

CHAPTER 8

The Nonverbal Code

Speakers of every language accompany their words with nonverbal signals that serve to mark the structure of their utterances.

—Peter Farb¹

Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. Define nonverbal communication.
2. Compare and contrast verbal and nonverbal codes.
3. Define kinesics and provide examples of kinesic behavior across cultures.
4. Define paralanguage and provide cross-cultural examples of paralinguistic differences.
5. Define proxemics and provide cross-cultural examples of proxemic differences.
6. Define haptics and provide cross-cultural examples of haptic differences.
7. Define olfactics and discuss how smell is perceived across cultures.
8. Define chronemics and discuss how time is perceived across cultures.
9. Recount the fundamental assumptions of the nonverbal expectancy violation theory.

Many linguists, psychologists, and sociologists believe that human language evolved from a system of nonlinguistic (nonverbal) communication. To these scholars, language and communication are not the same. Humans possess a host of nonlinguistic ways to communicate with each other through the use of their hands, arms, face, and personal space. When we combine verbal and nonverbal language, we create an intricate communication system through which humans come to know and understand each other.² All animals communicate nonlinguistically—that is, nonverbally—through sight, sound, smell, or touch. Moths, for example, communicate by smell and color. Through smell, some species of male moths can detect female moths miles away. Elephants communicate with low-frequency sound waves undetectable by humans. Felines are well known for rubbing their scent on (marking) people and objects to communicate their ownership of such property. This kind of animal or nonlinguistic communication is probably innate and invariant within a particular species. Most scholars also recognize that a significant portion of our nonverbal behavior, such as the expression of emotion, is innate and varies little across cultures. Like verbal language, however, much of our nonverbal communication is learned and varies across cultures.

This chapter investigates nonverbal communication and how it differs across cultures. It begins with some definitions of nonverbal communication and a discussion of how verbal and nonverbal codes differ. The chapter then outlines the various channels of nonverbal communication and how cultures differ regarding their use. These channels are kinesics, paralanguage, proxemics, haptics, olfactics, physical appearance and dress, and chronemics. The chapter closes with a discussion of nonverbal expectancy violation theory.

DEFINITIONS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The study of nonverbal communication focuses on the messages people send to each other that do not contain words, such as messages sent through body motions; vocal qualities; and the use of time, space, artifacts, dress, and even smell. Communication with the body, called *kinesics*, consists of the use of the hands, arms, legs, and face to send messages. *Paralanguage*, or the use of the voice, refers to vocal characteristics such as volume, pitch, rate, and so forth. Through paralanguage, people communicate their emotional state, veracity, and sincerity. Most of us can identify when speakers are confident or nervous through their vocal pitch, rate, and pace. Through *chronemics*, the use of time, people can communicate status and punctuality. We saw in Chapter 3 that cultures differ widely in their

monochronic or polychronic orientation. By studying space, or *proxemics*, we can learn how people express intimacy and power. In the United States, for example, people tend to prefer an “arm’s length” distance from others during communication. Through smell, called *olfactics*, a person’s ethnicity, social class, and status are communicated. Many cultures establish norms for acceptable and unacceptable scents associated with the human body. To other cultures, for example, people raised in the United States seem obsessed with deodorants, perfumes, soaps, and shampoos that mask natural body odors.

Linguist Deborah Tannen estimates that as much as 90 percent of all human communication is nonverbal, although other scholars argue that the percentage is much lower.³ During intercultural communication, verbal and nonverbal messages are sent simultaneously. Verbal communication represents the literal content of a message, whereas the nonverbal component communicates the style or how the message is to be interpreted. Hence, the nonverbal code often *complements*, *accents*, *substitutes*, *repeats*, or even *contradicts* the verbal message.⁴ For example, a speaker might complement the verbal message “This dinner is delicious!” with a smile and increased vocal volume. Politicians often accent their speeches by pounding their fists on podiums. When asked how many minutes are left to complete an exam, the professor might simply raise five fingers to substitute for the words “five minutes.” Persons often repeat their verbal message “Yes” with affirmative head nodding.

Sometimes, however, a person’s verbal and nonverbal messages contradict each other. When this happens, we usually believe the nonverbal message. For example, your roommate has been very quiet and reserved for a couple of days. Finally, you ask what is wrong. Your roommate replies with a long sigh and says, “Oh . . . nothing.” Which do you believe, the verbal or the nonverbal message? Most people believe the nonverbal message because, unlike the verbal message, which requires conscious effort to encode, nonverbal messages are often less conscious and therefore are perceived as more honest. Psychologist David McNeill argues that our nonverbal behavior is partly unconscious and represents a sort of visual metaphor or analogue of conscious thought. He states that gestures and other body motions are primitive forms of speech. Whereas verbal language takes thought and puts it into linear digital form—that is, a sentence—gestures and body movements show the instantaneous thought itself as an analogue of the thought.⁵ This is why verbal communication is often called *digital communication* and nonverbal communication is called *analogic communication*. Because we have less control over our nonverbal behavior, it tends to be perceived as more honest than our verbal behavior.

In addition to complementing, accenting, substituting, repeating, and contradicting verbal communication, nonverbal communication also regulates and manages our conversations with others. Professors delivering lectures can monitor the reactions of their students through their eye contact, body posture, and other nonverbal behaviors (for example, yawning) and adapt their lectures accordingly. Students who raise their hands are signaling the professor that they have questions or comments. Such behavior manages the flow of communication in the classroom. Individually, we can regulate the flow and pace of a conversation by engaging in direct eye contact, affirmative head nodding, and stance, thus signaling our conversational partner to continue or stop the communication.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VERBAL AND NONVERBAL CODES

By comparing and contrasting the human verbal and nonverbal codes, many linguists have concluded that verbal language evolved from its nonlinguistic predecessor. Noam Chomsky argues that verbal language is an advanced and refined form of an inherited nonlinguistic (nonverbal) system.⁶ A key distinction between the two is that the verbal language system is based primarily on symbols, whereas the nonverbal system is signal based. The difference between a symbol and a signal is that a *symbol* is an arbitrarily selected and *learned* stimulus representing something else. A *sign*, or *signal*, however, is a natural and constituent part of that which it represents. For example, when we hear thunder in the distance, it signals us that a storm is approaching. The thunder is a sign of a storm. But the thunder is also an intrinsic part of the storm. Sweating, for example, signals that one may be hot, but sweating is a natural part of being hot, as is shivering of being cold. Humans do not learn to sweat or shiver. Unlike signals, symbols have no natural relationship with that which they represent; therefore, they are arbitrary abstractions and must be learned. For example, the symbol *cat* have no intrinsic connection with a feline animal. Speakers of any language learn to associate symbols with referents.

Another difference between the verbal and nonverbal code is that the nonverbal signal system is much more restrictive in sending capacity than the verbal code. For example, it is virtually impossible to communicate about the past or future through nonverbal communication. You might be able to signal a friend of impending danger by waving your hands, but you cannot warn your friend of danger that might occur tomorrow or recall danger that occurred yesterday with nonverbal signals. In addition, communication of negation is practically impossible with the nonverbal code system. Try

communicating to a friend nonverbally that you are not going to the grocery store tomorrow. The same task is relatively easy through the linguistic system, however.⁷

Formal Versus Informal Code Systems

In Chapter 7, verbal language was defined as a systematic set of sounds combined with a set of rules for the sole purpose of communication. All verbal languages have a formal set of sounds, syntax, and semantics. The degree of formality of verbal language is not found in the nonverbal code, however. The alphabets of most verbal languages in the world represent about forty sounds. No such formalized alphabet exists for nonverbal codes. Different types of nonverbal behavior can be categorized, but these categories are much more loosely defined than in the verbal code. All verbal languages have a set of rules, called grammar or syntax, that prescribes how to combine the various sounds of the language into meaningful units, such as words and sentences. Although there are rules governing the use of nonverbal communication, a formal grammar or syntax does not exist. Nowhere is there a book or guide prescribing exactly what nonverbal behavior should be used when and where. There is no doubt that certain social contexts prescribe certain nonverbal behaviors, such as a handshake when greeting someone in the United States, but no systematic rule book on the same level of formality as an English grammar book exists for nonverbal communication. The rules for nonverbal communication are learned informally through socialization and vary considerably, even intraculturally. Finally, the verbal code, when used with the correct syntax, takes on *denotative meaning*. When using verbal language, if we hear a word that we do not understand, we can quickly go to a dictionary that will define the word for us. The dictionary tells us what the language means. No such device exists for our nonverbal communication. If someone touches us, or stands too close, or engages in prolonged eye contact, we can only surmise its meaning. Popular psychology notwithstanding, we have no dictionary for nonverbal communication. To be sure, nonverbal communication is meaningful, perhaps even more meaningful than verbal communication, but the denotative meaning of the nonverbal act must be inferred.⁸

CHANNELS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The closest thing the nonverbal code has to an alphabet is a gross classification system of the various channels through which nonverbal communication is sent. These channels are kinesics, paralanguage, proxemics, haptics,

olfactics, physical appearance and dress, and chronemics. As we will see later in this chapter, some nonverbal expressions, particularly some facial expressions of emotion, seem to be universal, but much of our nonverbal behavior is learned and is therefore culturally unique.

Kinesics

Kinesic behavior, or body movement, includes gestures, hand and arm movements, leg movements, facial expressions, eye gaze and blinking, and stance or posture. Although just about any part of the body can be used for communicating nonverbally, the face, hands, and arms are the primary kinesic channels through which nonverbal messages are sent. Relative to other body parts, they have a high sending capacity, especially the face.

The most widely recognized system for classifying kinesic channels was developed by Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen. Together, they organized kinesic behavior into five broad categories: (1) *emblems*, (2) *illustrators*, (3) *affect displays*, (4) *regulators*, and (5) *adaptors*. The meaning behind most of these kinesic behaviors varies across cultures.⁹

Emblems and Illustrators

Emblems are primarily (though not exclusively) hand gestures that have a direct literal verbal translation. In the United States, the hand gesture used to represent “peace” is an example of a widely recognized emblem. Dane Archer asserts that emblems are a rich channel of communication. Moreover, he maintains that emblems are often subtle yet filled with precise meaning. People in different cultures use different emblems, yet within any culture there is usually a high level of agreement on a particular emblem’s meaning. To a stranger, however, a culture’s favorite emblem is probably meaningless.¹⁰

Whereas emblems are primarily hand gestures that have a direct verbal translation, *illustrators* are typically hand and arm movements that accompany speech or function to accent or complement what is being said. Pounding your fist on the podium during a speech is an illustrator. Illustrators serve a *metacommunicative function*—that is, they are messages about messages. They are nonverbal messages that tell us how to interpret verbal messages. Shaking your fist at someone while expressing anger is an illustrator.

