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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS Laura K. Guerrero

Kory Floyd

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 Duck University of Iowa Since its inception the Personal Relationships series
 from Lawrence Erlbaum Associates has sought to review the progress in the
 academic work on relationships with respect to a broad array of issues and
 to do so in an accessible manner that also illustrates its practical value. The
 LEA series already includes books intended to pass on the accumulated
 scholarship to the next generation of students and to those who deal with
 relationship issues in the broader world beyond the academy.

The series thus not only comprises monographs and other academic
 resources exemplifying the multidisciplinary nature of this area, but also

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books suitable for use in the growing numbers of courses on relationships and in the growing number of professions which deal with relationship issues. The series has the goal of providing a comprehensive and current survey of theory and research in personal relationship through the careful analysis of the problems encountered and solved in research, yet it also considers the systematic application of that work in a practical context. These resources not only are intended to be comprehensive assessments of progress on particular "hot" and relevant topics, but also have already shown that they are significant influences on the future directions and development of the study of personal relationships and application of its insights.

Although each volume is well centered, authors all attempt to place the respective topics in the broader context of other research on relationships and within a range of wider disciplinary traditions. The series already offers incisive and forward-looking reviews and also demonstrates the broader theoretical implications of relationships for the range of disciplines from which the research originates. Collectively the volumes include original studies, reviews of relevant theory and research, and new theories oriented toward the understanding of personal relationships both in themselves and within the context of broader theories of family process, social psychology, and communication.

Reflecting the diverse composition of personal relationship study, readers in numerous disciplines??? social psychology, communication, sociology, family studies, developmental psychology, clinical psychology, personality,

counseling, women's studies, gerontology, and others???) will find valuable and insightful perspectives in the series. Apart from the academic scholars who research the dynamics and processes of relationships, there are many other people whose work takes them up against the operation of relationships in the real world. For such people as nurses, the police, teachers, therapists, lawyers, drug and alcohol counselors, marital counselors, the priesthood, and those who take care of the elderly, a number of issues routinely arise concerning the ways in which relationships affect the people whom they serve and guide.

Examples are the role of loneliness in illness and the ways to circumvent it, the complex impact of family and peer relationships upon a drug-dependent's attempts to give up the drug, the role of playground unpopularity on a child's learning, the issues involved in dealing with the relational side of chronic illness, the management of conflict in marriage, the establishment of good rapport between physicians and seriously ill patients, the support of the bereaved, the correction of violent styles of behavior in dating or marriage, and even the relationships formed between jurors in extended trials as these may influence a jury's decisions. Each of these is a problem that may confront some of the aforementioned professionals as part of their daily concerns and each demonstrates the far-reaching influences of relationship processes on much else in life that is presently theorized independently of relationship considerations. The present volume deals with the basic elements of behavior that influence interpretation of the spoken word and also convey their own messages: nonverbal communication (NVC).

The authors take a perspective on NVC that places the exchange of messages at the heart of the communication process, defining NVC as nonlinguistic messages that people exchange in interactive contexts. Such messages include behaviors that are dynamic as well as those that are static parts of the communication process and range from physical appearance to movement and gesture or vocal cues. These familiar elements of every interaction have important consequences for interpretation of behavior and exert significant power on the understanding of what is occurring in relationships, including the mistakes and misinterpretations that create difficulty in relationships.

The book is important because it places NVC in the context of personal relationships and looks at its effects and its roles in processes of attraction, affection, emotion, power, deception, and conflict. Not only are these topics important in relationships but the narrative of the book allows them to be discussed in the context of relational development overall and hence to show the developing role of NVC in relationships across time rather than, at least in some early work, confining the role of NVC to the earliest stages of relationships with nonintimates. The book thus makes an important contribution to the development of our understanding not only of relationship processes but also of the workings of NVC as a whole.

Finally, the practical applications of discussions about deception and conflict are all too necessary in understanding relationships in the real world and the book's practical value in this respect fulfills the overall mission of the series very adroitly. This page intentionally left blank Preface There is abundant

advice from various media about how to communicate within relationships. Televised talk shows, popular magazines, and self-help books often emphasize that effective communication is integral to happy, healthy relationships. Yet the advice found in the media often fails to reflect the complexity of human communication, including the nuances of nonverbal messages. Many laypeople equate nonverbal communication with body language, without recognizing that cues related to touch, space, the voice, physical appearance, the environment, and time also send important relational messages.

Although this book touches upon practical applications for couples, our primary objective was to summarize and integrate research on nonverbal communication as it applies to interpersonal interaction. The research clearly shows that nonverbal communication is a complex phenomenon subject to multiple interpretations and misinterpretations. In the first two chapters, we argue that nonverbal communication is a dynamic process that is influenced by biology and evolution as well as culture and socialization. In chapter 1, we take the position that not all nonverbal behavior is communication; rather, a source must intentionally send a message and/or a receiver must interpret a message.

According to this processoriented perspective, three types of message exchange constitute the clearest examples of communication: behaviors that are sent intentionally and decoded accurately (successful communication), behaviors that are sent intentionally but decoded inaccurately (miscommunication), and behaviors that are sent without intent but

nonetheless decoded accurately (accidental communication). We believe that all of these forms of message exchange, plus situations involving attempted communication (a message is xi xii PREFACE sent intentionally but not received) and misinterpretation (a behavior is performed without intent and interpreted incorrectly) shape the perceptions and emotions within relationships. In chapter 2, we argue that nonverbal communication is a product of biology, social learning, and relational context, as many theories of nonverbal exchange suggest.

