

Nonverbal Behavior Self Analysis

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COM 225: Nonverbal Communication

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As a communication scholar, I believe it is my job to share messages in any way possible to the outside world. Nonverbal Communication is a very large part of society and is rarely thought of in that sense. Sharing knowledge through our behaviors and vocals is important to fully understand messages given by others. Nonverbal Communication is the form of communication that comes most naturally and is the most influenced type of communication.

Communicator Characteristics

According to The Conversational Skills Rating Form, (Spitzberg, 2007) I am a skilled communicator with a score of 153 out of 160. I agree with my score. I am a good conversationalist, skilled socially, and expressive. I am a natural extrovert. My personality is a heightened ball of excitement. In a raw sense I describe myself as open, excited, loud, honest, openminded, spontaneous, silly, confident, adventurous, bold, talkative, energetic, and complicated. Most of these characteristics describe an outgoing person. I send accented messages in almost every interaction.

Within conversation, I can get very hyper and excited and start to leak coordination. This makes it easy for me to lower my sense of awareness and composure. (Austin, Straats-Reiss & Burgdorf, 2015) Because of my lack of awareness and composure, I tend to encode messages before decoding what is going on in a situation when hyper active. For example, the movie Avengers: Endgame just came out in theatres. There is a huge no spoilers rule. If too excited and pumped after seeing the movie I would totally reveal something before thinking about who is in the room and how my message would affect them if they hadn't seen the movie.

I have learned to stay composed a bit due to the spoiler rules about Avenger: Endgame. Some adaptors I use are kinesics like bouncing my legs and shaking my head without knowing it.

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I play with my hair and crack my knuckles. I move my hands a lot whether it's rubbing them on my pants or on a flat surface. I tap my fingers a lot too. All these behaviors are idiosyncratic and possible adaptors and learned behaviors.

My results from the Big 5 personality test, (Goldberg, 1992) showed a score of 93% for extroversion, 80% for agreeableness, and 84% for conscientiousness. These scores are accurate and link to the environment I grew up in. I come from a very expressive family. We are an Irish-Catholic Family and we fall into the stereotype of a large family with a lot of silliness. We have learned from each other how to act. (Balswick & Averett, 1977) We use big gestures with our arms and throw our heads back while laughing. We all have strong, animated vocalics. Our voices make us seem approachable and appear charismatic as told by a study done by Zuckerman & Driver (1989) We can maintain this appearance on our own until our volume goes up when we are all together. The volume is acceptable within the family. If you are in any relation to a Kearney, a very much collectivist group of people, you are understood by all of us. We care as much as we share. My identity and belonging with my family has given me my skills as an encoder and have enhanced my extroverted crowd pleasing skills and appearance. (Halberstadt 1986) As the book states, stable agreeableness will fuel an extrovert's appearance & adornment. (Guerrero & Hecht 2008)

Even though we are such an expressive group, I was still taught to suppress my expression by my family. They were preparing me for the real world where we couldn't act so enhanced. Those who grow up in a more expressive environment are better encoders and those who grew up in less expressive environments are better decoders. (Halberstadt, 1983) Because I was taught both, I can get confused in communication. In social situations my go to adaptor is to start talking because that is what I am used to. To me, silence is associated with failure of

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communication. (Tannen, 1985) So, when I am in a situation and I am having to suppress my expressions, my display rules can be misinterpreted. When I must not talk I use a humming adaptor and use kinesics by pursing my lips and scrunching up my face or, pursing my lips and widening my eyes to relay my own version composure.

