

chapter **6**

*Beware of persons whose bellies do not move when they laugh.*

—Chinese Proverb



# NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to demonstrate mastery of the following learning outcomes:

1. Define nonverbal communication, explain its metacommunicative nature, and discuss its functions and characteristics.
2. Define and distinguish among the following kinds of nonverbal messages: kinesics, paralanguage, proxemics, haptics, artifactual communication and appearance, olfactics, color, and chronemics.
3. Compare and contrast the nonverbal communication styles of men and women.
4. Distinguish between contact and noncontact cultures.
5. Describe the impacts of media and technology on nonverbal messages.
6. Identify steps you can take to improve your nonverbal effectiveness.

**T**he motion picture *The Artist* received the Oscar for Best Picture in 2012. This mostly silent black-and-white movie won the hearts of audiences and enthralled the critics, all with hardly any dialogue. Most of the communication that occurs in the movie is nonverbal.

The movie's lead actress, Bérénice Bejo, received an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress for playing Peppy Miller, a young starlet who in the course of the film becomes a star. In an interview on the experiences she had filming this silent movie, Bejo commented, "I was thinking: '*How am I going to move, how am I going to speak without using my voice?*' By the end of the shooting, I thought: 'That's it, I got it!' I can't explain it; it was physical. We give ourselves so much pressure with words. I like it very much that our intention is not conveyed solely through dialogue but by the body, the walk, the attitude, the precision of each gesture."<sup>1</sup>

The actors did not need to use spoken words to make their characters' messages clear to us. By observing how

the actors moved, by paying attention to their facial expressions, by looking at how they sat and adjusted their heads, we understood them—the actors' messages came alive. Relying on such nonverbal cues, we connected with the characters emotionally. We can do this in our daily lives as well.

"How am I going to move, how am I going to speak without using my voice?"

Consider, for example, what these descriptive phrases have in common:

*The twinkle in his eye. The edge in her voice. The knowing look of their smiles. The rigidity of his posture. The confidence in her walk. Your hairstyle. Your dress. Where you sit. How closely you stand to another. Your eagerness to arrive.*

Each of the phrases highlights a nonverbal cue that offers a clue to the attitudes, feelings, and personality of a person. Despite the presence of such cues, too often we remain unaware of the messages our bodies, our voices, or the space around us sends to others. We simply act and react without considering how actions modify, reinforce, or distort messages.

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Before continuing your reading of this chapter, which of the following five statements do you believe to be true and which do you believe to be false?

- |  |       |  |       |
|--|-------|--|-------|
| 1. You are a message.  | T   F | 4. Your hands reveal more about your feelings than does your face. | T   F |
| 2. Words used, not nonverbal cues, are more likely to reveal the telling of a lie. | T   F | 5. Some women purposefully make their teeth crooked.               | T   F |
| 3. Suspicious people are better at spotting deception.                             | T   F |  |       |

Read the chapter to discover if you're right or if you've made any erroneous assumptions.

ANSWERS: 1. T, 2. F, 3. T, 4. F, 5. T

This chapter's focus is nonverbal communication. Our concern is transitioning from *what* we say to *how* we say it, for words alone rarely, if ever, lead to our wanting to begin, continue, or end a relationship. By taking time to better appreciate the contributions of nonverbal messages, we take another step forward in expanding our ability to understand person-to-person interaction.

## DEFINING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Our interpersonal effectiveness depends on more than words. Nonverbal messages add to or detract from our words. In effect, we become the message, with our nonverbal cues announcing our state of mind, expectations, and sense of self. Our entire beings chatter incessantly, revealing what we really feel and think.

For example, how do you judge another's honesty or trustworthiness? The meaning of these variables is carried predominantly via nonverbal messages, often without our awareness and not under our conscious control. For this reason, nonverbal messages are less likely than words to be intentionally deceptive.<sup>2</sup>

**Nonverbal communication** is expressed through nonlinguistic means. It is the actions or attributes of humans, including their appearance, use of objects, sound, time, smell, and space, that have socially shared significance and stimulate meaning in others. It includes visual/kinesic cues such as facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, and body orientation; vocal/paralinguistic cues such as volume, pitch, rate, and inflection; proxemic cues such as space and distance; olfactory or smell cues; cues provided via artifactual communication and appearance; cues sent via color; and chronemic or time cues.

Although we may send nonverbal messages deliberately or accidentally, their meaning depends on how they are interpreted. Consequently, they fulfill **metacommunicative functions**, and communicate about communication, clarifying both the nature of our relationship, and/or the meaning of our verbal messages. In fact, researchers conclude that nonverbal cues carry approximately two-thirds of a message's communicative value. Even when used independently of words, as long as an observer derives meaning from them, nonverbal messages speak volumes. Of course, the amount of information conveyed varies according to their clarity, and how receptive and perceptive the receiver is. Based on interpretations of our nonverbal cues, others may decide if they like us, will or will listen to our ideas, or want to sustain or terminate our relationship. The ability to understand and respond to nonverbal messages helps unlock meaning's door.

## THE FUNCTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

As we noted, for us to fully understand the meaning of verbal messages, we also need to understand the meaning of the nonverbal messages that accompany them or occur in their absence. After all, we can change the meaning of our words with the wink of an eye, a certain facial expression, voice tone, bodily movement, use of space, or touch. As our ability to use and interpret nonverbal behavior and contextual cues improves, so will our understanding of interpersonal relationships. Let's see how this works. What do you make of these examples?



### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

#### True or False

1. You are a message.

**True.** Since you cannot turn off behavior, you continually send nonverbal messages.

#### Nonverbal communication:

Communication that does not include words; messages expressed by nonlinguistic means; people's actions or attributes, including their use of objects, sounds, time, and space, that have socially shared significance and stimulate meaning in others.

#### Metacommunicative functions:

Communication about communication.

1. The little boy who hides behind his mother as he says, “*I’m not afraid of the dog.*”
2. The woman who says, “*I love you,*” to her spouse while hugging him and smothering him with kisses.
3. The teacher who asks, “*Any questions?*” and fails to wait for a response before moving on to the next point.
4. The child whose eyes are downcast and shoulders are rounded as she says, “*I’m sorry for breaking the vase.*”
5. The supervisor who, when asked a question by an employee, leans forward with a hand cupped behind one ear.

Each message contains nonverbal cues that help reveal what a person is feeling. As we see, nonverbal cues are integral to communication. As the preceding situations illustrate, they may (1) contradict words, (2) emphasize or underscore words, (3) regulate their flow, (4) complement words, or (5) substitute for or take the place of spoken words (See Table 6.1). Whereas words are best at conveying thoughts or ideas, nonverbal cues are best at conveying information about relational matters such as liking, respect, and social control. To be sure, the meaning of neither verbal nor nonverbal messages should be interpreted without carefully considering the other. Let us review each of the identified functions.

**TABLE 6.1 Functions of Nonverbal Communication**

Function	Example
Contradicting	Your face is contorted into a grimace. Your eyes are narrowed and eyebrows furrowed. Yet, you are yelling, “I am not upset!” You are sending a mixed/double message.
Emphasizing	You wave your finger accusingly and raise your voice to demonstrate your anger as you say, “It is your fault, not mine.” Your behavior provides the <i>italics</i> .
Regulating	After explaining your stance on an issue, you raise and then lower your intonation as you say, “And that’s why I feel the way I do.” This, together with your silence, signals you are finished speaking and another person may comment. Your behavior influences the flow of verbal interaction.
Complementing	Your head is bowed and your body posture is slouched as your boss tells you how unhappy she is with your job performance. Your nonverbal cues provide clues to the relationship you and your boss share; they also help convey your attitude toward your boss.
Substituting	You run into a friend who asks, “So, how do you like your new job?” You just roll your eyes, using nonverbal cues in place of words.

## THE FUNCTIONS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

1. Nonverbal cues can *contradict* or *negate* verbal messages. When this happens what is said and what is done are at odds. Imagine the man who repeatedly says, “*Hold me,*” but backs away to avoid being held, or the salesperson that just lost a deal, screaming, “*I’m not angry!*” Each of these verbal messages is negated by the source’s nonverbal behavior. Each interaction represents a **double-message**—the words say one thing, the nonverbal cues, another.

### Double message:

The message that is communicated when words say one thing and nonverbal cues another.



We rely on nonverbal cues to emphasize spoken words.

2. Nonverbal cues can *emphasize* or *underscore* a verbal message. For example, when you raise or lower your voice, or slow down your rate of speech so you can deliberately stress a series of words, you are using nonverbal cues to accentuate your words.
3. Nonverbal cues can *regulate* or *control* person-to-person interaction. Using nonverbal cues, we establish the rules of order or “turn-taking” during talk. With eye contact, gestures, and voice we control who should speak next and thus direct the flow of verbal exchanges. The regulatory skills of others influence our judgments of them. For example, if we feel that talking to Eli is like talking to a wall, or that when we talk to Taylor we can’t get a word in edgewise, it may be because we do not get the turns or attention that we feel we deserve when we interact with Eli or Taylor.
4. Nonverbal cues can *reinforce* or *complement* a verbal message. With your keys and coat in your hand, you announce, “I have to leave now,” as you walk toward your car.
5. Nonverbal cues can *substitute for* or *take the place of* spoken words. When we don’t know what to say to express our sorrow at the death of a friend or a relative, an embrace often suffices. Similarly, when someone asks, “*What do you want to do tonight?*” a shrug of the shoulders frequently is used in place of “I don’t know.” Often when actions substitute for words, the nonverbal cues function as symbols of the verbal messages because they are widely understood. The up-and-down nod is understood to mean yes, just as forming a T with your hands during a sports event is understood to mean “time-out.”

### CHARACTERISTICS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication is an essential part of the total communication package. From a nonverbal perspective, you are a lighthouse of information continually sending messages from which others derive meaning.

**All Nonverbal Behavior Has Message Value.** While we can refrain ourselves from speaking—we literally can shut our mouths—it is impossible for us to stop behaving. Behavior, whether intentional or unintentional, is ongoing.

You cannot stop sending nonverbal messages. As long as someone is aware of your presence and is there to decode your nonverbal communication, it is impossible for you

not to communicate. Even if you turn your back on the observer and remove yourself from his or her sight, you are communicating. With this in mind, if someone were to enter the space in which you are now reading, what messages might they derive from your nonverbal demeanor? Are you seated at a desk or reclining on a bed? What does your face suggest regarding your level of interest and degree of understanding?

#### **Nonverbal Communication Is Ambiguous.**

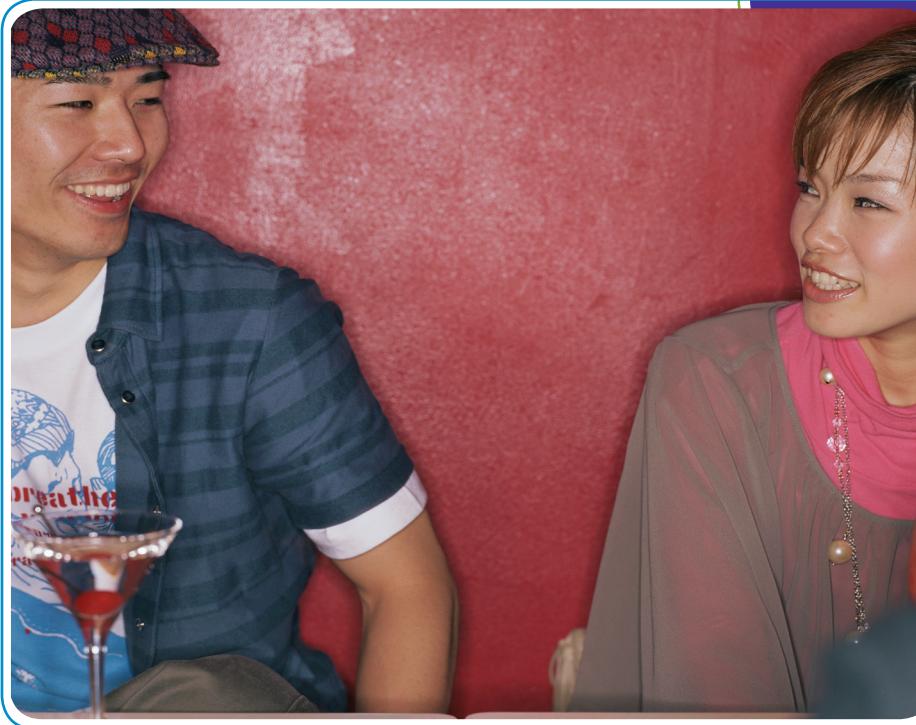
Although nonverbal cues are continuous and frequently involuntary, others can evaluate them in different ways—that is, what we communicate may be ambiguous and subject to misinterpretation. One nonverbal cue can trigger a variety of meanings. For example, wearing jeans can be symbolic of a relaxed mode of dress or it can be construed as a statement of support for the gay community, as when gay organizations without warning surprise blue jean wearers by posting signs that say “Wear jeans if you advocate gay rights.”