We then overview six prominent nonverbal theories??? expectancy violations theory, discrepancy arousal theory, cognitive valence theory, communication accommodation theory, interaction adaptation theory, and the parallel processing model??? and show how each is related to the bio-evolutionary or sociocultural perspectives. The heart of the book then focuses on various functions of nonverbal communication. Several nonverbal scholars, including Judee Burgoon and Miles Patterson, have organized their work on nonverbal communication around essential functions, such as intimacy, power, impression management, deception, and interaction management. In this book, we focus on those functions that seem most relevant to the initiation, maintenance, and dissolution of close relationships.

These chapters are ordered in a loosely developmental fashion, with fictional characters we have created (Tina and David) used to provide examples of how nonverbal cues may affect a relationship at different stages. We cover the functions of attraction (which is related to impression formation), affection, emotion, dominance, deception, and conflict/disengagement.

Some of these chapters are more relationally focused than others. For example, the deception chapter offers many claims that have been tested outside the boundaries of close relationships. The emotion and conflict chapters, however, focus more on how nonverbal behavior functions in close relationships such as marriages. All of the chapters offer information that is relevant to various types of interpersonal interaction.

We believe the differences in level of relational focus are reflective of the state of the research on each of the functions we cover. Finally, in the last chapter we discuss some of the practical implications that emerge from the scholarly literature on nonverbal communication in relationships. We hope this chapter is helpful to researchers, clinicians, and couples who want a better understanding of the complicated roles that various nonverbal cues play in relationships. We also urge readers to use this chapter, as well as other chapters in the book, as a springboard for asking new questions and advancing new theories about nonverbal communication.

Throughout the book, we highlight areas where research is either contradictory or inconclusive, hoping that in the years to come scholars will have a clearer understanding of these issues. Writing a book is a time-consuming but intellectually stimulating and rewarding experience. We have many people to thank for making this bookwriting experience both possible and rewarding. Our mentors??? Judee Burgoon, Peter Andersen, Mac Parks, and Valerie Manusov??? taught us about PREFACE xiii nonverbal communication and inspired us to learn more. We are grateful to Steve Duck, who invited Laura (several years and two pregnancies ago) to write a book

on nonverbal communication for the Series on Personal Relationships (and Laura is grateful to Kory for collaborating with her and adding his invaluable expertise to this project).

We are honored to be part of a series edited by Steve Duck, who has been a pioneer and enduring influence in the field of personal relationships. We would also like to thank our colleagues at Arizona State University for their support, especially Jess Alberts, Dan Canary, Paul Mongeau, and Susan Messman, who are always ready and willing to talk about relational issues. It has been a joy working with many individuals at LEA who provided us with patience and encouragement as well as publication support. In particular, we are grateful to Linda Bathgate and Karin Wittig Bates who oversaw the project, and to Sondra Guideman who edited our manuscript and prepared it for composition.

Finally, our family and friends helped us in many ways. Laura's husband, Vico, and her daughters, Gabrielle and Kristiana, deserve a special word of praise, as do Kory's family and his many close friends. At an instrumental level, they gave us the time we needed to complete this book. At an interpersonal level, they provided us with support and encouragement. Most important, however, our family and friends provide us with daily examples of the power that nonverbal communication has in relationships. We learn as much from them as we learn from the literature. ??? Laura K. Guerrero ???
Kory Floyd This page intentionally left blank C H A P T E R 1 Introduction Mr.

Bhaer could read several languages, but he had not learned to read women yet. He flattered himself that he knew Jo pretty well, and was, therefore,

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much amazed by the contradictions of voice, face, and manner, which she showed him in rapid succession that day, for she was in half a dozen different moods in the course of a half an hour. When she met him she looked surprised, though it was impossible to help suspecting that she had come for that express purpose. When he offered her his arm, she took it with a look that filled him with delight; but when he asked if she missed him, she gave him such a chilly, formal reply that despair fell upon him.

On learning his good fortune she almost clapped her hands; was the joy all for the boys? Then, on hearing his destination, she said " So far away? " in a tone of despair that lifted him on to a pinnacle of hope; but the next minute she tumbled him down again by observing, like one entirely absorbed in the matter???" here's the place for my errands. Will you come in? It won't take long. " ??? Alcott (1869/1995, pp. 539??? 540) Nonverbal behavior is pivotal in this passage from *Little Women*, in which the author, Louisa May Alcott, describes Professor Friedrich Bhaer's interpretation of Jo March's vocal, facial, and bodily cues when they meet and she finds out that he has accepted a teaching position far away.

In the book, all ends well with Jo and Friedrich marrying and successfully running a school for boys. Of course, an alternative ending would have been just as plausible, with Professor Bhaer walking away in frustration and never seeing Jo again. In real life, relationships sometimes suffer when people send conflicting nonverbal messages, express negativity through nonverbal 1 2 CHAPTER 1 cues, or misinterpret one another's behaviors. Nonverbal communication is also a potent means for showing affection, expressing

positive emotion, and otherwise maintaining satisfying relationships. Indeed, nonverbal communication is instrumental in the development and maintenance of personal relationships. Patterns of nonverbal communication during everyday interaction as well as conflict episodes also distinguish happy couples from distressed couples (see chaps. 5 and 8, this volume).

There are at least four reasons why studying nonverbal communication can help to illuminate the dynamics of personal relationships. The first??? and, perhaps, the most compelling??? is that nonverbal communication is the predominant means of conveying meaning from person to person. Although some have suggested that as much as 93% of conversational meaning is communicated nonverbally (Mehrabian, 1968), more conservative estimates indicate that nonverbal behaviors account for 60 to 65% of the meaning conveyed in an interpersonal exchange (Birdwhistell, 1970; Burgoon, 1994).

That is, even conservative estimates ascribe nearly twice as much meaning-making power to nonverbal communication as to verbal??? and it is not difficult to understand why, given the number of nonverbal channels and the range of nonverbal behaviors to which people have access. Whereas verbal communication is typically conducted either by speaking or by writing, nonverbal communication encompasses a broad array of visual, vocal, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, chronemic, and artifactual behaviors, many of which are routinely enacted in concert with each other to convey meaning. Moreover, nonverbal communication is multimodal; people can use multiple nonverbal cues at the same time (e. g. smiling while gesturing and sitting in a slumped position) whereas people can only speak or write one word at a time. A second reason nonverbal communication warrants attention is that,

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when nonverbal cues conflict with verbal messages, people are more likely to believe what is being conveyed to them nonverbally (Burgoon, 1994; cf. Langton, O'Malley, & Bruce, 1996). When one friend tells another that she is doing well, but her posture, tone of voice, facial expressions, and lack of immediacy suggest otherwise, her friend is most likely to draw the opposite conclusion, having privileged the information received through the nonverbal channels.

The reason people privilege nonverbal communication is related to the amount of control and intent typically attributed to verbal versus nonverbal behaviors. As Newton and Burgoon (1990b) noted, verbal messages are frequently constructed and conveyed with a high degree of control, conscientiousness, and intent (although these can certainly vary by context and by message modality). However, nonverbal cues vary widely on these dimensions. Some nonverbal behaviors are simply outside of a person's control; these include automatic reflex actions such as pupil dilation during exposure to strong light or sweating during episodes of fear INTRODUCTION 3 (Andreassi, 2000). Other nonverbal behaviors can be controlled but often are not, due to people's lack of awareness of them.

A good example is the increased fidgeting that often accompanies nervousness; although hand movement is well within the control of most people, fidgeting is a tell-tale sign of nervousness because people are often unaware they are doing it. One consequence of the difference in control that people routinely exercise over their verbal and nonverbal messages is that the latter are often seen to reflect more accurately a person's true cognitive

or emotional state. (This observation has fueled research on the nonverbal correlates of deception; see chap. 7, this volume.) Thus, while one friend tells another that she is doing well, her friend is more likely to believe the signals being sent by her nonverbal behavior and to conclude that she is distressed.

Although we do not wish to imply that nonverbal communication allows people to read other people like a book (Nierenberg & Calero, 1990), it does offer the opportunity to see beyond the level of control inherent in verbal communication and to obtain a more complete??? and sometimes, a more accurate??? picture of other people. To the extent that honesty and trust are cherished qualities in personal relationships, this aspect of nonverbal communication makes it particularly worthy of attention. Third, nonverbal behavior is the primary means of expressing??? and indeed, experiencing??? emotion (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996; Planalp, 1998). Highly intense emotional states are routinely manifested in nonverbal behaviors: crying or wailing with intense sadness, trembling with intense fear, smiling uncontrollably with intense happiness, and turning red in the face with intense anger or embarrassment.

In fact, some have gone so far as to suggest that these observable signs are not simply outcomes of emotional experience but may actually be part and parcel of the emotions themselves (see Levenson, 1988). There certainly can be little question that people's moods and emotions are influenced by the nonverbal cues they receive from others. A robust body of research (summarized in chap. 3, this volume) indicates, for instance, that people

prefer to interact with others who are visually attractive, who have attractive-sounding voices, and who smell nice. Pleasantness in any or all of these nonverbal cues can therefore play a part in elevating the mood of others with whom a person comes in contact.

Similarly, research has indicated that particular colors and smells can have emotion-enhancing or inhibiting effects (e. g. , Hirsch, 1998). Finally, nonverbal communication is highly meta-communicative. We routinely use nonverbal behaviors to enhance, clarify, or qualify the meaning of a verbal message. For instance, we can use a certain facial expression and tone of voice to indicate that what we are saying is sarcastic and is not meant to be believed literally. Similarly, illustrator gestures are used to add meaning to a verbal message; pointing in a specific direction while saying “ it’s over there,” for instance, or using one’s hands to illustrate the shape or 4 CHAPTER 1 size of something one is verbally describing.

Nonverbal cues can also be used in concert to send particularly clear or especially confusing messages. An individual might use a host of immediacy cues, such as smiling, leaning forward, and speaking in an enthusiastic voice, to send a clear message of interest and conversational involvement. Or, like Jo March in the passage at the beginning of this chapter, individuals might send (intentionally or unintentionally) seemingly contradictory nonverbal messages that increase uncertainty. One way the meta-communicative aspect of nonverbal behavior can aid the development and maintenance of personal relationships is by allowing people to express what they can’t??? or shouldn’t??? express verbally (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996).

For example, norms of politeness in many situations dictate that one should not verbalize one's true thoughts or feelings, but should instead mask them in the service of politeness. In some situations, however, one's genuine thoughts or feelings can be conveyed nonverbally. Suppose, for instance, that Kathy wants to know if she has chosen the right outfit for a party, so she asks her best friend Tammy in mixed company. To avoid embarrassing Kathy and causing her to lose face in front of others, Tammy says " I think you look terrific. " Meanwhile, however, she is conveying to Kathy with her eyes and her facial expression that she actually dislikes the outfit and recommends changing.

This transmission of meaning occurs outside of the awareness of the other guests (who have only paid attention to Tammy's words), but because Kathy and Tammy are such close friends, Kathy recognizes and acknowledges the message Tammy is conveying nonverbally and opts for a different outfit. Using her nonverbal behaviors, then, Tammy is able to be honest with her friend while simultaneously observing norms of politeness and helping Kathy save face. **DEFINING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION** So far we have been discussing the term nonverbal communication as if it is a readily understood and easily defined concept. In actuality, nonverbal communication has been defined various ways by different scholars.

The most common definition found in undergraduate textbooks is that nonverbal communication comprises all behaviors that are not words. However, some scholars have contended that such a definition is too broad, leading them to define nonverbal communication more narrowly. For

example, Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1996) conceptualized nonverbal communication as a subset of nonverbal behavior. Andersen (1999) argued that analogic processing distinguishes nonverbal communication from verbal communication. Rather than defining nonverbal communication directly, other scholars have instead focused on the codes that are studied under the rubric of nonverbal communication. These three conceptualizations are discussed next.

Communication Versus Behavior Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1996) defined communication as “ a dynamic and ongoing process whereby senders and receivers exchange messages” (p. 10), with nonverbal communication including “ messages that people exchange beyond the words themselves” (p. 3). According to Burgoon and colleagues, however, not all behavior qualifies as communication. Rather, communication is a subset of behavior, with behavior defined as “ any actions or reactions performed by an organism” (1996, p. 11, emphasis deleted). For communication to occur, encoding or decoding must take place. Thus, behaviors that are emitted when someone is alone are not communicative.

Routine behaviors, such as eating and sleeping, as well as certain biologically based behaviors, such as breathing, are classified as behavior rather than communication unless people alter them in some way. Hecht, DeVito, and Guerrero (1999) gave the example of blinking to illustrate the difference between behavior and communication. When people blink normally, they do so in an unconscious manner and interactional partners are unlikely to even notice such behavior. However, if a person blinks rapidly

to hold back tears, receivers are more likely to attribute meaning to the blinking behavior. Moreover, the sender would probably not try to hold back tears if receivers were not present.

Thus, in this context, rapid blinking would constitute communication.

Blinking would also be considered communication when used as a flirtatious cue to signal attraction. As this example shows, the same behavior can be classified differently depending on the extent to which it deviates from normal behavior, is directed toward others, and is decoded by others.

Burgoon and her colleagues also noted that nonverbal behaviors vary in terms of their communication potential. Consistent with their idea that communication reflects a dynamic and ongoing process, they defined active nonverbal cues (such as gestures, touch, and vocal tone) as high in communication potential.

These cues change during interaction and are part of the series of moves and countermoves that characterize many communication episodes. Other nonverbal cues (such as physical appearance, wall color, and furniture arrangement) tend to be static during a given interaction. Such cues contribute to perceptions and impressions, but they are not exchanged in the same way as more dynamic cues are. 6 Analogic Versus Digital

Processing CHAPTER 1 Rather than defining nonverbal messages in terms of channel, Andersen conceptualized nonverbal communication as cues that are processed analogically instead of digitally. As Andersen (1999) put it, “Nonverbal messages include all communication that is analogic, nonlinguistic, and typically governed by the right brain hemisphere” (p. 3).

In contrast, Andersen defined verbal communication as digital, linguistic, and governed by the left brain hemisphere. Similarly, Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Chua (1988) argued that “ While verbal communication is a digital communication process, nonverbal communication is a multilayered, multimodal, multidimensional, analogic process” (p. 118). Analogical processing involves decoding behavior holistically, whereas digital processing involves identifying and assigning meaning to separate units of behavior. Think about a child learning the alphabet. Often children begin by singing their ABCs. Although they know the song, they may not know the individual letters.

For example, many toddlers can sing LMNOP but they do not realize that this sound is actually composed of five letters. This is because they have processed the alphabet analogically rather than digitally. Andersen also distinguished analogic messages from digital messages based on the relationship between the code (e. g. , a behavior or word) and the referent (e. g. , the meaning of that code or word). Analogic codes have nonarbitrary relationships with their referents. Some analogic codes are intrinsic, which means that the code and the referent are very closely related or are the same thing, whereas other analogic codes are iconic, which means that the code and the referent resemble one another (Ekman & Friesen, 1969b).

Biologically based symptoms, such as blushing when embarrassed, crying when sad, or shaking when nervous are intrinsic codes that represent an individual’s internal state. Other intrinsic codes carry implicit meaning such that the behavior itself constitutes the referent. For example, forms of touch

such as hitting or kissing stand for themselves as well as for deeper meanings (e. g. , affection, hostility). With iconic codes, there is more distance between the behavior and the referent, although there is a resemblance between the two. Saying “ I’ve had it up to here” while pointing to one’s forehead, telling someone to “ come here” or “ sit closer” by patting a place on a couch, pointing to indicate direction, or tracing a figure or motion in the air are all examples of iconic codes.

Onomatopoeic words such as buzz, swish and sweep also resemble their referents and may be processed analogically rather than digitally. The vast majority of words, however, are symbolic rather than iconic or intrinsic (Ekman & Friesen, 1969b). “ Language is an arbitrary, indirect system that is symbolic. Symbols . . . bear no natural relationship to the things they represent” (Andersen, 1999, p. 6). Think about the word tree. People INTRODUCTION 7 could have come up with any word (i. e. , higgly, jova) to represent a tree. The meaning is not in the word itself, but in what the word represents. Indeed, people who speak different languages use various words to refer to what English speakers call trees.

Although words provide one of the clearest examples of symbolic codes, Andersen (1999) argued that certain behaviors are also symbolic and, therefore, processed digitally. Emblems, such as the okay gesture used in the U. S. , can be substituted for words. Such a gesture also has a variety of meanings across cultures. In Japan, the same gesture means money. In other areas of the world, the gesture is considered obscene. Interestingly, many emblematic gestures have iconic origins. The finger position of the okay

gesture resembles the letters O and K (consistent with the U. S. meaning), the outline of a coin (consistent with the Japanese meaning), and certain body parts (consistent with the interpretation of the gesture as obscene).

However, Andersen (1999) argued that because such gestures are culturally defined and digitally processed, they are symbolic and do not count as nonverbal communication. To further clarify the distinction between nonverbal and linguistic communication, Andersen (1999) gave the following examples. Linguistic messages include emblems, American Sign Language, lip reading, speech, language, Braille, musical notation, keep out or welcome signs, t-shirt slogans, subtitles, and letters. Nonverbal messages, on the other hand, include adaptors, illustrators, spontaneous facial expressions, vocalic features (e. g. , tone of voice, pitch, speaking rate), hugs, pats, singing, melody, interpersonal distance, style of dress, physical attributes (e. g. , height, eye color), shapes, environmental features (e. g. wall color, furniture arrangement), pictures, and video images. These lists are not comprehensive. Nonetheless, they illustrate some of the differences between Andersen's approach and other scholars' definitions of nonverbal communication (e. g. , Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996; Leathers, 1997). Specifically, Andersen excludes emblematic gestures while including some static features (such as eye color) as well as some biologically based behaviors (such a pupil dilation) that are processed analogically. Nonverbal Codes Some scholars prefer not to define nonverbal communication directly. Instead, they focus on what is included within the study of nonverbal communication.

For example, in interviews conducted at an annual conference of the National Communication Association, scholars such as Valerie Manusov and Maureen Keeley explained that rather than trying to define the term nonverbal communication in a sentence or two, they describe the various codes of nonverbal messages, such as kinesics, proxemics, haptics, and chronemics. Similarly, Leathers (1997) conceptualized nonverbal communi- 8
CHAPTER 1 cation in terms of “ three major interacting systems: the visual communication system, the auditory communication system, and the invisible communication system” (p. 13). According to Leathers (1997), the visual communication system tends to produce the most shared meaning within face-to-face interaction. This system includes kinesics (e. g. , body movement, gestures, eye behavior, and facial expression), proxemics (e. g. , space, distance, and territory), and artifacts (e. g. , physical appearance, clothing, adornment such as jewelry or briefcases).

Because these cues are readily seen during interpersonal interaction, Leathers contended that it is difficult to find situations wherein none of these codes would be interpreted as meaningful when two people are conversing. The auditory communication system comprises what other scholars (e. g. , Andersen, 1999; Burgoon et al. , 1996) have called vocalics or paralinguistics. Leathers (1997) identified nine vocal attributes that give voices “ their distinctive quality: loudness, pitch, rate, duration, quality, regularity, articulation, pronunciation, and silence” (p. 13). He argued that vocal characteristics are sometimes unconsciously produced or leaked, such as when a person’s voice spontaneously conveys nervousness or excitement.

Other times, vocal characteristics can be altered or exaggerated (e. g. , trying to sound warm when apologizing to someone).

According to Leathers, vocalics primarily serve three communicative functions: to express emotion, to project positive impressions, and to regulate or manage communication. Finally, Leathers included tactile, olfactory, and chronemic communication as part of the invisible communication system. Leathers noted that the olfactory (smell-related) and chronemic (time-related) codes do indeed tend to be invisible. Perfume may have an effect on people's perceptions and communication even though they do not see it. Similarly, although people may become angry when their spouse shows up late for an important dinner party, the idea of lateness is an abstract concept, as is the construct of time itself. In contrast, tactile communication (touch) is obviously visible.

However, Leathers (1997) believed that touch is processed differently than the visual codes of kinesics, proxemics, and artifacts. Specifically, he stated that " tactile messages can, and often do, communicate powerful meanings in the absence of any illumination and that the decoder of tactile messages relies on cutaneous receptors rather than eyesight to decode them" (p. 13). Other scholars have included environmental features as a code of nonverbal communication (Andersen, 1999; Burgoon et al. , 1996). For example, Knapp and Hall (2002) discussed natural environmental features, architectural design, and movable objects in their summary of the effects of the environment on communication.

Natural environmental features include weather, seasons, the temperature, differences between urban and rural INTRODUCTION 9 settings, and geographic features (such as the presence of mountains or the ocean). Architectural features, which Hall (1966) referred to as fixed feature aspects of the environment, include those characteristics that are difficult to change. The size and shape of a room, for example, may affect people's moods, as might the layout of an office building or the high or low ceilings found in one's home. Movable objects within an environment, which Hall (1966) referred to as semifixed features, include changeable elements such as wall color, sound, temperature, artifacts (e. g. artwork or flowers), and furniture, as well as the arrangement of artifacts and furniture. PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT COUNTS AS COMMUNICATION In addition to offering different definitions for nonverbal communication, scholars have offered various perspectives that delineate what should (and should not) be regarded as communication. Three of the most popular perspectives are the source, receiver, and message orientations, all of which address the larger question of whether one cannot not communicate (see Bavelas, 1990). Each perspective has important implications for what counts as communication, and therefore, what counts as nonverbal communication.

We also describe our position on this debate, along with our definition of nonverbal communication, as a process-based perspective. The Source Orientation The source orientation privileges the role of the sender within the communication process. Behaviors that are performed intentionally or are directed toward others are considered communication; behaviors that are purely spontaneous or are biologically based symptoms of one's internal

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states are not (Motley, 1990). Thus, if a person yawns in response to being tired, the yawn would not be classified as communication. However, if a person exaggerates, fakes, or tries to stifle a yawn, such other-directed behaviors would be deemed communication.

Motley made this distinction based on his acceptance of four postulates: (1) communication involves symbolic behavior, (2) communication necessitates encoding, (3) communication is an interactive process between senders and receivers, and (4) communication varies in terms of quality or fidelity, with the highest quality achieved when a receiver interprets a message consistent with the sender's intent. Motley argued that encoding does not require a consciously strategic decision to enact a certain behavior to reach a particular goal. Instead, the minimum requirement is that a sender directs a behavior toward a receiver, regardless of how cognizant the sender is of his or her 10 CHAPTER 1 specific goals.

According to this view, verbal messages count as communication (as long as a receiver attends to them??? either intentionally or unintentionally) because they are almost always symbolic and directed toward others. Nonverbal behaviors that are biologically based or purely symptomatic (e. g. , stomach growling, spontaneous facial expression) would not count as communication. Nonverbal behaviors that are other-directed (e. g. , putting hands on stomach and laughing after one's stomach growls, smiling to show liking or friendliness) would count as communication. The Receiver Orientation The process of interpreting or decoding behavior is privileged in the receiver perspective.

Behaviors are considered to be communicative as long as a receiver attaches meaning to them (Andersen, 1991). Thus, in contrast to the source orientation, symptomatic behaviors count as communication as long as they are interpreted by someone. Andersen proposed the receiver orientation based on three assumptions. First, communication requires at least two people, so communication cannot occur when a person is alone. Second, for communication to occur, a sender must perform behavior. Notice that Andersen focuses on simple performance rather than specifying that behavior must be intentional or directed toward others. Third, communication does not occur unless a receiver perceives behavior.

Andersen (1991) also presented counterarguments for each of the postulates Motley (1990) advanced. Specifically, he argued that not all communication is symbolic, that performing rather than encoding a behavior is a necessary component of communication, that although communication is interactive it does not always require two-way sending, and that while fidelity is an important characteristic of communication, it is not a requirement. Like Motley, Andersen includes verbal communication and other-directed nonverbal messages as communication. In addition, however, Andersen also considers that symptomatic and spontaneous nonverbal messages count as communication, as long as they are interpreted by a receiver. Thus, if Tim walked in and smiled after seeing Jessica laugh while watching a television show, Andersen would classify Jessica's laugh as communication even if she didn't know Tim entered the room. Tim's smile would only count as communication if Jessica noticed it and attached meaning to it. The Message Orientation The third perspective, the message orientation (Burgoon, 1980), <https://assignbuster.com/nonverbal-communication-in-close-relationships-assignment/>

privileges the characteristics of behavior over either the sender or the receiver. According to this perspective, behaviors are communicative when they meet at least one of the following criteria: (a) they are usually sent with intent, INTRODUCTION 11 (b) they are usually interpreted as intentional, or (c) they are regularly used and have consensual, shared meaning within a particular relationship, group, or culture. Burgoon et al. 1996) noted that behaviors do not have to be intentionally sent or interpreted as intentional every time they are used to qualify as communication. However, if a behavior is usually regarded as intentional, people are likely to interpret it as such. Similarly, behaviors that have consensual, commonly understood meanings count as communication even when they are misinterpreted. For example, imagine that Sarah smiles while sitting next to Jeff and daydreaming about something completely unrelated to him. Jeff then mistakenly interprets her smile as conveying pleasure that they are together. Under the message perspective, even though Sarah's smile was misinterpreted, it would count as communication because smiles generally convey pleasure and happiness.

This example also illustrates that spontaneous expressions and symptomatic behavior can be regarded as communication, as long as they commonly have socially shared meaning. If someone fidgets and has a tense facial expression, senders are likely to interpret such behavior as reflecting nervousness even if the receiver did not mean to send such a message. By contrast, idiosyncratic messages that are difficult to decode would not qualify as communication (e. g. , Sarah's voice tends to get quiet and low-pitched when asking a question; Jeff wears mismatched socks). Such

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idiosyncratic behaviors would lack socially shared meanings and would not be generalizable. A

Process-Based Perspective We believe that both encoding and decoding are important parts of the communication process. Discounting either the sender or the receiver would provide an incomplete picture of the communication that occurs between relational partners. We also believe that the exchange of messages is at the heart of the communication process. Thus, we define nonverbal communication as nonlinguistic messages that people exchange in interactive contexts. Like Burgoon (1980), we define messages as behaviors that typically have social meanings within a given context. These messages can be symptomatic or spontaneous as long as people usually attach meaning to them.

Like Andersen (1991), we do not discount messages that are performed rather than intentional or other-directed. In contrast to Andersen (1999), we include emblems as a form of nonverbal communication because such gestures frequently have iconic features and origins. Finally, we concur with the position of Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1996) regarding communication potential. To the extent that behaviors are a dynamic rather than static part of the communication process, we see them as having greater communication potential. For example, physical appearance cues are often powerful predictors of person perceptions (see chap. 3, this volume), but because these cues are less dynamic than kinesic or vocalic cues, 2 CHAPTER 1 we would argue that they possess less communication potential. In other words, these static cues affect perceptions and communication, but

they do not impact the communication process in a dynamic, ongoing fashion. Within our process-oriented perspective, three types of outcomes provide the best examples of communication: successful communication, miscommunication, and accidental communication (see Fig. 1. 1). These three forms of communication satisfy our criterion that there is an exchange of messages; in all these cases a sender performs a behavior (either intentionally or unintentionally) and a sender interprets that behavior.

Moreover, the behaviors exchanged in these three situations are likely to have fairly clear social meanings. Successful communication provides the highest level of fidelity, with a receiver interpreting a sender's message accurately. For example, a mother, Sandra, might frown and speak in an angry voice??? two other-directed behaviors??? when her 5-year-old son, Brandon, uses a 4-letter word. Brandon might then correctly interpret his mother's nonverbal communication as showing disapproval. In this case, the message has been exchanged successfully. When behaviors have consensual social meanings, it is much more likely that high fidelity communication such as this will occur.

Accidental communication is also likely to involve messages with common social meanings; this is why they are interpreted correctly even though they were sent unintentionally. Imagine that Sandra can't help herself from smiling initially when she hears Brandon use a 4-letter word for the first time. Sandra's smile is spontaneous and unintentional, yet Brandon sees it and concludes that his mom thought it was funny. Brandon's interpretation is correct even though Sandra might have preferred that he did not know she

was amused by his word choice. While accidental communication is likely to involve the interpretation of behaviors that have common social meanings, miscommunication is likely FIG. 1. 1. Matrix of outcomes following the enactment of nonverbal behavior. INTRODUCTION 13 o involve the sending of behaviors that have common social meanings. This is because miscommunication occurs when a sender intentionally encodes a message. Presumably then, the sender will use a behavior that has a common social meaning. Imagine, for example, that upon seeing his mother smile Brandon smiles back as a way of communicating liking and friendliness, as well as relief that his mother found his use of an obscenity funny. Sandra, however, interprets Brandon's smile as smug and defiant, and tells him " that's not funny, young man. " Even though Brandon tried to send a message of liking and friendliness using a behavior that commonly reflects such sentiments, miscommunication ultimately occurred.

Of course, sometimes miscommunication involves senders who are unskilled and make poor choices when encoding messages. Nonetheless, we believe that miscommunication is clearly a form of communication since active encoding and decoding take place. Two other types of outcomes??? attempted communication and misinterpretation??? are not as clearly communicative, though we believe they should be studied as part of the communication process. Attempted communication occurs when one person directs a message toward someone, but the intended receiver does not attend to the message. For instance, Bob might act standoffish by showing low levels of nonverbal involvement (e. g. little eye contact, indirect body orientation, and neutral facial expression) with the hope that his girlfriend,

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Stephanie, will see his body language and figure out that something is wrong. Stephanie, however, might be too involved in other activities to notice Bob's behavior. Clearly, this type of exchange has implications for the communication process as well as the relationship. Bob is likely to become frustrated if his attempts to telegraph a message to Stephanie continue to go unnoticed. Eventually, Bob might confront Stephanie in an angry manner, using her lack of attention to his communication attempts as evidence that she does not care enough for him.

Thus, although attempted communication does not fulfill the requirement that there is an exchange between two people (because the intended receiver is uninvolved), such attempts have implications for the communication process as a whole. Misinterpretation, in contrast, does fulfill the requirement that there is an exchange between two people. A sender performs a behavior and a receiver decodes that behavior albeit inaccurately. However, since the sender did not intentionally direct the behavior toward the receiver, and the receiver ends up decoding the behavior inaccurately, it is unlikely that the message exchanged in this instance has much consensual social meaning.

For example, idiosyncratic behaviors are likely to be enacted without intention, and various receivers are likely to attach different meanings to such behavior. Other times, misinterpretation occurs when a receiver attaches the wrong meaning to a behavior that has no inherent meaning. As a case in point, Noller's research (see chap. 5, this volume) has demonstrated that people in distressed marital relationships tend to

interpret neutral vocal tones as expressing negative emotion. This misinterpretation is then likely to lead to a negative communicative exchange between spouses. Thus, we believe that it is important to examine instances of misinterpretation as part of the communication process even though we do not regard misinterpretation as a form of communication.

Put another way, misinterpretation has the power to affect communication outcomes even though we would classify it as perceptual rather than communicative. Finally, in line with the sender, receiver, and message perspectives, we do not consider unattended behavior to be communication, nor do we consider it to be relevant to the communication process.

Unattended behavior occurs when a person performs behavior without intention and without a receiver attaching any meaning to it. Biologically based behaviors such as normal blinking or one's stomach growling, as well as routine behaviors such as eating and sleeping, usually fit this category. In some instances, adaptors (e. g. , scratching one's nose) and other body movements (e. g. , stretching one's legs) also fit here.

Such behaviors often go unnoticed within the communication process??? both by the sender and the receiver??? and therefore have no effect on outcomes. To summarize, we take a process-oriented perspective that combines elements from Burgoon's (1980) message orientation and Andersen's (1991) receiver orientation. Within this perspective, we categorize behavior as communication when a message with socially shared meaning is exchanged between a sender and receiver. According to this

definition, successful communication, accidental communication, and miscommunication provide good examples of communication, with these forms of communication varying in terms of fidelity (i. e. among these categories successful communication has the most fidelity whereas miscommunication has the least fidelity). This perspective differs from both Motley's (1990) sender orientation and Andersen's (1991) receiver orientation. Specifically, Motley would only include successful communication and miscommunication because he requires that messages are other-directed and decoded by a receiver. Andersen, on the other hand, would include successful communication, miscommunication, accidental communication, and misinterpretation because he counts instances where messages are interpreted, regardless of whether they were sent intentionally or have socially consensual meaning.

Finally, although we do not view attempted communication and misinterpretation as exemplars of communication, we believe that the perceptions associated with these two situations impact the communication process and, ultimately, outcomes such as liking and relational satisfaction. Therefore, taking a process-oriented perspective necessitates studying attempted communication and misinterpretation but labeling them as factors that affect rather than constitute communication. True to this perspective, we examine processes related to everything but attended behavior within this book. INTRODUCTION 15 AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK Empirical research is never conducted in a vacuum, but is instead informed by assumptions and theoretic principles, whether explicitly or implicitly.

We therefore begin our discussion of nonverbal communication in personal relationships in chapter 2 with a review of theories and frameworks. The chapter starts by explicating two foundational theoretic paradigms: the sociocultural paradigm and the bio-evolutionary paradigm. Each has been highly influential in the study of nonverbal communication and each subsumes multiple individual theories and models. Next, we introduce several specific theories that are frequently used in the study of nonverbal behavior. For each, we explicate the predictions and review empirical applications. Chapters 3 through 8 are the content chapters, each of which focuses on a specific arena of nonverbal communication in personal relationships.

