

Section One

Introduction

Introduction

We authors consider that “nonverbal communication” is a norm of human communication, and that the nonverbal form of communication is more complex than the term denotes. For that reason, we begin Section I with a discussion of exactly what nonverbal communication is, how different communication scholars approach the subject, and the components of this area of our discipline. We next look at the subcodes that are considered a part of this field of study and how nonverbal communication functions. Chapter 1 discusses the relation between perception and nonverbal communication, which helps in understanding the factors that assist us in filtering the nonverbal messages they receive. In addition, we look at how we use nonverbal communication and how our brains process it. Finally, we look at other factors that affect how we use and interpret nonverbal messages, including age, cultural backgrounds, race, status differences, and sex and gender differences.

Chapter 2 introduces basic research methods, which we include early in the text for two reasons. First, all research is only as good as the methods used by researchers to answer the questions they set out to answer and the hypotheses being tested. Learning about how research is conducted helps you to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the research reported. Second, you may wish to repeat some of the research procedures or test some of the researchers’ assertions and hypotheses that we report in this text. An understanding of research methodology will, at least informally, help you find the answers to your questions.

Before we begin our journey in Section I, we need to accomplish the following:

- Agree on what nonverbal communication is.

You should be able to define nonverbal communication and know how verbal and nonverbal communication differ from each other with respect to several important dimensions.

- Understand the historical foundations of what we call nonverbal communication.

One fact that cannot be stressed enough is that nonverbal communication cannot operate within a vacuum. Nonverbal communication usually functions along with the verbal aspects of communication to “create a message.”

- Explain how nonverbal communication clarifies what we communicate verbally.
- Acquire a basic understanding of the nonverbal subcodes that are studied in later chapters of this text.
- Acquire a basic understanding of how nonverbal communication has been researched and studied, and how theories have been derived through research processes.

The chapters you will be reading are based on research conducted by social scientists who use various methods in conducting their studies.

This first section, then, provides the foundations for what we later examine in some detail. We will attempt to identify several significant aspects of nonverbal communication for later study. As noted earlier in the Preface, much of what we authors examine may seem rather obvious and may be something you already know. What might surprise you, however, are the deviations and the effects of violating expectations based on the nonverbal subcodes. You might also be surprised by how much you are continually being influenced—and are influencing others—by means of nonverbal communication. For those reasons, throughout this textbook we will look at how you use nonverbal communication to affect others, and also at how you are influenced by it. ♦

Chapter One

Foundations of Nonverbal Communication

Key Concepts

- Definitions, Processes, and Problems
- Approaches
- Verbal-Nonverbal Distinctions
- Nonverbal Functions
- Nonverbal Subcodes
- Communication Functions
- How the Brain Processes Communication
- Age, Culture, Race, and Status Differences
- Sex and Gender Differences

Objectives

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Define Nonverbal Communication.
- Distinguish between various approaches that researchers take in studying nonverbal communication.
- Distinguish between verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Explain nonverbal communication filters, such as age, culture, race, status, sex, and gender differences.

For Juan, a typical sophomore communication major at a university like yours, it is a typical Monday morning. The electric alarm clock makes its familiar “buzz” at exactly 6:30 A.M. Juan, in the middle of a snore, turns over to his other side. His roommate, Bob, awakens slowly.

Quietly, Bob steps across the bedroom floor to the shower. The familiar creeping sound awakens Juan once again, and this time he gets out of bed. While Bob is in the shower, Juan goes to the dresser to select his socks and underwear. He can hardly distinguish the black socks from the blue but reasons that if he can’t tell, no one else can tell either. Juan slowly picks up the electric razor and begins to change his physical appearance.

Meanwhile, Bob completes his shower and shampoo. He gets out of the shower and blows his hair dry, brushes his teeth, sprays on underarm deodorant, shaves, and splashes on aftershave. He puts on his underwear and walks back into the bedroom.

Juan takes over the bathroom to begin a similar process of getting ready while Bob is choosing his wardrobe of the day. Bob is particularly careful on this Monday because he wants to impress Gayle, the woman who sits next to him in his 10:00 A.M. history class. In a matter of 45 minutes or so, the young men are on their way to the cafeteria for breakfast.

Immediately, the two can see that they will need to “reserve” a table. Their usual table has been taken, so they choose one nearby. Each places his book bag in a chair at this table, believing that leaving their possessions there reserves their place. That done, they get in the cafeteria line, each selecting his own breakfast.

Many of the actions performed by Bob and Juan seem typical. You may have noticed that much of their morning has been spent in **non-verbal interactions**, or behaving without words. You may think this behavior is typical of the beginning of the day but that it does not continue. The fact is, however, that we receive much of our emotional meanings through nonverbal subcodes. In addition, we spend a considerable amount of time in nonverbal communication. Mehrabian (1968, 1981), observing how feeling is transmitted in messages, found that as much as 93 percent of emotional meaning is transmitted nonverbally. Mehrabian’s research further indicated that in face-to-face interactions, the total affective (or emotional) meaning may be sent as follows:

- 38 percent of the emotional meaning of the message is *vocal*.
- 55 percent of the emotional meaning of the message is expressed via *facial expression*
- 7 percent of the emotional meaning of the message is expressed *verbally*.

Most researchers looking at the impact of nonverbal communication believe that Mehrabian's 93 percent figure may be a little high, but at the same time, these researchers do accept the relatively high impact of the "other-than-words" dimension, which this text calls *nonverbal communication*. In general, we authors accept Birdwhistell's (1970) and Philpott's (1983) approximations, which say that nonverbal communication accounts for 60 to 70 percent (or approximately two-thirds) of what we communicate to one another. It should be noted that this statistic has been widely accepted and reported by most contemporary nonverbal communication textbooks.

If this information is accurate, you are probably asking yourself, "Why haven't we studied this important phenomenon before?" This question is an excellent one, especially because everyone studies *verbal* communication from infancy through college. Although we all have had many courses in learning verbal "language," most of us have never had a specific course in nonverbal communication. You probably know something about nonverbal communication, especially if you have taken other communication courses, but what you know about it is probably not systematic, organized, or based on the ability to critique research. This text is designed to give you systematic, organized information about nonverbal communication.

In our study of nonverbal communication, we will find that nonverbal communication tends to be more elusive, is more intangible, is more difficult to define, and is more "natural" than verbal communication, yet we do not think about it as much as we think about the more symbolic, verbal form of communication. As Ekman and Friesen (1968) noted more than 30 years ago:

[Most people] do not know what they are doing with their bodies when they are talking, and no one tells them. People learn to disregard internal cues that are informative about their stream of body movements and facial expressions. Most interactive nonverbal behavior seems to be enacted with little conscious choice or registration; efforts to inhibit what is shown fail because the information about what is occurring is not customarily within awareness. (p. 181)

In summary, we are not always aware of the nonverbal communication of others, and we are sometimes unaware of our own nonverbal communication. This is not to say that *all* or even *most* of our nonverbal communication takes place unconsciously. Most of the time we simply act or react to an event, person, or object spontaneously; however, on occasion, the reaction may have been planned or rehearsed. Although we discuss this later in this chapter, we must realize that nonverbal communication is not totally symbolic. What we communicate nonverbally cannot, in most cases, symbolize something that is not present, but it may be the "trigger" that causes symbolic communica-

tion to occur. Verbal communication, as we will see, is more symbolic (although not totally) and more conscious in terms of its presentation. For example, Bob might talk about Gayle, the woman he is interested in, by using a verbal description of what she looks like. That, in turn, triggers the other person's mind to create a nonverbal picture of the absent woman. Of course, when we finally meet Gayle, our nonverbal picture will almost always change. The nature of nonverbal communication, then, is something we often take for granted.

Basic Definitions

For you to understand nonverbal communication, we need first to define what we mean by the term *communication*. We believe that **communication** is an interactive process whereby people seek to induce some form of change in attitude, belief, or behavior. We also agree with Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1989), who suggest that communication is a “dynamic and ongoing process whereby people create shared meaning through the sending and receiving of messages via commonly understood codes” (p. 12). We look at communication as the process of senders stimulating meaning in the minds of receivers and then having the receivers respond to the message they have received and interpreted (feedback). Although we believe that most communication is intentional, we also contend that intent is not absolutely necessary in order for communication to take place. The receiver of the message often perceives intent, even though the sender had no intention of sending the message received. In short, the sender of the message may not have meant what you thought he or she meant. When you are motivated to get your nonverbal message across to your receiver, you will be much more intentional with your nonverbal behaviors.