Codes

My environment plays a huge role in my life. I have decorated my room in my apartment to make me feel comfortable. It is filled with contextual clues proving that I live there, and I am in charge of the space. Color affects me greatly. I color coordinate almost everything in my mind. In the book *The Language of Colour* by Dorothee L. Mella, she talks about how different colors have to do with a fast-paced environment. I like bright colors that match my vibrant personality and high energy, so I have a very colorful bed spread, colorful furniture, colorful pillows, numerous bright posters, and paintings up on the walls to make the mood more joyful. I also have Christmas lights on my ceiling to bring in a cozy feel when I have to turn the brighter main lights off to sleep. In chapter 32 of our textbook, in reference to time and place codes, Stein explains that color effects mood and stimulant in a person and can reduce stress. In the winter, when it is cold and dark outside, I have a bright blue UV light that I sit in front of for 45 minutes a day to reenergize and bring back the warmth I associate with positivity and my own comfort level.

In my room, I also have added my own personal touches, so the paintings and posters are mostly my own artwork. I also have an old school desk for a makeshift vanity and a vintage shelf in my room to give it character. This is an example of architectural privacy. (Duvall-Early & Benedict, 1992) As much as I am an extrovert who thrives on energy from others, I prefer my personal space to be very private. I prefer people to not cross the transition space of my doorway

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unless invited and even then, certain spots in my room are off limits. This is in reference to adjacencies providing the ability to distance themselves for intimacy or group seclusion. (Stone, 1991) From the doorway, you will see that all my furniture is pushed as far back from the door as possible, pulling away from outside my comfort space. My door is always closed as a physical barrier. (Churchman & Herbert, 1978; Duvall-Early & Benedict, 1992; Hanson & Hillier, 1982; Kennedy, 1953; Werner & Haggard, 1992)

To gain the most privacy possible, I mask the outside world with noise from my TV, music on my portable speaker, and a white noise app I have on my phone. This mask is necessary to drown out the boys who live below me and play Call of Duty into the early hours of the morning. This noise would be considered ambient sound. (Deasy, 1985; Miller & Schlitt, 1985; Vinsel et al., 1980)

In the book, rejecting is a type of privacy-seeking behavior described by Haggard and Werner (1990). Rejecting is an environmental fight against invasions of privacy. An example of this would be a sign my friend and I have made as a symbolic indicator to put up on the wall when a late-night guest would be staying over. This sign is meant to convey that no one should come into the room because certain intimate acts are occurring inside. The sign could also send the nonverbal message that people within certain proxemics should put on head phones depending on the person that put up the sign and where the others will be while the sign is up.

After taking the Do You Avoid Touch? quiz, I received a 52 on the touch avoidance scale considering my likeness of touch from the same sex and opposite sex. I would agree with this high score. I do not like to be touched unless if it is by a significant other or parent. My personal space zone is more between 4 and 12 feet than it should be, as the zone is usually 1.5 to 4 feet. (Malandro & Barker, 1983) I come from a family of huggers, so this can be an issue. For

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example, at Christmas when we take turns opening presents, each family member gives who ever gave them the gift a hug. In social situations with family, a full embrace is very uncomfortable. I can barely make it past a shoulder embrace like how I would greet a friend described in Morris's Top 14 Types of Touch. (Morris, 1971)

Because of this uncomfortable tradition, I use proxemics to my advantage. I sit as far as I can away from the rest of the family distancing myself. I offer to give family members air high fives so they don't have to walk across the room to give me a hug. My friends are touchy as well. They don't mind sitting shoulder to shoulder when there are plenty of seats around the island in the kitchen. I always sit at the end of the kitchen island where no one can sit next to me. In the living room, I sit on the love seat instead of the couch and put my feet up so no one can sit next to me. These acts against touch are considered controlling a public territory. (Smeltzer, Waltman & Leonard 1991)

I do have acceptations to my lack of touch. When I took The Five Love Language Test by Gary Chapman, I received a low six for my need of touch. However, my friend Alexis got a high 11 for her need of touch. In the past, I would move away when she would sit close to me or my body would tense up when she would pat my shoulder. As I have grown more comfortable with her, I have been able to conform to her need of touch and embrace it. For example, when we saw Avengers: Endgame, Alexis grabbed my hand in anticipation when the fight scenes would play out. I allowed it and even engaged in the haptic of handholding to stabilize the equilibrium of the situation and satisfy her immediacy cues. (Argyle, 1988; Burgoon & Walter, 1990; Hayduk, 1981; Patterson, 1982; Rosenfeld, Breck, Smith, & Kehoe, 1984)

