3

Nonverbal Communication Analysis

When body language and words are in conflict, people believe body language.
—Daryl Perkins, Mark S. Norman & Associates

Overview

The most conspicuous and direct vehicle of expression in interpersonal communication is the verbal exchange. At the same time, nonverbal communication is a surprisingly sophisticated and efficient system for conveying meaning. According to communications scholar J.S. Philpott, more than two-thirds of the total impact of a message is the result of nonverbal factors.[1] Moreover, political consultant Bill Carrick maintains that the subtle nonverbal cues of gesture, posture, syntax, and tone of voice account for as much as 75 percent of a viewer's judgment about the electability of a candidate.[2]

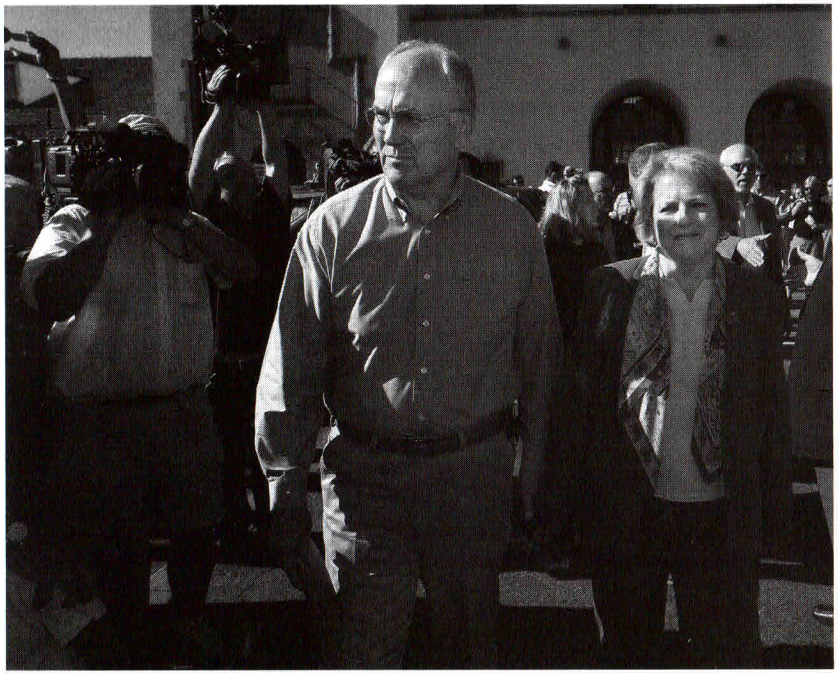
The field of nonverbal analysis is defined by the following research findings:

- Subtle and implicit information is conveyed through nonverbal channels in a few seconds or even a fraction of a second.[3]
- People are quite accurate in decoding these brief instances of nonverbal communication.[4]
- Specific nonverbal behaviors accompany certain feelings.[5]
- Nonverbal cues are especially adept at communicating information about emotions and mood.[6]

Although nonverbal communication behavior generally has been linked to the study of interpersonal communication, it is applicable to the critical analysis of mass communications as well.