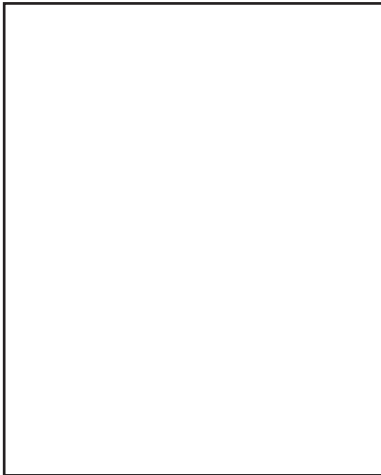
We also believe that *communication* is a reciprocal process, creating a *norm of reciprocity* (or a *dyadic effect*). This concept says that we should expect those with whom we communicate to respond in a manner similar to our original communication. For example, in nonverbal communication, if you use a positive nonverbal indicator (such as your tone of voice or a smile), you should expect a similar positive response from the person with whom you are communicating. This does not always happen, however, and those phenomena are discussed later in this textbook, when the *expectancy violations theory* is discussed.

What, then, is nonverbal communication? To begin this definition, we can say that the *nonverbal part of communication is that aspect of the communication process that deals with the transmission and reception of messages that are not a part of the natural language systems*. Whether they are spoken or written, words are considered part of verbal communication. Any aspect of communication that does *not*

include words is considered part of the nonverbal code. This does not mean that you do not combine verbal and nonverbal codes to create a message; indeed, much of nonverbal communication occurs in conjunction with verbal communication. This textbook deals with those aspects of nonverbal communication that are perceived through the five most commonly known human senses: sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.

Nonverbal communication may come via the characteristics of the speaker (hairstyle, vocal characteristics, appearance, behavioral displays);

it may come via the characteristics of the receiver (obvious boredom, dress, audible sighing); or it may rest in the features of the situation (cold room, institutional cream-colored walls, burned-out light bulbs). Nonverbal communication often occurs through the interaction of all three of these: **the speaker** (dress, voice, distance maintained), **the receiver** (posture, facial expression, distance maintained), and **the situation** as perceived by the sender and/or receiver (the context, the environment, the time of the interaction). For example, look at two of your classes, say, Biology and Psychology. Compare the differences between the two professors,



your conduct in those two class settings, and the physical classroom settings. Can you see how differences between the nonverbal aspects of those two situations can result in very different communication in those settings? Surely you can, and that means you are well on your way to understanding some of the effects of nonverbal communication.

By now you should have a basic idea of what nonverbal communication is. It is something more than being merely “beyond words,” or as Sapir (1949) once suggested, “an elaborate code that is written nowhere, known to none, and understood by all” (p. 556). Nonverbal communication is complex because it creates communication by use of nonverbal behaviors, either by themselves or combined with words. It may be shared *between* people (interpersonally) or *within* a person (intrapersonally). It may be intentional or unintentional. It may also be used without words, or it may take on meaning only when it is used in combination with words.

Considerations for Definitions

Before we clarify what we believe nonverbal communication to be, we must address some of the considerations just mentioned. We will

examine behavior versus communication, intentionality, signs versus symbols, and how people process nonverbal communication.

Behavior versus communication. First, we distinguish between nonverbal behavior and nonverbal communication. Some scholars do not make this distinction; however, we believe that it is an important one for understanding the scope of nonverbal communication. The perception of cream-colored walls is part of nonverbal communication. The walls may be said to “communicate” only because living things—people—perceive and interpret them in certain ways and act accordingly. Only living things behave. In a given context, the size of a room may communicate; you probably feel quite awkward when you have a class of five students in a room designed to hold two hundred. At the same time we say that inanimate objects *may* communicate, as just defined, human beings might behave without communicating. It is true to say that people cannot *not* behave; it happens as a natural process of being a living human being. We believe, however, that people who are behaving are not necessarily communicating. In our discussion, we use the word *communication* only when a receiver has *interpreted* a message as having some *meaning*. For communication to occur, a receiver must be present and must interpret (decode) the transmission of symbols (messages). Some theorists would not agree with this position, so we present it as a foundation for understanding our approach in this textbook. These messages may be either verbal or nonverbal; as long as a receiver has interpreted a message, whether it was sent intentionally or not, communication has taken place.

You can communicate nonverbally with yourself (*intrapersonally*), which is actually being your own sender and receiver, and in that case, there may be a fine distinction between behavior and communication. As Dittman (1972) points out, a message may be controlled by the person and yet be below the level of consciousness (or subliminal) and not actually perceived. For example, suppose you are driving down the highway. You look around and see that there are no cars approaching. There are no other people around, so you pick your nose. Is this action nonverbal communication or nonverbal behavior? In this incident, it is nonverbal communication. Why? It is nonverbal communication because you yourself interpreted the behavior as a *message*. You checked around to see if anyone might see you do this action, knowing that it would not be considered socially acceptable; it would be against societal norms to be caught in the act of picking your nose, even if it was by someone you did not know. You were weighing the social consequences of the act; you were having **social cognition**. Social cognition also includes issues other than weighing consequences, such as decision making, the perceptions of others, and the attribution of characteristics to a specific nonverbal behavior. We focused on weighing consequences because it is one of the more obvious aspects of social

cognition. If you had merely acted and not thought about the act, then that act would have been simply a nonverbal behavior.

Observational Study 1.1

As you walk around campus, explore the various considerations discussed and decide if what you observe is nonverbal behavior or nonverbal communication. What

led you to decide whether the “acts” you observed were communication or behaviors? Are there some that are easier to determine? Why?

Intentionality. It is important to understand **intention** as it relates to nonverbal communication. In verbal communication, we often think about what we say, although some might argue with that position. In the nonverbal system, however, there is often unintentional transmission of messages. For example, if you have an itch, most often you will scratch it. In the event that you think about it and you deem it inappropriate to scratch that particular part of your body in front of other people, you may make the decision not to scratch that itch. If you do not think about it, you might just reflexively scratch whatever itches. In doing this, you create the difference between intentional behaviors and unintentional ones. The actual decision not to scratch makes the absence of scratching intentional intrapersonal communication. Scratching without thinking and sending a message those who see you scratch that you are crass would be unintentional interpersonal communication.

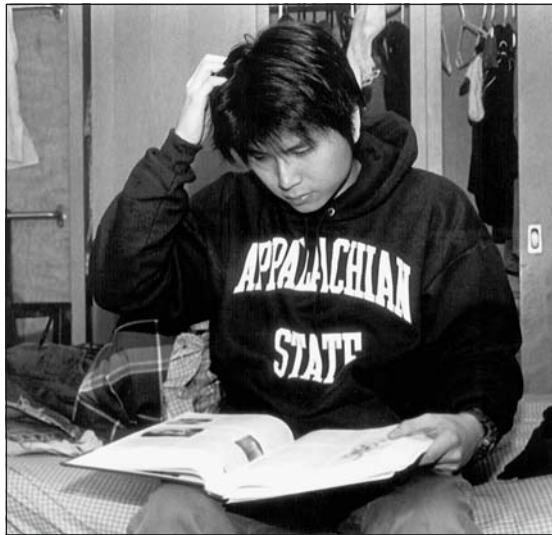
A good example of this difference is the head scratch. Usually you scratch your head in a general context, and it means nothing. In the early 1980s, however, the Head and Shoulders shampoo advertisers created a new meaning for head scratching—dandruff and all the negative connotations, according to the commercial, of having a “flaky” scalp. In later years, NIX and RID advertisements for ridding hair of head lice and Scalpacin’s contemporary advertisements for “Stress Itch” added to the social unacceptability of scratching your head in public. What had been a simple reaction (behavior) to a felt need may now be interpreted as an intentional (and negative) communication between you and receivers (those who actually see you scratch your head).

The *perception* of some form of intent is enough for an act to be considered communication. In the head-scratching example, communication did occur, although it may not have been the intended message that was transmitted. Nonverbal communication occurs when a message is decoded (or interpreted) as having some meaning, *regardless of the sender’s intent*. Most *verbal* communication carries with it a

greater amount of intent, but *nonverbal* communication tends to be more primitive and less controllable than its verbal counterpart.

Researchers believe that intention is necessary for communication to take place. This does not mean that you will not receive and interpret events that were not intended for you as communication; you will. You will also be sent messages that you do not interpret as messages; this is another intentionality issue in and of itself. Suffice it to say that effective communication is often dependent on the intentions of the sender.

Nonverbal communication is rarely as easily understood as verbal communication is. The problem is that whether or not the source intends the message (be it nonverbal or verbal) is secondary; as long as the **receiver** perceives intent, then communication has occurred. Often sources simply behave—they do not consciously think about the ramifications of a specific behavior—but others perceive that the source has done the behavior on purpose. It often gets confusing and, more often than not, leads to misunderstanding. *There are times, however, when neither the source nor the receiver perceives intent; in this case, the act falls under the category of behavior, not communication.*



What kind of nonverbal communication is it possible to create by simply scratching your head?

Observational Study 1.2

Go to class and look around at your surroundings and the people in your class. Write down five nonverbal behaviors you noticed

that you believe were intentional and five that you believe were unintentional. Try to decide what makes the difference.

Sign versus symbol. Verbal and nonverbal communication guides or directs people through the use of signs and symbols. Verbal communication, because of its symbolic nature, includes a code (language) upon which we must agree if communication is to take place. We must create a socially shared system of agreement—a language in which words take on “meaning.” If we are to be understood, then people must comprehend the symbols we use to communicate. The perceived inten-

tion of verbal communication creates a need to share with others what we mean when we use words. For example, look up the word “dog” in a dictionary. How many different meanings can be taken from the use of a simple three-letter word? Does meaning differ when “dog” is used as a noun as compared to a verb? Add connotations (or emotional meanings) to the definition of “dog,” and you have a whole different issue to add to the topic of the meaning of verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication may be symbolic or nonsymbolic. One of the more difficult areas in discussing the distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication is the distinction between *signs* and *symbols*. In the verbal code we have a **symbol**; that is, the word takes the place of something else—the word represents an abstraction, such as beauty, God, wealth, or even dog. The symbolic nature of verbal communication is inherent in language; words are abstractions of actual things that may or may not be seen by the receiver. Most of us have heard the childhood phrase, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Most of us are also well aware that this phrase is wrong. If I call you a “rat,” you know you are not really a rat. You may not even think of yourself as a “ratty” person. Yet you react to the word with emotional responses, such as hurt, anger, or indignation.

A **sign**, on the other hand, is a natural representation of an event or act. Fever is a sign of one’s being ill. A cross on a building is a sign of a church or, if a person wears a cross it is a sign of someone who professes Christianity. “\$” is a sign of money and sometimes wealth. Much of what we call nonverbal communication falls under the rubric of a signal, though nonverbal communication is sometimes considered symbolic by receivers. People expressing emotions do so nonverbally. They may smile, cry, or frown; when they do, we label the nonverbal behaviors with a symbol—*happiness*, *sadness*, or *displeasure*. What we try to do in many cases is to infer meaning from a sign. With the verbal code, which must depend on socially shared meanings, the process of *inferring* meaning is not usually necessary. When we infer meanings without being sure of what was meant, we can damage communication. The crying may have been a sign of happiness, not sadness at all.

Although the verbal code is quite *explicit* about what it represents—meaning more precise or specific—nonverbal communication is more *implicit*, meaning more implied or understood. Mehrabian (1981) first distinguished between explicit and implicit communication by noting that “Verbal cues are definable by an explicit dictionary and by rules of syntax, but there are only vague and informal explanations of the significance of nonverbal behaviors” (p. 3). Nonverbal communication would be much easier to understand if we did have a dictionary and syntactical rules for nonverbal signals. We take Mehrabian’s dichotomy of explicit and implicit communication one step further: We note that most nonverbal communication involves expectations on both the

senders' and receivers' parts. These expectations become the *norm* in given situations or relationships, and they generate both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Distancing zones (or space usage), appropriate dress, hair length, speech rate, amount of touch, and other nonverbal elements differ by culture and subcultures. They take on normative expectations that people can choose to either maintain or violate. Violations of norms, as discussed in later chapters, can yield both beneficial and hazardous results.

Let us look back to Bob and Juan. When they got up to prepare for classes, they began a series of behaviors that are the norm for many of us: They showered, they cleaned up, dressed, went to eat, reserved their places with their books, and generally behaved as *expected* of college students. Over a period of time such habits become so normal that they govern behavior and communication patterns. Although verbal communication is symbolic and must be analyzed when it is used—we must *think* about what we are going to say, or at least wish we had said at times—the nonverbal code is less symbolic and is more normative in nature. We often do not think about what we do nonverbally, yet most of us could name what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in specific situations. Waving hello to one of your good friends with your “upraised middle finger” (the proverbial “flip off”) may be perfectly fine, whereas doing the same to your professor, your boss, your clergy, or your parents would probably have some negative consequences. *What is the norm in one context may not necessarily be so in all situations.*

Because we have expectations, we sometimes assume (often inappropriately) that nonverbal communication is less calculating and a more accurate reflection of our feelings than verbal communication. Exploring nonverbal communication in more detail reveals that the relationship really does not exist in the ways we might imagine. In the case of Bob and Juan, unless there is a particular reason for changing their thinking about their communication, they usually act and react in accordance with everyday normative expectations. These actions often mold their verbal communication as well.

Observational Study 1.3

<p>Make a list of your daily routine; what you do before you go to class each day until just before your first class begins. How much of this list</p>	<p>is normative for you? How much do you consciously know you are doing as a nonverbal behavior? How much is unconscious or subconscious?</p>
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At this point, we would define **nonverbal communication** by going back to our definition of communication on [p. 8]: *A process of creating meaning in the minds of receivers, whether intentionally or*

unintentionally, by use of actions other than, or in combination with, words or language. Nonverbal communication includes norms and expectations, usually imposed by society, for the expression of experiences, feelings, and attitudes. In other words, nonverbal communication occurs when some nonverbal subcode (e.g., appearance, touch, space, body movements) creates meaning for a receiver, which can happen on purpose or unintentionally.

Nonverbal communication, then, operates in much the same way as verbal communication. It provides us with a means to control our communication, although it takes place in a more subtle, spontaneous, and natural way. Aspects of nonverbal communication make it possible, however, for receivers to be mistaken in interpreting a message, especially if the receiver perceives that message as having been sent on purpose. A shrug meant to convey “I don’t know” may have been interpreted as “I don’t care.” Nonverbal messages, while containing at least as much information as verbal messages, may lose their specificity of content, for a number of reasons. A nonverbal message by itself may be ambiguous or unclear; in many instances, it needs the verbal message to complete the process of communication.

There seems to be agreement among scholars about what subcodes are included in nonverbal communication, but there are considerable differences of opinion about how to approach their study. The next section looks at the different approaches that appear regularly in the study of nonverbal communication.

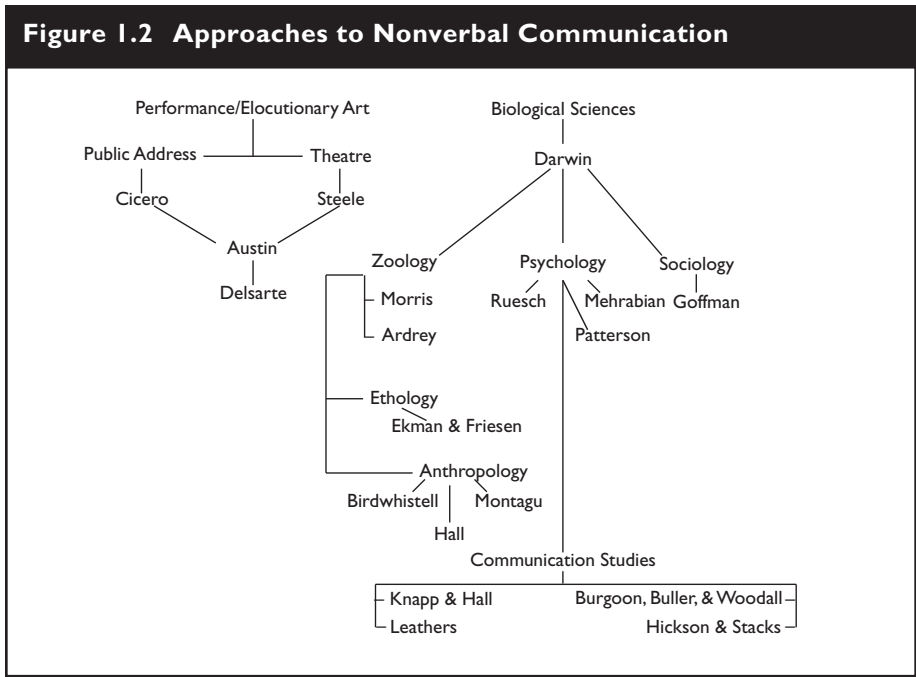
Observational Study 1.4

Observe the interactions of several people. Which of their messages appear to be explicit? Which appear to be implicit or implied? Which are intended

for others’ attention and which are not? How do others react to both the intended communications and to the unintended communications?