I use clothing and accessories as forms of adornment to express myself and symbolize who I am as an individual. I wear my granny's ballerina charm on a gold necklace to represent

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my values and my past. I always have scrunchies on my wrists showing my preparedness. I have a flowered scarf that makes me feel warm and fashionable showing I care about myself and my appearance. And, I have a pair of red Converse high tops that make me look unique and help me stand out. They make me feel like I can do anything! (Kind of like Michael Scott in *The Office* and his jeans.) These are all examples of symbols and emblems within my appearance that others will use to try and understand me. (Kaiser, 1997)

Hypothetically, if my boyfriend Matt and I were in high school, the stereotypes surrounding both of our appearances drive us apart and not make us attracted to one another. Considering The Halo Effect (Guerrero & Hecht 2008) stating that all that is beautiful is good, extroversion and introversion, the HurryDate study (Kurzban & Weeden 2005), the “matching hypothesis” (Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971), and how dramatic high school can be, I have come up with a scenario on how and why we would end up together.

I could potentially be the “popular cheerleader” with my long blonde hair, height, proportionate height and weight, and clean and polished clothing making me appear physically attractive according to HurryDate. My peppiness, positive attitude, extraversion, social skills, want to be around others, and confidence attached to my extroversion is perceived as attractive by most and makes me more likely to make connections with others forming a lot of different relationships. (Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, & Kalnysh, 2014)

Matt’s appearance would make him fall under the stereotype of the “loner nerd.” His slumped in shoulders, sweatpants, lack of enthusiasm to care about his appearance would make him less attractive. His quiet personality, laid back demeanor, elevated smarts, limited amount of relationships, and awkwardness indicating introversion, would make him less attractive. (Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, & Kalnysh, 2014)

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Because of these high school stereotypes, Matt and I would not be seen as similar and would therefore not be expected to be attracted to one another stated by the “matching hypothesis” (Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971). However, by taking away the stereotypes, The Halo Effect (Guerrero & Hecht 2008) and the amplified illusion of high school, Matt and I would appear similar in physical features. We both have thick hair, height, proportionate weight and heights, make the same facial expressions, have the same color skin, and the same bone structure. In that sense of being the same, we would be attracted to one another according to HurryDate.

Matt and I could possibly be attracted to each other by having more similarities found in the HurryDate study. We are both looking for a long-distance relationship which helped us seek out more exact features in a partner such as, kindness, intelligence, and exciting personality which we found in each other to our own liking. HurryDate states that men value a woman’s BMI as their top priority when looking for a partner and that women look for earning capacity as a top priority. Both of these facts make sense in my relationship. My body type is labeled as a mesomorph as I learned from the BMI quiz. A mesomorph has a naturally fit body. Matt has his own apartment in the city and a full-time job giving him a salary. It could be compared to a sugar daddy and trophy wife situation. It’s a win win for both of us.

My appearance also has to do with my collectivist personality when it comes to certain events. “Clothing could help a person to achieve a defined goal. Clothing is a specific manifestation of person’s identity and society, individual and collective, and the identification of an individual or group.” (Tijana, Tomaž, & Čuden 2004) An example of this specific clothing choice is what I wore to see the movie Avengers: Endgame, the weekend it premiered. As devoted members of our fandom, my friends and I dressed to represent the Marvel Universe. We

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all painted our nails red like Iron Man's suit. We wore clothes that made us feel confident and strong like all of the leading ladies of the film. I specifically exhibited my previously mentioned red Converse high tops. Any other clothing worn, had a connection to super heroes to convey our devotion to Marvel and all who were going to be representing alongside us.