Nonverbal cues may not mean what others think they do. There could be any number of reasons why a person looks at a watch, coughs, or rubs his or her eyes. All nonverbal behavior should be interpreted within a specific context.

**Nonverbal Communication Is Predominantly Relational.** Many find it easier to communicate emotions and feelings nonverbally. We convey liking, attraction, anger, and respect for authority nonverbally. In fact, our primary means of revealing our inner states, that typically are not readily transmitted using words, is through nonverbal communication. For example, we usually look to the face to assess emotional state. We look to the mouth to evaluate contempt. We look to the eyes to evaluate dominance and competence. We base our judgments of confidence and relationship closeness on our reading of gestures and posture, and we listen to the voice to help us evaluate both assertiveness and self-confidence.

Sometimes we are unaware of the nonverbal cues we send; as a result, we inadvertently reveal information we would rather conceal. Without intending it, our nonverbal messages let others know how we feel about ourselves and about them. As our awareness of our nonverbal communication increases, its informational value decreases. In effect, a conscious intention to manage the impression we convey means that we will do our best only to communicate messages that are in our own best interest.

**Nonverbal Behavior May Reveal Deception.** When a person says one thing but means another, we can use our deception detection skills to determine that the person’s behavior



We use nonverbal cues to signal our attraction for another person.



#### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

##### True or False

**2.** Words used, not nonverbal cues, are more likely to reveal the telling of a lie.

**False.** It is easy to lie with words; it is harder to lie nonverbally.



#### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

##### True or False

**3.** Suspicious people are better at spotting deception.

**True.** Because liars often try to conceal displays of deception, being suspicious gives you an edge in identifying such attempts.

contradicts his or her words. Under most circumstances, when there is a discrepancy or inconsistency between verbal and nonverbal messages, researchers advise that you believe the nonverbal cues, which are more difficult to fake.<sup>3</sup> Deception clues or leakage can be detected in changes in facial or vocal expression, gestures, or slips of the tongue.<sup>4</sup> In fact, once strong emotions are aroused, these changes may occur automatically, with our words, body, and voice betraying us by thwarting our attempts to conceal them.

Researchers David Buller and Judee Burgoon have conducted an array of studies in which they ask subjects to deceive someone. For example, imagine you face the following situation:

*You and your BFF have agreed that you would see a new film together during winter break. Prior to the break, however, your significant other surprises you by taking you to see the movie you had agreed to see with your friend. What do you do when you return home for winter break and your friend comes over and says, "We're going to be the last people to see that movie, but I didn't want to see it without you. Can we go tonight?"*

According to Buller and Burgoon's **Interpersonal Deception Theory** you have a number of response choices.<sup>5</sup> If you decide not to tell the truth you could lie to your friend by telling him or her how excited you are to finally be able to go see the movie. In other words, you engage in falsification by creating fiction. Or you could say, "I changed my mind. Let's see something else. I heard that movie got bad reviews." You engage in concealment by keeping from your friend your real reason for not wanting to go to the film. Or you could practice equivocation by changing the subject and dodging the issue altogether. All three potential responses, however, involve deception. Looking at things from your friend's perspective, do you think you could spot the deception if you were not the person lying but the person being lied to? Buller and Burgoon believe that we make poor lie detectors. Many liars, it seems, strategically monitor and control their deceptive displays giving us only a 60 percent chance of being able to identify when someone is lying to us.<sup>6</sup> In fact, our ability to spot the deception depends on how suspicious we are.

Psychologist Paul Ekman, however, believes that with training it is possible for us to become more skilled at detecting dissemblers. Ekman and his co-researcher, Wallace Friesen, identify forty-three muscular movements that we are capable of making with our face. They also identify more than 3,000 facial expressions that have meaning, compiling them into the **Facial Action Coding System**, or FACS, a virtual taxonomy of facial expressions used to interpret emotions and detect deception. Ekman and Friesen have worked for the CIA, the FBI, and more recently Homeland Security to create experimental scenarios for studying deception that could not only facilitate the counterterrorism work of these organizations but also help their agents correctly identify untruths.<sup>7</sup> Paul Ekman's work was the subject of the pop-culture television program *Lie to Me* that first aired in 2009 and for which he served as a consultant.

Theatrical and media performances demonstrate how possible it is for skilled communicators to control the nonverbal cues they exhibit, thereby persuading audience members to suspend their disbelief and accept the façade. Yet most of us do not spend weeks, days, or hours consciously rehearsing for our daily encounters. Nevertheless, when interacting with another, sometimes we may wish to misrepresent our real feelings or intentions, perhaps by dressing differently, by lying, or by masking an actual facial expression so that we do not insult or embarrass the other person. In general, we are more successful at such deceptions if the other person trusts us. The more a person plans and rehearses a deceptive message, the more confident the person is, and the less

guilty the person feels about the deception itself, the less likely it is that others will suspect or uncover the person as a liar. Some people are better deceivers. For example, some occupations such as the law, the diplomatic corps, public relations, politics, and sales require that professionals be able to act differently than they may actually feel. This can pose problems for those of us trying to uncover deception.

If we are watchful, however, we can improve our ability to detect deception attempts. Unskilled liars leak clues.<sup>8</sup> It may be a change in facial expression, a shift in posture, a change in breathing, an unusually long pause, a slip of the tongue, a false smile, an ill-timed gesture, or other leaked nonverbal cue that gives them away (See Table 6.2).



The TV series *Lie to Me* starred Tim Roth as an expert in body language who assists law enforcement in revealing deception. The program was based on the real-life work of psychologist Paul Ekman with the CIA, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security.

**TABLE 6.2 Nonverbal Clues to Deception**

*When telling a lie, you are more apt to do the following:*

- Smile falsely, using fewer facial muscles than when exhibiting a genuine smile
- Blink more frequently
- Have dilated pupils
- Rub your hands or arms together, scratch the side of your nose, or cover your mouth
- Shift body posture frequently
- Articulate and pronounce words more carefully
- Speak more slowly and say less than you otherwise would
- Exhibit speech that contains more errors and/or hesitation than is typical for you
- Raise your pitch
- Deliver a mixed message

*Your lie is more apt to be discovered if you do the following:*

- Intentionally want to conceal your emotions
- Feel intensely about keeping the information hidden
- Feel guilty
- Are unfulfilled by lying
- Are unprepared and unrehearsed

**SOURCES:** Adapted from R. G. Riggio and H. S. Freeman, "Individual Differences and Cues to Deception," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 1983, p. 899–915; and Paul Ekman and Mark G. Frank, "Lies That Fail," in Michael Lewis and Carolyn Saarni, eds., *Lying and Deception in Everyday Life*, New York: Guilford Press, 1993, p. 184–200.

**Interpersonal deception theory:**

A theory that explains deception as a process based on falsification, concealment, or equivocation.

**Facial Action Coding System:**

A virtual taxonomy of more than three thousand facial expressions used to interpret emotions and detect deception.

## TRY THIS: It's Not Just What You Say . . .

We are fascinated with lie detection. Are you able to distinguish a liar from a truth teller? Behavioral slipups can betray those who commit them. For example, if a person is trying to communicate an aura of confidence, but his or her foot shakes uncontrollably, then chances are that others present will determine that the person is anxious or uptight rather than confident or in control.

1. Cite an example of how a friend or coworker's behavior contradicted what she said to you or to another person. Specifically, what behavior(s) exhibited by the person leaked his or her true feelings?
2. Think of the last time you interacted with someone you thought was telling you the truth but whom you now know was lying to you. What was it about this person's behavior that initially caused you to believe that he was being truthful? Now, looking back, how many of the following nonverbal clues to deception do you recall the person exhibiting during your interaction?
  - Pausing
  - Hesitations
  - Rapid speaking rate
3. When have you attempted to use nonverbal messages to conceal your actual intentions or feelings? Were you successful? If you were, what do you attribute your success to? If not, why not?
  - Self-adaptors, such as touching the face and body
  - Object-adaptors, such as touching to playing with objects
  - Deficient eye contact
  - Averted gazes
  - Excessive blinking
  - Pupil dilation
  - Masked Smiles

### READING NONVERBAL MESSAGES

To improve your ability to read another person, we explore eight nonverbal message categories including (1) kinesics, (2) paralinguistics, (3) proxemics, (4) haptics, (5) olfactics, (6) artifacts and appearance, (7) color, and (8) chronemics. Though for purposes of examination we will discuss each category separately, the meanings stimulated by behavioral cues falling within these categories do not occur in isolation. Instead, they interact with each other, whether reinforcing or diminishing the impact of the perceived cues (see Table 6.3).

TABLE 6.3 Types of Nonverbal Cues

Messages Are Sent by	
<b>Kinesics</b>	Facial expressions, gestures, eye movement, posture, rate of walk
<b>Paralinguistics</b>	How words are spoken, variations in the voice
<b>Proxemics</b>	How space and distance are used
<b>Haptics</b>	Different types of touching
<b>Clothing and artifacts</b>	Appearance, style
<b>Color</b>	Variations in clothing and environmental colors
<b>Chronemics</b>	Using time to communicate

## KINESICS: THE MESSAGES OF MOVEMENT

**Kinesics** is the study of human body motion. It includes such variables as facial expression, eye movement, gestures, posture, and walking speed. Valuable communicator information is contained in the look on your face, whether you stare or avert your gaze, whether your shoulders are straight or drooped, whether your lips are curved in a smile or signal contempt with a sneer, and whether your gait suggests eagerness or anxiety.

**Face and Eye Talk.** Picture yourself as part of each of the following scenarios:

Your spouse has had an operation. You are meeting with the doctor to discuss the prognosis. You search the doctor's face, looking for clues.

You return home a day late from a business trip. Your spouse meets you at the door. As you approach, your eyes focus on the face of your significant other.

Almost immediately, the face of the doctor or your spouse in each situation could cause you to cry, put you at ease, or frighten you.

*The Face.* The face is the main channel we use to decipher the feelings of others. Quite simply, faces talk. Chatter oozes out of their every movement. In fact, it is wise to depend on facial cues to facilitate person-to-person interaction.

What do faces reveal? Faces tell us many things, including the following:

1. Whether parties to an interaction find it pleasant or unpleasant
2. How interested an individual is in sustaining or terminating contact
3. The degree of involvement of the parties
4. Whether responses during contact are spontaneous or controlled
5. The extent to which messages are understood and shared

The face is also the prime communicator of emotion. Our ability to read the emotions depicted in facial expressions determines whether we will be able to respond appropriately to others' feelings.

How good are you at reading faces? Do your interpretations of facial expressions have a high or a low degree of accuracy? In general, the ability to read another's face increases with familiarity, an understanding of the communication context, and an awareness of behavioral norms. Not everyone is good at reading facial cues. Deficiency in interpreting facial cues of teachers and classmates, for example, may even be a factor in unpopularity and poor grades. Psychologist Stephen Nowicki notes, "Because they are unaware of the messages they are sending, or misinterpreting how other children are feeling, unpopular children may not even realize that they are initiating many of the negative reactions they receive from their peers."<sup>9</sup>

Since they are the most visible and reliable means we have, we also use facial features to identify others and distinguish one person from another.<sup>10</sup> Just as security analysts use faces to identify potential terrorists, crime victims describe suspects' faces for police artists to draw, parents of missing children describe their children's faces to authorities, and relatives, friends, and acquaintances describe your facial features to others.



### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

#### True or False

4. Your hands reveal more about your feelings than does your face.

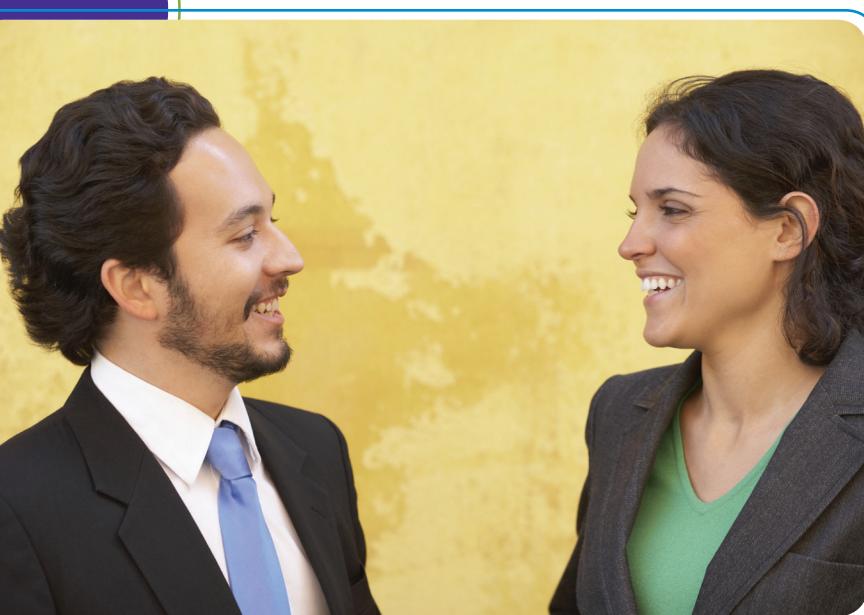
**False.** The face is the prime revealer of feelings.

**Kinesics:** The study of human body motion.

Aside from identifying you, your facial appearance influences judgments of your physical attractiveness and approachability.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, your face affects whether others assess you to be dominant or submissive.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we speak of a baby face, a face as cold as ice, a face as strong as a bulldog's, and so on. What words would you use to describe your face, a friend's face, or the face of your significant other?

*The Eyes.* “Shifty eyes.” “Goo-goo eyes.” “The evil eye.” “Eye to eye.” Eye behaviors are a key part of interpersonal communication, as we use our eyes to establish, maintain, and terminate contact. As with all nonverbal cues, the messages you send with your eyes may be interpreted in a variety of ways, but there are three central functions eye movements serve:

1. Eyes reveal the extent of interest and emotional involvement.
2. Eyes influence judgments of persuasiveness and perceptions of dominance or submissiveness.
3. Eyes regulate person-to-person interaction.



**Looking others in the eye can help you appear more honest and credible.**

gaze, we are likely to assume that they have something to hide, they lack confidence, or they are unknowledgeable on some matter.<sup>14</sup>

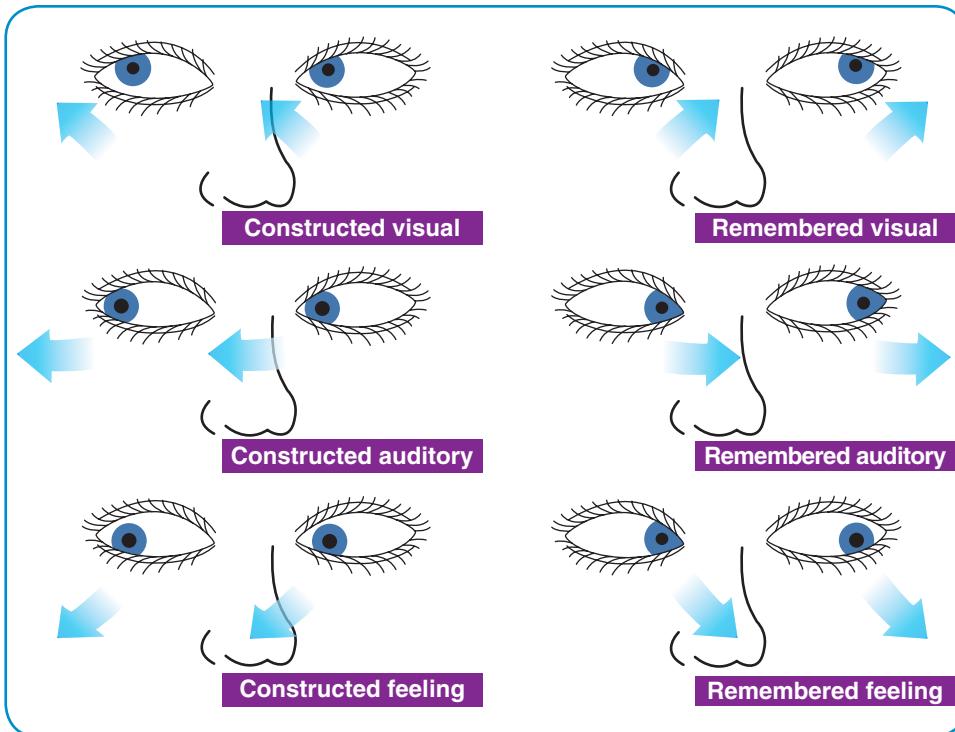
Visual dominance correlates with increased eye contact, whereas frequently averted eyes generate impressions of submissiveness. Like apes, humans can “stare down” each other to establish dominance. Look away first, and you may well find that you have become the less powerful player in an interaction. However, again it is important not to draw a wrong conclusion based on a cultural misunderstanding.

Eye contact also indicates whether a communication channel is open. It is much easier to avoid interacting if we have not made eye contact, because once we do, interaction virtually becomes an obligation.<sup>15</sup> When we like one another or want to express our affection, we also increase our eye contact.

The pupils of our eyes are a reliable indicator of emotion. When we take an interest in what another is saying, our blinking rate decreases and our pupils dilate. Of course, the opposite is equally true. When we are uninterested, our pupils contract.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, our pupils dilate when we experience a positive emotion and contract when we experience a negative one. They rarely, if ever, lie, because regulating pupil size is a nonverbal cue beyond our conscious control.

In order for others to find you persuasive, you must refrain from excessive blinking and maintain a steady gaze, that is, neither look down nor look away from the person(s) you are trying to convince; also, you must not exhibit eye flutter. In some cultures, including Arabic, Latin American, and southern European cultures, individuals judge those who look them in the eye as more honest and credible than those who do not. In American culture, when others avoid meeting our eyes or avert their

**FIGURE 6.1 Eye Movements and Cognitive Processing**



The eyes provide another cue we can use to enhance the establishment of behavior synchrony or behavioral mirroring with another in an effort to establish or advance our relationship. We establish behavioral synchrony by using nonverbal cues that are in sync with the other person's. According to Richard Bandler and John Grinder, a relationship exists between eye movements and thought or cognitive processing—including whether a person is primarily a visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or emotional processor. As a result of their research, Bandler and Grinder were able to identify eye movement patterns and their meanings for right-handed people (the reverse tends to be true for left-handed people) (see Figure 6.1). Since such eye movements reflect a person's preferred sensory modality, you can use them to get on the same wavelength and promote interaction between you—increasing interpersonal intimacy.

While their work is controversial, Bandler and Grinder contend that you can also use eye movements to determine how truthful a person is. If, for example, a person is describing an event experienced firsthand, the person's eyes should move primarily to his or her left (if the person is right-handed), suggesting memory access. If, however, the person looks up and to the right a lot, it may be that he or she is constructing the experience, not recalling it.<sup>16</sup> In addition to providing a window into the soul, revealing a person's emotions to others, the eyes may offer a window into whether or not a person is telling the truth.

**Putting on a Face: The Ethics of Face-Work.** “Put on a happy face!” instructs a once popular song. Have you ever followed such advice when you did not feel happy inside? Could others tell you were not really happy?

When we use our facial expressions to communicate genuine inner feelings, we exhibit **representational facial expressions**.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, when we consciously control our face to communicate a message meant only for public consumption, for all practical purposes we

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**Representational facial expressions:**  
Exhibited facial expressions that communicate genuine inner feelings.

## ANALYZE THIS: Facecrime

In his classic novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, author George Orwell alludes to the practice of masking facial expressions in order not to let those in authority know what you are really thinking. The citizens of Orwell's dystopia know that the smallest movement could betray them. Afraid to commit a "facecrime," they make great efforts not to look nervous for fear others will think they have something to hide. They seek to communicate only state-sanctioned feelings; any citizens who fail at this place themselves in danger of being arrested.

Such concerns, of course, have become a part of real life in the twenty-first century. In fact, recently the U.S. Department of Homeland Security had airport security professional trained in how to detect faked facial expressions. However, while we may try to conceal our real feelings, it is not typically because we fear the state's retribution, but instead because we fear that others may not approve of them or may be hurt by them.

1. Can you remember a time when you (or someone near you) were called out for committing a facecrime? What might have led you or the other person to commit the act? What was the outcome?
2. Should the concept of facecrime exist? Explain your position.

SOURCE: George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), New York: New American Library, 1983.



are giving a performance; hence, our facial expressions are labeled **presentational facial expressions**. It is when we consciously control our facial expressions that we likely are engaging in interpersonal deception.

What techniques do we use to "put on a face"? First, we may qualify our facial expression—that is, we add another expression that modifies the impact of the original expression. Second, we may modulate our facial expression; we simply change it to reflect feelings that are somewhat more or less intense than what we actually feel. Third, we may falsify directly. This requires that we simulate an unfelt emotion, neutralize an emotion by showing none when we actually feel some emotion, or mask a felt emotion by displaying one that we do not really feel.<sup>18</sup> Which of these techniques have you caught yourself using?

When we fake a face, usually we leave an array of clues for astute observers. For example, our "face-work" may lack spontaneity or be out of sync with our words or actions, or we may exhibit involuntary cues, in which an expression appears on our face for only a fraction of a second. What begins as a smile becomes ever so briefly a grimace and then is reengineered back into a smile. We call these fleeting emotional changes, lasting no more than one-eighth to one-fifth of a second, **microfacial** or **micromomentary expressions**. Such expressions reveal our emotional states and typically occur when we attempt to disguise or conceal those states. Thus, a twitch of the mouth or the eyebrow can suggest that the emotion being communicated is not the emotion actually being felt.

Sometimes the simple act of smiling actually evokes a positive mood change in the person smiling. Still, the degree to which people demonstrate susceptibility to deliberately engineered facial expressions varies greatly. On the other hand, the total lack of the physical ability to smile, a condition called *Möbius syndrome*, leaves one with a perpetually grumpy look, making it difficult for individuals afflicted to experience normal interpersonal relationships. Though it may be unintended, the lack of a smile causes others to perceive the unsmiling person as unfriendly or bored.<sup>19</sup>

**Presentational facial expressions:** Facial expressions that are consciously controlled.

**Microfacial/micromomentary expression:** An expression lasting no more than one-eighth to one-fifth of a second that usually occurs when an individual consciously or unconsciously attempts to disguise or conceal an emotion and that reveals an actual emotional state.

**Gestures and Posture: The Body in Motion and at Rest.** We move and stand in distinctive ways—so distinctive that often others can identify us by our characteristic walk or posture. The movements and alignment of our body communicate. Although some of our body's messages facilitate effective person-to-person interaction, others—whether sent consciously or unconsciously—impede it. What kinds of cues do different bodily movements send?

**Cue Categories.** Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen identify five categories of nonverbal behavior that we can use to describe bodily cues: emblems, illustrators, regulators, affect displays, and adaptors.<sup>20</sup> We explore each in turn in the following (see also Table 6.4).

**TABLE 6.4 Types of Bodily Cues**

Cue Category	Description	Examples
Emblems	Deliberate body movements that can translate into speech	Thumbs-up, wave hello
Illustrators	Body cues that support or reinforce speech	Direction pointing
Regulators	Intentional cues to influence turn taking	Head nods, breaking eye contact
Affect displays	Unintentional movements of the body that reflect emotional states of being	Slumping body; relaxed, confident body
Adaptors	Unintentional movements that are frequently interpreted as signs of nervousness	Nose scratches, hair twirling

**Emblems** are movements of the body that are consciously sent and easily translated into speech, such as a wave that means “come here,” a thumbs-up gesture that means “okay,” and a wave that means “hello” or “good-bye.” We most frequently use emblems when noise or distance makes it less feasible that we will be understood through the use of words alone. Traders on the floor of a stock exchange and sports umpires and coaches on the playing field use emblems regularly; for them, emblems compose a gesture system.<sup>21</sup>

**Illustrators** are bodily cues designed to enhance receiver comprehension of speech by supporting or reinforcing it. As we do with emblems, we use illustrators consciously and deliberately. For example, when you give someone directions, you use illustrators to facilitate your task. When you want to stress the shortness of a member of a basketball team compared to the average height of team members, you use your hands to emphasize the difference.

**Regulators** are cues we use intentionally to influence turn taking—who speaks, when, and for how long. For example, gazing at someone talking to you and nodding your head usually encourages the person to continue speaking, while leaning forward in your seat, tensing your posture, and breaking eye contact traditionally

**Emblems:** Deliberate movements of the body that are consciously sent and easily translated into speech.

**Illustrators:** Bodily cues designed to enhance receiver comprehension of speech by supporting or reinforcing it.

**Regulators:** Communication cues intentionally used to influence turn taking and to control the flow of conversation.



The person in this picture is using an illustrator to clarify the directions he is giving.

