

Nonverbal Skillfulness

Chapter 2

Nonverbal Messages Tell More

*What you think I'm saying
May be other than what I mean.
What you think I'm feeling
May be exactly that which I am not.
Read between my lines.
Look between my actions.*

Components of Nonverbal Skillfulness

- Social intelligence
 - The ability to get along with others, understand their emotions, motivations and intentions, and get them to cooperate with you
- Emotional intelligence
 - The ability to monitor your own and others' emotions and to use this knowledge to guide your thinking and actions
- Nonverbal sensitivity
 - The capacity to decode others' expressions accurately
- Nonverbal expressivity
 - The ability to encode and express yourself in ways that others can decode correctly

Learning by Doing

- We learn nonverbal skillfulness by
 - Observing
 - Imitating
 - Mirroring
- We send and decode nonverbal messages that are
 - Spontaneous
 - Deliberate
 - Multi-Channel

Nonverbal Code-Sharing

- The intrinsic code
 - Natural elements of our appearance that convey aspects of our identity, including gender and status
- The iconic code
 - Learned, posed or deliberately sent nonverbal cues intended to foster a desired perception of our identity
- The arbitrary code
 - A socially constructed and learned system of symbolic nonverbal cues

Culture's Effects on Coding

- Universal nonverbal elements can include facial expressions and gestures
- Cultures can vary in their use of these elements
- Nonverbal skillfulness avoids “ethnocentrism”, the assumption that our own culture’s nonverbal norms define what is appropriate

Culture's Effects on Nonverbal Variation

- Five cultural dimensions affect nonverbal communication
 - Individualist/Collectivist
 - Immediate/Nonimmediate
 - Low-Power-Distance/High-Power-Distance
 - High-Context/Low-Context
 - Masculine/Feminine

Cultural Dimensions, continued

- Individualist Cultures
 - Value personal space and privacy
 - Approve of free, spontaneous expression in public or private
- Collectivist Cultures
 - Value harmony, togetherness and tradition
 - Frown upon expressing negative thoughts and feelings

Cultural Dimensions, continued

- Immediate (Contact) Cultures
 - Touch more, face each other more directly, make more eye contact, stand more closely, talk more loudly
 - Gaze tends to focus on the face during interactions
- Nonimmediate (Noncontact) Cultures
 - Touch less, face each other less directly, make less eye contact, stand farther apart, talk more softly
 - Gaze tends to focus on the full body during interactions

Cultural Dimensions, continued

- Low-Power-Distance Cultures
 - Expect egalitarian distributions of power
 - Nonverbal displays are more similar, diminishing status differences
- High-Power-Distance Cultures
 - Expect distinct differences in power, with higher-status members holding more power and resources
 - Nonverbal displays stress these status differences

Cultural Dimensions, continued

- High-Context Cultures
 - More importance is given to nonverbal than to verbal expression
 - Collectivist cultures tend to be high-context
- Low-Context Cultures
 - More importance is given to verbal than to nonverbal expression
 - Individualist cultures tend to be low-context

Cultural Dimensions, continued

- Feminine Cultures
 - Less rigid gender role assignments are upheld
 - Stereotypically female qualities are valued (cooperation, caregiving and compassion)
 - More freedom of nonverbal expression
- Masculine Cultures
 - More rigid gender role assignments are upheld
 - Stereotypically masculine qualities are valued (ambition, dominance and competitiveness)
 - Less freedom of nonverbal expression

Characteristics of Nonverbal Skillfulness

- Expressivity
- Sensitivity
- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation

