

# 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