- Nonverbal communications analysis provides insight into the ways in which nonverbal communication behaviors reinforce verbal messages in media presentations. In visual media (photographs, film, and television), actors employ nonverbal behaviors such as body posture, accents, or subtle facial expressions and eye movements to reinforce messages. In the 1950 film Sunset Boulevard, Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson), a reclusive silent film diva, declared, "We didn't need dialogue [in those days]. We had faces." Even in radio, which relies only on sound, vocal modulation, rhythm, and pitch have an enormous impact on the impressions received by the audience.
- Nonverbal communications analysis examines ways in which media communicators use "scripted" nonverbal strategies to create a particular image or impression. People who are interviewed on camera often follow a "script" devised by impression formation managers. These professionals carefully orchestrate the nonverbal behaviors of their clients to make their verbal messages more convincing. For example, in 2007, Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) was arrested for sexual misconduct in the restroom of the Minneapolis airport. Craig then held a news conference to announce his innocence. As he approached the podium, he was holding hands with his wife, Suzanne. Asked about this carefully scripted nonverbal behavior, a class of college students responded that the gesture sent a series of messages declaring Craig's innocence. Holding hands is "wholesome," a "romantic and platonic gesture which counterbalances the more sordid sexual aspects of the accusation." In addition, holding Craig's hand is "both a physical and emotional expression of support by Craig's wife."
- *Nonverbal communications analysis furnishes individuals with tools to detect behaviors that are at variance with the "scripted" verbal message.* As discussed earlier, people who are interviewed on camera often follow a "script" devised by their media handlers. For instance, during the 2007 Republican primary race for president, TV footage captured challenger Mike Huckabee throwing snowballs in Michigan before its primary. Commentators leaped on this image, declaring that this was evidence that the former governor of Arkansas was "just like regular folks."

Larry Craig and Wife



Media communicators often rely on "scripted" nonverbal behaviors to create a particular image or impression. For example, after Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) was arrested for sexual misconduct in the restroom of the Minneapolis airport in 2007, Craig held a news conference to announce his innocence. As he approached the podium, he was holding hands with his wife Suzanne, which conveyed the message that he was innocent. (*AP Images/Troy Maben*)

However, at the same time, their nonverbal behaviors may reveal their actual thoughts and feelings. In 2007, Democrat Hillary Clinton, running in the New Hampshire presidential primary election, was asked by a prospective voter how she managed to persevere, despite all of the hardships involved in running for president. Obviously fatigued, Clinton responded with what appeared to be a spontaneous display of emotional nonverbal behavior. With tears welling up in her eyes, Clinton replied in a shaky voice that although her task was difficult, she cared about the country and didn't want it to "go backward." Clinton's win in New Hampshire defied the polls, which had predicted that Barack Obama would win by a wide margin. Postelection polls confirmed that

a significant number of women voters were influenced by this genuine emotional declaration to change their vote to support Clinton.