## TRY THIS: The Ethics of Impression Creation

Trial consulting is a growing industry. Hired usually by defense attorneys, trial consultants work with defendants and witnesses to ensure that the nonverbal behaviors they exhibit help them create as favorable an impression as possible on the jury.

Similarly, career, college, and political consultants work with individuals like you to help present each person in as favorable a light as possible in situations such as interviewing for a job or for admission to graduate school or campaigning for public office.

1. Imagine you have been hired as a consultant to help in building a more successful image for you. What changes would you suggest regarding your nonverbal behavior?
  2. In your opinion, is it ethical to employ consultants to work with individuals on their nonverbal displays just
- to ensure they make a positive impression on others? In other words, should consultants be helping others, including criminal defendants, politicians, and job applicants, to appear more credible, confident, and likable than they actually are? Explain your position.

signals that you would like a turn. If we ignore or remain unaware of another's use of regulators, the other person may accuse us of rudeness or insensitivity. Your use or misuse of regulators reveals much about your social skills.<sup>22</sup>

**Affect displays** are movements of the body that reflect emotional states of being. While our face, as we have noted, is the prime indicator of the emotion we are experiencing, it is our body that reveals the emotion's intensity. Typically, we are less aware of our affect displays because often we do not intend to send many of them. People who "read" our bodies on the basis of its demeanor can judge how we genuinely feel.<sup>23</sup> For example, you might describe another person's body as slumping and defeated, still and motionless, relaxed and confident, or proud and victorious. Those of us who characteristically show a lack of affect or feeling make it especially difficult for others to relate to us meaningfully.

As we do with affect displays, we unintentionally use **adaptors** that involuntarily reveal information about our psychological state at the same time they meet our own physical or emotional needs. Adaptors include movements such as nose scratches, hand over lips, chin stroking, and hair twirling. Individuals interacting with us or observing us interpret these as signs of nervousness, tension, or lack of self-assurance.

**Decoding the Body's Messages.** Others form impressions of us and may judge us to be more or less likable, assertive, or powerful based on observations of our physical behavior. Watching a person's body can help us answer questions such as the following:

*Do individuals like or dislike one another?* When we like each other, we tend to exhibit open postures and more direct body orientation, and we stand more closely together than when we do not. Our bodies are also relatively relaxed, and our gestures are uninhibited and natural. Such cues tend to stimulate interaction. In contrast, if we do not like each other, our bodies emit very different cues. Instead of facing each other directly, we exhibit incongruent and indirect body orientations. We are also likely to avoid sustained eye contact and display a high degree of bodily tension and rigidity. It is harder to like someone who is closed off or all wrapped up in him- or herself.

*Is a person being assertive or nonassertive?* An assertive person's nonverbal behavior is more relaxed and expansive than the nonverbal behavior of someone who is nonassertive.

**Affect displays:**  
Unintentional movements of the body that reflect the intensity of an emotional state of being.

**Adaptors:**  
Unintentional movements of the body that reveal information about psychological state or inner needs, such as nervousness.

Typically, a nonassertive person adopts a rigid posture, exhibits an array of nervous gestures, avoids sustained eye contact, and hunches his or her shoulders in a protective or closed stance. In contrast, the assertive counterpart exhibits comfortable eye contact and employs illustrators in place of confidence-deflating adaptors that announce vulnerability.

GO ►

#### WATCH THIS 6.1

For a video on effective nonverbal cues visit the student study site.

*Is an individual powerful or powerless?* If you have an erect but relaxed posture, gesture dynamically, feel free to stare at others, and interject your own thoughts even if it means interrupting another person, you are likely to be perceived as powerful. On the other hand, visible bodily tension, a downward gaze, and closed posture will contribute to perceptions of you as powerless.

Thus, whether or not we want to approach or avoid another person, and whether we assess him or her to be confident or anxious, powerful or powerless, is often influenced by the bodily cues we receive. Our bodies talk constantly about how we feel about ourselves and how we feel about others. Even when we try to “stonewall” someone in an effort to cut off our communication, our body continues talking.

### PARALINGUISTICS: THE MESSAGES OF THE VOICE

The messages that you send with your voice are known as **paralanguage**. Often it is not what you say but how you say it that determines an interaction's outcome. We rely on vocal cues to help us determine the real meaning of spoken words. Such cues are especially important when we are deciding whether someone is being sarcastic. The words “Yeah, right” convey different meanings depending on whether they are spoken sincerely or sarcastically, and our interpretation of these words influences how we respond to the person who said them.

The tone of your voice can help you communicate what you mean to convey, or it can reveal thoughts you mean to conceal. It can reinforce or negate the words you speak. The sound of your voice communicates, revealing to others your emotional state, attitudes, personality, status, and interaction maintenance, or turn-taking, needs. How you speak influences how others interpret your intentions, as well as how credible, intelligent, or attractive they judge you to be.<sup>24</sup> With this in mind, respond to the following questions:

- Does my voice enhance or detract from the impression I make?
- Does my voice support or contradict my intended meaning?
- If I were interacting with me, would I want to listen to the sound of my voice?



The sound of your voice affects how others respond to your words.

**Paralanguage:**  
Messages sent using  
only vocal cues.

Among the elements of paralanguage are pitch, volume, rate, articulation, pronunciation, hesitations, and silence. Each plays a part in the impressions others form of you.

**Pitch.** Pitch is the highness or lowness of the voice; it is similar to pitch on a musical scale. We associate higher pitches with female voices and lower pitches with male voices. We also develop vocal stereotypes. We associate low-pitched voices with strength, sexiness, and maturity, and high-pitched voices with helplessness, tension, and nervousness. Although we each have a modal or habitual pitch—one that we use most frequently when we speak—we also vary our pitch to reflect our mood and interest in conversing. For example, we often lower our pitch when sad and raise it when excited. In contrast, if we are bored, we may speak in a monotone that reflects our lack of interest. A lively animated pitch encourages interaction, whereas a monotone discourages it.

It is the voice's pitch that others use to determine whether you are making a statement or asking a question or whether you are expressing concern or conviction. Your pitch expresses your emotional state; for instance, it can communicate anger or annoyance, patience or tolerance.

**Volume.** The power of your voice, its loudness or volume, also affects perceptions of intended meaning. While some whisper their way through encounters, others blast through them. An individual who is typically loud may alienate others; such a person is often viewed as overbearing or aggressive. In contrast, if you are soft-spoken, others may interpret your behavior as timidity. Thus, your volume can over- or underwhelm, thereby causing others to turn you off in an effort to turn you down or to lose interest in your words simply because they cannot comfortably hear them.

#### **Effective Interpersonal Communicators Regulate Volume in an Effort to Promote**

**Meaningful Interaction.** Your volume should reflect the nature of your message, the size and acoustics of the space you are in, your proximity to the other person, and any competing noise or conversations. Typically, we increase volume to stress particular words and ideas and to reflect the intensity of our emotions. Similarly, a sudden decrease in volume can add suspense or sustain another's attention. Volume that is varied is most effective.

**Rate.** Speaking rate is the third vocal cue affecting the communication of meaning. Most of us speak at an average rate of 150 words per minute. When we speed up our speech, exceeding 275 to 300 words per minute, it is difficult for others to comprehend what we are saying, and our message thus becomes virtually unintelligible. In contrast, if we speak too slowly, others may perceive us as tentative or lacking in confidence or intelligence. An overly deliberate speaking pace contributes to boredom, lack of attentiveness, and unresponsiveness in others. Rate also affects others' judgment of our intensity and mood. As your rate increases, so do assessments of your level of emotional intensity.<sup>25</sup> When talking about more serious subjects, we often slow down; on the other hand, our speaking rate usually accelerates as we shift to talking about lighter topics. In many ways, rate reflects the pulse of your words. It quickens to relay agitation, excitement, and happiness, and it falls to convey seriousness, serenity, or sadness.

**Articulation and Pronunciation.** The sound attributes of articulation and pronunciation affect message intelligibility as well as perceptions of credibility. **Articulation** is the way you pronounce individual sounds. Ideally, even during person-to-person contact, the sounds of your speech are sharp and distinct. When you fail to utter a final sound (a final *t* or *d*, for example), fail to produce the sounds of words properly, or voice a sound in an unclear, imprecise way (*come wimme* versus *come with me*, *dem* versus *them*, *ihear* versus *idea*), perceptions of your credibility drop.

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**Articulation:** How individual words are pronounced.

## REFLECT ON THIS: *Ummmmmmm . . .*

Psychologist Nicholas Christenfeld sought to figure out why we insert the sound *um* into our speech—especially when most of us believe it makes us sound fuzzy-headed. Christenfeld asked, “Why do people say ‘um’ instead of sitting quietly—given that people don’t admire people who um?” According to Christenfeld, such utterances signal our desire to speak—though words may elude us. An *um* is also, he believes, a sign that the speaker is weighing verbal options and ideas. He claims that these pauses are universal and that we all use several hundred filled pauses—using fillers such as *um*, *er*, and *like*—every day, and sometimes as many as nine hundred in an hour. Is it possible?



1. Count the number of *ums* you utter during a specific one-hour period. Try not to become too self-conscious while you are counting.
2. Begin counting *ums* and related nonfluencies spoken by those you interact with. How many do you estimate each of these persons utters per minute?
3. How does a person’s “umming” affect your perception of his or her credibility and likability?

SOURCE: Cited in Nora Zamichow, “Professor, Um, Studies, Um, Why We’re Tongue Tied,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1992.

While the focus of articulation is on the production of speech sounds, the focus of **pronunciation** is on whether you say the words themselves correctly. When you mispronounce a word, you may suffer a loss of credibility, and those listening to you may find it more difficult to make sense of what you are saying.

**Hesitations and Silence.** Hesitations and silence are the final paralinguistic variables we will consider here. Knowing when to pause is a critical skill. When nervous or tense, we may exhibit a tendency to fill all pauses, often by inserting meaningless sounds or phrases such as *uh*, *you know*, or *okay* in the effort to fill voids. These **nonfluencies**, or hesitation phenomena, disrupt the natural flow of speech and adversely affect how others perceive your competence and confidence.

In addition to slowing the rate of speech and emphasizing key ideas, brief periods of silence or pauses give us a chance to gather our thoughts. This is not to suggest that a pause’s message is always positive. Sustained pauses—significantly extended periods of silence—allow us to give another the “silent treatment,” a means by which we ignore a person, saying to him or her without using words, “As far as I am concerned, you do not exist.” We also tend to become silent during moments of extreme anxiety or annoyance.

### PROXEMICS: SPACE AND DISTANCE TALKS

Our use of space and distance also reveals how we feel about ourselves and what we think of others. As with kinesics and paralinguistics, space and distance communicate.

Generally, we use physical proximity and distance to signal either desire to communicate or disinterest in communicating. The closer we stand, the greater the chances are that we like

**Pronunciation:** The conventional treatment of the sounds of a word.

**Nonfluencies:** Hesitation phenomena; nonlinguistic verbalizations.

one another. Proximity or lack of it also indicates how dominant or submissive we are in a relationship. The more dominant we feel, the more likely we are to move closer to another; in contrast, the more submissive we feel, the less likely we are to decrease our interaction distance. Perceptions of friendliness or unfriendliness and extroversion or introversion, as well as our privacy and social contact needs, are also reflected in our spatial relationships. As we study how we use space and distance to communicate, keep in mind that a gap may exist between the messages we intend to send using space and distance and the messages that others actually receive and interpret.

**Proxemics:** The study of how space and distance are used to communicate.

**Intimate distance:**

From skin contact to 18 inches from another person; the distance usually used by people who trust each other or who share an emotional bond or closeness.

**Personal distance:**

distance: From 18 inches to 4 feet from a person; the distance at which we are most apt to converse informally.

The father of proxemics research, Edward T. Hall, coined the term **proxemics** to indicate that “proximity” influences human interaction. The word itself refers to how we use the personal space around us as we interact with others as well as how we structure the space around us in our homes, offices, and communities (territory).<sup>26</sup>

**Spatial Relationships: Near or Far.** Hall identified four distances that distinguish the kinds of interactions we have and the relationships we share during them (it should be noted that Hall's research involved only white Americans):

Intimate distance	Contact to 18 inches
Personal distance	18 inches to 4 feet
Social-consultative distance	4 to 12 feet
Public distance	12 feet to the limit of sight

**Intimate distance** ranges from skin contact to 18 inches from another person. At this distance physical touching is normal. While we usually share such closeness with those we trust and with whom we share an emotional bond, this is also the distance used for physical combat and sexual harassment. For example, have you ever had someone physically “in your face” to the point that you wished he or she would just “back off”? At times, in crowded spaces such as elevators, buses, or theater lobbies, we have to put up with intimate distance between ourselves and strangers—people we would not ordinarily stand so near.