For the most part, emblems and illustrators are not taught in school but are learned informally through a child’s socialization in his or her culture. By six months, babies in all cultures begin to use gestures to communicate to their parents.

Dane Archer maintains that emblems and illustrators are at least 2,500 years old and can be seen in the ancient artwork of various cultures. Archer asserts that the systematic study of gestures began about 400 years ago, during Shakespeare's time. Although cultures differ widely in their use of emblems and illustrators, people in most cultures tend to use them for the same kinds of communication situations. For example, most cultures use emblems and illustrators during greetings and departures, to insult or to utter obscenities to others, to indicate fight or flight, and to designate friendly or romantic relationships.¹¹

Greeting rituals are an important component in any person's communicative repertoire. To know the greetings of different cultures when interacting outside your own culture is a first step toward developing intercultural communication competence. In high-context and collectivistic cultures, greeting rituals often differ according to one's social status. Moreover, in some cultures, men and women have different rules for how to greet someone. Bowing is the customary greeting in Korea and other Asian cultures, such as Japan and Vietnam. When Koreans greet elders, professors, persons of power, and persons of higher status than themselves, they bow lower and longer and divert eye contact. When businesspeople or friends meet, the bow is generally shorter and quicker.¹² In Japan, the appropriate bow is with the hands sliding down toward the knees, back and neck stiff, and eyes averted (see Figure 8.1). As in other Asian cultures, bowing recognizes social stratification. Social subordinates should bow lower and longer than their superiors. Persons of equal status match bows unless one is younger, in which case the younger person should bow a shade lower and longer. The eyes should always be lowered.¹³

In addition to bowing as a greeting, Japanese businesspeople typically exchange business cards. The exchange is indispensable in order to commence formal communication with each other. The business card communicates the group to which the person belongs and the rank of the person. Great care and time should be spent examining another's card, and only when a meeting is finished can the card be put away into a shirt or coat pocket (but never into a pants pocket, as that shows disrespect). When receiving the card of a Japanese businessperson, one should take the card with both hands, as a sign of respect.¹⁴

Microcultural groups in the United States have unique greetings as well. Moellendorf notes that although most Amish generally will not initiate greetings with strangers or non-Amish persons, many Amish will respond to an outsider's wave by pointing their index finger toward the sky. The raised finger points to heaven and shows respect to non-Amish while revealing the Amish people's strong religious beliefs.¹⁵



Figure 8.1 Bowing is the customary greeting in most Asian cultures

As in the United States, the handshake is a common gesture/illustrator during a greeting in most parts of developed Kenya. In this case, however, when greeting a person of higher status, such as a teacher, the person of lower status should take the left hand (the hand not being used in the handshake) and grasp his or her own right arm somewhere in the proximity of the forearm during the shake. According to Axtell, the handshake is a common greeting in China as well. The traditional Chinese greeting is to cup one's hands (left over right), place them about chest high, and raise them while bowing.¹⁶ According to Bishop, when greeting a holy man or priest, East Indians bow slightly or kneel with their hands pressed together palm to palm in front of their chests. This shows ultimate respect for the higher castes.¹⁷ Harris and Moran report that when greeting male friends in Saudi Arabia, Saudi men kiss both cheeks of the friend. They prefer to get very

close during the greeting. The cheek-kissing ritual is practiced in other Middle Eastern cultures as well. The Arab handshake feels loose compared with the firm handshake practiced in many Western cultures.¹⁸ In traditional Sri Lanka greetings, the hands are placed together, palms touching at the chin level, and the person bows slightly and says “*Namaste*,” which means “I salute the Godlike qualities in you.”¹⁹

Archer has observed that many cultures have emblems and illustrators for insulting others and for communicating obscenities. According to Archer, some cultures may have as many as six or seven obscene gestures, whereas some northern European cultures, such as the Netherlands and Norway, do not have any native obscene gestures.²⁰ Giving someone “the finger” (making a fist with the hand and extending the middle finger upward) is a widely recognized obscene gesture in many parts of the world, including the United States, Mexico, and much of Europe. Forming a “V” with the index finger and middle fingers with the palm facing in is vulgar in Australia and England, communicating the same intent as “the finger.” Creating the very same gesture with the palm facing out is completely acceptable, however, and represents “V for victory.” In the Ladino culture of Guatemala, a hand gesture called the *la mano caliente* (“the hot hand”) is equivalent to “the finger” and is created by placing the thumb between the first and middle fingers then squeezing the hand to make a fist (see Figure 8.2). This gesture is considered obscene in other Central and South American cultures as well. In the Ladino culture, however, this gesture is very offensive, and anyone using it should be prepared to fight. If a person were to use the *mano caliente* to a military or police officer, the offender could expect to spend time in jail or do hard labor in the army.²¹ The same hand gesture is used in Hmong culture to belittle or insult someone. In the Hmong culture, only males use this gesture.²² In Jamaica, this gesture is called “the fig” and is considered obscene there also.²³

In Peru, making a pistol gesture with each hand and then pointing the “pistols” at someone from about waist level is considered obscene and may provoke a fight (see Figure 8.3). In Iran, putting an open hand directly in front of and horizontal to one’s face with the palm facing in and rubbing the hand down over the face from about the eyes to the chin, almost as if stroking a beard, is considered obscene and is equivalent to “Fuck you” (see Figure 8.4). An obscene gesture recognized in many European cultures, especially France, is taking either hand, palm down, and putting it on the biceps of the opposite arm while quickly raising the opposite arm and making a fist in one fluid motion (see Figure 8.5). This gesture is basically equivalent to “the finger” and to the verbal designate “Up yours” or “Fuck you.”²⁴

Archer points out that in addition to obscene emblems and illustrators, many cultures have gestures indicating that someone is homosexual or an



Figure 8.2 In the Latino culture of Guatemala, this gesture, called *la mano caliente*, is considered offensive



Figure 8.3 This hand gesture is highly offensive in Peru and could provoke a fight



Figure 8.4 The Iranian equivalent to “the finger”

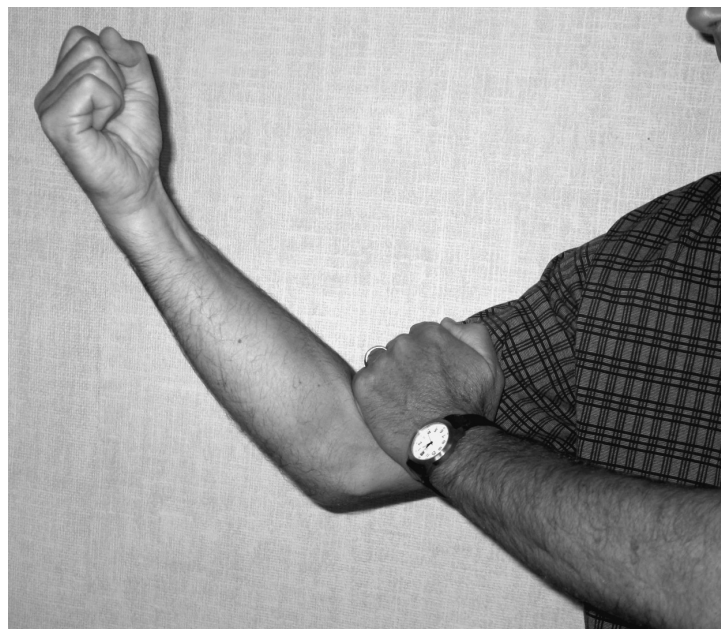


Figure 8.5 In European cultures, this gesture is similar to “the finger”

adulterer. These gestures are strongly linked to one's sex role. Most gestures indicating that someone is a homosexual almost always apply to men, whereas gestures indicating that someone is unfaithful usually apply to women. In Japan, putting the hand, palm out, against the cheek while turning the face away, almost as if to pretend to be telling a secret, is a sign that someone is homosexual. In Colombia, making a circle with the index finger and thumb (like the "OK" gesture in the United States), and then placing the circle around the nose, is a sign for homosexual. The limp-wrist gesture, or slight variations of it, for homosexual is recognized in the United States, China, Mexico, and Thailand, among other countries. In Uruguay, four or five quick claps of the hands indicates that a woman is a lesbian.²⁵

Archer contends that gestures communicating "I am afraid" or "I want to fight you" (that is, fight or flight) are uncommon in the United States but occur with some regularity across cultures. In Mexico and Nepal, placing a hand with the palm up, fingers extended upward while moving in and out touching the thumb is an invitation to fight. In Japan, putting the index fingers on the temples of the head, as in making horns, is a sign that one is angry. In China, pretending to pull up one's sleeve with the hand of the opposite arm designates that one is ready to fight.²⁶ In Hmong culture, clapping one's hands during an argument is a signal to the opponent that it is time to fight. The gesture is usually reserved for very intense situations in which someone intends to harm the other.²⁷

Most cultures use emblems and illustrators to designate friendly and/or romantic relationships. In the United States, for example, crossing the index and middle fingers of the same hand designates closeness and communicates, "We're close" or "We're tight." In China, clasping the index fingers from each hand together signals love or romance. In Thailand, pressing the palms of both hands together and placing them against a cheek (as in a "Sleeping Beauty" gesture) is indicative of romance. Tapping the tips of the index fingers together in Japan, or extending both index fingers parallel at waist level in Mexico, communicates that someone is in love.²⁸

Affect Displays: Facial Expressions of Emotion

Knapp and Hall point out that perhaps more than any other part of the body, the face has the highest nonverbal sending capacity. Through facial expressions, we can communicate our personality; open and close channels of communication; complement or qualify other nonverbal behavior; and, perhaps more than anything, communicate emotional states.²⁹

Many linguists believe that our verbal language evolved from a system of nonlinguistic communication that was inherited from our animal past. If this

is a valid assumption, then we should expect that some forms of our nonverbal communication would be invariant across cultures. Current evidence suggests that some facial expressions of emotion, called *affect displays*, are universal. Paul Ekman alleges that humans can make more than 10,000 facial expressions, and that 2,000 to 3,000 of them have to do with emotion. Ekman is careful to point out that by studying faces, we cannot tell what people are thinking, only what they are feeling about what they are thinking.³⁰ Initially, Ekman believed that affect displays, like so many other forms of communication, were the result of learning and were culturally unique. He originally agreed with sociologist Ray Birdwhistell, who wrote,