Approaches to Nonverbal Communication

An *approach* means to get close to a subject—in this case, nonverbal communication. Our approach to nonverbal communication suggests several factors. First, it implies that we either include or exclude several elements in our study. Second, our approach “colors” how we see the event, and may even determine whether we can see the event at all. Third, our approach involves some research methodology (a method of classifying what we are observing), a way of understanding what we see based on that classification, and finally, a basis for predicting



Source: Adapted and extended from M. Hickson & D. W. Stacks, *NVC Nonverbal Communication Studies and Applications* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1985), 13.

future behaviors. As you might guess, there are many approaches to the study of nonverbal communication; ours is simply one of many.

An *approach* is often identified by one of three related, but different, factors. The first factor is one’s theoretical point of view; the second is one’s field of study or discipline; the third is one’s methodology for undertaking research.

Theoretical Approaches

Many researchers think nonverbal communication is learned. People taking this perspective advocate the *nurture approach*. Traditionally, anthropologists and sociologists (such as Birdwhistell, Hall, Montagu, and Goffman) have used the nurture approach. We learn our nonverbal communication norms from sources that nurture our education. In opposition to this approach is the *nature approach*, developed by Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1871/1998). Darwin assumed that nonverbal behavior is part of the genetic structure of human beings as well as of other animals. In other words, the nature approach claims that our nonverbal communication skills are part of our heredity, and that they are innate. A third approach, the *functional approach*, assumes nothing about genetics or learning behavior. It focuses instead on the types and functions non-

verbal communication performs. Psychologists and communication researchers (such as Mehrabian, J. Burgoon, Leathers, Knapp, Hall, and Richmond and McCroskey) have emphasized the functional approach. This approach looks more specifically at how we use nonverbal channels to accomplish the function of our communication encounters.

While these theoretical approaches reveal something about the nature of nonverbal communication, more can be learned by looking at the disciplines (or areas of study) of the researchers.

Disciplinary Approaches

Perhaps the oldest discipline to consider the effects of nonverbal communication began in considering delivery in public speaking contexts. The early Greeks and Romans, and Cicero in particular, were the first to analyze delivery as one of the five important components of effective public speaking: invention, organization, memory, style, and *delivery*. Management of the voice and of gestures was a focus in the consideration of delivery (Corbett 1971). This focus on voice and gesture was known as the *elocutionary movement*, and it brought about an emphasis on the proper use of voice and gesture, which was prescriptive in nature. It provided specific vocal expressions and gestures based on how people should read or recite words. Steele (1979) developed a musical staff analogy, in which he wrote “music” for speeches, poetry, and literature. Austin (1966) suggested a similar prescription for gestures. The prescriptive approach may be referred to as the “performance/elocutionary art” approach to nonverbal communication. Today, this approach is considered antiquated, and, with the exception of some broadcasting and theatre programs, it is rarely taught. Because it was primarily a learned systematic approach to using specific nonverbal channels, it may be considered a *nurture view*.

Such a *nurture view* is held by many social scientists, who feel that the nonverbal code is similar to the verbal code and that all we need to do is to understand the structure of the nonverbal code. These scholars do *not* accept the notion that nonverbal communication is universal. Just as language differs, they argue, different cultures have different nonverbal coding systems. Nonverbal messages that are normal in the United States may very well have a completely different meaning in an Asian culture, and quite often may be considered socially unacceptable. There are some universal nonverbal codes, such as a smile, but for the most part, we cannot be sure that all people we encounter understand our nonverbal messages the same way.

Within the social and behavioral sciences we find many contemporary nonverbal communication researchers, although most of these researchers claim communication studies as their home discipline. Those closest to the *nature view* follow a biological science approach

and are best represented by Desmond Morris (1977) and Robert Ardrey (1966). They are followed by ethnologists, who compare and contrast human behavior with that of other animals. Probably best known are Ekman and Friesen (1969), both having closely followed Darwin's beliefs. Psychologists often take different approaches from those of communication theorists. Some, like Mehrabian and Ruesch, take a *functional view*; others take a more psychological (or *nature*) view. Morris, for example, was a zoologist by profession, and he took the *nature view* in some instances. Some social anthropologists, such as Birdwhistell, take a linguistic (or language) view. We present these examples to show that there is no one correct way to study nonverbal communication.

Methodological Approaches

The methods used in the study of communication help us understand the many approaches to studying nonverbal communication. Typically, those who take a *nature view* observe the similarities in behaviors of humans and other animals. The establishment of territoriality is a good example of this approach; both human beings and animals establish their own territories. Those who take a *nurture view* observe over a period of time how nonverbal communication occurs in groups. For example, someone might videotape a group, and by viewing the tape again and again, the researcher may discover underlying systems of nonverbal communication (e.g., nodding, blinking, and winking). Functionalists focus upon specific functions of nonverbal communication to determine how they work in specific contexts. For example, this approach may be used to study different greeting behaviors. More specific issues about methodology will be discussed in Chapter 2 when we begin to apply them to specific nonverbal subcodes.

This book, while reviewing the contributions of all approaches, uses a functional approach to nonverbal communication, combined with teaching you how to apply what you learn about those functions (what we referred to in the Preface as an application orientation). This approach, we believe, will allow you to see how nonverbal communication functions in interactions with other individuals and will allow you to use the functional approach yourself. To develop such a view, we must first examine in more detail what constitutes nonverbal communication, its subcodes or channels, and its functions.

Nonverbal Functions and Subcodes

To this point, we have talked about what nonverbal communication is. We can look at many actions or expressions and call them “non-

verbal communication.” What we choose to study and how we group these subjects together reflect both our definition and our approach to the study of nonverbal communication. We believe it best to examine the subcodes, those different component parts of the overall nonverbal code, as dimensions of five areas: touch and space, physical appearance, gestures, vocalics, and covert body/temporal communication (or those nonverbal issues that are not seen or heard). We feel that these five areas, each with its own appropriate subareas, constitute nonverbal communication. After this examination, we will look briefly at the traditionally held functions of human nonverbal communication.

Touch and Space

We communicate within an environment or physical setting. Because of this, our examination begins with an analysis of how touch is used and how it is a component of using *zero space*. Zero space is when two people are touching and there is no space or distance between the two of them. Next we analyze how people use their own personal space and then how the environment affects communication, helping to establish the context (or situation) of the communication. Later in the text, we examine the influences of the environments’ physical dimensions: (e.g., furniture, architecture), color and aesthetic appreciation, environmental size and shape, and temperature and humidity. Within environments, we structure the space around us in two ways: We establish territories, and we expect certain amounts of personal space to be available to us. Thus, the text looks at how we structure our territory and our personal space, what types of communication can be expected in each of these two, and what the norms are regarding both these aspects of proxemic behavior, or the use of space. We examine the total lack (absence) or violation of space as well as touch behavior. The term is commonly referred to as haptics or “zero-proxememics.” Finally, we examine the impact of violating the norms and expectations of someone with respect to both space usage and touch.

Physical Appearance

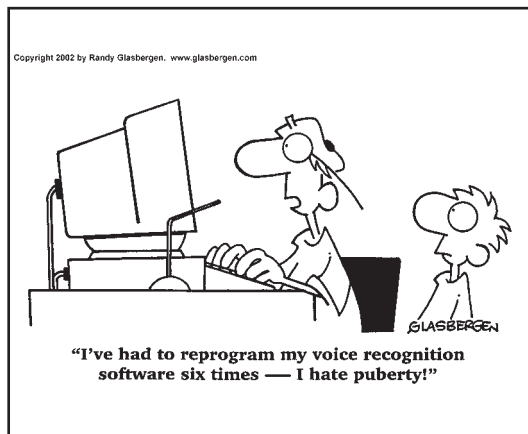
We examine how our body affects communication. We look at body shape and size, body image, physical attractiveness, clothing, and accessories, including all types of objects we carry or use. We consider how the body is used as a communicative tool and how we perceive the bodies of others. Stereotypical judgements, relationships between body size and I.Q., salary discrepancies, and expectations are examined for their day-to-day impact. We also examine how accessories, such as jewelry, book bags, hats, etc., affect people’s perceptions of others. Included in this analysis is the impact of advertising on our society’s view of what is physically attractive.

Body Movements and Gestures

Kinesics is the study of communication that is engendered by bodily behaviors that can be visually observed. These may be gross or exaggerated movements, or minute, almost imperceptible movements. Kinesics is explored through Birdwhistell's "kinesic system," which looks structurally at the use of body movements. It is then explored through Ekman and Friesen's more "meaning-centered approach" to bodily movement. We examine the blending of kinesic behaviors to create different emotional messages. We also look at the relationship between eye behavior and communication, both between people and as an analysis of the brain's activity during communication.

Vocalics

The fourth subcode examined is the unique contribution the voice makes to our "vocal expressiveness." We explore some of the stereotypes we have of others that are based on voice—masculinity, femininity, assuredness, and cooperativeness, to name but a few. We look at sound and its attributes—loudness, pitch, duration, articulation, and silence. We examine the "paravocal" aspects of voice qualities—what is a "good" or a "bad" voice, how it is used, and with what effect, characterizers, and qualifiers. Finally, we examine the effects of dialect, accent, rate, and nonfluencies, and we consider their correlation with such characteristics as body shape and appearance.



Covert Body/Temporal Communication

The final chapter in Section 2 examines phenomena we usually do not see: the impact of the olfactory system (scent and smell), as well as perceptual aspects of nonverbal communication, including possible detection of deception. We then examine the impact of time (chronemics) on our communication, looking at biofeedback rhythms and cultural expectations of how we use and perceive time.

Nonverbal Functions

As noted earlier, nonverbal communication does not operate in a vacuum. Nonverbal communication often performs one of several

functions in relationship to verbal communication. These functions help us to understand and use communication more effectively. We have identified six functions for which nonverbal communication is used.

1. *Identification and self-presentation.* We use nonverbal devices to let others know who we are. Those who know us well can identify us by our voices on the telephone. Some people call and say, "Hey, it's me." When we know that voice well, we know who "me" is. We also present ourselves through physical appearance, by facial expression, by vocal tone, by postural stances or sitting, by our olfactory signature (how we smell), by our use or misuse of time, among many other factors. We can tell when other people are "dressed up," when they appear excited, and when they sound depressed.
2. *Control of the interaction.* We use the nonverbal channel to take the floor so that we can speak; we regulate many interactions by nonverbal channels. Instead of saying, "I have a question," we may raise our hand or show a look of puzzlement. In an interpersonal setting, we are likely to raise our index fingers and lean forward to signal our desire to take the floor. We also let others know when it is their turn to speak by slowing down our rate of speaking and pausing, by leaning back, by using silence, among other tactics. All these nonverbal devices, and others, regulate our interactions.
3. *Relationship of interactants.* We illustrate to others how well we know a person by how closely we stand or sit to him or her, whether we smile and wink at the person, whether we whisper to him or her. Holding hands illustrates a particular type of relationship. For two teenagers, it may mean, "We're together [for now]." For a father and son, it may mean that the father is taking care of the son. If the son tries to pull away, the hand holding may mean that the father is in charge. Employees may assume a stiffer posture in the presence of their bosses than with their co-workers. If you are "in charge," say, as a parent, you may fold your arms across your chest and tap your foot to show impatience with your child, yet you are not likely to use the same nonverbal behaviors with your boss because the relationship is different.
4. *Display of cognitive information.* We use nonverbal communication to send specific information to the receiver; consider the use of a hand to communicate. A display of fingers may mean, "Okay." Another display, a hand held up by a road worker, may mean, "Stop!" When you allow someone to pull into the line of traffic in front of you, the same hand signal

may mean “Thanks!” Thumbs up may mean “Great!” Obscene signs may be delivered in an angry way or a friendly way. Recall the earlier example where you might “flip off” a good friend just to say hello; not everyone you did that to would take it as a friendly gesture. A specific uniform may tell others “I am a police officer.” A stethoscope around one’s neck is used to illustrate that one is a health care worker.

5. *Display of affective (emotional) information.* We use nonverbal communication to let others know how we feel. Also, our innate knowledge of nonverbal communication allows us to interpret the emotions of others. When we first meet a person, we establish a “baseline” of his or her emotions. Does the person appear nervous, anxious, stressed? When we meet that person again, we use that first occurrence in evaluating how we think that person feels. The better we know someone, the more accurate we are with our suppositions.
6. *Display of deception.* We also use nonverbal communication to show others that we feel a certain emotion when we actually do not feel it. We try to detect deception in others through their nonverbal behaviors. We tend to think of excessive pauses and “ahs” as indicators that the other person is lying. As we will discuss those that we have long thought are cues to deception are not good indicators.

These six nonverbal functions provide us with a basic set of tools for the examination of nonverbal communication. Other scholars may provide other functions, but we believe these six meet our criteria for teaching about nonverbal communication. Before we begin to examine these functions, we need to look at the general communication process. The review below will form a background for the examination of our functional approach to communication, which is based on what we believe to be the purposes of nonverbal interaction.

Nonverbal Communication and Perception

Most researchers agree that the communication process begins with **perceptions**. Perceptions are derived from the way we look at things—through (1) sensation and (2) interpretation. A sensation takes place through one of the five senses: touch, or the tactile sense; sight, or the visual sense; sound, or the aural (hearing) sense; smell, or the olfactory sense; and taste, or the gustatory sense. After a stimulus has been sensed by one or more of our sensory organs, the brain interprets this stimulus, and places it in our “memory bank of perceptions.” Through this process of perceiving, the external world becomes a part of what we refer to as knowledge.

To look at how perception affects communication processes, let us analyze an example. Recall a class you have had where there were students who felt they always had to participate in class discussions by either asking questions or sharing their thoughts whenever the professor asked a general question of the class. You may have perceived these students to be *brown nosers* and *royal pains*, and because the professor always allowed these students to speak up, you may have believed that the professor was “falling for it.” The professor, however, might have perceived these students to be people who were unsure of themselves and of their worth as students. The professor may have believed that those issues prompted these students to try and prove to themselves that they were smart enough to be there. The students, however, may have perceived themselves to be active participants in the class simply because they liked the subject matter and they wanted to “take in” as much of it as possible in the short time allotted to class meetings. The only way they knew how to accomplish that goal was to be active participants. Although the students’ self perception may have been correct, does that mean the professor’s or your perceptions were incorrect?

Just contemplating that small communication example, you can see how much perception affects how we interpret messages. For that reason, we always suggest checking your perceptions with the communicator, not with other observers of the communication. When you wish to know the actual message a communicator means to send, you need to consult with the communicator to clarify the meaning of the message.

In nonverbal communication, knowledge is typically related to *how we intend to evaluate the message*. Nonverbal communication provides us with a message about the message (what we call a “metamessage”). Nonverbal communication tells us, for example, whether people are being serious, joking, or sarcastic when they say, “I love you.” Now you take this same expression, and repeat it in these manners: sincerely, sarcastically, and playfully. Can you tell the difference? This evaluation of the meaning is based on the vocal tone and facial expressions used when the message is sent.

Observational Study 1.5

Find an opportunity to carry on a conversation with your roommate or closest friend. Observe the nonverbal messages of your friend as you watch for nonverbal cues. Then experiment with your own

nonverbal messages by sending one message that is sincere and another that is sarcastic or playful. Note whether or not your conversational partner received the message you believe you sent.

There are a number of factors that **filter**, or influence, our perceptions or interpretations. These filters include the function or purpose of the communication, as already discussed, as well as process structure, age, culture and race, status, and sex and gender. These five perceptual filters, discussed in the following paragraphs, do influence how we perceive others' communications.

Process Structure

Process structure refers to how the brain processes incoming sensations. Some texts use the term hemispheric differences (more commonly known as left brain/right brain) to refer to processing differences; however, we prefer *hemispheric style* (e.g., Andersen, Garrison, and Andersen 1979; Bowers, Bauer, and Heilman 1993; Stacks 1982a; Stacks and Andersen 1989; Stacks and Sellers 1989). The left hemisphere of the brain is responsible for most people's verbal communication. This side of the brain is specialized in an abstract, logical, and analytical way that is best used for the analysis of language. The left is also known as the side of the brain that most often processes the cognitive information you receive. The right hemisphere (sometimes called the "minor" hemisphere) is specialized for the spatiotemporal, gestalt, emotive forms of communication for which nonverbal communication is best suited. The right is often called the side of the brain that processes more of the affective (or emotional) information as well as more of the creative information received (Bowers, Bauer and Heilman 1993). For many years it was thought that one side of the brain dominated the other. More recently, we have begun to realize that each hemisphere's specialization includes a small share of the other hemisphere's specialty (Stacks and Andersen 1989). This means that some language will be processed in the right hemisphere, which may be done automatically or because it is tied to some emotions. The left hemisphere also processes some nonverbal communication.