Chapter 3 addresses the process of interpersonal attraction and the many ways in which nonverbal behavior both elicits attraction and conveys it. Chapter 4 focuses on the nonverbal communication of affection in personal relationships, highlighting multiple influences on its expression and the relational benefits associated with it. In chapter 5, we discuss the experience and nonverbal expression of emotions in relational communication and the ways in which people learn to decode emotional expressions accurately. Chapter 6 addresses the nonverbal correlates of power and the many ways in which dominance is exercised in interpersonal interaction.

Our focus in chapter 7 is on deception, the nonverbal behaviors that people exhibit when they deceive, and individual abilities to detect deception through nonverbal behaviors. Finally, in chapter 8, we discuss relational conflict as well as providing a brief overview of how nonverbal

communication may function as relationships deescalate and eventually dissolve. We conclude in chapter 9 with a summary of the theoretic and practical implications for our understanding of nonverbal communication in personal relationships, and we discuss some important future directions for researchers in this area. A unique aspect of the chapters is that they play host to an ongoing story of relational development.

Our characters, David and Tina, meet each other at the beginning of chapter 3 as a result of their mutual attraction. Subsequent chapters follow the escalation, as well as the trials and tribulations, of their romantic relationship with each other. Although the storyline is advanced primarily at the beginning of each chapter, it is woven throughout the chapters as examples of the nonverbal communication principles being addressed. We hope that this ongoing storyline will help to illuminate some of the issues raised in the content chapters. To make the storyline clear, we begin here by providing contextual information about its two principal characters. David, age 32, is vice principal of 16 CHAPTER 1 the high school in the small town where he grew up.

He was raised almost entirely by his mother, who worked two jobs while David and his brother Chris were in school. Chris, who has been developmentally disabled since birth, now lives in a facility three hours away, so David rarely sees him. David's primary social network consists of a small but close-knit group of friends, most of whom he has known since kindergarten. Since small-town life doesn't afford him many opportunities to meet women, David regularly goes with his friends to clubs and bars in the

larger neighboring city. David has dated off and on for the past several years but feels he has yet to find the right person. Tina, age 35, is about to be promoted to vice president of the bank where she has worked since college.

She grew up in the city, the eldest child and only daughter of two prominent physicians who encouraged all seven of their children to excel academically. While earning her MBA she was briefly engaged to a law student whom she met through her mother. He was the son of longtime friends of Tina's parents, but although Tina enjoyed his company, she did not genuinely love him so she called off the engagement. Since then, she has focused primarily on her career, often working late into the evening to get ahead. She enjoys her job and her friends from work, but is beginning to feel that there must be more to life.

C H A P T E R 2 Major Paradigms and Theories of Nonverbal Communication

When David and Tina first meet, they bring a host of expectations, preferences, behavioral tendencies, and past experiences to their initial interaction. Some of their perceptions and actions are rooted in biology and evolution; others have been shaped by their social and cultural environments. Biology and environmental forces have also interacted to make them the people they are today. As they get to know one another, their relationship will provide another source for modifying their perceptions and behaviors, including their nonverbal communication. Tina may learn to expect David to be talkative and emotionally expressive when at social functions, so she would be surprised if he sat alone quietly in a corner.

Tina may also notice that she has become more outgoing in social situations as a function of being around David. As their relationship progresses, they will learn more about how their communication styles interact. Scholars have long debated whether biology or the environment are more influential in predicting human behavior. Consistent with our description of the factors affecting Tina and David's initial interaction, we take the position that both biology and the environment are critical in understanding nonverbal communication and relationships. Moreover, several theories explaining the exchange of nonverbal communication implicate biology, social learning, or both in their predictions.

These theories help explain how Tina and David will react nonverbally to each other based on the expectations, attitudes, perceptions, and emotions they experience at different points in their relationship. To provide a broad framework for discussing nonverbal communication in relationships, this chapter first explicates the assumptions of the bio17 18 CHAPTER 2 evolutionary and sociocultural paradigms, using examples from the nonverbal literature to illustrate their application. Further along in this chapter, we will indicate how the assumptions of these two paradigms inform numerous contemporary theories relevant to the exchange of nonverbal communication.

First, we turn to a discussion of the bio-evolutionary paradigm. THE BIO-EVOLUTIONARY PARADIGM Why are some nonverbal expressions of emotion encoded and decoded similarly across cultures (Fridlund, 1994)? Why are certain facial features universally attractive (Etcoff, 1999)? And why do

parents around the world use a similar type of baby talk when communicating with their infants (Grieser & Kuhl, 1988). The bio-evolutionary paradigm helps answer these and other questions by explaining how and why patterns of human behavior have evolved over the millennium. Of course, evolutionary theories were not developed for the purpose of explaining and predicting communicative behavior.

Instead, the study of evolution has been aimed at understanding how characteristics of species change and develop over time; this line of theoretic work has only recently been applied to the understanding of relational communication, as well as nonverbal behavior, through the field of evolutionary psychology. Evolution Through Natural Selection and Differential Reproduction Despite references to the Theory of Evolution, there actually is no such theory. Instead, several theories related to the evolution of species and the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral motivations that accompany evolutionary processes fall under the sociobiological paradigm.

In this context, evolution refers to changes observed over time in the physical characteristics of organisms; thus, gradual changes in the wingspans of condors, the spotting patterns of leopards, or the average height of adult humans would all be examples of evolution. Many erroneously credit Charles Darwin with the discovery of evolution when, in fact, scientists had been studying the evolutionary process for many decades prior to his contributions. (Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, was also an evolutionist and Darwin's own work was an expansion of Thomas

Malthus's Essay on the Principle of Population, first published in 1798; see Malthus, 1894).

The younger Darwin's celebrated contribution (Darwin, 1859) was an explanation for how the process of evolution works, which he offered in his theory of natural selection (an explanation that was independently, and simultaneously, proposed by Alfred Russel Wallace, 1858). PARADIGMS AND THEORIES 19 The theory o