

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Division of Marketing & Communications

University of Maine Departmental Records

5-1-2020

COVID-19_UMaine News_#Selfie4Science Face Mask Study

University of Maine Division of Marketing and Communications

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19_marketing



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [History Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Repository Citation

University of Maine Division of Marketing and Communications, "COVID-19_UMaine News_#Selfie4Science Face Mask Study" (2020). *Division of Marketing & Communications*. 32. https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19_marketing/32

This Press release is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Division of Marketing & Communications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

UMaine News



inbox?

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Recent Posts

Maginnis quoted in BDN editorial about Maine's COVID-19 response

Published: July 17, 2020

VillageSoup highlights Tick Lab services

Published: July 17, 2020

Mount Desert Islander reports on Dagher's talk about 3D-printing, boatbuilding and offshore wind

Published: July 17, 2020

VillageSoup highlights Maine Forest Tick Survey

Published: July 17, 2020

AI Initiative seed grant awards announced

Published: July 17, 2020

UMaine Today



CONIFER CLASSROOM What are the roles of Maine's University Forests?



Ruben invites community to snap #Selfie4Science for face mask study

May 1, 2020

Next time you put on a face mask before heading into the grocery store, Mollie Ruben would like you to snap a selfie and send it her way.

Your #Selfie4Science will support COVID-19-related research.

Given the need to wear face masks as well as interact while wearing them, the University of Maine assistant professor of psychology is interested in learning about people's social perceptions and biases related to face masks.

She's building a database of people with and without face masks for a study that will have important implications for business, health care, education and interpersonal relationships.

"COVID-19 has certainly changed many aspects of our everyday lives but as a nonverbal communication researcher, the most stark change has been in our everyday social interactions," says Ruben.

"Not only are we interacting with people in different or fewer ways, but when we do interact with others in public spaces, it's often and will continue to be behind a face mask."

Nonverbal research suggests the eye and mouth regions are particularly important for communication purposes and impression formation, she says.

"By blocking almost half of the face behind a mask, we are interested in how this impacts perceptions of others. How can we convey to our students this fall that we're friendly, approachable professors without the usual smile?"

Ruben is a certified Facial Action Coding System (FACS) coder and is an expert at analyzing facial expressions to assess emotions.

At UMaine, she directs the Emotion, Pain, and Interpersonal Communication (EPIC) Lab, where she examines the expression and perception of nonverbal cues, and the role of nonverbal behavior in communication processes.

Nonverbal behaviors include facial expressions, body movement, gestures, appearance cues like hairstyle or piercings, tone of voice, and sociodemographic information such as gender, race or age.

Ruben's research predominantly involves thin slices of behavior, including photographs or short videos of behavior.

"It turns out that individuals can and do regularly make judgments about others based upon this small amount of information," she says.

Research on stigma and bias suggests that particular groups of individuals may be perceived differently with or without a mask than others.

"For example, a racial minority may seem more threatening in a mask than a racial majority group member," says Shelby Helwig, a graduate student working alongside Ruben.

"We are interested in capturing what biases may exist for particular stigmatized groups when wearing or not wearing a mask in the hopes of using this information to help reduce these potential biases from forming."

For this initial portion of the project, Ruben is gathering photographs and people's basic demographic information. In the second part, she'll ask people to make first-impression judgments about the photographs.

Doctoral student Morgan Stosic also will work with Ruben and Helwig on the project. To take part, upload a photograph of yourself in a face mask to the [University of Maine Face Mask Database](#).

Contact: Beth Staples, beth.staples@maine.edu

Share this:     



Division of Marketing and Communications
5703 Alumni Hall
Orono, ME 04469-5703

Tel: 207.581.3743
Fax: 207.581.3776

Home
Submit news
Podcast

UMaine Today Magazine
Subscribe
Contact