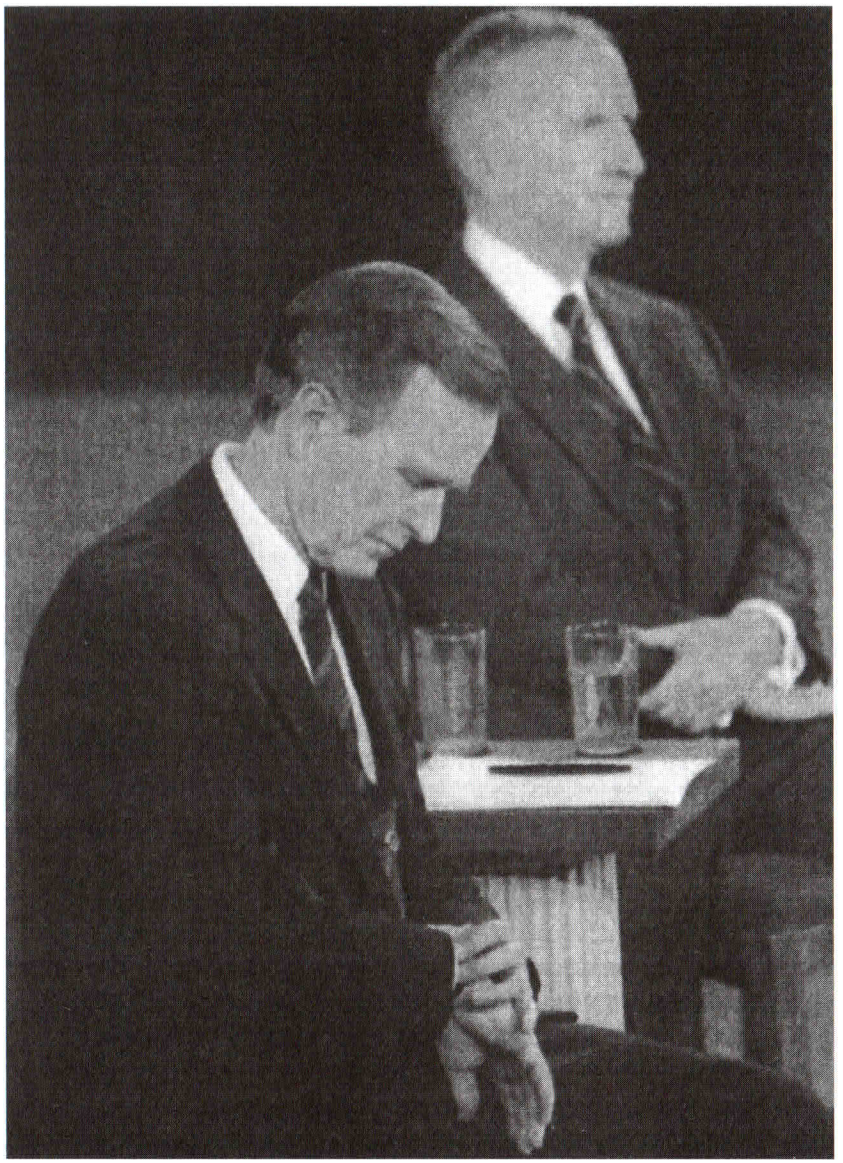
Today, the media—and particularly the Internet—have blurred the distinction between private and public activities. Media scholar Joshua Meyrowitz observes that modern political candidates are always onstage and consequently must maintain a steady state of performance. Before the advent of the Internet, politicians could retain some semblance of privacy. Today, however, political figures no longer have the luxury of "backstage activities"—areas of privacy hidden from public viewing.[7]

A striking demonstration of the potency of unintended gestures in the media occurred during the third 1992 presidential debate between Bill Clinton and George Bush. The town-meeting format was more favorable to Clinton's public performance style. During the debate, Clinton employed a series of carefully crafted gestures designed to add a personal dimension to his performance. At one point, Marissa Hall asked a question about the economy. Clinton approached Hall, smiled, and made it a one-to-one conversation. His scripted open hand gestures were synchronized perfectly with his words and conveyed an emotional aura of warmth and openness. While Clinton was answering the question, Bush clearly was visible in the background. As Clinton spoke, Bush glanced down and, turning his wrist slightly, peeked at his watch. This gesture spoke volumes about Bush's lack of engagement in this debate. In a broader sense, the gesture served as a metaphor for Bush's lackluster campaign and his diminished chances at reelection; clearly, his "time was up."

Today, nearly everyone carries video technology (in a tool as simple as a cell phone); consequently, public figures should assume that they are always being recorded. News organizations such as CBS and Fox News now employ "embeds"—freelance reporters who record public figures and send the footage to the networks—but private citizens can also post their videos on Internet sites such as YouTube.

Meyrowitz contends that this backstage visibility has led to a decline in the prestige of political leaders. The opening up of traditional backstage behavior means that citizens now know, in intimate detail, about the private behavior of those in authority. The scrutiny of politicians' private behavior has challenged our public conception of "appropriate behavior." For instance, in the days leading up to the 2006 midterm elections, Barbara Cubin, a Republican candidate for the House of Representatives from the state of Wyoming, was caught on camera

George H. W. Bush



Nonverbal communications analysis furnishes individuals with tools to detect unscripted behaviors that are at variance with the verbal message. In this 1992 presidential debate, the camera captures George H.W. Bush as he is glancing at his watch, signaling lack of interest in the proceedings. *AP/Wide World Photo.*

telling opponent Thomas Rankin, who has multiple sclerosis and uses a wheelchair, "If you weren't sitting in that chair, I'd slap you across the face."[8] The incident was distributed on YouTube, playing a role in the election (despite a usually dominant Republican edge in conservative Wyoming, Cubin won by only 1,000 votes, one of the closest margins in the state's history).