Just as there are no universal words, no sound complexes, which carry the same meaning the world over, there are no body movements, facial expressions, or gestures which provoke identical responses the world over.³¹

In contrast to Birdwhistell, other scholars hypothesized that because they were inherited, human nonverbal expressions would be similar, if not universal, the world over. The basis of this argument can be found in the writings of evolutionary scholar Charles Darwin, who wrote,

We can thus also understand the fact that the young and the old of widely different races, both with man and animals, express the same state of mind by the same movements. . . . I have endeavoured to show in considerable detail that all the chief expressions exhibited by man are the same throughout the world. This fact is interesting, as it affords a new argument in favour of the several races being descended from a single parent-stock, which must have been almost completely human in structure, and to a large extent in mind, before the period at which the races diverged from each other.³²

The late Harvard University professor Stephen Jay Gould, well known for his stance on evolution, agrees with Darwin and argues that although universal facial expressions may have been functional for the animals from whom we inherited them, they are not functional for us today. Take, for example, a facial expression of anger, in which a person snarls, grits his or her teeth, and displays the canine teeth (see Figure 8.6). This facial expression is remarkably similar to expressions of anger in several animal species (see Figure 8.7). The fact that there is no need for us to display our teeth in order to express anger (we can simply say how angry we are) suggests that such a gesture must have been inherited.³³

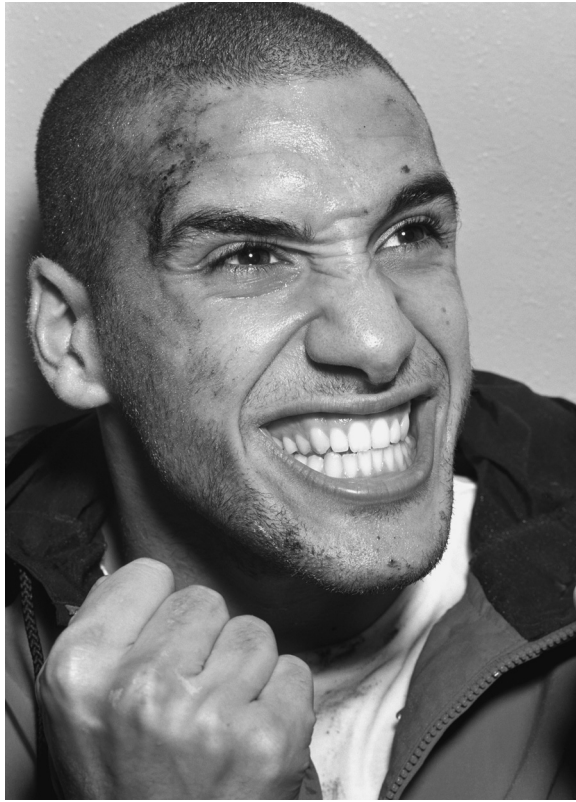


Figure 8.6

Ekman was determined to find whether certain elements of facial behavior are universal or culturally specific. He and his colleagues believed that there may be distinctive movements of the face for the primary emotions of surprise, fear, anger, disgust, happiness, and sadness that are probably universal. They further argued that while people from divergent cultures may express emotions similarly, what stimulates the emotion and the intensity with which it is expressed is probably culturally specific. In other words, although Germans and Japanese may express fear, surprise, anger, happiness, disgust, and sadness similarly in terms of muscular facial expressions, what *elicits* fear in Germans may be different from what elicits fear in Japanese. Moreover, cultures may differ in how they manage and regulate facial expressions of emotion, particularly in the presence of others.³⁴

Ekman and Friesen (among others) have conducted numerous studies testing their hypotheses. In one study, Ekman, Friesen, and a number of



Figure 8.7 A facial expression of anger in humans is remarkably similar to several animal species

their associates had more than 500 participants from ten different countries look at slides of people expressing the six emotions of fear, anger, happiness, disgust, sadness, and surprise. The participants in the study came from a variety of cultures the world over: Estonia, Italy, Germany, Japan, Hong Kong, Scotland, Sumatra, Turkey, Greece, and the United States. Participants were shown photographs of Caucasians in posed facial expressions of the six different emotions, one at a time for ten seconds each, and were instructed to indicate which of the six emotions was presented. The participants were also asked to rate the intensity of the presented emotion on a scale of 1 to 8. The results showed that in the overwhelming number of trials, the emotion rated strongest by the largest number of observers in each culture was the predicted emotion. Where cultures differed was in their ratings of intensity of the emotion. Ekman reasoned that perhaps people judge a foreigner's expressions to be less intense than expressions shown by members of their own culture, or that attributions of less intense emotions to foreigners might be due more to uncertainty about the emotional state of a person from an unfamiliar culture. In interpreting these results, Izard claims that there appears to be an evolutionary and biological relationship between

facial expressions and certain emotional states, but that this connection can be uncoupled by the human capacity to exercise voluntary control over innate emotional expressions.³⁵

Although Ekman's studies provide evidence that facial expressions of primary emotions appear to be universal, other data suggest that cultural influences, such as individualism and collectivism, play a role in the expression of emotion. Stephan, Stephan, and De Vargas found that persons from individualistic cultures express emotions affirming independent self-conceptions, such as self-actualized, capable, self-satisfied, and proud of oneself. They also found that persons from collectivistic cultures were less comfortable expressing negative emotions (for example, indignant, annoyed, distrustful) than persons from individualistic cultures.³⁶

In related research, Schimmack found that persons from individualistic cultures are better able to recognize happiness than collectivists, and that persons from high-uncertainty-avoidant cultures were less accurate in the recognition of facial expressions of fear and sadness than persons with low uncertainty avoidance.³⁷ Matsumoto alleges that high-uncertainty-avoidant cultures create social institutions to deal with fear and therefore recognize this emotion less well.³⁸ Along similar lines, Pittam, Kroonenberg, Gallois, and Iwawaki found that Australians were rated as more expressive by Japanese, and that Japanese may conceptualize emotions as less intense.³⁹

Cross-Racial Recognition of Faces. Most of us have heard statements such as "I can't tell one Japanese from another . . . they all look alike!" Although this statement smacks of racism and ignorance, scientific evidence indicates that own-race identifications tend to be more accurate, by as much as 10 percent to 15 percent, than cross-race identifications. Own-race identifications are those in which we identify someone of the same race as our own. Cross-race identifications are those in which we identify people from a race different from our own.⁴⁰ Legal scholars have expressed a concern over an own-race recognition bias in eyewitness identification for some time. In fact, Feingold argued nearly ninety years ago that it is well known that, other things being equal, individuals of a given race are distinguishable from each other in proportion to our familiarity, to our contact with the race as a whole. Thus, to the uninitiated American, all Asiatics look alike, whereas to the Asiatic, all White people look alike.⁴¹

Experts in the field of eyewitness memory and about half of potential jurors endorse the belief that cross-racial identifications are less reliable than same-race identifications. This presumption is based on the belief in the existence of an own-race bias—that is, that people recognize people of their own race better than people of another race. Brigham and Malpass note that

the own-race recognition bias has been demonstrated among Whites, Blacks, Asians, Latinos, and Hispanics. Explanations for this phenomenon vary. Some evidence shows that persons who have close friends of the other race show less of an own-race recognition bias.⁴² Moreover, Ferman and Entwistle found that children living in mixed-race environments show less of an own-race recognition bias than children living in a segregated environment.⁴³ Conversely, other research indicates that the own-race recognition bias is not reduced by frequent contact with the other race and that prejudiced persons are no more likely to exhibit an own-race recognition bias than nonprejudiced persons.⁴⁴ There is some evidence indicating that persons who view other-race faces tend to focus on the constituent (individual) features of the face, whereas observers of same-race faces focus on configural features of the face.⁴⁵

Regulators

Nonverbal regulators are those behaviors and actions that govern, direct, and/or manage conversation. During conversations in the United States, for example, direct eye contact and affirmative head nodding typically communicate agreement or that a conversant understands what is being communicated. How close one stands to another during a conversation can also signal to the conversant whether to continue the communication. Rules for direct eye contact and distance during communication vary considerably across cultures. In many Asian cultures, such as South Korea, Vietnam, and Japan, direct eye contact is prohibited between persons of differing status. In these cultures, the person of lower status avoids making direct eye contact with his or her superior as a sign of respect. Direct eye contact in these cultures can communicate insolence or signal a challenge to the person of higher status. In South Korea, when people of higher status hand something to a person of lower status (for example, a professor handing something to a student), the person of lower status accepts whatever is handed with both hands, gives a slight nod of the head, and averts eye contact during the act, all as a sign of recognizing the status differential.

Communicator distance during conversation can also govern the flow of communication (see Figure 8.8). According to Almaney and Alwan, in some Middle Eastern cultures, people stand very close together during interaction to smell each other's breath. To smell one another is considered desirable. In fact, to deny someone your breath communicates shame.⁴⁶ Harris and Moran point out that in many Arab cultures, men hold hands as they converse to demonstrate their trust in each other. During conversation, a raising of the



Figure 8.8 Communicator distance during conversation can govern the flow of communication

eyebrows or a clicking of the tongue signifies a negative response and a disruption in the flow of communication.⁴⁷

Adaptors

Adaptors are kinesic actions that satisfy physiological or psychological needs. Scratching an itch satisfies a physiological need, whereas tapping the tip of your pen on the desk while waiting for the professor to deliver a final exam satisfies a psychological need. Very little, if any, cross-cultural research on adaptors has been conducted. For the most part, adaptors are not learned and probably do not vary much across cultures.