**Personal distance**, which ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet, is less proximate or personal than intimate distance. While we can still hold or shake the hand of another at this distance, we are most likely merely to converse informally. We use this distance at social events such as receptions or when talking between classes or during coffee breaks. If we unilaterally close the gap between personal and intimate distance, we may make the person we are interacting with feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, if we widen the distance between us, we may make him or her feel rejected.



The amount of distance we maintain between us reveals the nature of our relationship.

**Social distance** extends from 4 feet to 12 feet. At this distance we are less apt to talk about personal matters, more able to keep another at arm's length, and thus more likely to conduct business or discuss issues that are neither private nor of a personal nature. Many of our discussions during meals, conferences, or meetings are held within social distance range. Often we use objects such as desks or tables to maintain appropriate distance in these settings. Usually, the more distance we keep between us, the more formal our interaction becomes.

**Public distance** (12 feet and beyond) is the distance we use to remove ourselves physically from interaction, to communicate with strangers, or to address large groups. Public distance is much less likely than smaller distances to involve interpersonal communication.

People from different cultures maintain the same four categories, but not necessarily the same distances. For example, Latin Americans use the smallest conversational space, European Americans use more space than Latin Americans do, and African Americans use even more impersonal space than European Americans do.<sup>27</sup> In addition, as common sense tells us, cultural and family backgrounds also influence our use of space and personal body boundaries. Unlike the United States, where land tends to be plentiful and family size averages three or four, in countries where land is scarcer and families are larger, people live in tighter spaces, spaces that by our standards might be small or confining.

What happens when we violate distance norms? **Expectancy violation theory** researchers tell us that the outcomes of such violations can be positive. For example, if we perceive the approaching person closing the distance between us as attractive or a high-reward source, our evaluation of him or her may become more favorable, especially if the distance violation is accompanied by other behaviors, such as compliments.<sup>28</sup> More frequently, however, we may feel uncomfortable or violated when another person invades our personal space.

Understanding proxemics affords us opportunities to improve our relationships. By becoming aware of how space communicates, we attune ourselves to the nature of acceptable and unacceptable proxemic behavior. Although some studies reveal that "spatial invasions" may, under some conditions, achieve positive outcomes, we ought not be too quick to dismiss the fact that spatial violations have also led to lawsuits and violence.

**Places and Their Spaces: Decoding the Environment.** Three kinds of environmental space concern us: fixed-feature space, semi-fixed-feature space, and informal space (see Table 6.5).<sup>29</sup> Each affects communication in different ways.

**Fixed-feature space** involves the permanent characteristics of an environment—including walls, doors, built-in cabinets, windows, in-ground pools, roads, and paths—that functionalize it and determine how we will use it. For example, window placement often determines the front of a classroom, swimming pools provide opportunities for increased interaction, and aisles in shopping malls and stores route customers in an effort to promote sales.

**TABLE 6.5 It's about Space**

Type of Space	Represented by	Example
Fixed-feature space	Permanent characteristics of the environment	Walls, Doors
Semi-fixed-feature space	Movable objects	Plants, Furniture
Informal or non-fixed-feature space	Our space	Personal bubble

**Social distance:** From 4 feet to 12 feet from another person; the interpersonal distance we usually use to conduct business or discuss nonpersonal issues.

**Public distance:** A distance of 12 feet and beyond; the distance we use to remove ourselves physically from interaction, to communicate with strangers, or to address large groups.

**Expectancy violation theory:** A theory that addresses our reactions to nonverbal behavior and notes that violations of nonverbal communication norms can be positive or negative.

**Fixed-feature space:** Space as defined by the permanent characteristics of an environment.

**Semi-fixed-feature space** uses movable objects such as furniture, plants, temporary walls, and paintings to identify boundaries and either promote or inhibit interaction. For instance, desks can reduce contact, while chairs facing each other can increase it. Compare the amount of interaction occurring in a physician's waiting room, where chairs line a wall, with the amount of interaction occurring in restaurants, where chairs are positioned to encourage conversation. Some rooms say, "Use me," and actually bring people together, while others say, "Look at me," and keep people out.



When is it acceptable for another person to invade your territory?

#### **Semi-fixed-feature space:**

Space in which movable objects are used to identify boundaries and promote or inhibit interaction.

#### **Informal space or non-fixed-feature space:**

The invisible space each person carries around.

**Territoriality:** The claiming or identifying of space as one's own.

**Haptics:** The study of how touch communicates.

Problems may develop when another invades territory we have identified as ours.

Sometimes we fight over spaces, or we get upset when someone uses space we think is ours without our permission. To restore our comfort and prevent another from continuing to occupy our space, we may chastise a person who, without our authorization, put his or her things on our desk or in our room.

In professional settings, territory claimed tends to reflect status. CEOs and company presidents typically are accorded more favorable and larger office spaces than are managers. The former also are able to employ more markers, such as outer offices with assistants, to keep others out. While higher-status individuals can enter the spaces of lower-status people unannounced, the opposite is rarely true.

#### **HAPTICS: TOUCH**

In the discussion on proxemics, we noted that intimate space extends from the point of touch to 18 inches. **Haptics**, or touch, is usually involved in our closest relationships. While

**Informal space** or **non-fixed-feature space** is the space we carry around with us. It is invisible, highly mobile, and enlarged or contracted at will as we try to keep individuals at a distance or bring them closer. The amount of personal space we claim, the size of our personal bubble, changes as we move from interaction to interaction, relationship to relationship.

#### **Territoriality: Yours and Mine.**

**Territoriality** is another proxemics variable related to our use of informal space. Each of us lays claim to, or identifies as our own, spatial areas that we seek to protect or defend from intrusion. We devise various means to accomplish this, some more formal than others: nameplates, fences, stone walls, assigned chairs, or signs that say things such as "My Room." While it may not be logical to claim certain spaces, it is typical. Think of how often you have stopped someone from taking a specific seat, saying, "That's my chair," or "Don't sit there—that's Dad's seat."

always part of sexual communication, touch also plays a role in helping us develop closer relationships and is a key ingredient in the establishment and maintenance of many of our personal relationships.

Touching signals the desire for closeness. As children we likely were introduced to various touching no-no's. For example, we might have been instructed to keep our hands to ourselves around people—and not to touch when around breakable items. However, touch remains an important tool in interpersonal communication, and the messages it communicates, as we shall see, are varied.

The amount of touching we do or find acceptable is, at least in part, culturally conditioned. As with proxemics, a set of norms governs our use of touch. When others violate these norms, we may experience discomfort. Although some cultures promote only limited touching, others promote more frequent touch. Members belonging to a given culture generally conform to its established norms. In the United States, for instance, it is more acceptable for women to touch each other than it is for men to touch each other.<sup>30</sup> Touch also correlates positively with openness, comfort with relationships, and the ability to express feelings.<sup>31</sup>

We use touch for different purposes: to communicate attitude or affect, to encourage affiliation, and to exert control or power.<sup>32</sup> To demonstrate our concern for others, we often touch them. In some ways, beginning early in our lives, touch serves a therapeutic function. Infants wither emotionally and physically when not touched, and they thrive when picked up and held. Our entrance into and our exit from this world typically involve touch. Unfortunately, although touch is our most effective means of demonstrating affect or support, and it is important for the maintenance of both physiological and psychological health, as we get older we are often touched less.

Touch also helps us exert status or power in relationships. People of higher status usually initiate touch. Thus, it is more likely you will see the CEO pat a worker on the shoulder than vice versa.<sup>33</sup> The person who initiates touch is also the one who usually controls or directs the interaction. The person touching typically is perceived to have more power and to be more assertive than the person he or she is touching. Thus, the touching act itself implies power. Sometimes, however, rather than communicating liking or concern, touch signals dislike, dominance, aggression, or abuse; shoves, pokes, and slaps fall into this category.

The amount of consensual touching two people do indicates how much they like each other. Touch is part of relationship development and is used as a guide to gauge the amount of intimacy desired. We touch those we like and try not to be touched by those we dislike.



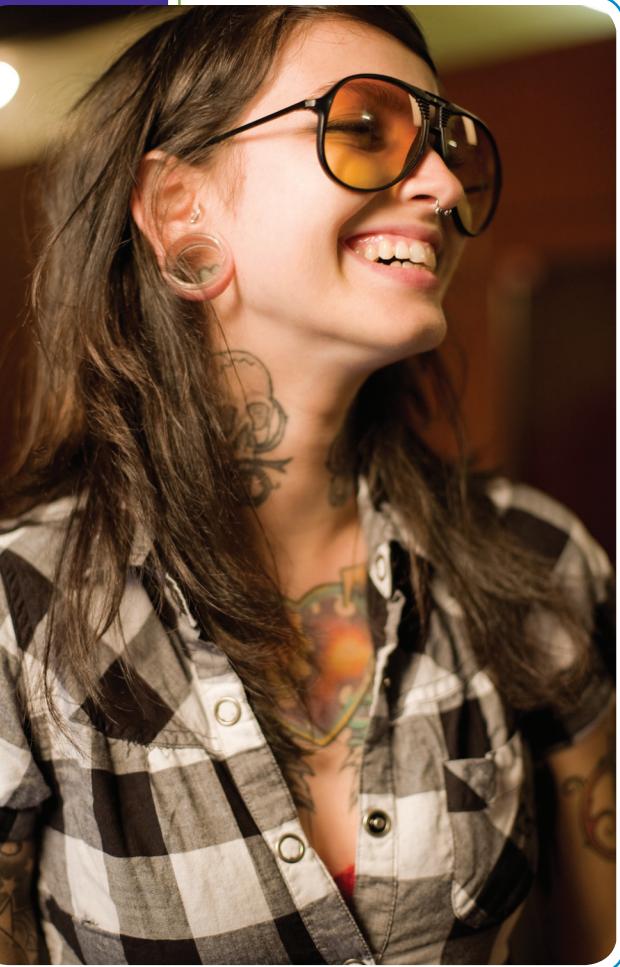
**Touch is an element of our closest relationships.**

Touch also marks greetings and leave-takings. Even a handshake can be social and polite or friendly and warm.

### ARTIFACTUAL COMMUNICATION AND APPEARANCE

What clothing or jewelry do you like to wear? What do your appearance, hairstyle, and mode of dress and personal adornments suggest to others about you? Do others find your bodily appearance and attire pleasing and appropriate?<sup>34</sup> And how does what you wear affect you?

Artifactual communication and appearance influence our reactions. In the early stages of a relationship, what we wear and how we look affect first impressions and may even lead to our being accepted or rejected. In addition, the clothing and jewelry we wear can cause others to form judgments regarding our success, character, power, and competence. Typically, we respond more positively to those we perceive to be well dressed than to those whose attire we find questionable or unacceptable. In the past, Americans were more apt to respond to requests from well-dressed individuals, including those in uniform, than they were to listen to or emulate individuals whose dress suggested lower status or a lack of authority,<sup>35</sup> but things may be changing. During the past few presidential campaigns, candidates have dressed more casually in the effort to come off as accessible and as “empathetic, regular Joes.”<sup>36</sup>



Unfortunately, many believe we live in a looks-based culture. They may be right. It appears that tall men, slender people, and attractive women are awarded a premium for their height, thinness, and beauty. For example, when it comes to height, taller people seem to win elections and jobs. Men actually make almost \$800 a year more for every extra inch of height. When it comes to weight, individuals who are obese or overweight are treated more unkindly, with heavier people earning less than slim people or people of average weight. In like fashion, persons others judge to be unattractive receive lower salaries than do persons judged attractive. Attractiveness also appears to be a factor for people facing prison, with less attractive people receiving longer sentences than their more attractive peers.<sup>37</sup>

Recent research has also discovered that what we wear affects our cognitive processes, reflecting the findings of a new scientific field called “embodied cognition.” According to a study conducted by Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky, because of this, if you wear a white coat you believe belongs to a physician, your ability to pay attention improves significantly. If, however, you think the same white coat belongs to a painter, no such improvement occurs. Quite simply, the clothing we have on not only influences how others see us but, by transforming our psychological state, also affects how we think about ourselves.<sup>38</sup>

Are you, for example, familiar with the television hit *Mad Men*? Acknowledging the show’s popularity, a recent news headline proclaimed “Now You Can Look Like the Drapers.” The story reported on a major national retailer’s decision to introduce a *Mad Men* line, with clothing and accessories based on the show

**What we wear and how we look helps others form impressions of us. What do the artifacts you wear suggest to others about you?**

offered for sale to the public. The hit status of *Mad Men* made the clothing of the 1960s the style to wear in the second decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>39</sup> If you wanted to look like Betty Draper, you might have bought A-line dresses, while Don Draper made the thin tie and fitted jacket into a statement. Some fans even created avatars of themselves dressed as their favorite *Mad Men* characters, and others adopted the actual hairstyles worn by the characters they most admired. Some used all their nonverbal wiles to capture the essence of the series, even purposefully mimicking the speech cadences and gestures of characters.