These candid glimpses into a candidate's behavior can provide perspective into a candidate's qualifications. However, it can also be argued that this media scrutiny has inhibited the ability of our elected officials to govern effectively. Politicians must monitor every action and reaction to maintain the desired image they wish to project and to prevent any damage to this image.

Nonverbal communication furnishes perspective into cultural attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, and myths that define a culture.

For example, sociologist Erving Goffman has identified patterns of nonverbal behaviors in advertisements that provide insight into gender relations in American culture. Goffman discovered a preponderance of *function-ranking* images in ads: "In our society when a man and a woman collaborate face-to-face in an undertaking, the man . . . is likely to perform the executive role."[9] The principle of function ranking also extends to instruction; in advertising, men are depicted instructing women more than the reverse, which "involves some sort of subordination of the instructed and deference for the instructor."[10] When females are depicted as engaged in a "traditionally" male task, such as fixing a car, a male is present to "parenthesize the activity, looking on appraisingly, condescendingly, or with wonder."[11]

Goffman also found that ads often depict women as victims of "ritualistic humiliation" at the hands of men. For example, in Newport Cigarette ads, male models dunk females in water, pour water on their heads, and hold them aloft in precarious positions. The women in these ads are smiling; they are not threatened but, rather, appear impressed by this display of dominance. Although the mock assault games are set within a comedic context, Goffman declares, "Underneath this show a man may be engaged in a deeper one, the suggestion of what he could do if he got serious about it."[12]

Moreover, male models in ads are frequently depicted encircling the female model with their arms. This gesture establishes the male as protector

from outside attack. However, at the same time, the encircling arm prevents the female from withdrawing from the male. Goffman notes that "the extended arm, in effect, marks the boundary of his social property."[13]

Nonverbal communications analysis provides insight into the role of nonverbal communication cues in the depiction of media stereotypes.

Media communicators rely on nonverbal communications cues in presenting stereotypes in programs. For instance, body type plays a role in the casting of parts in films. Characters with athletic frames (mesomorphic body types) are often cast as the heroic figures, who are highly confident, task oriented, energetic, talkative, aggressive, and dominant. In contrast, people with heavy builds (endomorphic body types) are frequently cast as characters who are lazy, warmhearted, sympathetic, good-natured, dependent, passive, sloppy, and indolent. Characters with thin, fragile frames (ectomorphic body types) often play the role of characters who are tense, fussy, critical, suspicious, tense, nervous, pessimistic, anxious, self-conscious, and reticent.

Characters also are stereotyped in terms of age. Media consultant Jane Squier Bruns relates a story in which her son Mark Squier, who is also a political media consultant, produced a TV spot for the Democratic Party designed to raise concerns about the Republicans' Medicare policy. The commercial consisted of visuals of a grandmother tending her infant grandson, while the voice-over declared that Republican initiatives would jeopardize the health care of young and old alike. Squiers's infant daughter Emma was cast as the baby in the campaign spot. Bruns, a vibrant, attractive woman who is also an actress, suggested that she play the role of the grandmother. However, she was told that she was not "right" for the part because she did not fit the stereotypical image of a grandmother—even though she is Emma's actual grandma. Instead, the role of the grandmother was given to an elderly, frumpy woman who wore a frumpy housedress.[14]

Height is frequently associated with stereotypes of males that appear in the media. Leading men are generally cast with females who are shorter. When women do appear with shorter men, the male characters generally appear in comedic roles. Consequently, when diminutive leading man Alan Ladd was cast with taller actresses, the crew dug trenches for the women to walk in to even out the height differential.