Paralanguage

Paralanguage refers to vocal qualities that usually, though not necessarily, accompany speech. Knapp and Hall divide paralanguage into two broad categories: voice qualities and vocalizations. Paralinguistic voice qualities include pitch, rhythm, tempo, articulation, and resonance of the voice. Paralinguistic vocalizations include laughing, crying, sighing, belching, swallowing, clearing of the throat, snoring, and so forth. Other paralinguistic vocalizations are intensity and *nonfluencies*, such as “um,” “ah,” and “uh.” Silence is also considered within the domain of paralanguage.⁴⁸

Often, paralinguistic qualities, vocalizations, and nonfluencies reveal a speaker's emotional state and/or veracity. Audiences can discern when speakers are nervous or confident by listening to their tone of voice, rhythm, pace, and number of nonfluencies. Parents often detect a child's deception not so much by what the child says but by how it is said. Through paralanguage we can tell whether speakers are being genuine, cynical, or sarcastic. Moreover, a person's geographical origin can be determined by listening closely to his or her paralanguage.⁴⁹

In all spoken languages, vocal sounds are carried by vowels; it is impossible to speak words without them. Consonants, on the other hand, function to stop and start sound. Linguist Peter Ladefoged has observed that although there are perhaps as many as nine hundred consonants and two hundred vowels in all the world's languages, many languages tend to use only five vowel sounds. In fact, one in five languages uses the same vowel sounds as used in Spanish and English—*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*—although there are variations on their pronunciation. According to Ladefoged, although there are literally thousands of speech sounds that any human is capable of making, only a few hundred sounds have ever been observed among the world's spoken languages. The average language uses only about forty sounds, and all babies are capable of making all of them. All babies, the world over, make the same sounds during infancy. Linguists believe that these sounds are the building blocks by which infants construct mature sounds. Although infants have not yet learned the specific language of their culture and have not yet spoken a single word, they practice the sounds of all human languages. All babies regularly produce a small subset of universal syllable types that occur in all of the world's languages. This is strong evidence that human language was not invented by humans but rather evolved. To be sure, unusual sounds show up in some languages. Clicking sounds, for example, can be heard in South Africa's Zulu and Xhosa languages, and nasal sounds are heard in Eskimo languages. And although these sounds may be unique components of these languages, all human babies, regardless of culture, can be heard making them at some time prior to learning their culture's formal verbal language.⁵⁰

Some languages, called tonal languages, rely on vocalized tones to communicate meaning. In these languages, a rising or falling tone changes the meaning of a word. Thai is a pentatonic language that uses five tones: monotone, low, falling, high, and rising. Modern Vietnamese is a monosyllabic language, meaning that all words are only one syllable long. Like the Thai language, Vietnamese is tonal, and the meaning of the syllable changes with tone. The Chinese language is tonal also. Mandarin Chinese, the most common language in China, is based on four or five tones. Every syllable in Mandarin has its definite tone. The first tone, called *yingping*, is a high-pitched tone without variation from beginning to end. The syllable is spoken with an

even tone, using the highest pitch of the speaker's voice. The second tone, *yangping*, starts from a lower pitch and ends high. The syllable is spoken with a rising tone, not unlike speakers of English asking a question. The third tone, *shangsheng*, is perhaps the most difficult to master. It begins as a middle-level tone, goes down, bounds up, and ends with a relatively higher pitch. The fourth tone, *chyusheng*, is a falling tone that starts high and ends at the lowest range of the speaker's voice. The fifth tone, *chingsheng*, is often left out of descriptions of Mandarin. This tone is spoken very quickly and lightly, as if it has no tone. *Chingsheng* is often called the neutral tone.⁵¹

To be sure, English and other languages have inflections—that is, a change in pitch on certain words and sentences. English speakers can communicate anger or sadness by changing the pitch of their voice. Without the appropriate inflection, the meaning of an English speaker's sentence can be misinterpreted. In Chinese, however, tones completely change the meaning of a word. Take, for example, the word *ma*. In the first tone, *ma* is “mother.” In the second tone, *ma* becomes “hemp” or “grass.” In the third tone, *ma* becomes “horse,” and in the fourth tone, *ma* becomes “to scold” or “to nag.” In Mandarin Chinese, the meanings of words are strictly based on the tones, which remain constant in whispering, yelling, or even singing. Mandarin tones are relative to the natural pitch of the speaker. A deep-voiced man's high note may be much lower than the high note of a woman.⁵²

As with any other form of communication, some paralinguistic devices are learned and vary across cultures. South Koreans are taught to avoid talking or laughing loudly in any situation; such behavior is seen as rude and unbecoming since it tends to draw attention. Many Koreans, especially women, cover their mouths when laughing.⁵³

In their study of paralinguistics, Zukerman and Miyake introduce the idea of a vocal attractiveness stereotype. They contend that, like one's physical attractiveness, individuals perceived to be vocally attractive elicit more favorable impressions than those not perceived to be vocally attractive. The results of their study indicate that attractive voices are those that are relatively loud, resonant, and articulate. Unattractive voices are squeaky, nasal, monotone, and off-pitched. Zukerman and Miyake found some sex differences in vocal attractiveness. For example, throatiness was perceived more negatively among female voices than among male voices.⁵⁴

Silence is a part of the paralinguistic channel. Hasegawa and Gudykunst maintain that silence is the lack of verbal communication or the absence of sound. Hasegawa and Gudykunst assert that culture influences the meaning and use of style. In their research, they compared the use of silence among Japanese and Americans and found that, in the United States, silence is defined as pause, break, empty space, or lack of verbal communication.

Hasegawa and Gudykunst maintain that silence generally is not a part of Americans' everyday communication routines. They argue that although silence is acceptable among intimate others, when meeting strangers, Americans are very conscious of silence and find it quite awkward. In Japan, however, silence is a space or pause during verbal communication that has important meaning. Pauses, or silence, are to be interpreted carefully. Stylistically, Japanese are taught to be indirect and sometimes ambiguous to maintain harmony. Silence, then, can be used to avoid directness, such as bluntly saying "no" to a request.⁵⁵

Charles Braithwaite has studied silence across cultures and argues that silence is a central nonverbal component of any speech community. He argues that some communicative functions of silence may be universal and do not vary across cultures. For example, Braithwaite maintains that among Native American groups, Japanese, Japanese-Americans in Hawaii, and people in rural Appalachia, the use of silence as a communicative act is associated with communication situations where the status of the interactants is uncertain, unpredictable, or ambiguous. In addition, Braithwaite argues that silence as a communicative act is associated with communication situations where there is a known and unequal distribution of power among interactants. In other words, when interactants consciously recognize their differential status, they consciously use silence. Braithwaite cites evidence of this in many cultures, including the Anang of southwestern Nigeria, the Wolof of Senegal, the Maori of New Zealand, the Malagasy in Madagascar, urban African-American women, and some working-class White Americans.⁵⁶

Proxemics

Proxemics refers to the perception and use of space, including territoriality and personal space. Territoriality refers to physical geographical space; personal space refers to perceptual or psychological space—sometimes thought of as the "bubble" of space that humans carry with them in their day-to-day activities. In cultures whose population density is high, personal space and territoriality are highly valued. Privacy in densely populated locations is often accomplished psychologically rather than physiologically. In Calcutta, India, for example, there are nearly eighty thousand persons per square mile. There is literally not enough room in the city to claim any personal space. Touching and bumping into others while walking through the streets of Calcutta is quite common and to be expected.⁵⁷

Socioeconomic factors can also affect a culture's perception of space. Cramped and insufficient housing is common in much of Sri Lanka. In the 1980s most housing units were quite small. Thirty-three percent of the

homes had only one room, 33 percent had two rooms, and only 20 percent had three rooms. Moreover, the average number of persons per home was five. (Overcrowding in Sri Lanka is declining, however, since the government initiated intensive housing programs in the 1990s).⁵⁸

The Moroccan perception of space reflects the culture's valuing of community. Personal space during a conversation is typically less than an arm's length. In mosques, worshipers line up shoulder to shoulder to pray. Houses typically have very little space between them as well.⁵⁹ Because Kenyan culture values harmony and sharing, Kenyans tend to be less aware of personal territory than people in the United States. For example, many Kenyans do not designate specific rooms in the home for specific activities, such as a living room or a dining room. In addition, the personal space distance between interactants is much closer than in the United States.⁶⁰ Saudi Arabians, too, are known to have closer personal space than Americans. Saudis typically enjoy getting very close, face to face, and engaging in direct eye contact.⁶¹ Many other studies support the link between culture and proxemic behavior in comparing Americans with Arabs, Latin Americans, Pakistanis, Germans, Italians, Japanese, and Venezuelans. These examples suggest that culture plays a decisive role in how spatial distances are maintained during communication. Other variables besides culture can affect proxemic distances, however, such as the age and sex of the interactants, the nature of the relationship, the environment, and ethnicity. Several studies have documented that in most cultures, the need for personal space increases with age. In addition, the use of space as influenced by sex seems to vary significantly by culture.⁶²

Haptics

Haptics, or tactile communication, refers to the use of touch. Mark Knapp argues that touch may be the most primitive form of communication. In the United States, much research has been conducted to examine the impact of touching during the first few years of life.⁶³ Haptic communication varies widely across cultures, and the amount and kind of touch varies with the age, sex, situation, and relationship of the people involved. In his theorizing about culture and nonverbal communication, Edward Hall distinguishes between contact and noncontact cultures.⁶⁴ Contact cultures are those that tend to encourage touching and engage in touching more frequently than either moderate-contact or noncontact cultures, in which touching occurs less frequently and is generally discouraged. Many South and Central American cultures are considered contact countries, as are many southern European countries. The United States is regarded as a

moderate-contact culture, whereas many Asian countries are considered noncontact. Many Asian cultures have established norms that forbid public displays of affection and intimacy that involve touch. One of the five central tenets of Confucian philosophy is the division between the sexes. Because Confucianism is so central to many Asian cultures, engaging in touch with the opposite sex is considered uncivil.⁶⁵ In their field study of touch patterns among cross-sex couples, McDaniel and Andersen observed the touch behavior of couples in airports. They found that couples from the United States touched most, followed by (in order of most to least touching) couples from Northern Europe, Caribbean/Latins, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia.⁶⁶ Psychologist Sidney Jourard conducted a study that counted the frequency of body contact between couples as they sat in cafés in different cities and countries. He found that the average number of touches per hour in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was 180; in Paris, 110; in Gainesville, Florida, 2; and in London, 0.⁶⁷

Because we are often taught not to touch others, some people develop touch avoidance. These people feel uncomfortable in situations requiring touch and generally avoid touching when possible. In her study of Americans, Japanese, Puerto Ricans, and Koreans, Beth Casteel found no touch avoidance differences in same-sex dyads for the Japanese and Americans, in that both were significantly more touch-avoidant than same-sex dyads in Puerto Rico and Korea. In opposite-sex dyads, however, Japanese and Koreans showed much higher levels of touch avoidance than Americans and Puerto Ricans. Casteel concluded that the Japanese and Americans allow women to touch other women, but men should not touch men. Koreans and Puerto Ricans are just the reverse.⁶⁸

