_{\text{flippant}}=4.65$ . This *t*-test value was statistically significant, thus the data are consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H10: A neg pick-up line will be perceived more favorably when delivered by an attractive man than when delivered by an unattractive man.*

A t-test assessing the difference in the perceived favorability of a neg pick-up line when delivered by an attractive man as compared to delivery by an unattractive man was performed. The  $t$ -test value was  $t(48)=-0.12, p=n.s. M_{unattractive}=2.22, M_{attractive}=2.26$ . The  $t$ -test value was not statistically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H11: An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line will be perceived as more attractive, overall, than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

A  $t$ -test was calculated to assess the difference in perceived overall attractiveness of an unattractive man when delivering a flippant line as compared to when he delivers a neg. The  $t$ -test value was  $t(49)=-1.14, p=n.s. M_{neg}=2.38, M_{flippant}=2.69$ . The  $t$ -test value was not statically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

*H12: An attractive man delivering a neg pick-up line will be perceived as more effective at getting a date than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line.*

A chi-square test assessing the perceived effectiveness of a neg pick-up line when delivered by an attractive man as compared to when delivered by an unattractive man was performed. The chi-square value was  $\chi^2(1)=0.28, p=n.s$ . The chi-square value was not statistically significant, thus the data are not consistent with the alternative hypothesis.

Table 4  
*Attraction and Neg Pick-up Line*

Attraction	Ineffective	Effective
Unattractive	24	2
Attractive	23	1

## Discussion

### *Interpretation of results*

The data from this study suggest that neither the flippant pick-up line nor the neg pick-up line is very effective in obtaining a date or starting an interaction. However, in hypothesis 3 the

flippant pick-up line rated as slightly more effective than the neg pick-up line. Additionally in hypothesis 4, the flippant pick-up line also tested as more favorable than the neg pick-up line.

Communication competence, attractiveness, and social attractiveness were all items tested in relation to the two types of pick-up lines. In hypothesis 2, the data supported an attractive man being perceived to be more commutatively competent than an unattractive man. The data for hypothesis 7 resulted in data concluding that the unattractive man delivering the flippant pick-up line was perceived to be more socially attractive than the attractive man delivering the same flippant pick-up line. It was also supported by hypothesis 9 that an attractive man using the flippant pick-up line was perceived as more socially attractive than when he is using the neg pick-up line.

Perception of a man's communication competence was also predicted to vary as a function of the type of pick-up line employed in an interaction. There was no support for an unattractive man using the flippant pick-up line being perceived as more commutatively competent than if he is using a neg pick-up line.

An unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line was not perceived as more socially attractive than an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line. However, the means calculated from the data suggest that in fact the data were moving in the direction consistent with the hypothesis. That the means were in the direction predicted by the hypothesis, it may just be the case that the sample was too small to have adequate power to find a statistically significant effect for this hypothesis.

It was predicted that the effectiveness of a flippant pick-up line would vary as a function of a man's attractiveness. The data did not support the hypothesis predicting that an attractive man using a flippant line would be more effective in getting a date than an unattractive man. The

data also did not support the unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line being perceived as more attractive, overall, than an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line. This result could be due to no matter the pick-up line being used, the more attractive a man is, the better his chance at continuing the interaction. However, the neg pick-up line was not perceived as more favorable when delivered by an attractive man versus an unattractive man, so it is logical to conclude from this study that the neg pick-up line has low ratings and is not an effective pick-up tactic regardless of the attractiveness of the communicator.

The results also did not support the hypothesis that an attractive man delivering a neg pick-up line would be perceived as more effective at getting a date than will an unattractive man delivering a neg pick-up line. Further, the data did not support the hypothesis that an unattractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line would be more effective than an attractive man delivering a flippant pick-up line.

What the data from this study suggest is that the flippant pick-up line is slightly more effective and favored than the neg pick-up line. The flippant pick-up line can also increase an unattractive man's social attractiveness and it also helps an attractive man appear more socially attractive. The findings indicate that a man using a neg is not perceived as socially attractive, thereby decreasing his social attractiveness and overall attractiveness.

#### *Limitations of the study*

Limitations of this study include the sample size. The sample size was relatively small. Only 101 college students completed the survey, resulting in cell-sizes of 23 to 25, which is just short of the convention of a minimum of 30 participants per cell. Small sample sizes undermine the statistical power of a test to find an effect that exists in reality. If a larger sample size had been obtained, results that were moving in a direction consistent with predictions may have

obtained statistical significance. Another limitation of the study related to the sample is that participants were college students who are relatively young in the scheme of dating years. College students might systematically perceive the pick-up lines differently from other populations such as middle aged divorcees who are dating. Also, the majority of the participants were single, which could affect how the pick-up line was perceived. Older participants could have revealed that pick-up lines are for the younger generations when trying to find a mate and determining mate value.

There was no pilot testing of the perception of the pick-up line scale. The scale used to measure the perception of the pick-up lines was not tested so there was no standard for how reliable the scale was or the validity of the scale. A developed scale to measure such things as the perception or effectiveness of a pick-up line would be beneficial for future research studies. Fortunately, the scale was more than adequately reliable, but validity testing on the scale would improve the soundness of the use of this scale in future research.

Another limitation of this study was not having a neutral pick-up line condition or having an extraordinarily attractive man for the video. The attractive man in the stimulus videos was rated attractive, but the data could be different if a man of higher ratings was used. By not having a neutral pick-up line, there was no baseline of normalcy or acceptability to which the socially risky or inappropriate flippant line and the neg could be compared. If the study had used a neutral condition, such as a simple direct request for date, the data could have varied in that the direct line could have been the line that was most preferred over the neg line or the flippant line. Having a neutral condition along with the expansion of the age range of participants could have yielded results that pick-up lines, not the direct request could have negative perceptions.

