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Nonverbal communication, status differences

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racial groups, or for interracial couples. Relationships of same-sex couples do not differ in many important ways from those of heterosexual couples, but critical tasks facing same-sex couples, such as family acceptance and coming out, could affect marital adjustment. There is a small literature on cultural differences in marriage, but little psychological research on cultural differences in the transition to marriage and predictors of marital change for newlyweds. Early predictors of distress and instability are being established, but marital researchers know relatively little about how these processes unfold over time and how changes affect the developing relationship. Researchers are studying newlyweds who are at relatively similar stages in their relationships (e.g., beginning first marriages, without children, and at similar ages) and following them over time. Repeated assessments of relationship factors using multiple methods—interview, self-report, physiological data, and observational data—will allow for a richer picture of how relationships develop in the early years. Understanding the development of newlywed marriage will be crucial to helping couples develop effective ways of relating to each other and maintaining positive behaviors that maximize chances of relationship success.

Rebecca J. Cobb

See also Early Years of Marriage Project; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Transition to; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project; Remarriage

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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION, STATUS DIFFERENCES

Many of our social interactions can be described along a dominance, power, status, or other dimensions suggestive of higher versus lower position. Our work environment is characterized by hierarchies with people in different statuses. But also in intimate relationships, power or status differences between partners (e.g., differences in earning power, differences in dominant interpersonal behavior) are not rare. Even in unstructured groups of people with initially equal status, status hierarchies form readily. Some hierarchies are quite pronounced, such as in the military, and others are quite flat, such as in many nonprofit organizations. Some hierarchies are explicit such as the differences in executive decision-making power between a CEO and an office clerk, and others are more implicit, such as the differences in influence on the decision to watch a particular movie among a group of friends. What is common to all hierarchies is that there is a dominance, power, or status difference among group members. Though there are differences between these concepts, for convenience this entry uses the term *status* to describe all these aspects of vertical position. *Status* has been defined in many different ways. It can be defined as having or striving for privileged access

to restricted resources (e.g., money, time) or as having or striving for influence over others. A hierarchy is defined as the status difference among two or more individuals. It has to be noted that a high-status position per se cannot exist alone because it necessitates somebody with low status.

This entry discusses whether and how people are able to infer the status of their social interaction partners, how people use nonverbal behavior to make status inferences, and which nonverbal behaviors people in actual high-status or low-status positions typically express.

Nonverbal Behavior: Definition and Importance

Nonverbal behavior encompasses communication without words. The distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication is not always easy to make. In verbal communication, each word has a specific meaning and people can be held accountable for what they say. Most nonverbal communication, however, is ambiguous with respect to meaning. Situational aspects such as the relationship between the conversation partners or the topic they are talking about can greatly influence the meaning of specific nonverbal cues. Some of the most commonly investigated nonverbal behaviors are facial expressions, eye gaze, body movements (such as gestures), posture, touching behavior, and vocal behavior, such as tone of voice, speech modulation, or speech duration, just to give a few examples.

Whether verbal or nonverbal behavior matters more as a source of information depends on the situation. When a verbal message is unclear or ambiguous, nonverbal cues play a particularly important role. Nonverbal cues become especially salient and important when they contradict the words being spoken or when people doubt the honesty of a verbal communication. Consistent with this, lie detection is more successful when people rely on nonverbal rather than verbal cues. Nonverbal cues are also important in the expression of emotions. In addition to expressing emotions, however, nonverbal cues have many other functions—for example, to signal attention, reflect physical states such as pain, coordinate turn-taking in conversations, reveal personality characteristics,

and signal interpersonal orientations such as friendliness or dominance.

Expression and Perception of Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Egon Brunswik's lens model has shown itself to be a useful framework for studying expression and perception of interpersonal characteristics such as status. In a lens model perspective, a target's behavior forms the basis of perceivers' judgments about the target's status. If, for instance, a high-status person talks more than a low-status person, speaking time can be considered an indicator of actual status. A perceiver observes the exhibited behavior, for instance, that one person talks more than another, and infers that the person who talks more is higher in status than the person who talks less. Thus, speaking time is used as a cue of elevated perceived status. If perceived status corresponds to actual status, the assessment is called accurate. Within the lens model, one can ascertain which cues are believed to be associated with status (relation between specific cues and perceived status) and which cues are actually associated with status (relation between specific cues and actual status).

Although most of the cues studied within a lens model approach are either verbal or nonverbal behaviors, other cues can work as identifiers of people's status. Appearance can be another cue people use to assess others' status. For instance, high-status people are perceived as taller than low-status people. In the same vein, formal dress is usually associated with expressed and perceived high status.

Expressing Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Studies looking at nonverbal behavior and actual (as opposed to perceived) status have defined status in terms of personality, structural status (e.g., rank in an organization, socioeconomic dominance, emergent leadership within a group), or assigned status (e.g., in a psychology experiment). In meta-analyses on the expression of status in nonverbal behavior, only a few behaviors have been related to actual status. High-status people show more bodily openness (arms and legs), interact

at closer interpersonal distances, have louder voices, interrupt others more often, and talk more than low-status people do. Studies also show that high-status people have higher visual dominance—defined as the ratio of percentage of looking while speaking to percentage of looking while listening—than do low-status people.