In their comparison of high-contact cultures of southern Europe and low-contact cultures of northern Europe, psychologists Remland, Jones, and Brinkman found that more touch was observed among Italian and Greek dyads than among English, French, and Dutch dyads.⁶⁹ The people of northern Italy have few inhibitions about personal space and touch. Heterosexual men are often seen kissing each other on both cheeks and walking together arm in arm, as are women. East Indians are very expressive with touch. To touch the feet of elders is a sign of respect. Indians demonstrate their trust for one another by holding hands briefly during a conversation or religious activity. When a Hindu priest blesses others at religious gatherings, he gently touches the palms of their outstretched hands.⁷⁰ Saudi Arabians tend to value touching also. Saudi businessmen often hold hands as a sign of trust, a form of touch behavior that some Americans often misunderstand. Saudi women, however, are never to be touched in public.⁷¹

Most cultures prohibit some forms of touch. Harris and Moran observe that in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and some other cultures, the head is considered sacred and should not be touched by others. Americans sometimes make the mistake of patting children of other cultures on the top of the head as a sign of affection or endearment. In some cultures, this is seen as a serious breach of etiquette.⁷²

In many African and Middle Eastern cultures, the use of the left hand is forbidden in certain social situations. In Kenya, Indonesia, and Pakistan, for example, the left hand should not be used in eating or serving food. Harris and Moran report that in Kenya, the left hand is considered weak and unimportant. Sometimes, Kenyans intentionally use the left hand when serving food to someone they disrespect. In other cultures, such as Iraq and Iran, the left hand is used for cleaning and bodily functions and should never be used to give or receive gifts or other objects.⁷³

Like proxemics, the nature of touch is often mediated by more than culture. The relationship between the interactants, the location and duration of touch, the relative pressure of the touch, the environment in which the touch occurs (public or private), and whether the touch is intentional or accidental influence touch across cultures.

Olfactics

Probably the least understood, yet most fascinating, of all human sensations is olfactics—that is, our sense of smell. Our lack of understanding is certainly not because we lack a sense of smell. According to Gibbons, humans can detect as many as ten thousand different compounds by smell. Moreover, approximately 1 percent of our genes are devoted to detecting odors. Although this may not seem like much, humans have more olfactory genes than any other type of gene identified in human and mammalian DNA. Gibbons suggests that our lack of understanding may be because we lack a vocabulary for smell and are discouraged from talking about smell. Particularly in the United States, we have become obsessed with masking certain smells, especially those of the human body. According to Gibbons, the biggest users of fragrance in the world are U.S.-based companies like Procter & Gamble, Lever Bros., and Colgate. Some brands of soap use more than 2 million pounds of fragrance a year. In many Western cultures, body odor is regarded as unpleasant and distasteful, and we go to great efforts to mask or remove it.⁷⁴

David Stoddart asserts that in addition to their ability to detect odors, humans are even more adept at producing odors. According to Stoddart, evidence from anatomy, chemistry, and psychology indicates that humans

are the most highly scented of all the apes. Human scent comes from two types of glands that lie beneath the skin, the sebaceous glands and the apocrine glands. Sebaceous glands are all over the body wherever there are hair follicles. They produce an odorous oily fluid whose original purpose was to protect hair. The apocrine glands are a type of sweat gland. They are most dense in our armpits but are also found in the pubic and anal regions, the face, the scalp, and the umbilical region of the abdomen (the belly button). Women appear to have more apocrine glands than men, but some evidence suggests that their glands are less active than those in men. The most distasteful odors come from the apocrine glands, which are activated when we are frightened, excited, or aroused. Human saliva and urine also produce human scent.⁷⁵

According to Kohl and Francoeur, research has repeatedly shown that women perceive odors differently at various phases of their menstrual cycles. They tend to be the most sensitive to odors during ovulation. Other studies indicate that when in close proximity to each other over time, as in dormitory living, women synchronize their menstrual cycles. Scientists believe that axillary organ secretions function as odor cues to stimulate their cycles. On a related note, studies have shown that vaginal secretions during ovulation are minimally unpleasant, whereas such secretions before and after ovulation are described as distinctly unpleasant.⁷⁶

Kohl and Francoeur suggest that although preferences for certain smells seem to vary across cultures, there appears to be a universal preference for some kinds of scents that may have biological and evolutionary roots. These preferences are probably mediated by culture to some extent, however. For example, the finest perfumes in the world contain olfactory hints of urine. Scientists allege that these scents function as sex attractants. We know, for example, that sex-attractant pheromones are expelled from the body in urine. These two kinds of smell may mirror those of our humanoid ancestors and unconsciously stimulate the deepest parts of the brain.⁷⁷

In addition to functioning as a sex attractant, smell is also used politically for marking social class distinctions. Classen, Howes, and Synnott contend that smell plays a significant role in the construction of power relations in many societies.⁷⁸ Le Guerer comments, for example, that idiomatic expressions often employ smell-related terms to voice antagonism and repugnance toward others. People refer to persons they dislike as “stinkers.” When we are suspicious of someone, we say we “smell a rat.” When something seems wrong or amiss, we comment that “it doesn’t smell right” or “smells fishy.” Dishonest politicians may “reek of hypocrisy.”⁷⁹

Anthony Synnott claims that odor is often used to categorize groups of people into status, power, and moral classes. To be sure, the smells

themselves are not intrinsically moral or immoral, but the qualities or thoughts attributed to the specific scents are what give them their moral significance. Synnott argues that a person's scent is not only an individual emission and a moral statement, but also a perceived social attribute that is significant especially for members of subordinate groups, who are often labeled "smelly." Such labels often foster racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice and hatred. Subordinate and microcultural groups are often described as possessing negative olfactory characteristics. In fact, Synnott argues that perceived foul odors legitimize inequalities and are one of the criteria by which a negative identity is imposed on a particular class or race.⁸⁰ Many cultures establish norms for acceptable and unacceptable scents associated with the human body. When individuals or groups of people fail to fit into the realm of acceptability, their odor signals that something is "wrong" with them, either physically or mentally. Kohl and Francoeur note that the American Puritan tradition of "cleanliness is next to godliness" may explain the American obsession with deodorants, perfumes, soaps, and shampoos.⁸¹ Muslims believe that cleanliness of the body and purity of the soul are related. Muslim women are told to purify themselves after menstruation. Cleanliness is prescribed before and after meals. The Koran specifies that all five daily prayers must be preceded by washing of the hands, arms, and feet.⁸²

Social class distinctions based on smells are the cultural product of education, religion, parenting, and social pressure from peers. With the exception of those scents that appeal to everyone, people are conditioned to find certain scents attractive and others dirty or foul. Moreover, such distinctions sustain social barriers between groups and even justify a dominant group's persecution of subordinate groups.⁸³ In the Middle Ages, wealthy people bought perfumes to diminish the scent of the lower classes. Nineteenth-century Japanese described European traders as *bata-kusai*—"stinks of butter."⁸⁴ Adolf Hitler's hatred of Jews was based partially on olfactics; he claimed that their foul odor was representative of their "moral mildew" and reflected their outer and inner foulness, and therefore their immorality.⁸⁵ Gibbons reports that during World Wars I and II, German and English soldiers claimed they could identify the enemy by their smell. Similar claims have been made by North Vietnamese and U.S. troops.⁸⁶ Baker reports that in U.S. history, Thomas Jefferson is purported to have said that Blacks have "a very strong and disagreeable odour."⁸⁷ Dollard claims that many White racists used the "disagreeable scent" of Blacks as a final proof of the impossibility of close association between the races.⁸⁸ In 1912, sociologist Georg Simmel wrote, "It would appear impossible for the Negro ever to be accepted into high society in North America because of his bodily odor."⁸⁹ Indeed, Simmel concluded that "the moral ideal of harmony and equality

between the different classes and races runs up against the brick wall of an invincible disgust inspired by the sense of smell.”⁹⁰

Classen, Howes, and Synnott maintain that more than any other group, women are stereotyped and classified by their scent. Historically, in many cultures, women were considered the fragrant sex, unless they were prostitutes or suffragettes or challenged the male-dominated social order. The role of fragrance was primarily to entice men. In general, the Western cultural axiom has been that, unless perfumed, women stink. Jonathan Swift’s poem *The Lady’s Dressing Room* expresses this belief:

His foul imagination links
Each Dame he sees with all her Stinks:
And, if unsav’ry Odours fly,
Conceives a Lady standing by.⁹¹

Although it may be the least studied of all the senses, social scientists are discovering that olfactory sensation is a potent influence on social interaction. Survey data indicate that a significant percentage of adults are conscious of and influenced by smells in their environment. In their poll of more than 350 American adults, the Olfactory Research Fund found that 64 percent of respondents indicated that smell greatly influenced the quality of their lives. Specifically, 76 percent of the respondents reported that the sense of smell was “very important” in their daily relationships with persons of the opposite sex, and 20 percent indicated that it was “somewhat important.” Seventy-four percent indicated that smell was “very important,” and 22 percent said that it was “somewhat important” in their relationships with their spouses. Although the percentages dropped somewhat, 36 percent of the respondents indicated that smell was “important” in their relationships with friends, and 40 percent agreed that smell was “very important” in their relationships with co-workers. Eighty percent of the respondents reported using environmental fragrances, such as potpourri, room sprays, and scented candles. Well over 60 percent of respondents believed that particular aromas enhance the quality of life, relieve stress, and help retrieve memories. Of those respondents who used cologne, perfume, or aftershave, 83 percent said they did so because they liked the scent, 68 percent said it made them feel better about themselves, 56 percent said it enhanced their sense of well-being, 51 percent said they used fragrances to make themselves more romantically attractive to others, and 46 percent said they used fragrances to make a fashion statement.⁹²

This emphasis on smell is often motivated by the pivotal role olfactics play in the maintenance of social relationships. Todrank, Byrnes, Wrzesniewski,

and Rozin assert that most cultures assign meaning to odors that is often displaced onto the people wearing them.⁹³ This is especially evident in relationships with members of the opposite sex. Although it is widely recognized that odors play a determinant role in the mating practices of many animal species, Kohl and Francoeur argue that odors are also an important ingredient in human mating and bonding and cite empirical evidence showing that odors hasten puberty, mediate women's menstrual cycles, and even influence sexual orientation.⁹⁴ Extant research indicates that odors help people identify their family members, facilitate the bond between parents and children, and influence how often and with whom individuals mate.