It is essential to note that each hemisphere of the brain is specialized to analyze either verbal or nonverbal communication. To explain this difference, we will look at a model suggesting that nonverbal communication is more spontaneous, whereas verbal communication is symbolic. According to Buck (1982, 1984), spontaneous communication is related to the right hemisphere, is an automatic reflexive response, and is non propositional (lacks logical analysis) in nature. Buck's dichotomy is presented in Table 1.1.

One final approach to hemispheric processing has been proposed by Stacks (1982a). Stacks postulates that the two brain hemispheres differ only in terms of style; that is, each is best suited for either verbal or nonverbal communication. He theorizes that each hemisphere contains the process necessary for language, but language processed in the

Table 1.1 Summary of the Characteristics of Spontaneous and Symbolic Communication

Characteristics	Spontaneous Communication	Symbolic Communication
Basis of signal system	Biologically shared	Socially shared
Elements	Signs: Natural, externally visible aspects of referent	Symbols: Arbitrary relationships with referent
Intentionality	Spontaneous: Communicative behavior is an automatic or a reflex response	Voluntary: Sender intends to send a specific message
Content	Nonpropositional motivational/emotional states	Propositions: Expressions capable of logical analysis (test of truth or falsity)
Cerebral Processing	Related to right hemisphere	Related to left hemisphere

Source: R. Buck, "Spontaneous and Symbolic Nonverbal Behavior and the Ontogeny of Communication," in *Development of Nonverbal Behavior in Children*, ed. R.S. Feldman (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982), p. 38. Reprinted with permission.

right hemisphere is unconscious or repressed by the left hemisphere (which is the analytical, logical aspect of reality).

How each hemisphere of the brain operates also helps determine what type of material is being processed. Based on the work of Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967), Burgoon and Saine (1978) concluded that verbal communication is more digital, much like a computer's information: it is highly arbitrary, discrete, and found in finite units. Nonverbal communication, however, is more continuous and natural. Burgoon and Saine label this kind of communication as **analogical**, which means that the code material is composed of continuous, infinite, and natural representations of what people observe. A metaphor for the analogical nature of nonverbal code material is the color spectrum. It consists of a finite number of colors, from white (a combination of all colors) to black (the absence of all colors), but our symbolic representations of the color spectrum are arbitrary and discrete (e.g., aquamarine, tangerine, lilac, navy blue). In the same way a gesture is continuous and infinite, analysis forces us to "create" a meaning for that gesture. That meaning will be arbitrary and it may change by culture or subculture, from relationship to relationship, from situation to situation. Take, for example, the "okay" symbol—creating a circle with the thumb and forefinger and extending the other three fingers upward. In our culture it means, "okay." In some other cultures the same symbol is an expression of what raising the middle

finger in the air is in our culture. Those definitions are arbitrary and are based on the norms of the culture.

Richmond and McCroskey (2000) take this processing of information in a similar direction, but the distinctions they note are a little different. Two distinctions they make, among others, are between the **linguistic distinction** and the **continuity distinction** showing processing distinctions similar to those of Burgoon and Saine (1978). The linguistic distinction is discussed as relying on language, whereas nonverbal communication does not rely on language. This does not deny, however, that verbal and nonverbal communication do work in conjunction with each other. The continuity distinction looks at verbal communication as discontinuous, meaning that a verbal interaction has a start and a finish. Nonverbal communication is continuous, meaning it is ongoing and does not need a verbal component to have meaning. Even the absence of nonverbal behaviors can send a message (e.g., the “silent treatment” when you are angry).

Finally, we must examine the structure of the two codes. As might be expected, nonverbal communication is much less structured than verbal communication. Many researchers believe that nonverbal communication has no particular set of rules, no grammar, and no syntax. Other nonverbal communication scholars would disagree with that statement, however, and say that we actually do create rules for what is nonverbally acceptable and what is not (see Birdwhistell 1967, 1974, 1983; Schefflen 1964; E. T. Hall 1959, 1972, 1976). The verbal code can be indicative of the past, present, and future, and it can also be expressed in a number of different languages. Nonverbal communication has no written set of rules (although some are probably understood), grammar, or syntax; it is bound to the present, and is its own natural language. For example, although speakers can talk about speeches they give or will give (about how good or bad they were or will be), they cannot do so nonverbally without first providing a **context** through verbalizing. Consider a smile. What does it reflect? Without some other information, say about the topic being discussed or the situation at hand, we have no idea. Although we may infer many things from that smile, a verbal message is needed to understand what the emotion is.

Nonverbal communication, because of its rather singular need to be in the present, tends to be highly *contextual*. Different situations or environments produce different nonverbal messages. Your nonverbal communication will likely be different at a funeral than it is at a party, although a funeral in New Orleans might be a different experience from what we normally think of as funereal. The way you act in class or while hanging out with a friend would probably not be proper in a job interview or at work. The context helps us to decide what norms and rules to follow.

Age

As we will discuss in later chapters, age is a primary factor in the communication process. For example, children stand closer to one another when they are younger. You will usually allow a 3-year-old to climb into your lap, but would you allow the person sitting next to you in this class to do the same? People who lose some of their hearing as they age will stand closer to people so they can hear. Adults tend to stand farther away from people. These are norms for our society, and such standards will always be contextually based. Individuals whose sight has weakened may have difficulty observing the gestures and facial expressions of others and so may move closer to others. As people get older, they tend to put more distance between others and themselves. We often see children as “space invaders,” and we may have a tendency to avoid getting anywhere near senior citizens, almost as if old age were contagious. We should also point out, however, that these are standards of our culture; other cultures that revere their aged members do not avoid coming in contact with the older generation. It is Knapp and Hall’s (1992) belief that we are more likely to move closer to others of our own age group.

Age may also affect other aspects of nonverbal communication. Physical appearance is one area where age may play a role. Children of preschool age may not yet be aware of clothing trends and may, therefore, be less concerned with their physical appearance than when they grow into their school-age years. As people age into senior citizens, they may become less concerned with appearance again, perhaps becoming more concerned with the people they are than how they appear. It would be stereotypical to make any blanket statements about how age affects appearance because each person will certainly make personal choices based on his or her preferences. Can you think of any senior citizens who are overly concerned with their physical appearance and attributes, including the trendy dress of the day? Conversely, can you think of any young children who are similarly concerned with the same issue? Your answer will likely be *yes* to both of those questions, just proving that you need to be careful about the nonverbal subcode of physical appearance when you analyze it using this perceptual filter of age.

Culture and Race

Nonverbal aspects of communication vary widely according to culture and race. In some cultures people stand very close to one another; in others, men kiss one another’s beards; women do not shave their legs and underarms in some cultures; some cultures’ pace of life is very different from ours in the United States. With the many cultural and racial differences, we may find that dress can be different, as can

touch, space, scent, usage of time, gestures, and so forth. In addition, some theoretical differences will greatly affect nonverbal communication between people from different cultures.

We should take note of cultural variables that can influence nonverbal interactions. One specific variable that would influence nonverbal communication is whether a culture uses **high-context** or **low-context communication**. High-context communication, according to Gudykunst (1998), is seen where most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. What this means is that high-context communication is more indirect, ambiguous, and far more dependent on the nonverbal code. Low-context communication is seen when the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. Low-context communication is more direct, precise, clear, and is more dependent on the verbal code for message transmission.

Another cultural variable that researchers should determine when studying nonverbal communication is whether a culture is **individualistic** or **collectivistic** in nature. Gudykunst (1998) tells us that cultures that are more individualistic are ones where individuals' goals take precedence over the group's goals; they are more likely to promote self-realization, and they see each person as having a unique set of talents and potential. In individualistic cultures, people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family only; the "I" identity takes precedence over the "we" identity. In collectivistic cultures, the group's goals take precedence over individuals' goals, which requires that individuals fit into their groups. Emphasis is placed on collectivity, harmony, and cooperation within the group. In collectivistic cultures "people belong to in-groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty" to the group (p. 47); the "we" identity is more important than the "I" identity (Gudykunst 1998). These two variables can significantly influence the importance of nonverbal communication. Using dress as an example, we can see that people from more individualistic cultures may dress in unique styles. Someone from a collectivistic culture, wanting to *fit in* with the group, might dress like others in the same culture. In some cultures, collectivism is forced on the population, such as is done in Communist China. The government, especially in some work settings, can prescribe dress, and many people in cultures like that of China dress in identical clothing styles and colors.

