

# Essay on cross cultural nonverbal differences

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Alton Barbour (1976) in his book, *Louder Than Words: Nonverbal Communication* indicates that nonverbal communication adds up to 93% of any communication. This therefore shows that effective nonverbal communication is very essential in communication. While nonverbal communication is very important, it worth noting that all communication including nonverbal communication takes place within cultural contexts. All meanings are learned and developed in the eyes of our different cultures. Cross cultural communication can be difficult in working context as different cultures have different meanings for different nonverbal cues.

Keywords: nonverbal, culture, differences.

One of the nonverbal differences that you can experience is dressing. People in different cultures have different dressing codes. Some cultures would prefer to have official wear for the office while others would not do not have any kind of dress code restriction. Therefore the different kind of clothing may send different kind of messages which would ultimately lead to different perceptions.

Another difference that one is likely to encounter is the use of gestures. Different gestures may have different meanings which would send different messages to people from different cultures. When gestures give contrasting meanings, this brings confusions and make working together difficult. Worst still some gestures could have bad meanings in one culture and yet have a good meaning in another. Using such gestures would bring create wrong impressions.

Proxemics is another kind of nonverbal communication which refers to the personal space people create while conversing. This may cause differences while working within a cross cultural context because people from different cultures attach different value and meanings to personal space. People in each culture give different space according to the relationship they have with their communication partners.

For instance in America people value their personal space and prefer to stand a few meters from each other as they communicate, on the contrary people in Latin American countries like to talk while standing close to each other. In Brazil, for example it is rude to take a step backward while talking to someone. It would be difficult for a Brazilian and an American to work together given their different use of personal space. The American would find the Brazilian invading their personal space while the Brazilian would find the American being rude. Even though both of them mean well this might it might destroy their working relationship.

## **References**

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