

## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication is nonlinguistic transmission of information through visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic channels. Like other types of communication, nonverbal communication involves encoding and decoding processes. Encoding is the act of generating the information; decoding is the act of interpreting the information. Nonverbal encoding processes include facial expressions, gestures, posture, tone of voice, tactile stimulation (such as touch), and body movements (such as moving closer or farther away from a person or object). Decoding processes involve the use of received sensations combined with previous experience in interpreting and understanding the information. Although nonverbal communication may refer to mass communication such as television, art products, and multimedia productions, in this discussion the emphasis is on interpersonal communication, whether face-to-face or indirect (e.g., by telephone or electronic mail).

Culture has a significant impact on nonverbal communication. For instance, the ways in which people use gestures are specific from culture to culture. People in the western world nod their heads to signal agreement, but people in countries like India and Bangladesh often move their heads from side to side to convey a similar meaning. Most Asians use gestures such as bowing to show their respect to other people. Many Asians are silent when they are disappointed, and continue using their usual tone of voice and smiling face even though they are in an emotional state such as anger, embarrassment, fear, or sadness. Most Americans seem more comfortable in using nonverbal communication to encode their emotional states than do Asians.

Scientists and practitioners have long been aware of the importance of the relationship between nonverbal communication and emotion. In 1872 Charles Darwin published *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. In 1905 Sigmund Freud observed, "He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore" (Freud, 1905/1953, pp. 77–78). By the 1970s and 1980s researchers had started to develop refined procedures and technology for measuring the encoding and decoding processes of nonverbal communication (Feldman & Rimé 1991; Harper, Wiens, & Matarazzo, 1978). The methods vary from social to physiological and from descriptive to experimental studies. They have generated general laws and measures of individual differences about transmission of cognitive and affective information.

The relationship between facial expression and emotion has been extensively studied by Ekman (1993). He began studying facial expression and emotion in 1965 with a single question: Are they universal or culture-specific? When he could not find a simple answer, his research ran into "many new and challenging questions." With Friesen, Ekman originated the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) in 1978. The FACS is a reliable rating technique, using photographs or a video for encoding and decoding basic emotions such as anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. Matsumoto & Ekman (1992) developed the Japanese And Caucasian Facial Expressions of Emotion (JACFEE) and the Japanese And Caucasian Neutral Faces (JACNeuF). This instru-

ment has been widely used around the world, and results have shown it to be reliable for studying emotions accurately. Reviewing Ekman's and others' studies on facial expressions of emotion and personal adjustment, Keltner, Kring, & Bonanno (1999) concluded that there is a correlation and proposed further study of the process of how facial expression has a significant role in personal adjustment.

Another nonverbal cue to the emotions experienced by another person is voice. Bachorowski (1999) summarizes vocal characteristics, sometimes called speech acoustics, such as pitch and jitter. Banse and Scherer (1996) found that vocal profiles not only show the degree of specific intensity for different emotions but also differentiate valence (pleasantness) and quality aspects. Raters use vocal cues to identify the speaker's emotional state from vocal information. During a psychoanalytic process, verbal and nonverbal messages are explored because they have both conscious and unconscious aspects (Sackler, 1998). Hall, Harrigan, and Rosenthal (1995) note the important role of nonverbal communication in the interaction between a clinician and a client. They claim that perceived quality of interaction depends mostly upon how a clinician uses nonverbal communication with his or her client. The clinician's facial expressions, voice tones, and gestures will create like and dislike in clients; and the success of therapy depends on the consistencies between the clinician's verbal and nonverbal communication.

Using vocal cues (sometimes called paralinguistics or prosody) Sundberg (1966) developed a Test of Implied Meanings (TIM) using judgments of the real meanings of sentences spoken by actors. Test results showed that skilled therapists were mostly accurate in judging the real meaning than others and females were better interpreter than males. The most developed and researched paralinguistic test is the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) developed by Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers, and Archer (1979). The PONS includes visual and auditory stimuli. One of its findings is that facial expression is superior in decoding accuracy as compared to other channels.

Intimacy may be detected from proxemics (the use of space in gestures, postures, and touching). The more intimate a relationship between individuals, the more nonverbal communication is observed (Patterson, 1990). Proxemics between the individuals is closer; they do more hugging and touching (although the amount and manner of this is related to culture). Hall and Veccia (1990) studied touching between the sexes. They found that both men and women touched each other on purpose with the same frequency. The difference was that males tended to put their arms on the females' shoulders, but females put their arms on the males' arms (perhaps related to differences in height).

The expression and perception of mental states are complex phenomena present in all people. How sincere and truthful is a person? How intensely does a companion feel? Is facial expression of emotion universal or culture-specific? How do people use gestures, tones of voice, and other nonverbal cues influence individuals' perceptions of emotional states in others? Will increasing contact in a globalizing world require and lead to greater ability to encode and decode mental states in others? These are only a few

of many questions that remain to be answered. The advancement of theory and research in nonverbal communication is important for improving the understanding of basic processes in human interaction.

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