The craze for retro fashion tells a story. Back in *Mad Men* days, clothing echoed gender roles and helped prepare us for the transition from domestic roles for women to roles that were more progressive, as many women of the day forsook meekness, cherishing their new independence.<sup>40</sup> The show's costumers are conscious and deliberative in their use of fashion as nonverbal message.

### OLFACTICS: SMELL

Who smells good to you? How good do you smell to others? Through the years, the desire to use and appeal to the sense of smell or **olfactics** has spawned numerous industries offering products such as perfumes and colognes, mouthwashes and deodorants, household disinfectants, scented candles, and aromatherapy oils. Unlike the members of some cultures, Americans are into masking their natural bodily odors, preferring to use smell as an attractor by substituting pleasant for unpleasant smells in the effort to trigger emotional reactions, sexual arousal, romance, or friendship. For example, women prefer men who smell similar to them.<sup>41</sup> Gay men respond to smell much as women do, and in ways that are distinct from those of heterosexual men.<sup>42</sup>

Smell and the recall of good and bad memories go hand in hand. When something bad happens, for example, our sense of smell sharpens, as if going on high alert to warn us of impeding danger.<sup>43</sup> Of course, we also have good memories related to the presence of pleasing smells, such as freshly baked cookies and flowers blooming.

### COLOR: ASSOCIATIONS AND CONNECTIONS

Color talks both to and about us. The colors we surround ourselves with and the colors we wear affect us both physically and emotionally. For example, research has found that when a person is exposed to pure red for extended periods, the nervous system is excited, and blood pressure, respiration rate, and heart rate rise. In contrast, when the person is similarly exposed to dark blue, a calming effect occurs, and blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate fall.<sup>44</sup> Color may help compel us to move more quickly or slowly, help us relax, or cause us to become agitated. People who regularly wear red tend to be more active, outgoing, and impatient than those who avoid the color.

Fast-food chains, product marketers, department stores, and law enforcement agencies use our predictable reactions to various colors as behavioral conditioners. For example, because the color green encourages oral interaction, it is common practice for investigators to question suspects in green rooms, or in rooms where the lighting is green. Of course, green also prompts

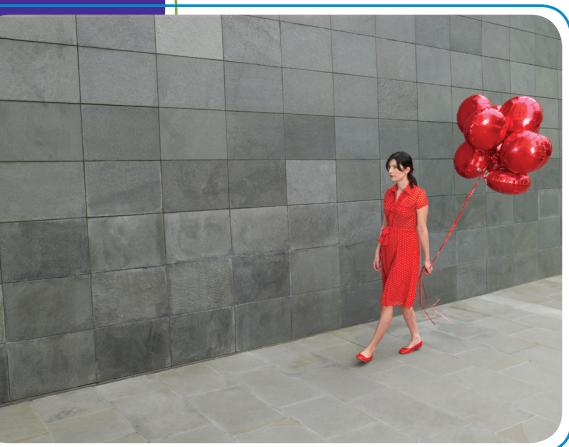


Slick sixties fashions are an important part of the popularity of the television drama *Mad Men*. The costumes evoke the spirit of the era and communicate the characters' personalities.



Smell can attract or repel. How do you use smell in your efforts to attract others?

**Olfactics:** The study of the sense of smell.



Color affects us both physically and emotionally. How does the color red affect you?

ecological associations. Table 6.6 indicates how marketers use color to target consumers.<sup>45</sup> In which group would you place yourself?

Colors do not evoke the same meanings in all cultures. For example, whereas in the United States and European countries brides routinely wear white, in Asian countries white is the color of mourning and so not considered suitable for weddings. In India, if a bride wears white, at least a touch of another color is usually added. In Ghana blue signifies joy; in Iran it has negative connotations. In the United States yellow suggests caution or cowardice; in China it represents wealth. Korean Buddhists reserve the color red for writing a person's name upon his or her death. What meanings do different colors have for you?

In their efforts to influence our reactions to color, some paint companies give their colors new names. For example, Sherwin-Williams has a color called Synergy (a shade of green), and Ace Paint has Hey There (a yellowish color)—words that give new meaning to color.<sup>46</sup> The names of the colors suggest how they are likely to influence communication.

### CHRONEMICS: THE COMMUNICATIVE VALUE OF TIME

**Chronemics** is the study of how we use time to communicate. Some of us are preoccupied with time, while others regularly waste it. Some of us are typically early, while others are chronically late. Some of us approach life with a sense of urgency, while others prefer a more leisurely pace. Some of us are early birds, functioning best in the morning, while others, night owls, perform best at night.

TABLE 6.6 Color Matters

First, look only at the color palette in the first column. Rank the colors shown, from the color you prefer most (your favorite) to the color you prefer least.

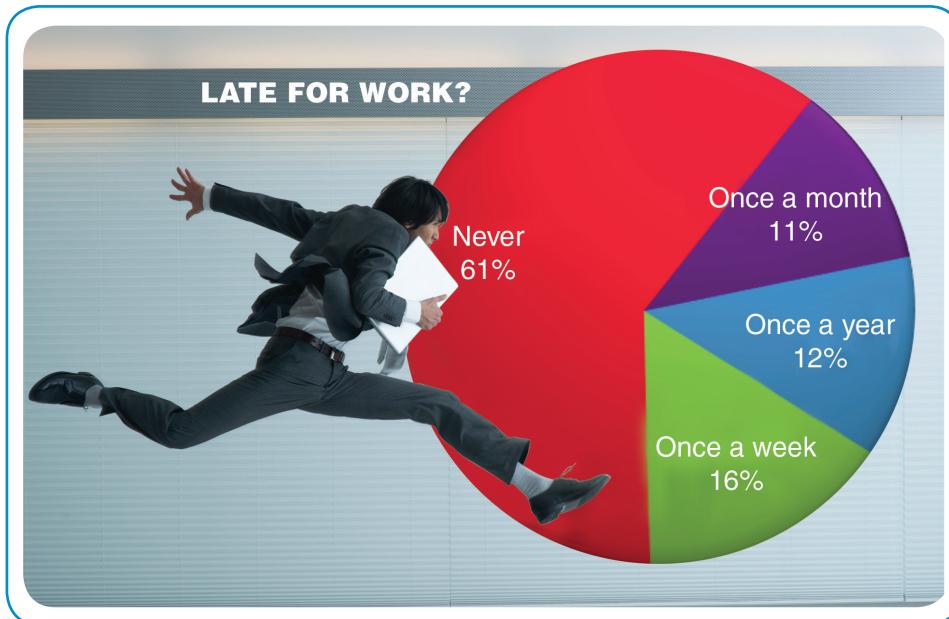
Once you have completed your ranking, consider the accompanying color preference descriptions. To what extent, if any, do you think they accurately describe you?

Color	Meaning/Personality	Communicates
Gray	Neutrality	Noninvolvement, concealment, or lack of commitment
Blue	Calmness	Contentment, being at peace
Green	Growth	Persistence, high self-esteem, constancy
Red	Energy	Intensity, conquest, fullness of living
Yellow	Happiness	Lack of inhibition, a desire for change
Violet	Enchantment	Longing for wish fulfillment, a desire to charm others
Brown	Security	Need for physical ease and contentment, for release from discomfort
Black	Nothingness	Surrender, renunciation

**Chronemics:** The study of how humans use time to communicate.

SOURCE: Based on Max Luscher, *The Luscher Color Test*, translated and edited by Ian Scott, New York: Random House, 1969.

**FIGURE 6.2** How Often Are You Late for Work?



SOURCE: Based on information from CareerBuilder survey of 7,780 workers.

Misunderstandings, miscalculations, and disagreements involving time can create communication and relationship problems. What does it mean to be “on time”? How is the concept of punctuality construed? To be “on time” for a job interview may be interpreted differently from what it means to be “on time” for a cocktail party. The latter usually allows more flexibility.

We also structure time in an effort to ensure we accomplish needed tasks. How long we are willing to wait to meet with someone or for something to occur is also a reflection of our status and the value we place on what we are waiting for. Status affords us greater power to control both our own time and others’ time. The more status a person has, the longer others with less status will wait to see him or her.<sup>47</sup>

Our culture influences how we use and think about time. In some cultures people live for today, but in others they are waiting for tomorrow. Thus, even the meaning of the phrase “a long time” is influenced by how a culture’s members conceive of time.

## CULTURE AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

Our culture modifies our use of nonverbal cues. For example, individuals who belong to **contact cultures**, such as Saudi Arabia, France, and Italy, relish the intimacy of contact; when interacting, they tend to display their warmth, closeness, and availability to one another, tend to be comfortable standing close to each other, seek maximum sensory experience, and touch each other frequently. In contrast, members of **noncontact cultures** or lower-contact cultures, such as Scandinavia, Germany, England, Japan, and the United

**Contact cultures:**  
Cultures that encourage nonverbal displays of warmth, closeness, and availability.

**Noncontact cultures:** Cultures that discourage the use of nonverbal displays of warmth, closeness, and availability.

## REFLECT ON THIS: Does Beauty Pay?

Research reveals a connection between perceived attractiveness, mating, and income. In Daniel S. Hamermesh's book *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People Are More Successful*, the accomplished economist explains why he believes attractive people make more money than unattractive people—some \$230,000 more over the course of their lives. According to Hamermesh, this is true even in professions where beauty should not be an issue, such as education and sports. Additionally, Hamermesh reports that men suffer more monetarily for being labeled unattractive than do women, with women earning some 3 percent less and men earning a whopping 22 percent less than more attractive cohorts.



### Consider these questions:

1. If we know the cost of unattractiveness, should those judged below average on the beauty scale be protected in the same way we protect people from racism and sexism?
2. Have you ever penalized another or been penalized in some way yourself for your looks? Explain.

SOURCES: For example, see Mads Meier Jaeger, "A Thing of Beauty Is a Joy Forever"? Returns to Physical Attractiveness over the Life Course," *Social Forces*, 89, 2011, p. 983–1003; and P. Prokop and Peter Fedor, "Physical Attractiveness Influences Reproductive Success of Modern Men," *Journal of Ethology*, 29, 2011, p. 453–458.

Daniel S. Hamermesh, *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People Are More Successful*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.

States, place more value on privacy and are more likely to discourage the behaviors exhibited by higher-contact culture members.<sup>48</sup>

Individuals who grow up in different cultures may display emotion or express intimacy in different ways. For example, members of Mediterranean cultures tend to display uninhibited, exaggerated highly emotional reactions, expressing grief or happiness with open facial displays, magnified gestures, and vocal cues supportive of their feelings. In contrast, neither the Chinese nor the Japanese readily reveal their feelings in public, preferring to display less emotion, maintain more self-control, and keep their feelings to themselves; for these reasons, they often remain expressionless.<sup>49</sup>

Even when members of different cultures use the same nonverbal cues, they may not mean the same thing. In the United States, for instance, a nod symbolizes agreement or consent, while in Japan it means only that a message was received.

Misunderstandings become more likely when we fail to understand that persons around the world and from different cultures use nonverbal cues that adhere to cultural rules that are different from ours. For example, individuals from Latino cultures tend to avoid making direct eye contact with another person as a sign of respect or attentiveness, a cue that persons from the main U.S. culture may misinterpret as a sign of inattentiveness or disrespect.<sup>50</sup> Like those from Latino cultures, individuals from Asian cultures also lower their eyes as a means of signaling respect. While African Americans are apt to use more continuous eye contact than European

Americans when speaking, they tend to use less when listening.<sup>51</sup> They also prefer authority figures to avert their gaze.<sup>52</sup> When it comes to public displays of fervent emotion, however, African Americans tend to be comfortable with such behavior, while some members from the mainstream culture may regard such displays as inappropriate because they violate their expectation for self-control and restraint.<sup>53</sup> Culture influences other kinds of nonverbal cues as well. For example, while a timepiece may be a great gift to give someone in the United States, in China clocks are associated with death and funerals, so making a gift of a clock may be interpreted as a sinister act.<sup>54</sup> And while Americans are prone to spending money to straighten less-than-perfect teeth to improve their smiles, in Japan a new fashion has women paying to have their teeth purposefully made crooked—a look called *yaeba*, favored by men and suggesting the woman is not perfect. This practice is thought to make the women more girl-like and approachable, sexualizing them in the process. Just as women in the United States use Botox to change their appearance and make themselves more acceptable to men, Japanese women use *yaeba* to maintain a youthful appearance.<sup>55</sup>

For us to interact effectively with individuals from different cultures, we need to make the effort to identify and understand how culture shapes nonverbal communication. Acknowledging that one communication style is not intrinsically better than any other can help foster more successful multicultural exchanges.