Kate Fox is a social anthropologist and the Director of the Social Issues Research Center in Oxford, England. Fox has studied cultural differences in olfactics, with a special emphasis on non-Western cultures. Fox maintains that, unlike most Western cultures, smell is "the emperor of the senses" in many cultures. For example, Fox describes the importance of smell among the Ongee people of the Andaman Islands, a group of islands off the south-east coast of India. According to Fox, much of Ongee cultural life revolves around smell. For example, their calendar is based on the smell of flowers that bloom at different times of the year. One's personal identity is defined by smell. Fox writes that to refer to oneself, an Ongee touches the tip of his or her nose, which is a gesture meaning both "me" and "my smell." Fox also reports that during greetings, Ongee routinely ask "How is your nose?" rather than "How are you?" Ongee etiquette prescribes that if a person responds that he or she feels "heavy with smell," the greeter should inhale deeply to remove the excess smell. Conversely, if the greeted person indicates that he or she is short of smell energy, Ongee etiquette prescribes that the greeter contribute some extra scent by blowing on him or her.⁹⁵

Fox also describes smell rituals among the Bororo peoples of Brazil and the Serer Ndut of Senegal (Western Africa). Among the Bororo, personal body smell indicates the life force of the individual, whereas one's breath odor indicates the state of one's soul. The Ndut believe that individuals possess a physical smell, defined by one's body and breath odor, and a spiritual smell. The spiritual smell is thought to be a reincarnated smell. For example, the Ndut can tell which ancestor has been reincarnated by associating the smell of a child to that of a deceased person.⁹⁶

In her olfactory research, Fox has discovered that among those cultures where smell is so closely associated with one's personal identity, the exchange or mixing of odors among people is carefully prescribed. For example, among the Amazonian Desana, members of a particular tribal group are thought to share a similar odor. Marriage is only allowed between

people of different odors; that is, between members of different tribal groups. Similarly, among the Batek Negrito of the Malay Peninsula, people of similar odor groups are prohibited from engaging in sexual intercourse and even sitting too close to one another. The Batek Negrito believe that the prolonged mixing of similar odors causes illness in the people themselves and any children they may conceive.⁹⁷

Fox also writes that Western smell preferences are not universal. For example, the Dassanetch, a tribal cattle-raising group in Ethiopia, believe that the smell of cows is the most pleasing of all smells. Dassanetch men routinely wash their hands in cattle urine and smear their bodies with cattle manure. Such smells are associated with status and fertility. The Dogon people of Mali find the scent of onions very attractive, especially for young men and women, who rub fried onions all over their bodies.⁹⁸

SELF-ASSESSMENT 8.1

Personal Report of Olfactory Perception and Sensitivity (PROPS)

The following instrument is designed to assess your level of olfactory perception and sensitivity. On a scale of 1 to 7, indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = undecided, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree.

- _____ 1. When interacting with a stranger of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her breath.
- _____ 2. When interacting with a stranger of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her body.
- _____ 3. When interacting with a stranger of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her cologne or perfume.
- _____ 4. When interacting with a stranger of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her breath.
- _____ 5. When interacting with a stranger of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her body.
- _____ 6. When interacting with a stranger of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her cologne or perfume.
- _____ 7. When interacting with a close friend of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her breath.
- _____ 8. When interacting with a close friend of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her body.

- _____ 9. When interacting with a close friend of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her cologne or perfume.
- _____ 10. When interacting with a close friend of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her breath.
- _____ 11. When interacting with a close friend of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her body.
- _____ 12. When interacting with a close friend of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her cologne or perfume.
- _____ 13. When interacting with a stranger of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my breath.
- _____ 14. When interacting with a stranger of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my body.
- _____ 15. When interacting with a stranger of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my cologne or perfume.
- _____ 16. When interacting with a stranger of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my breath.
- _____ 17. When interacting with a stranger of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my body.
- _____ 18. When interacting with a stranger of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my cologne or perfume.
- _____ 19. When interacting with a close friend of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my breath.
- _____ 20. When interacting with a close friend of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my body.
- _____ 21. When interacting with a close friend of the opposite sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my cologne or perfume.
- _____ 22. When interacting with a close friend of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my breath.
- _____ 23. When interacting with a close friend of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my body.
- _____ 24. When interacting with a close friend of the same sex, I am typically conscious of the scent of my cologne or perfume.
- _____ 25. When interacting with someone from a different culture or ethnicity, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her breath.
- _____ 26. When interacting with someone from a different culture or ethnicity, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her cologne or perfume.
- _____ 27. When interacting with someone from a different culture or ethnicity, I am typically conscious of the scent of his or her body.

- _____ 28. When interacting with someone in a private environment, I am typically conscious of the scent of the immediate surroundings.
- _____ 29. When interacting with someone in a private environment, I am typically conscious of the scent of the furniture.
- _____ 30. When interacting with someone in a public environment, I am typically conscious of the scent of the immediate surroundings.

To calculate your PROPS score, sum your responses as follows:

1. Perception and sensitivity to others: add Items 1–12 (range = 12–84).
2. Perception and sensitivity to self: add Items 13–24 (range = 12–84).
3. Perception and sensitivity to different cultures: add Items 25–27 (range = 3–21).
4. Perception and sensitivity to environment: add Items 28–30 (range = 3–21).

Higher scores indicate more sensitivity to the particular contexts. For example, scores above 50 for perception and sensitivity to others and/or self would be high, whereas scores below 30 would be considered low sensitivity. Scores above 15 for perception and sensitivity to persons from different cultures would be considered high, whereas scores below 7 would be considered low sensitivity.

Source: J. W. Neuliep and E. L. Groshkopf, *Toward a Communication Theory of Olfactics: Explication, Development of the Personal Report of Olfactory Perception and Sensation and Some Initial Tests*. Paper presented at the 2001 annual convention of the National Communication Association, Atlanta, GA.

Physical Appearance and Dress

Often, we can identify a person's culture by his or her physical appearance and dress. Communication with another is often preceded by visual observations of the other's physical appearance. Moreover, in most cultures, people consciously manipulate their physical appearance to communicate their identity. Most cultures have strict rules for how their members should present themselves. To violate a culture's prescriptions for appearance may result in negative sanctions. In many cultures, a person's physical appearance and dress communicate the person's age, sex, and status within the culture.

In virtually every culture, men and women dress differently, and in many cultures, the differences begin at birth. In the United States, for example, male infants are traditionally dressed in blue and female infants are dressed in pink. In the Masai culture of Kenya, the distinction between young girls and women is communicated through body artifacts. According to Vandehey, Buerger, and Krueger, Masai women wear specific necklaces and earrings to designate their marital status. For a married woman to be seen

without her earrings may bring harsh physical punishment from her husband. Masai men wear earrings and arm rings that designate social status. The specific earring distinguishes the man as an elder or warrior. Other body ornaments communicate whether a Masai (male or female) has been circumcised.⁹⁹

In most Islamic cultures, Muslim women are often easily recognized by their headscarves, or turbans, which are important symbols of religious faith among Muslims. Smucker maintains that the scarves are often perceived by Westerners as a sign of male subjugation of women. In Turkey, however, many young Muslim women believe that rather than being a symbol of subservience to men, the headscarf, or veil, serves as a guard against the eyes of men and as a symbol of women's allegiance to God, rather than to their husbands or fathers.¹⁰⁰ Harris and Moran note that in many Middle Eastern cultures, such as Saudi Arabia, Islamic law decrees that women dress conservatively and cover their hair in public. Although women are not required to wear the traditional full-length *abaya* (black cloak) over their clothing, they are encouraged to wear a knee-length tunic/dress over slacks and a scarf on their heads. Moreover, they should avoid explicit makeup in the presence of Saudi men. The idea behind these dictates is to avoid sexually arousing men. Saudi men may wear either Saudi dress or their normal Western dress but should not wear shorts or open shirts. Long hair for men is discouraged.¹⁰¹

Harris and Moran observe that in India, businessmen wear a *dhobi*, a single piece of white cloth about five yards long and three feet wide that wraps around their lower body. Long shirts are worn on the upper part of the body. Most Indian women wear a *sari* and blouse. A *sari* consists of several yards of lightweight cloth draped so that one end forms a skirt and the other a head and shoulder covering. It is not acceptable for women to show skin above the knees or a large portion of the back. Wearing clothes that are in any way revealing is discouraged because it may unintentionally communicate "a loose woman."¹⁰²

In Japan, the kimono—a long robe with wide sleeves—is the traditional clothing for both men and women; it is traditionally worn with a broad sash, or *obi*, as an outer garment. The specific design of the kimono varies according to one's sex, age, marital status, the time of year, and the occasion. In the ancient past, there was no distinction between a man's and a woman's kimono. Today, there are several types of kimonos worn by men, women, and children. Men typically wear kimonos of blue, black, brown, gray, or white. Women's kimonos are the most elaborate and varied in style and design. The fabric, cut, color, sleeve length, and the details of the *obi* vary according to a woman's age, social status, marital status, and the season. During the summer months, women wear *yukatas*, or lightweight cotton

kimonos. Many Japanese hotels provide *yukatas* for guests to wear in their rooms. In Japan, on “7–5–3 Day” (November 15), boys who are three or five years old and girls who are three or seven years old dress up in kimonos to pray at the temples. There is also a special day for all girls and all boys to go to the temple: March 3 is Girls’ Day and May 5 is Boys’ Day. Kimonos are worn on these days as well.¹⁰³

Chronemics

Chronemics refers to the nonverbal channel of time. Recall (from Chapter 4) Hall’s description of monochronic and polychronic time-oriented cultures. According to Hall, monochronic (M-time) orientations emphasize schedules and the compartmentalization and segmentation of measurable units of time. Many M-time cultures are low context, including the United States, Germany, Scandinavia, Canada, France, and most of northern Europe. Conversely, polychronic (P-time) orientations see time as much less tangible and stress multiple activities with little emphasis on scheduling. P-time cultures stress involvement of people and the completion of tasks as opposed to a strict adherence to schedules. Many P-time cultures are high context, including southern Europe, Latin America, and many African and Middle Eastern countries.¹⁰⁴

The primary system for organizing time, in just about every culture, is the calendar. According to L. E. Doggett, one of the world’s leading authorities on calendars, cultures create and use calendars as a way of organizing units of time to satisfy the needs of the society. Doggett maintains that calendars give people a sense that they can control time. Calendars also provide a link between people and the cosmos, or the supernatural. Doggett asserts that, in many cultures, calendars are considered nearly sacred and serve as a source of social order and cultural identity. In many ways, calendars dictate human communication patterns. When people eat, work, celebrate, worship, engage in leisure, attend school, hunt, rest, and fight wars is often prescribed by the calendar. Social contracts of just about every kind are typically determined by calendars. For example, marriages are deemed successful by the number of years they have lasted. Prison terms are defined in terms of months or years. In most cultures, an individual’s age, which is measured by a calendar, is the primary criterion for social and cultural privileges and responsibilities.¹⁰⁵

According to Doggett, there are about forty calendars used in the world today. Most of these calendars are astronomically based. The primary astronomical cycles include the day, month, and year. Days are defined by the rotation of the earth on its axis. The month is based on the revolution of the moon around the earth. The year is based on the revolution of earth around the sun.