There are other cultural variables that are also important when studying nonverbal communication. **Power distance** is one variable that affects the use of nonverbal communication in situations involving interactions between people of different statuses. Some cultures' norms say that people who are more powerful should be in control, and their nonverbal communication behaviors will reflect this. This norm is called **high power distance**. The United States is deemed a

culture that practices **low power distance**, which means that Americans believe people should be treated as equals, even if there is a status difference between them (Gudykunst 1998). Most of us know some nonverbal behaviors that are expected of us when we are in a subordinate role, so it is easy to see how this variable could affect nonverbal communication norms and expectations. If you are a subordinate in a high power distance culture, you will assume postures that indicate less power, such as shrinkage of your body, whereas the boss might use an expansive posture. You might not initiate eye contact or touch if you are in a subordinate role in a high power distance culture; that privilege is reserved for the person in the higher status role.

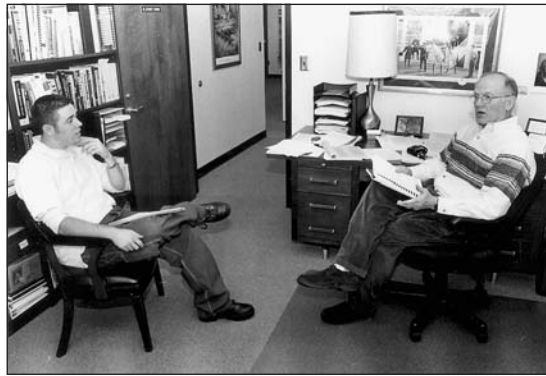
The final cultural variable that would cause communicators to modify their nonverbal communication would be **masculinity** and **femininity**. In cultures that are considered more masculine, gender roles are clearly distinct. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. People in highly masculine cultures value things, power, and assertiveness; they emphasize differentiated sex roles, performance, ambition, and independence; they tend to have little contact with members of the opposite sex when growing up, and they tend to see same-sex relationships as more intimate than opposite-sex relationships (Gudykunst 1998). In cultures considered more feminine, gender roles overlap; both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. People in highly feminine cultures value quality of life and nurturance; they value fluid sex roles, service, and interdependence (Gudykunst 1998). The authors of this text believe that there is also a “middle of the road” position on this issue—that there are also **androgynous** cultures, which means that they reject the rigid sex roles often imposed by society (Wood 2001). A culture that is androgynous would have characteristics of both masculine and feminine cultures.

When deciding how to communicate with people who are culturally or racially different from us, we need to take many things into account. Culture and race are clearly important filters that help us understand nonverbal communication.

Status

How we interact nonverbally with superiors may differ entirely from how we interact with subordinates. In addition, our nonverbal communication sending and receiving processes vary depending upon whom we are interacting with. We may have relaxed kinesics while interacting with our peers, but when in the presence of our “boss,” we become more formal. A superior may initiate touch with you by putting a hand on your shoulder after a successful project, for instance, but would you be likely to do the same if he or she had similar successes?

In 1994, Johnson reported that there are reasons to believe that the purpose for which we use nonverbal communication depends on position of legitimate authority. That is, bosses tend to use nonverbal communication to manipulate and even control, while subordinates use it to comply and show deference (or respect) to a boss's authority. Later in this textbook, we will discuss more ways status is communicated, and it will become even more obvious that status also serves as an important filter for understanding nonverbal communication.



Does your posturing differ when interacting with a professor and interacting with your roommate?

Gender

We, like many communication scholars, differentiate between *sex* and *gender*. We define sex as the biological determination of male and female. Gender we define as a psychological determination, and we consider it to be a continuum, with masculinity at one end and femininity at the other. The midpoint of the continuum would be androgyny, which is having both masculine and feminine psychological traits. In 1977, Henley published *Body Politics: Power, Sex, and Nonverbal Communication*. In her book, Henley argues that males are the dominant and domineering sex and that males indicate their dominance through a number of channels, including nonverbal communication. Tannen (1990) and Wood (2001) wrote that males typically use the communication process as a method of *control*, which complemented Henley's analysis. At the same time, Tannen suggested that females generally use the communication process to *negotiate*, and Wood's research on "women's speech" confirms that finding. Over the last decade, many researchers have studied the differences between male and female communication, and the discipline of nonverbal communication is not a stranger to that research. This textbook will look at how gender affects the many subcodes that we use.

When looking at status differentials, we need to refer to Johnson's (1994) findings mentioned in the preceding section about status. These findings can be applied especially to work environments employing both males and females. As the make-up of the work force becomes more and more that of both genders in both superior and subordinate roles, the nonverbal communication will change. For now, however,

the majority of research on gender issues in the workplace indicates that the “superior” nonverbal behaviors are those considered typically male (Wood 2001). In the course of covering the different subcodes in this text, we will point out some of those specific findings.

There appear to be several positions regarding the relationships between power, gender, and nonverbal communication, and they should be considered as positioned along a continuum. We summarize these positions by saying that some scholars report no differences in how males and females use power, while others take the position that there are no similarities. Some of the positions point to differences but say those differences exist as a result of legitimate authority being exercised, not because of gender. Some say that males always dominate females and that nonverbal communication is just one such area. Others point to the idea that men and women both exhibit power, but it is not to be viewed as dominance. Power is certainly one area where we see differences between genders, if not in the manifestation of power, surely in the range of findings we discovered when surveying the literature on this theme. We will look at this issue a number of times in our study of the subcodes of nonverbal communication, allowing you to draw your own conclusions.

Henley (1977) saw significant differences in nonverbal communication when a male boss dominated a female secretary by using nonverbal communication. A situation with a male boss and a female secretary was typical when Henley undertook her research in the early 1970s. Today, while such a relationship may still be somewhat typical, there are also others that are much different: (e. g., a female boss with a female secretary, a male boss with a male secretary, and a female boss with a male secretary. Johnson (1994) attempted to determine gender-based differences in light of the legitimate authority of the individual. She found that, with the exceptions of smiling and laughing, one’s position in authority was more important than gender. Even with smiling and laughing, the gender composition of the group being studied was more important than the gender of the boss. Today Henley would probably find different results, the differences traceable solely to the changes prescribed by federal Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity laws. What might have been acceptable in the workplace twenty years ago may not acceptable today, and most of our society has been educated about this topic. Most people in positions of authority today are very careful about using any discriminatory nonverbal behaviors based on sex for fear of the consequences. We could hope that these changes came as a result of more nonverbal sensitivity, since that would indicate that more effective communication practices were being learned, but the reality is probably that these changes have come about as a result of subtle coercion by our society. Nevertheless, the outcome is still be positive.

To better understand some of the gender differences found in non-verbal communication, we will briefly explore several factors that previous research has indicated as dominating and deferent (acquiescent, obedient, submissive) behaviors. Using the control of interaction function, we might see that there are several ways to dominate a conversation. It may be done by talking too much, interrupting, changing the topic, and by the use of silence. Each of these methods has been viewed as a dominating mechanism.

Amount of talk. James and Drakich (1993) and Wood (1999), among others, have reported that men talk more than women in mixed-sex interactions (Eakins and Eakins 1978; Thorne and Henley 1975). Tannen (1990), however, suggests that in public situations, males ask more questions, ask longer questions, and typically ask the first question; Wood's (2001) research confirms those findings. Tannen suggests further that males talk more in public and females more in private situations, referring to male talk as "report talk" and female talk as "rapport talk."

Interruptions. There are three types of interruptions: positive, negative, and neutral. Positive interruptions include those where a question is asked for clarification purposes (communication function). Neutral interruptions include those that are "asides" (e.g., "Please pass the butter.") Negative interruptions are often referred to as **overlaps**, although some overlaps are not considered to be negative. Overlapping, by definition, means that you overlap someone's speech with your own; it is sometimes seen as a sign that you are interested and that you are following the conversation. Let's consider what we know thus far about the amount of talk and regulation of conversation between males and females, and then consider how interruptions are a part of the process of communication. We know that men talk more than women in public situations, asking the first questions, asking more questions, and asking longer questions (which are often preceded with a statement or statements) (Tannen 1990). With that in mind, let us assess how interruptions add to this:

1. Men interrupt more often (Beck 1988; Bohn and Stutman 1983; Esposito 1979; Hall 1984; West and Zimmerman 1983).
2. Interruption is often seen as dominance (Stewart, Stewart, Friedley, and Cooper 1990; Tannen 1983, 1990).
3. Interruption has also been seen as a signal of interest as opposed to dominance (West and Zimmerman 1983).
4. Women will interrupt more with questions, men with statements (LaFrance and Carmen 1980; Wood 2001).
5. Interruptions and overlaps are different, according to some theorists (Bennett 1981).