An additional limitation of this study was that both pick-up lines used in the study were not pilot tested before the study. By doing a pilot test of the lines, specifically the neg, it could have been determined if there was any confusion about the lines. The flippant line was pulled out of a previous research study that had characterized the line as a flippant pick-up line, so confusion with this line is less likely. There was no research to pull a neg pick-up line from. If there was confusion about the lines in a pilot test, the lines could have been altered.

The final limitation of this study is that it was biased viewed from a heterosexual mating relationship viewpoint. Though this limitation is mitigated by the explicit boundaries placed around the argument in this manuscript by the use of evolutionary research, it is appropriate to acknowledge what those boundaries fail to illuminate. Failure to account for homosexual relationships in this study is limiting because it does not take into account the other roles that humans can play. For example, if a female is approached by another female, would the line used by a male still work or would a different chosen line be delivered. This is also problematic because there are multiple other relationship types that might result in mating, but this study operated under the assumption of heterosexual mating strategies.

#### *Future research*

Future research studies completed on pick-up lines should evaluate the influence of other behaviors, such as nonverbal behaviors such as closeness, eye contact, and posture, and their relative impact on the effective execution of various pick-up lines. Studies could also try to gather data on the types of people open to using these pick-up lines and how popular these types of pick-up lines, flippant and neg, are in the pick-up artistry community. Research should not just focus on who is using the lines, but also the type of people who are open to having a pick-up line used on them.

Possibly combining studies to evaluate the male face shape along with the pick-up line perception could yield different data results than just examining a pick-up line. The data collected from this study could alter the perceptions about male face shape, with the more square face being more masculine and being associated with negative traits such as dishonesty and less warmth. If the male with the more square face was to use a neg line, females may perceive him as possessing even more negative traits. If a male with a more feminine round face were to use the flippant line, it is possible that the female would perceive his line as a cute attempt to start an interaction because the negative traits associated with the masculine face are not present.

While this study only examined the heterosexual aggressor male viewpoint of acquiring a mate, a future study should examine the frequency of females playing the aggressor and approaching the possible male mate target. Examining females' frequency and variation of strategies could only improve the available research on human mating strategies.

### *Conclusion*

Individuals can be flexible in their mating strategies and this study evaluated one strategy: pick-up lines. This pick-up line study assessed two different lines based on perceived effectiveness and favorability. The two lines, a flippant and a neg, were tested with an attractive man and an unattractive man. Physical attractiveness is the first instinctive characteristic individuals base mate choices on and the study data confirmed that a physically attractive man is perceived as more communicatively competent. Social attractiveness also plays a part in attraction. Unlike physical attractiveness, which is based on traits such as symmetry of the face, social attractiveness can be increased, which increases mate value. Increasing social attractiveness can be done with using a flippant pick-up line. The data indicate that unattractive men are perceived as more socially attractive than an attractive man when delivering the flippant



pick-up line. If an attractive man chooses to use the flippant line, he is perceived as more socially attractive than when he delivers the neg line. The flippant pick-up line was also perceived as more effective and more favored over the neg pick-up line.

The data gathered from this study are useful when looking at mating strategies and individuals engaging in courtship. Pick-up lines are used as a sexual display to convey their attraction for a target. The findings suggest that males should consider their own attractiveness and chose their line accordingly. Potential targets are assessing a mate from the first sentence and are evaluating the content accordingly. In reality, this first sentence either commences a new relationship or it can prevent a relationship from occurring.

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## APPENDIX

### Scales

#### **Communication Competence Scale**

1. (Attractive/Unattractive man) treats people as individuals.
2. (Attractive/Unattractive man) can deal with others effectively.
3. (Attractive/Unattractive man) is a good listener.
4. (Attractive/Unattractive man)'s personal relations are cold and distant.\*
5. (Attractive/Unattractive man) is easy to talk too.
6. (Attractive/Unattractive man)'s conversation is not "smooth."\*
7. (Attractive/Unattractive man) is relaxed and comfortable when speaking.
8. (Attractive/Unattractive man) likes to be close and personal with people.
9. (Attractive/Unattractive man) generally knows what type of behavior is appropriate in any given situation.
10. (Attractive/Unattractive man) is an effective conversationalist.
11. (Attractive/Unattractive man) does not mind meeting strangers.
12. (Attractive/Unattractive man) is a likable person.

\*reverse coded

1=strongly disagree

2=moderately disagree

3=slightly disagree

4=undecided

5=slightly agree

6=moderately agree

7=strongly agree

### **Attraction Scale**

#### Social

1. I think he could be a friend of mine.
2. It would be difficult to meet and talk with him.\*
3. He wouldn't fit into my circle of friends.\*
4. We could never establish a personal friendship with each other.\*
5. I would like to have a friendly chat with him.

#### Physical

1. I think he is quite handsome.
2. He is very sexy looking.
3. I find him very attractive physically.

4. I don't like the way he looks.\*

5. He is somewhat ugly.\*

\*reverse code

1=strongly disagree

2=moderately disagree

3=slightly disagree

4=undecided

5=slightly agree

6=moderately agree

7=strongly agree

### **General perception of pick-up line**

3-item semantic differential with a 7-point response

1. This pick-up line was

Inappropriate \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Appropriate

2. This pick-up line was

Unacceptable \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Acceptable

3. This pick-up line was



Offensive    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Respectful

\*\*\*4. This pick-up line was

Kind    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Mean

\*\*\*This item was thrown out because its inclusion reduced the reliability of the overall scale to unacceptably low levels.

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