Most cultures use either a solar, lunar, or lunisolar calendar. Many Western cultures, such as the United States, use a solar calendar. Islamic cultures use a lunar calendar. The Hebrew and Chinese use a lunisolar calendar.¹⁰⁶

Doggett points out that the Gregorian calendar (a solar calendar) serves as the international standard. The United States functions under the Gregorian calendar. A common year is 365 days, with leap years of 366 days. Months are either 30 or 31 days, except for February, which has 28 or 29 days depending on whether or not the year is a leap year. The Hebrew calendar is lunisolar and is the official calendar of Israel. Each year consists of either 12 or 13 months. Months consist of either 29 or 30 days. The beginning of each month is determined by a new moon. Traditionally, days of the week are designated by number, except for the seventh day, the Sabbath. Days begin and end at sunset. In the Islamic calendar months correspond to the lunar cycle. Based on religious principles, Muslims begin each month upon the first visibility of the moon's crescent. Like the Hebrew calendar, days begin at sunset. In China, the Gregorian calendar is used for governmental purposes, but the traditional Chinese calendar is used for scheduling cultural festivals and for timing agricultural activities. The Chinese calendar is lunisolar, where months are either 29 or 30 days.¹⁰⁷

Hall has pointed out that perceptions of time differ considerably across cultures. In the United States, for example, time is tangible (i.e., concrete, perceptible). Hall notes that to Americans, time can be bought, sold, saved, spent, wasted, lost, made up, and measured. Americans are also future-oriented, in that we take great efforts to plan and schedule what we expect (or want) to happen. Conversely, to many Arabs, a person who tries to look into the future is regarded as either irreligious or insane. To many Arabs, only God can decree what will or will not occur. Hall also notes that duration is an important component to one's perception of time. According to Hall, duration is what happens between two points. Most Americans view time in this manner and carefully schedule and evaluate cultural events according to their duration (e.g., minutes, hours, days) as in "Oh, that movie was way too long," "This won't take but a minute," "When will you get here?" To some Native American groups, time is not thought of as measurable. Time is a sequence of events that differs for each set of circumstances.¹⁰⁸

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND DIMENSIONS OF CULTURAL VARIABILITY

Throughout this book several dimensions of cultural variability have been discussed, including individualism-collectivism, power distance, and high-low context. Each of these dimensions can help explain cultural differences in nonverbal communication across cultures.

Individualism-Collectivism

In Chapter 2, individualism was defined as a cultural orientation where individuals precede groups. In individualistic cultures, emphasis is placed on individuals' goals over group goals, and social behavior is guided by personal goals, perhaps at the expense of other types of goals. Individualistic cultures stress values that benefit the individual person. The self is promoted because each person is viewed as uniquely endowed and possessing distinctive talent and potential.

In collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, group goals have precedence over individual goals. Collectivistic cultures stress values that serve the ingroup by subordinating personal goals for the sake of preserving the ingroup. Collectivistic societies are characterized by extended primary groups such as the family, neighborhood, or occupational group in which members have diffuse mutual obligations and expectations based on their status or rank. In collectivistic cultures people are not seen as isolated individuals but as *interdependent* with others (e.g., their ingroup), where responsibility is shared and accountability is collective. A person is seen not as an individual, but as a member of a group.

In their review of nonverbal communication in individualistic and collectivistic cultures, Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, and Smallwood note that persons in individualistic cultures tend to be distant proximally whereas persons in collectivistic cultures tend to work, play, live, and sleep in close proximity. In addition, body movements tend to be more synchronized in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Facial behaviors (i.e., affect displays) differ as well. Persons in individualistic cultures tend to smile more than persons in collectivistic cultures. Andersen and his colleagues reason that people in collectivistic cultures are more likely to suppress their emotional displays because maintaining group harmony is primary. Finally, individualistic cultures are more nonverbally affiliative (i.e., nonverbal behaviors that bring people closer together physically and psychologically) than collectivistic cultures.¹⁰⁹

Power Distance

A culture's power distance (i.e., large vs. small) may account for nonverbal differences across cultures. Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of a culture expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Cultures with a smaller power distance emphasize that inequalities among people should be minimized and that there should be interdependence between less and more powerful people. In cultures with a larger power distance, inequalities among people are both expected and desired. Less powerful people should be dependent on more powerful people. In high power distant cultures, interaction between persons of low

and high power may be very restricted, thus limiting the amount of nonverbal interaction. Andersen and his colleagues point out that in large power distant cultures, people without power are expected to express only positive emotional displays when interacting with those of higher power (e.g., smile more).¹¹⁰

Power distance also affects paralinguistic cues. Persons in small power distance cultures are generally less aware of their vocalics (e.g., volume, intensity) than persons in large power distance cultures. Andersen and his colleagues mention that North Americans (small power distance) are often perceived as noisy, exaggerated, and childlike.¹¹¹

Oculistics are also affected by power distance. In large power distance cultures, subordinates are taught to avert direct eye contact often as a sign of respect for those in superior roles. For example, in large power distant cultures, students rarely give teachers direct eye contact. Direct eye gaze can be interpreted as a threat or a challenge to the person of higher power.

High and Low Context

Recall from Chapter 2 that high and low context refers to the degree to which interactants focus on the physical, social, and psychological (i.e., the nonverbal) context for information. Persons in high-context cultures are especially sensitive to the nonverbal context. Persons in low-context cultures focus less on the social or physical context and more on the explicit verbal code. Persons from low-context cultures are perceived as very direct and talkative, whereas persons from high-context cultures are perceived as quiet, shy, and perhaps even sneaky.

Persons in high-context cultures tend to pay a great deal of attention to nonverbal behavior during interaction. Thus, facial expressions, touch, distance, and eye contact serve as important cues. Subtle body movements that may be missed by a low-context person may take on special meaning to the high-context person.

Nonverbal Expectancy Violations Theory

Judee Burgoon has formalized a theory of nonverbal communication called the nonverbal expectancy violation theory (NEV).¹¹² The basic premise of the theory is that people hold expectancies about the appropriateness of the nonverbal behaviors of others. These expectations are learned and culturally driven. For example, in the United States, people expect to shake hands when they are introduced to someone. Burgoon posits that occasionally people violate nonverbal expectations. When this happens, the violation produces arousal, which can be physiological or cognitive and either positive

Table 8.1 Fundamental Assumptions of the Nonverbal Expectancy Violations Theory

Assumption 1: Humans have two competing needs, a need for affiliation and a need for personal space (or distance). These two needs cannot be satisfied at once.

Assumption 2: The desire for affiliation may be elicited or magnified by the presence of rewards in the communication context. The rewards may be biological or social.

Assumption 3: The greater the degree to which a person or situation is defined as rewarding, the greater the tendency for others to approach that person or situation; the greater the degree to which a person or situation is defined as punishing, the greater the tendency for others to avoid that person or situation.

Assumption 4: Humans are able to perceive gradations in distance.

Assumption 5: Human interaction patterns, including personal space or distance patterns, are normative.

Assumption 6: Humans may develop idiosyncratic behavior patterns that differ from the social norms.

Assumption 7: In any communication context, the norms are a function of three classes of factors: (a) characteristics of the interactants, (b) features of the interaction itself, and (c) features of the immediate physical environment.

Assumption 8: Interactants develop expectations about the communication behavior of others. Consequently, they are able to recognize or at least respond differently to normative versus deviant behaviors on the part of others.

Assumption 9: Deviations from expectations have arousal value.

Assumption 10: Interactants make evaluations of others.

Assumption 11: Evaluations are influenced by the degree to which the other is perceived as rewarding such that a positively valued message is only rewarding if the source is highly regarded and a negatively valued message is only punishing if the source is not highly regarded.

Source: Reprinted from Burgoon, J. K., A Communication Model of Personal Space Violations: Explication and an Initial Test, in *Human Communication Research*, 4, 1978, pp. 129-142. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

or negative. Burgoon maintains that once a violation has been committed and arousal is triggered, the recipient evaluates the violation and the violator. Violations initiated by highly attractive sources may be evaluated positively, whereas those initiated by unattractive sources may be evaluated negatively.¹¹³ The very same violation may produce very different evaluations, depending on who committed it. The evaluation of the violation depends on (1) the evaluation of the communicator, (2) implicit messages associated with the violation, and (3) evaluations of the act itself. In presenting the theory, Burgoon outlines several key assumptions (see Table 8.1).

Burgoon bases Assumption 1 on literature from anthropology, sociology, and psychology, indicating that humans are a social species with a biological/survival instinct to be with other humans. Conversely, humans cannot tolerate extended physical contact with, or excessive closeness with, others; that is, humans have a basic need to insulate themselves from others and a need for privacy. Although this first assumption appears to be universal, the degree to which a person feels the need to be with others or insulated from them is probably culturally driven. Individualists may be more comfortable alone in the same situations in which a collectivist feels uncomfortable. Moreover, the way in which a person satisfies the need for privacy or affiliation certainly varies across cultures. In the United States and Germany, for example, privacy is often satisfied by physical separation from others (for example, closed doors), whereas in densely populated cultures such as India, privacy may be fulfilled psychologically.

Assumption 2 indicates that affiliation for others is triggered by rewards within the communicative context. These rewards may be biological (food, sex, safety) or social (belonging, esteem, status). Biological needs are no doubt universal, but social needs are often learned and vary across cultures. Belonging needs are felt much more strongly in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic ones. Conversely, esteem needs are more strongly felt in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic ones. Assumption 3 extends Assumption 2 by stating that humans are attracted to rewarding situations and repelled by punishing situations. This phenomenon is probably universal, but it should be noted that what people deem rewarding and punishing varies across cultures.