## GENDER AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

Just as we learn language from others, we pick up the proper use of nonverbal cues from them as well. In fact, our nonverbal interaction style likely contributes to our gendered identity, because the preferred styles of men and women tend to reflect a number of gendered patterns. Researcher Judith Hall suggests that “male” and ‘female’ are roles, each with its set of prescribed behaviors.”<sup>56</sup> As a result, men and women commonly use nonverbal communication in ways that reflect societal expectations. For example, men are expected to exhibit assertive behaviors that demonstrate their power and authority; women, in contrast, are expected to exhibit more reactive and responsive behavior. Thus, it should not surprise us that men talk more and interrupt women more frequently than vice versa.<sup>57</sup>

Men are also more apt to be dominant during interactions. The measurement of visual dominance involves comparing the percentage of time spent looking while speaking with the percentage of time spent looking while listening. When compared with women, men display higher levels of looking while speaking and lower levels of looking when listening. Thus, the **visual dominance ratio** of men usually is higher than that of women, again reflecting the ability of nonverbal cues to reinforce perceptions of social power.<sup>58</sup>

Men and women also differ in how they use space and touch. Men tend to use space and touch to assert their dominance over women. As a result, men are much more likely to touch women than women are to touch men. Women thus are more apt to be the recipients of touching actions than they are to be the initiators. Men usually also claim more personal space than do women, and when they walk with women, they are more likely to take a position in front of the women than behind them. Thus, usually, males are the “touchers” and not the “touchees” and are the leaders rather than the followers. In general, when it comes to same-sex touch, it is considered more appropriate for women to touch other women than for men to touch other men. Men, it appears, have more of a concern with being perceived as homosexual than women do.<sup>59</sup>



### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

#### True or False

**5.** Some women purposefully make their teeth crooked.

**True.** The look, called *yaeba* in Japan, is believed to increase a man’s interest in a woman.

**Visual dominance ratio:** A figure derived by comparing the percentage of looking while speaking with the percentage of looking while listening.

## TRY THIS: The Race Factor

1. Are the nonverbal reactions of a television character influenced by the race of the other character in a scene? Do the nonverbal reactions displayed by television actors influence racial attitudes in viewers? According to research, the answer to both these questions is yes. The facial expressions and body language of actors are perceived as less favorable when the characters they are interacting with are black. The more negative reactions displayed by the actors adversely affect viewers' attitudes about race. In contrast, when black characters are responded to more favorably than white characters, the attitudes of viewers toward blacks improve. You are the director of television drama. Given these research findings, what instructions would you give your actors?
2. Is your outfit perceived to be a reflection of your race? Again the answer appears to be yes. Research confirms that people make judgments about race based on cues that extend beyond skin color. For example, people are more frequently perceived to be black if they are wearing janitorial attire than if they are wearing other kinds of clothing. The stereotypes we carry with us influence our perceptions of race. Provide an example of a time when you stereotyped a stranger on the basis of her or his apparel.

SOURCES: Valerie Ross, "Color TV," *Scientific American Mind*, July/August 2010, p. 13.

Jonathan B. Freeman, Andrew M. Penner, Aliya Saperstein, Matthias Scheutz, and Nalini Ambady, "Looking the Part: Social Status Cues Shape Race Perception," *PLoS ONE*, 6:9, e25107. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0025107; also cited in Pamela Paul, "Is Race Reflected by Your Outfit?," *New York Times*, October 16, 2011, p. ST6.

One of the nonverbal behaviors that women display more than men is smiling. Accustomed to using a smile as an interactional tool, women even smile when under stress.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, men, who are customarily taught to display less emotion than women, are likely to suppress their facial expressions, thereby conveying their sense of reserve and self-control. Gender differences in behaviors such as smiling do not necessarily cross over to cocultures. Unlike their Caucasian counterparts, African American women do not tend to smile more than African American men. Feminine socialization functions differently in the African American community. Women also commonly display their feelings more overtly than do men. In general, women are more expressive and exhibit higher levels of involvement during person-to-person interaction. Women also use nonverbal signals to draw others into conversation to a greater extent, perhaps smiling at them or opening their hands in the direction of others to solicit comments. While women characteristically demonstrate an interest in affiliation, men generally are more interested in establishing the strength of their ideas than in sharing the floor.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, women tend to be better interpreters of nonverbal messages.

When it comes to use of artifacts, use of color, and clothing, men and women are likely to reflect the stereotyped characteristics attributed to the sexes. For instance, women use artifacts such as jewelry, cosmetics, and hair adornments that help reinforce the image of a woman as a decorative object. Similarly, men's clothing tends to be less colorful and more functional than women's clothing. Men's clothing is more likely than women's to promote utility, activity, and ease of movement, and it does not call the same kind of attention to the body as does women's clothing. Consequently, women are perceived as more sexual.<sup>62</sup>

Despite these habitual proclivities, in recent years some men have taken to wearing heels and some women have taken to wearing classic male oxfords. In fact, in France, the wearing of high-heeled shoes, by men as well as women, used to be perceived as a sign of nobility.

Today, they help men bring a look to dance floor clubs. While it appears to be acceptable for women to wear shoe styles that were previously reserved for men, how long do you think it will be before contemporary society finds it acceptable for men to wear stilettos?<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, men are also wearing “wristwear” (not called bracelets) and carrying “holdalls” (not referred to as purses and less and less as “murses”).<sup>64</sup>

Remember, according to standpoint theory (discussed in Chapter 3), it was women’s subordinate societal status that compelled them to become better message decoders so that they could accurately predict the behavior of the more dominant or powerful men.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, as Carol Gilligan notes, since women are more concerned than men with relationship maintenance, it follows that they are likely to develop an enhanced sensitivity to nonverbal cues that facilitate and sustain relationship development.<sup>66</sup>

### NONVERBAL CUES AND FLIRTING: EXPRESSING INTEREST OR DISINTEREST

Flirting is a means of self-promotion as well as a vehicle to express your interest in another. As we now realize, making an impression on someone starts not when you begin to speak, but rather with your appearance, posture, manner of moving, and gestures.

How do males and females signal interest in potential partners? Males signal their interest by preening and stretching (actions that make them seem larger). They also are likely to stiffen their stance and flex their muscles. Men may also talk in a low voice and are likely to stand or sit with their hands on their belt or belt buckle. Females, in contrast, display nonverbal actions designed to make them appear smaller. They may play with or flick their hair, tilt their heads, exposing their necks, and even display their inner wrists. They also are apt to glance, gaze, primp, preen, pout, lip lick, smile, giggle, laugh, and nod in agreement. Both men and women flash or raise their eyebrows slightly to indicate their interest, make eye contact (even from across the room) or exhibit sideway glances, and play with accessories such as earrings, necklaces, or neckties. They also tend to lean in closer, exhibit open body language, gaze at the other’s lips or jaw, laugh, and lightly touch the other’s arm or knee.<sup>67</sup>



How would you describe what this man is wearing over his shoulder? Would you change the terminology were a woman wearing it?

### TRY THIS: Top Billing

Fascination with name brands and celebrity culture has transformed the clothing industry. Many people wear clothing like a billboard—using what they have on to promote their personal status, express affection for a celebrity, or endorse an issue or cause. For example, we wear clothing or carry artifacts emblazoned with the logos of popular designers, effectively providing free advertising for those labels. We wear copies of outfits worn by celebrities. We wear T-shirts promoting our attitudes toward an array of subjects, from opposition to animal cruelty to support for a political candidate.

1. In your opinion, are men and women more apt to use clothing in this manner?
2. Why do you think this is so?

To slow down or de-escalate a flirtation, the woman may turn her body away, cross her arms across her chest, or avoid meeting the other's eyes. Both men and women use departing, excuses involving friends, answering or pretending to answer a cell phone, ignoring, and facial expressions of disinterest to deter or end a flirtation.

When terminating a flirtation, men tend to be less polite than women. Of course, the consequences of unwanted flirtation can be serious, especially if it is interpreted as sexual harassment or becomes obsessively intrusive.<sup>68</sup>

Gender influences men's and women's use of nonverbal cues as they define their expectations for each other, express their feelings about and toward one another, and convey their interest in pursuing or not pursuing an interpersonal relationship. By sensitizing yourself to the differences associated with gender, you can reduce misunderstandings and increase your personal communication effectiveness.

## MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY, AND NONVERBAL MESSAGES



All too often, the media and technology help to legitimate stereotypical nonverbal displays. Their contents depict a plethora of open sexual appeals, portrayals of women obsessed with men, and male-female interactions in which the men are physically dominant and the women are subordinate. They also include numerous repetitions of the message that "thin is in."

For example, in her video series *Killing Us Softly*, Jean Kilbourne explores how media representations help convey gender norms for dominance and subordination. Kilbourne argues that advertising, the primary storyteller in our culture, takes agency away from women. According to Kilbourne, by exploiting the social anxieties women have and espousing the American value that transformation is possible, advertisers encourage women to be excessively thin. Kilbourne also warns that the images advertisers use undermine how women see themselves while at the same time participating in the normalization of violence directed at them by men. In support of her position, Kilbourne offers examples of how advertisements sexualize women, turn women into body parts, contain numerous instances of silenced women, depict women competing against one another, trivialize the power women have, appear to condone violence against women, and feature few older women. Kilbourne further observes that advertising's objectification and sexualization of men is also on the rise.<sup>69</sup>

After repeated exposure to such media messages, men and women come to believe and ultimately emulate what they see and hear. Thus, females are primed to devote considerable energy to improving their appearance, preserving their youthfulness, and nurturing others, while males learn to display tougher, me, men are typically portrayed as superior to women, who are usually shown in various stages of undress. In the media, nonverbal behaviors portray women as vulnerable and men in control.<sup>70</sup>

The repetition of such myths can cause us to feel dissatisfied and inadequate. If we rely on the media for messages about what is and is not desirable in our relationships and interactions, we may find it difficult to be ourselves.

**Flirting is a means of self-promotion as well as a means of expressing our interest in another.**

Even mediated vocal cues suggest that it is the male and not the female who is the authority. In up to 90 percent of all advertisements, male voices are used in voice-overs—even when the product being sold is aimed at women. Interestingly, however, when the medium changes and we segue to the computer, we find that computer voices are mostly female, as exemplified by the voice-activated feature called Siri—the iPhone virtual assistant. The reason: research reveals that people find women's voices more pleasing. This is also the rationale for the use of female voices in most navigation systems—except those sold in Germany, where German men refuse to take directions from a woman.<sup>71</sup>

The continued growth of the use of computer-generated virtual reality simulations is cause for some concern. While facilitating our feeling as if we are really interacting in different, but make-believe, environments and even giving us the opportunity to change our gender, such simulations are also being used to enforce violent gender scenarios resulting in women being threatened and killed. Even when erotic rather than violent, computer games all too often reinforce the notion that men have physical control over women.

In the effort to help eliminate some of the ambiguity of online communication, individuals use **emoticons**—relational icons—to increase the expressiveness of their written messages by revealing the user's physical or emotional state. Additionally, they employ a kind of shorthand, using abbreviations such as ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing) or LOL (laughing out loud), to describe their reactions to a partner. Still, despite advances in virtual reality programs, it is impossible to reach out and actually touch someone on the computer screen.<sup>72</sup> The use of emoticons is not without criticism. As one person wrote, "If anybody on Facebook sends me a message with a little smiley-frowny face or a little sunshine with glasses on them, I will de-friend them. I also de-friend for OMG and LOL. They get no second chance. I find it lazy. Are your words not enough?"<sup>73</sup>

What is more, soon we will no longer merely look like we are talking to ourselves when wearing tiny wireless earpieces connected to our smartphones; we may soon also be able to don "Google glasses"—thick-framed eyeglasses that will project information and entertainment onto the lenses—which may well cause us to exhibit bizarre body language as we seek to avoid the virtual things projected before us.<sup>74</sup> Can you imagine how an onlooker will interpret the flailing of your arms? While Google glasses may be the next big thing, right now facial recognition software lets us use only visual cues to tag someone on Facebook.



When we are interacting online, sometimes words are not enough.