Surprisingly, only a few nonverbal behaviors actually indicate high status on average across studies because people often think that there are many clear indicators of high and low status. Indeed, people use many more nonverbal cues when they try to infer another person's status, as discussed in the following section.

Perceiving Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Varied research paradigms have been used to study the perception of status. For instance, target stimuli have been schematic faces, photographs of posed facial cues (e.g., smiling versus nonsmiling or lowered versus raised eyebrows), candid photographs of naturalistic interactions, short video clips of people interacting, or face-to-face interactions.

Nonverbal behaviors that are used systematically by observers to assess the status of target individuals have also been investigated in meta-analyses. Perceivers rate targets higher in status if they show more gazing, lowered eyebrows, a more expressive face, more nodding, less self-touch, more touching others, more gestures, more bodily openness, more erect or tense posture, more body or leg shifts, smaller interpersonal distance, a more variable voice, a louder voice, more interruptions, less pausing, a faster speech rate, a lower voice pitch, more vocal relaxation, and more talking. Also, observers use the visual dominance ratio defined earlier as an indicator of high status.

Many of these status–nonverbal behavior relations are influenced by other variables such as, for instance, gender. More specifically, some nonverbal behaviors show parallel differences in gender and in status (e.g., high-status people tend to talk more, men more than women can be found in high-status positions, and men tend to talk more than women, at least in opposite-gender interactions). Nevertheless, this parallelism does not necessarily mean that the status differences in

nonverbal behavior can be explained by underlying gender differences. Furthermore, for a number of behaviors, this parallelism was lacking. More studies going beyond this parallelism and showing causal relations are needed to clarify this question.

That people use a long list of nonverbal behaviors to judge status reflects the existence of clear stereotypes about the nonverbal behavior of high-status (and low-status) individuals. Fewer nonverbal behaviors are characteristic of people with an actual high or low status than there are nonverbal behaviors perceived as indicators of status. Thus, perceivers seem to use nonverbal cues that do not necessarily indicate the status dimension. People harbor expectations—or stereotypes—about which nonverbal cues are related to high or low status. These expectations are not always correct. If this is the case, are people still accurate in judging another person's status?

Accurately Assessing Status

Whether people are able to tell who is the boss and who is not in a social gathering seems important because it can bring about distinctive advantages. For instance, it can improve effective communication (e.g., directly addressing a request to the person who is able to make a decision), prevent social faux pas (e.g., inappropriately addressing a high-status person), or help a person to maneuver in status hierarchies because knowing who has high and who has low status helps one to plan strategic moves.

Although the findings are not unequivocal, it seems that status can be assessed at better than chance level. For instance, better than chance accuracy was found when perceivers judged which of two target people in a photograph was the other's boss. Other research has found that people could assess the status of university employees based on photographs and observers were able to assess targets' assertiveness in videotaped interactions at better than chance level.

So how can we explain that even if perceivers use many invalid nonverbal cues to assess a target's status, they are still accurate in their assessment? First, the potential nonverbal cues targets emit are endless, so in a given study, the investigators might

not have measured genuinely diagnostic cues. To remedy this drawback, future research should measure a more comprehensive list of behaviors, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors and appearance cues. Second, not all cues contribute equally to accuracy. If, for instance, speaking time is more diagnostic for expressed dominance than is gazing, using speaking time correctly and using gazing incorrectly might still result in considerable accuracy. Third, the correct assessment might be based not on single cues but on combinations of different cues. Accuracy would then be a more “Gestalt”-like impression formation process. There is indeed some evidence suggesting that the pattern of how the different nonverbal and appearance cues used to assess status corresponded to the pattern of how status was expressed in these nonverbal and appearance cues. In other words, there is a positive correlation between beliefs and actual status effects. Thus, accuracy is possible because the way people use the array of nonverbal cues to judge status (i.e., how they weight the relevance of each cue to be an indicator of status) corresponds largely to how much each nonverbal cue is a valid indicator of actual status.

Conclusion

The status dimension is inherent to many different social encounters and thus affects how people interact with each other verbally and nonverbally. However, the fact alone of possessing high (or low) status might only marginally explain the exhibited nonverbal behavior. For instance, a high-status leader can adopt a directive leadership style and show behaviors such as frequent interruptions, a loud voice, and averting gaze while the other is speaking. By contrast, a high-status leader can equally well adopt a participative leadership style and show behaviors such as infrequent interruptions, a soft voice, and looking at the other while he or she speaks. Thus, personality factors or the specific motivation or emotion experienced during an interaction can affect the nonverbal behavior on top of, or even more so, than status per se.

Marianne Schmid Mast and Judith Hall

See also Accuracy in Communication; Communication, Nonverbal; Gender Stereotypes; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Power, Predictors of

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NONVERBAL INVOLVEMENT

Nonverbal involvement refers to the behavioral immediacy between people in social settings. Increased nonverbal involvement is a cumulative product of several behaviors, including closer distance, higher levels of gaze, touch, forward lean, more direct body orientation, and greater expressiveness in facial, gestural, and vocal channels. In general, higher levels of nonverbal involvement signal more intense interactions. High involvement may be positive, as in the embrace of lovers, or negative, as in the brawling of enemies. Because nonverbal communication is typically more important in face-to-face interactions than is verbal communication, nonverbal involvement plays a critical role in the formation and maintenance of