Assumption 4 asserts that humans have the perceptual ability to discern differences in spatial relationships. We can tell when someone is standing close to us or far away from us. Assumption 5 deals with the establishment of normative nonverbal behaviors. Normative behavior is that which is usual or typical, or that follows a regular pattern. For example, the lecture style of your professor is probably consistent day after day. The professor has established a normative way of delivering his or her material. Many normative behaviors are established by society and culture. In the United States, for example, saying “good-bye” is a normative way of terminating a telephone conversation.

Assumption 6 recognizes that even though most of us follow similar normative rules and regulations for our verbal and nonverbal behavior, we also develop our own personal style of interaction that is unique in some way. Assumption 7 states that norms operate as a function of the interactants, the interaction, and the environment. Characteristics of the interactants might include their sex, age, personality, and race. Characteristics of the interaction

itself might include status differences or degree of intimacy between the interactants. Finally, characteristics of the environment may include the physical features of the setting, such as furniture arrangement, lighting, or even temperature.

Assumption 8 deals with the notion of expectancies, a key element of the theory. Burgoon argues that during interaction, interactants develop expectancies and preferences about the behaviors of others. These expectancies are anticipations of others' behavior that are perceived to be appropriate for the situation. Typically, expectancies are based on a combination of societal and cultural norms. For example, students expect that their professors will behave in an appropriate and consistent manner. In certain cases, however, students might expect idiosyncratic deviations from the norms for particular professors (for example, a certain professor frequently tells jokes in class).

Assumption 9 focuses on two other key ingredients in the theory, violation of expectancies and arousal. Burgoon subscribes to the notion that when a person's nonverbal expectancies are violated, the person becomes aroused. The violation tends to stimulate the receiver/communicator's attention and to arouse either adaptive or defensive reactions. For example, we learned earlier in this chapter that in some cultures (for example, Korea), touching the top of a child's head is prohibited. To do so would be a violation of expectancy, and the child or the parents might respond negatively or defensively. In some situations, however, some violations are perceived positively. A shaman may be allowed to touch the top of a child's head, and such behavior may be perceived positively.

Assumption 10 states that people make value judgments about others. Assumption 11 extends this notion by specifying how evaluations are made. Burgoon contends that the first factor influencing the positive or negative evaluation of a violation is the communicator reward valence—that is, how much the violator is perceived as someone with whom it is desirable to interact. Thus, communicator reward valence is based on communicator and relationship characteristics (age, sex, personality, status, reputation, anticipated future interaction) and interactional behaviors (style, positive feedback). Communicator reward valence influences how one will evaluate the violation of expectancies. Burgoon's theory holds that more favorable evaluations will be given when the violation is committed by a high-reward person than when it is committed by a low-reward person. If someone to whom you are attracted stands very close to you at a party, much closer than is normative, you may interpret this violation positively as a sign of mutual attraction or affiliation. Conversely, if someone by whom you are repulsed stands too close to you at a party, you may evaluate this violation quite negatively.

Burgoon asserts that positively evaluated violations produce favorable communication patterns and consequences, whereas negatively evaluated violations produce unfavorable communication patterns. In addition, Burgoon contends that even extreme violations, if committed by a high-reward person, can be evaluated positively and produce reciprocal communication patterns. Although a significant number of studies support the assumptions of Burgoon's theory, very few, if any, have investigated its cross-cultural applicability.

Cultural Contexts and Nonverbal Expectancies

As we have seen throughout this book, the cultures of Japan and the United States differ significantly. Japan is a collectivistic, high-context culture, whereas the United States is an individualistic, low-context culture. Individualistic cultures stress the importance of an individual's unique identity. Emphasis is placed on individual goals over group goals. From an early age, American children are taught that they are individuals with unique abilities and talents. People are rewarded for being "the best," "the one and only," and "number one" in whatever they do. The goal of Americans is to be the best that they can be and to strive for the top. A well-known cliché in the United States states that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," meaning that in order to get attention or to have one's needs met, one must draw attention to oneself.

In contrast, collectivistic cultures place precedence on group goals over individual goals. Collectivist cultures emphasize values that serve the ingroup by subordinating personal goals for the sake of the ingroup. Group activities are dominant and pervasive. Responsibility is shared, and accountability is collective.¹¹⁴ Japan has an unofficial motto that reads, "*Deru kugi wa utareru*," or "The tallest nail gets hammered down." Children are taught at a young age that their identity is based on their relationship within the group (family or business). Group leadership, rather than individual initiative, is valued. However, especially among Japanese youth, a new sense of individualism is growing in Japan.¹¹⁵

A high-context culture, such as Japan, is one whose members are highly sensitive to the perceptual, socio-relational, and environmental contexts for information. High-context cultures have a restricted code system (language). Members do not rely on verbal communication as their main source of information. Silence and nonverbal behavior are most informative. Statements or actions of affection are rare. Members are quite adept at decoding nonverbal behavior. Japanese, for example, expect others (that is, Japanese) to understand the unarticulated communication. Cultural members are expected to

know how to perform in various situations where the guidelines are implicit.¹¹⁶

Members of a low-context culture, such as the United States, are less sensitive to the perceptual, socio-relational, and environmental contexts. That is not to say that they ignore the environment—they are simply less aware of it than are members of a high-context culture. A low-context communication is one in which the mass of information is found in the explicit code. Hence, low-context cultures have an elaborated code system. Verbal messages are extremely important when information to be shared with others is coded in the verbal message. Members of low-context cultures do not perceive the environment as a source of information. Guidelines and expectations are frequently explained explicitly.¹¹⁷ In addition to high-context/low-context distinctions between the two countries, Japan is considered a low-contact culture, whereas the United States is considered a moderate-contact culture.

Many of the communicative behaviors of high/low context, individualistic/collectivistic, and high-/low-contact cultures are different, and the interactants will inevitably violate each other's expectations regarding appropriate non-verbal behavior.

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: VIOLATION OF NONVERBAL EXPECTANCIES

In the following two scenarios, Jim, Akira, and Mitsuko interact. Akira and Mitsuko are exchange students from Japan who are spending a semester studying at an American college. Jim is an American student at the same college. Notice how each violates the others' expectations without realizing it. When reading the scenes, keep in mind the different cultural orientations and the assumptions of nonverbal expectancy violation theory.

Jim and Akira are at a party.

1. **Jim:** (Nudges Akira and says loudly) *This is a great party, eh?*
2. **Akira:** (Is startled—stands back—tries to put some distance between himself and Jim) *Yes, thank you.*
3. **Jim:** (Leaning forward toward Akira, with direct eye contact) *If you want to meet some girls, I could introduce you.*
4. **Akira:** (Shocked by such an offer, he backs away) *But I don't know them. They might be upset.*
5. **Jim:** *Well, how else are you going to meet them?*
6. **Akira:** (Uncomfortable) *Maybe during a class or something*

Mitsuko, another Japanese exchange student, approaches Jim and Akira. She knows Akira, but not Jim.

7. **Mitsuko:** *Hello, Akira.* (Bows slightly and looks down)
8. **Akira:** *Ab, Mitsuko, this is my friend Jim.*
9. **Jim:** *Hi!* (Forward leaning into her space)
10. **Mitsuko:** *Hi, Jim.* (Bows slightly and does not make direct eye contact)
11. **Jim:** *Are you two friends?* (Wonders why she won't look at him, thinks to himself, "Well, I'm not one of them. She probably thinks I'm ugly.")
12. **Akira:** *Yes, we know each other.*

A long pause ensues.

13. **Jim:** (Thinks to himself, "This is going nowhere—I've got to think of something to say." He speaks rather loudly)
Great party, hey guys?

Akira and Mitsuko both jump back.

14. **Akira:** (Thinks to himself, "This guy is too weird") *Yeah, this is fun.*

During this scenario, Jim violates Akira's kinesic, proxemic, paralinguistic, and haptic expectations. Several of the axioms and propositions from Burgoon's NEV theory can be applied to this interaction. Notice in Lines 1 through 4 that Akira perceives that Jim is standing too close, talking too loud, and thus backs away. From Akira's point of view, Jim violated his proxemic and paralinguistic expectations. In Line 1 Jim touches Akira, which probably violated Akira's nonverbal expectations regarding haptics. From Jim's vantage point, Akira violated his expectations as well, by not looking at him and not responding to his offer that he introduce him to women.

According to NEV theory, violations have arousal value (Assumption 9). Throughout the dialogue we can see how Akira and Jim became aroused (shocked, uncomfortable, startled, annoyed) by each other's violations. Both Mitsuko and Akira jump when Jim yells, "Great party, hey guys?" In Lines 13 and 14 we can see how Burgoon's Assumption 10 applies in that the arousal leads to evaluations ("This is going nowhere," "This guy is too weird"). In this case, the evaluations are negative.

According to the theory, the greater the degree to which a person is perceived as rewarding, the greater the tendency for others to approach that person. Likewise, the greater the degree to which a person is perceived as

punishing, the greater the tendency for others to avoid that person. Unfortunately for Akira, because he is in a “foreign” country, he will be the more likely of the two to change his behavior to conform to the expectations of others.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Many social scientists believe that our verbal language evolved from a system of nonlinguistic communication that we inherited from our animal predecessors. As humans we possess a host of nonlinguistic ways to communicate with each other through the use of kinesics, proxemics, paralanguage, haptics, olfactics, and physical appearance. Our nonverbal communication, when combined with verbal language, creates a very complicated communication system through which humans come to know and understand each other.

Our nonverbal behavior is innate and learned. Many of our unconscious behaviors, such as the expression of emotions, are universal. People from all cultures express anger, happiness, and sadness the very same way. Yet other forms of nonverbal communication, such as gestures, are unique manifestations of our culture’s distinctive cosmos. We learn how to communicate with our bodies (kinesics) through the use of space (proxemics), by touching others (haptics), with our voice (paralanguage), with smell (olfactics), and through the way we dress and present ourselves. Sometimes, our nonverbal behaviors violate the expectations of others. Sometimes, we stand too close or touch too much. When this happens, the other person evaluates the violation as positive or negative depending on whether we are perceived as attractive or unattractive. If we are thought of as attractive, our violation may be welcome. If we are perceived as unattractive, the same violation may be evaluated quite negatively.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adaptors: Mostly unconscious nonverbal actions that satisfy physiological or psychological needs, such as scratching an itch.

Affect displays: Nonverbal presentations of emotion, primarily communicated through facial expressions.

Analogic communication: Nonverbal communication.

Chronemics: The use of time.

Denotative meaning: The literal meaning of a word; the dictionary meaning.