**Emoticons:** Text-based representations of facial expressions and moods.

## TRY THIS: Can You Read the Cues?

Back in 1959, anthropologist Edward T. Hall coined the expression “the silent language” to describe nonverbal communication. Hall’s writings on nonverbal communication attracted significant attention, both scholarly and popular. Hall argued that when we fail to decode the manners, gestures, and subtle protocols that accompany words, we leave ourselves vulnerable to miscommunications of one kind or another.



Today we spend significant communicative time interacting online in social networks. It is estimated that high school students alone devote in excess of nine hours a week to social networking. Add texting, blogging, and tweeting on top of that. In our increasingly text-dependent world, more and more communication involves the exchange of written words alone. The prevalence of texting and other forms of messaging leaves a dearth of opportunities to learn to read posture, facial expressions, intonation, and eye movements—all the expressive behaviors of nonverbal communication that are so essential for mutual understanding.

1. In your opinion, are we in danger of losing the “silent fluency” that comes from experiencing face-to-face communication, a needed key in reading another’s behavior? Explain your answer.
2. How do you suggest we ensure that such skills are acquired?
3. To what extent do you believe that using FaceTime and Skype, enablers of face-to-face interaction over cell phones and computers, solve some of these issues? How does reading someone’s face when you are virtually face-to-face with him or her compare with reading faces when you are really face-to-face?

SOURCE: Mark Bauerlein, “Why Gen-Y Johnny Can’t Read Nonverbal Cues,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2009, p. W11.

## GAINING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

In Chapter 1, we noted that human beings cannot *not* communicate, because all behavior has message value. In fact, nonverbal behavior affects credibility ratings. Thus, it is important to learn to use nonverbal messages to enhance your personal credibility, likability, and attractiveness, and, at times, to establish dominance. By using nonverbal cues appropriately, you can create a more favorable impression and aid in the development of your relationships. If we are to enhance our abilities to develop effective interpersonal relationships, we need to be fully aware of the nonverbal messages we send and receive.

### PAY ATTENTION TO NONVERBAL MESSAGES

By tuning in to nonverbal messages, we can enhance our awareness of how others respond to us. Nonverbal communication is a “relationship language.” It expresses how we feel about one another. Even though it may be a challenge to interpret how people really feel, if only because they may not want us to know, the key to understanding people is to observe them in action and listen to the sound of their voices as they interact with you. For

example, when in your company, do other people lean toward you or pull away? Face you directly or indicate a desire to avoid interpersonal involvement by facing away from you? Do their facial expressions suggest they are happy you are around, interested in pursuing a relationship, fearful to approach you, or angry with you? Is their posture relaxed, indicating they feel comfortable, or uptight, indicating that they feel you or the situation pose a threat? What do their voices reveal? Do they speak in a friendly manner? Are they trying to use their voices to hide what they are really feeling? Similarly, what does their use of touch, space, and distance suggest about your relationship? What about their use of clothing, color, and time? As you observe others, you pick up and interpret nonverbal cues that reveal their attitudes and feelings.

### **WHEN UNCERTAIN ABOUT A NONVERBAL CUE'S MEANING, ASK!**

What a particular nonverbal cue signifies in one culture may not transfer to another culture. For example, psychologist Aaron Wolfgang reports,

I remember when I was doing some filming in a marketplace in Palermo, a group of men motioned to my crew with their arms extended, palms down and fingers moving back and forth. We thought it meant, "Go away." As we prepared to leave, one of the men came forward, smiled, and taking our arms invited us for some wine. We found out later that the gesture meant, "Come here."<sup>75</sup>

To avoid misinterpretation, it is important to pay attention to differences in cultural background.

Even if you and those with whom you interact come from the same culture, it is important to remember that nonverbal cues can have multiple meanings. Because of the ambiguity of nonverbal cues, it is a good idea to check your perception, perhaps by paraphrasing, to determine if your interpretation is correct. By asking for verbal clarification of your observations, you increase the chances for mutual understanding.

### **REALIZE INCONSISTENT MESSAGES HAVE COMMUNICATIVE VALUE**

When words and facial expressions, gestures, postures, or vocal cues contradict each other, rely more on the nonverbal information you are receiving than on the words. Even though the words may be precisely what we want or expect to hear, we must also heed unintended mixed or inconsistent messages to help us decide, for example, whether the other person is incompetent, nervous, or a liar.

### **MATCH THE DEGREE OF CLOSENESS YOU SEEK WITH THE NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR YOU DISPLAY**

Nonverbal behavior should be compatible with the kind of relationship sought. Touch, for example, typically varies according to duration, location, and strength, depending on our relationship with another person. Similarly, intimacy and distance also correlate with relationship type. Thus, your proximity to the other person and the amount of touching you use should be compatible with the kind of relationship you seek. The more intimate your relationship is, the closer you will want to be to each other. The less intimate you are with another person, the greater the distance you are likely to keep between you. Should you find yourself in close proximity with someone with whom you are not emotionally close, you can use nonverbal cues to compensate for your discomfort. For example, you may decrease eye contact, helping to psychologically increase the distance between you.

Similarly, if you are separated from someone with whom you feel emotionally close, you can find ways to use nonverbal cues to close the distance gap, perhaps increasing eye contact, waving, or smiling. Among the other nonverbal cues you can use that reveal the closeness of a relationship are cues related to chronemics or time. You reveal your closeness to and comfort with another person by spending more time together.

### **MONITOR YOUR NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR**

Monitoring your own nonverbal behavior is a critical component of interpersonal goal attainment. By engaging in self-reflection, you will be better able to judge if you are using nonverbal cues to project the message you hope to send. For example, how well do you use facial expressions and body movements to foster relationships you want to pursue and terminate relationships you want to end? Are you effective at using the environment to invite or better control opportunities for person-to-person interaction? What does your proximity to the other person and your use of touch suggest about the nature of your relationship? When you want to change the tenor of a relationship from one that is close to one that is more restrained, or vice versa, what nonverbal cues do you characteristically put into play? How do they affect your partner?

### **ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ABILITIES TO ENCODE AND DECODE NONVERBAL MESSAGES VARY**

Some of us are better at regulating, expressing, and interpreting nonverbal behavior than are others. There appears to be a positive correlation between our ability to enact nonverbal messages and our ability to receive and decipher them—skills that also are linked with a. Extroverts also have an advantage when it comes to picking up nonverbal cues because they are comfortable in making contact, participating in social encounters, and observing others.

Even more important, the more we hone our nonverbal abilities, the more likely it is that others will perceive us as socially adjusted and that we will be able to exert social influence and have satisfying relationships.<sup>77</sup>

## CONNECT THE CASE: *The Case of Surprised Sam*

Sam entered the conference room. He couldn't put his finger on what was up, but things just didn't feel right to him as he observed the people already present in the room. At the head of the impressive mahogany table sat his company president. Senior vice presidents sat to the president's right and left, and several managers—including Sam's immediate supervisor—lined the table's sides.



There was one seat open. As Sam approached, he couldn't help but feel uneasy. Sure, the people at the table were drinking coffee, smiling, checking their smartphones, consulting their tablets, texting, and chatting among themselves. As Sam took his seat, not one person looked up or said a word to him.

Sam asked himself why he was feeling uncomfortable. Was it because the president had not yet acknowledged Sam's presence? Was it because no one had greeted him except maybe his immediate supervisor, who Sam thought had acknowledged him with a perfunctory hello by nodding her head? Whatever it was, Sam felt like an outsider.

Then the president looked up—and made eye contact directly with Sam. Everyone else stopped whatever he or she was doing and looked Sam's way too. The president called the meeting to order, explaining that there was but a single agenda item—Sam.

Sam's heart sank. How could he have missed it? Had there been other cues besides the lack of eye contact that he had overlooked? Was this going to be the end of his career? Here they were, he told himself, about to fire him, and he had had no clue that any problem existed before now.

At that moment, the president reached under the table and brought out a bottle of champagne. Sam, he announced, was being promoted and would now be senior vice president in charge of his entire division. Slowly, a smile appeared on Sam's face, and Sam rose to shake hands with all assembled, including his soon-to-be former supervisor.

### Answer these questions:

1. Have there been times when you have felt just as uncomfortable as Sam did on entering a room but could not identify what caused you to feel that way?
2. What steps can we take to ensure that we pick up and do not misread nonverbal cues?

# REVIEW THIS

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

- 1 Define nonverbal communication, explain its metacommunicative nature, and discuss its functions and characteristics.** Nonverbal communication consists of the actions or attributes of human beings, together with the use of objects, sounds, time, and space that have socially shared significance and stimulate meaning in others. Because nonverbal communication helps clarify the nature and meaning of verbal messages, it also fulfills metacommunicative functions. Nonverbal cues can add to, negate, accent, regulate, or replace verbal messages. As such, they are an integral part of the total communication package. Nonverbal behavior also has message value, is ambiguous, is predominantly relational in nature, and provides clues to deception.
- 2 Define and distinguish among the following kinds of nonverbal messages: kinesics, paralanguage, proxemics, haptics, artifactual communication and appearance, olfactics, color, and chronemics.** Kinesics is the study of body motion, including expressions, gestures, eye movement, posture, and rate of walk. Paralinguistics includes a consideration of vocal cues, such as how words are spoken and the impact of vocal variations. Proxemics is the use of space and distance. Haptics includes an exploration of different kinds of touch. Artifactual communication and appearance involve the significance of clothing, personal adornments,

beauty, height, and weight for our feelings and others' reactions to us. Olfactics is the study of the sense of smell. Color has effects on us both psychologically and physically. Chronemics explores the communicative value of time.

- 3 Compare and contrast the nonverbal communication styles of men and women.** Most men and women use nonverbal communication in ways that reflect societal expectations for persons of their respective genders. Thus, men exhibit assertive behaviors and women are more responsive and reactive.
- 4 Distinguish between contact and noncontact cultures.** Contact cultures value the intimacy of contact by promoting interaction and displays of warmth, closeness, and availability. Noncontact cultures value privacy and the maintenance of distance.
- 5 Describe the impacts of media and technology on nonverbal messages.** Media and technology frequently participate in the legitimization of stereotypes. When interacting online, some individuals use emoticons to try to replace the nonverbal cues that would be present in face-to-face interaction.
- 6 Identify steps you can take to improve your nonverbal effectiveness.** By paying attention to nonverbal cues, paying attention to cultural differences, being alert for inconsistent messages, matching nonverbal behavior and relationships so they are compatible, monitoring our nonverbal behavior, and recognizing that we vary in our abilities to encode and decode nonverbal messages, we improve the likelihood of communicating effectively.

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Can you offer an example of metacommunication in action? How, for example, might you use it to better understand the nature of a relationship? (See pages 152–154.)
- 2 Can you create a scenario illustrating the role nonverbal cues play in creating a false impression? Why do you think people believe that it is easier to lie with words than with nonverbal cues? (See pages 155–158.)
- 3 Can you explain the kinds of messages conveyed by personal appearance? What about those that voice and use of space and distance communicate? (See pages 172–174.)
- 4 Can you offer two examples of nonverbal messages in action, one demonstrating how gender or culture influences the use and interpretation of nonverbal cues, and the other demonstrating the role that media and technology play in nonverbal messaging? (See pages 175–182.)
- 5 What can you do to enhance your ability to send and receive nonverbal messages? (See pages 182–184.)



## CHECK YOUR SKILLS

- 1 Can you use nonverbal cues to identify when someone is attempting to deceive you? (See pages 155–157; and **Try This**, page 158.)
- 2 Can the ability to read faces accurately improve your relationships? (See pages 159–162; **Analyze This**, page 162; and **Try This**, page 182.)
- 3 Can you use your eyes to increase your visual dominance and establish behavior synchrony? (See pages 161–162.)
- 4 Can correctly interpreting another's body messages help you make judgments regarding that person's liking, assertiveness, and power? (See pages 163–165; and **Try This**, page 164.)
- 5 Can you use paralinguistic cues to help identify the meaning inherent in spoken words? (See pages 165–167, and **Reflect on This**, page 167.)
- 6 Can you use space and distance to clarify intentions? (See pages 167–170.)
- 7 Can you recognize the attractiveness effect? (See pages 172–173; and **Reflect on This**, page 176.)
- 8 Can you use nonverbal messages to help bridge culture and gender differences? (See pages 175–179; and **Try This**, page 178.)
- 9 Can you assess when media and technology are helping to legitimate the use of stereotypical nonverbal displays? (See pages 181–183.)
- 10 Can you account for the misreading of nonverbal cues? (See pages 182–184; and **The Case of Surprised Sam**, page 185.)

## KEY TERMS

Nonverbal communication	152	Affect displays	164	Fixed-feature space	169
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