This nonverbal cue reflects, reinforces, and shapes cultural attitudes

with regard to height. A 2007 study found that taller immigrants to the United States earned more than shorter ones, with an extra inch of height associated with a 1 percent increase in income.[15]

A Cautionary Note

Nonverbal cues can serve as a springboard to further analysis of media messages. However, several mitigating factors must be taken into consideration when conducting a nonverbal communications analysis. First, the culture to which a person belongs can influence the meaning ascribed to nonverbal communications behaviors. For instance, greeting people with a kiss is common in Mediterranean countries, whereas people in Northern European countries are less inclined to greet relative strangers with a kiss. Further, individual countries may have their own protocol with regard to a nonverbal behavior. For instance, in France, people greet each other with a kiss on both cheeks—one kiss each—although in a few regions it is the double-double kiss, with two on each cheek. The Belgians, the Dutch, and the Swiss go for the triple kiss. Indeed, these behaviors can be so confusing that the lip balm company Blistex has included a catalogue of kissing customs on its Web site.[16]

In addition, nonverbal behaviors may have innocent explanations. For instance, a person may assume a particular posture because her back hurts. As Groucho Marx commented, "Sometimes a cigar is only a cigar." Thus, although a nonverbal analysis can identify patterns of nonverbal behaviors, it cannot identify the *intention* behind a nonverbal act. However, a nonverbal study can provide insight into scripted nonverbal communications and can serve as a point of origin for further examination of the meanings conveyed by unscripted nonverbal communications.

Finally, in conducting nonverbal analysis, it is essential to develop consistency in the identification of nonverbal communication through orientation, training, and pretesting.

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Despite different cultural expressions, people share common communication functions. For example, *openness gestures* (e.g., unbuttoning coats, uncrossing legs, moving toward the edge of the chair) convey a sense of confidence, encouraging interaction. In contrast, fidgeting, tugging at clothing, and playing with objects are *nervousness gestures.*

Identifying the *function,* or purpose, of nonverbal communication behaviors in media presentations can provide considerable insight into messages:

- *Clarification.* Nonverbal behaviors may emphasize points or dramatize the verbal content in pantomime. For example, hand gestures punctuate the verbal content, indicating which points are of vital importance.
- *Persuasion.* Nonverbal behaviors may be used to enlist the agreement or cooperation of the listener. An earnest look or slap on the back may serve as an appeal to support the verbal message.
- *Facilitating the communication process.* Nonverbal cues regulate the process of communication. For instance, a puzzled expression asks the communicator for clarification, whereas a fixed gaze can reassure the communicator that the listener is interested and paying attention.
- *Expression of emotion.* Nonverbal cues can express a range of emotions, including anger, nervousness, sadness, happiness, sympathy, satisfaction, fear, love, and jealousy. Nonverbal cues also can furnish information about the communicator's attitude toward the subject matter. Posture or eye contact can disclose how the person *feels* about what is being said. Nonverbal behavior also can reveal the speaker's attitude toward the other person(s) involved in the conversation. Finally, nonverbal cues can express the communicator's feelings about the environment, context, or circumstances in which the conversation is taking place.
- *Expression of intimacy.* Nonverbal behaviors can signify the level of intimacy that exists between the parties engaged in conversation. Touch, eye contact, and proximity convey attentiveness, interest, and emotional engagement between the people engaged in communication. Nonverbal cues (such as an icy stare) also can be used to maintain a distance between the communicators. Moreover, lovers often position themselves in close proximity to one another and may touch (e.g., hold hands, kiss) while conversing.
- *Social control.* Nonverbal cues can furnish perspective into disparities in social status and power. During the course of a conversation, a relationship, however brief, is formed, based on a shared interest—the topic of conversation. As in all positive relationships, the two parties must adhere to unwritten rules of decorum that govern a communication exchange, including the length of time that two people look each other in the eye, the distance between two people engaged in conversation, and the proper (or improper) boundaries for touching. Significantly, the rules of nonverbal communication are often dictated by the party who enjoys higher status. For example, at a ceremony in January 2007, New York mayor Michael R. Bloomberg planted a double kiss on Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye of New York State.[17]