6. Overlaps are not gender related (Zimmerman and West 1975).
7. Seventy-five percent of the time, overlaps are cooperative (Tannen 1990).
8. Sometimes overlaps are simply conversational “duets” (Falk 1980).
9. Men use interruptions more to control conversation; women use interruptions more to indicate interest and to respond (Stewart, Stewart, Friedly, and Cooper 1990; Wood 2001).
10. Men more often consider interruptions as normal and good-natured, at least within masculine environments, so it carries over into all environments (Wood 1998, 2001).

If you are thinking that some of these points contradict each other, you are correct. The body of research on the topic of interruptions has never been clearly conclusive about which gender uses more of them and how they are used. Perhaps further research into this nonverbal and verbal field will be more forthcoming with its results, but for now, suffice it to say that interruptions do occur and are used by both genders. We will look at these more closely when we discuss the vocal subcode in a later chapter.

Silence. If silence means the lack of interruption, it is interesting that some researchers have found that males use silence as a method to dominate. Silence has long been considered a vocalic subcode factor that communicates much information. Sattel (1983) has noted that silence can be used as an instrument of power. While Tannen (1990) has indicated that some males use silence as a “taciturnity of spirit” (meaning being subdued or reserved), there appears to be no research to support males using silence as a manipulative tool.

Power is not the only issue in the use of silence. Richmond and McCroskey (2000) point out that people use silence to communicate many things. We may use silence to establish interpersonal distance, to put our thoughts together, to show respect for another person, or to modify others’ behaviors. Most research in the area of gender differences, however, has not determined that either gender uses silence for one of those functions more than the other gender.

Deference. At the other end of the regulation of interaction spectrum is the concept of deference, meaning that we can expect subordinates to defer to their superiors in terms of conversations and other communication interactions. One of the most significant means of deferring is through nonverbal gesturing. When the boss is “lecturing,” a subordinate may be compelled to nod his or her head in agreement. Goffman (1976) discussed deferential behavior at length in his studies of advertising. Goffman found that marketing and advertising special-

ists had taken advantage of the common stereotypes of gender differences. Goffman found six general types of *genderisms* in advertisements; (1) males were larger than women in relative size; (2) women were portrayed as outlining and touching objects more often than men (the feminine touch); (3) males were portrayed as having the more executive, superior, or active role (function ranking); (4) the family was often used, but whereas sons were shown as inferior to fathers, mother-daughter combinations generally displayed more equality; (5) females were found to physically lower themselves to males (ritual of subordination); and (6) women were found to be depicted as withdrawn psychologically from the social situation at large, not oriented to it, and dependent on the goodwill of others. We might think that these findings have changed in recent years. Although there have been some changes, the majority of advertisements still send the same message (Wood 2001). When we view an advertisement that shows something out of the “ordinary,” in relation to gender roles, it stands out. The Coca-Cola advertisement where the women working in an office building ogle the attractive construction worker outside (which is the exact opposite of that which we usually think of as “the norm”) would be one example. Another might be some of the advertisements where a man is discussing bathroom-cleaning products.

The mass media apparently reflect the gender roles of our society and also contribute to them. Archer, Kimes, and Barrios (1976) noted some factors similar to Goffman’s findings. Studying photographs in newspapers and magazines, they observed that more of the bodies of females were shown, whereas pictures of males contained mostly faces. Still other researchers look at election campaigns where there are female and male candidates. Media will often pay attention to what the female candidate is wearing, but the male candidate does not receive the same scrutiny (Wood 2001). Think of the 2000 election of Hillary Clinton to the U.S. Senate and how often the media pointed to the clothes she was wearing at different events, in particular at her victory rally. Was the same done to Rick Lazio? Such differences make it clear why in almost any social situation, we have a certain set of expectations about how our own gender should communicate.

Observational Study 1.6

Choose to watch a one-hour TV program and observe the advertisements accompanying that program. How many were there? How many

used stereotyped gender roles? How many did not? What nonverbal messages did these ads send about the roles of men and women in our society?

An overview of gender differences research (c.f., Hall 1984; Jones and Yarbrough 1985; Wood 2001) reveals that males and females differ

in terms of facial expressions (women reveal more emotions); posture and bearing (women are more relaxed and sit differently; men expand more, women use shrinkage behaviors); eye contact (women employ more); gesturing (men use more and are more expansive in their use of gestures; women use more in approval-seeking situations); clothing, grooming, and physical appearance (women put more importance on their appearances, and society places more importance on their appearance); use of space (women are approached much more closely); and touch (men often interpret women's touch as sexual, more so than women do men's touch, women are touched more in same-sex interactions than men are). In terms of vocalics, there are gender differences in sound development (female children start speaking earlier, mothers vocalize more to female children); physiology (males have larger larynxes and longer and thicker vocal cords, more males have speech defects); and pronunciation (more females speak standard American dialect, more males, nonstandard, blue-collar English); pitch (lower pitch for males); volume (males generally speak louder); and vocal typecasting (males have more problems verbalizing emotions) (Cline 1986; Cline and Musolf 1985; Eakins and Eakins 1978).

An individual's sex can often be determined solely on the basis of the voice. Although there are gender differences in how messages are transmitted, there are also gender-related differences in perceptions of others' nonverbal communication. Vocally, women are generally perceived in terms of sociability, and men are perceived in terms of physical and emotional power. Vocal quality cues are used more in judging women than in judging men. As a general conclusion, we can also state that *women are more accurate in their interpretation of nonverbal cues and are more responsive to nonverbal cues than are men* (Kramer 1978; LaFrance and Mayo 1979; Rosenthal et al. 1979).

Additional research has examined how males and females perceive each other. Powell, Hill, and Hickson (1980) had students view a videotaped speech given by a speaker of the same and one of the opposite sex. Participants evaluated speakers for attitudinal similarity, credibility, and interpersonal attraction. The only differences between males and females were found for females who viewed a female speaker, and then only on the assessment of the female speaker's *social attraction*.

It is our position that understanding differences in power and gender is important to effective communication, especially when dominance in an interaction is considered. Just as with all nonverbal communication, it would be impossible to generalize about entire populations just because some findings indicate that certain behaviors are used by the majority of one group. Such a generalization would be stereotyping at its worst, and it would not allow for the individuality of human beings. Such general differences, however, can be important and helpful in learning to communicate effectively with others.

Summary

Introductory information on this significant topic of nonverbal communication will be crucial to your understanding the rest of what we discuss in this textbook. Nonverbal communication is important; it accounts for 60 to 93 percent of the communication we have with others in face-to-face interaction, depending on which theorist one cites. Several theoretical and methodological lines of thought developed for the study of nonverbal communication have been presented here, in the hope of making the concept of nonverbal communication clearer for you. Realize, too, that although nonverbal communication and verbal communication differ in many ways, the two systems function together. After reading this introduction, you should be able to distinguish between nonverbal communication and nonverbal behavior. It is our hope that you are now able to identify and define nonverbal communication in terms of four basic dimensions: overt (kinesic and vocalic) communication, spatial use (proxemics, haptics/tactics), physical appearance, and body/temporal communication (covert, olfactory, chronemic). In addition, environmental factors become an important part of our study of nonverbal communication.

It is important to understand that we both receive and send the nonverbal code to others through a number of filters. Our filters assist us in interpreting the various stimuli that we sense. These filters include the purpose of the interaction (according to each of the interactants), the sex or gender of the interactants, the brain processing of the nonverbal code, and the age, culture, race, and status of the interactants. As you go through the chapters of this book, you should remember that these filters help determine what you gain from a nonverbal encounter. To understand the studies we cite in Section 2, we will review in the next chapter how nonverbal communication research is conducted.

Questions for Thought

1. What is nonverbal communication? Nonverbal behavior?
2. How much difference is there in the ways males and females use nonverbal communication?
3. How do the two code systems (verbal and nonverbal codes) work to create “communication”?
4. In your mind, how do the five purposes of nonverbal communication relate to the total communication process?
5. Given what you have learned in this chapter, how effective are you as a nonverbal communicator? Why?

6. What do you think is the role of media in setting the nonverbal roles for individuals? Are the roles they create realistic for you and people in your age group? What about for young children? Senior citizens? Middle-aged adults? ♦