Communication

Within the course I have learned a lot from each unit. The assessments that came with each week were very interesting to me. They taught me why I react to certain situations in a specific ways. Some of the assessments made me open my eyes to what I should change about my thought processes. For example, The Harvard Implicit Bias Gender assessment end result was "moderate automatic association for male with career and female with family" meaning when I think of the family dynamic in my culture, I envision a man having a job and a woman taking care of the family at home. As a feminist, I did not like that answer. But, because I took this course, I know that it's ok to have a certain mindset because that's how I was taught. I can move forward and learn from others by decoding their behavior in different contexts to change my answer.

Another quiz I took to analyze my decoding skills was the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy or "DANVA." (Nowicki & Duke 2001) While paying attention the pitch, volume, articulation, and resonance when different people with different emotions were speaking, I was very confused. It was shocking to see how many emotions I misunderstood by listening to the vocalics and not being able to read other nonverbal behavior visually. I am in need of more training when it comes to that. This type of nonverbal communication is very important, and I should make it a priority because I am in a long distance relationship and even though I am familiar with my boyfriend's voice, I still get confused when he is trying to convey

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certain messages on the phone. This could be linked to being a better encoder than decoder due to the environment I grew up in.

By taking the High or Low Context Assessment (Adair, Durchan, Chen & Liu, 2016), I found that I am a low context communicator. For the time, relationships, space, and communication dimensions I scored in the lowest rank. The assessment explains that I like clear instruction and thrive on direction to accomplish tasks in one fowl swoop. The more direct information and feedback I receive, the better I will be at finishing a task. I agree with this statement. I love information and I love communication. Without it I feel very lost and anxious. Even after going through this course and gaining an understanding on why different nonverbal cues come to be, I still appreciate any information I can get to fully understand something I am participating in, which is the task of encoding and decoding messages correctly. An example would be when my roommate and I watched Avengers: Infinity War for the first time. The movie ended with a cliff hanger. My kinesics were out of control. I was very upset and started shouting and jumping around. It one point I was standing on our couch holding the ceiling to keep from falling over with one hand while I swung my other hand in frustration. I was encoding the message that I couldn't decode the movie's message. It made me question my abilities to be a Marvel fan if I couldn't complete the task of watching the movies without heartbreak. I needed more information about the situation so I could stop my thought process.

This course has also helped me understand my relationships. My boyfriend is very introverted and quiet, and I am loud and extroverted. Before taking this class, I had been trying to figure out how I could get him to come out of his shell. I now know that the amount of expressiveness a person displays has to do with the environment in which they grow up in. (Halberstadt, 1984). To compare and contrast, I grew up in a very expressive and emotional

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home where it was common to express feelings. He grew up in a home with very little expression or emotion and was told that it was not ok to express. To dig deeper, he grew up in very masculine environment with two brothers. They lived on a farm where they were participating in stereotypical masculine activities like physical labor and playing sports. His father used to tell him to “quit crying and rub some dirt in it.” This emphasized the need for aggression, strength, and competitiveness that would push away expression. (Guerrero & Hecht, 2008) I grew up in a more feminine environment with a very free flowing atmosphere that allowed creativity but also emphasized gender roles making it normal for me to be emotional. My mother always told me “Let it all out! You will feel so much better when you get it out of your system!” This made me more susceptible to being expressive. (Guerrero & Hecht, 2008)

During my time in my Nonverbal Communication class I learned how to decode nonverbal messages very well. With each unit, I felt like I was becoming a stronger decoder of all nonverbal behaviors. I now have a greater appreciation for actively learning about a certain type of communication instead of just using it as what society says it is with no context. The class made me feel better about myself as a person studying communication. I thought it was cool to be able to analyze myself and my nonverbal cues and compare them to others. The skills that were taught can break down one more layer of misunderstanding in the world and I’m proud that I can help others encode and decode with my newfound knowledge of nonverbal communication.

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