Indeed, the person who assumes a dominant role in the relationship is free to violate the conventional rules of conduct. In 2006, U.S. president George W. Bush greeted German chancellor Angela Merkel by squeezing her shoulders and neck. Merkel winced in surprise and pain. Larry Sabato, professor of politics at the University of Virginia, criticized Bush's behavior as inappropriate: "Almost any male alive today knows that you don't offer uninvited massages to any female, much less the chancellor of Germany."[18]

Moreover, reporter Joan Vennoch questioned whether this was an imposition of power, given that the recipient of this squeeze was the only female in the room: "This interaction between two heads of state put an international spotlight on a fact of life for working women. You can spend a career perfecting your handshake and still be startled by a man who suddenly invades your personal space with unexpected intimacy in a professional setting. Is it a mostly innocent, if socially boorish, version of the male-to-male, locker room towel snap? Or, is it a way to demean and patronize, to change the equation by neutralizing the woman's power so it is no longer a case of two professional equals?"[19]

Indeed, the formula of tabloid talk shows often revolves around the violation of the accepted rules of nonverbal communications conduct. For example, in 2004, *The Jerry Springer Show* surpassed *The Oprah Winfrey Show* as the highest-rated daytime talk show, in large measure because of the fisticuffs between guests. The formula of Springer shows consisted of a confrontation between guests who delivered shocking news (e.g., a husband telling his wife on national television that he is a female impersonator and is sleeping with her best friend). Much of the "excitement" of the program then involved the guests pummeling each other—clearly a violation of the rules of decorum for daytime talk shows.

President Bush and German Chancellor Merkel

Nonverbal behaviors can reveal the dynamics of a relationship. In 2006, U.S. president George W. Bush greeted German chancellor Merkel by squeezing her shoulders and neck. Merkel winced in surprise and pain at this demonstration of male dominance.

However, in 2004, it was disclosed that these fights were scripted. Guests were given instructions such as "We want four fights" and threatened with lawsuits if they didn't deliver.[20] As a result of pressure from politicians, including Senator Joseph I. Lieberman and former secretary of education William Bennett, Springer Studios USA announced a new policy that would prohibit fighting on the show. Significantly, the ratings for the show immediately plummeted.

Nonverbal communication cues may fulfill more than one function simultaneously. For instance, a gesture may express intimacy and at the same time have a persuasive purpose. In addition, nonverbal communication behaviors may serve both a *manifest* and a *latent* function. Manifest functions are direct and clear to the audience. We may have little trouble recognizing these messages when we are paying full attention to a media presentation. Latent functions refer to instances in which

the media communicator's intention may not be immediately obvious to the audience. Latent functions are indirect and beneath the surface and, consequently, escape our immediate attention. Indeed, it is surprising to discover how frequently the manifest function is irrelevant—or at least subordinate—to other, latent purposes, like impressing the audience, nurturing relationships, or expressing emotion. For instance, it is not uncommon to become involved in an information exchange in which it becomes clear that the other person is not really interested in your opinions but instead is intent on converting you to his or her point of view. In this case, the latent function is *persuasion.*

Types of Nonverbal Behaviors

Examining specific nonverbal behaviors can provide insight into the message, the communicator, and the dynamics of a communication exchange.

Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are a reliable source of emotional information. According to psychology professor Dr. Paul Ekman, seven basic human emotions have very clear facial signals—anger, sadness, fear, surprise, disgust, contempt, and happiness.[21] In addition, the face can register a range of responses, including evaluative judgments (e.g., pain, pleasure, superiority, determination, surprise, attention, and bewilderment), degree of interest or disinterest in the subject, and level of understanding.

People tend to attribute positive characteristics to individuals who smile, including intelligence, a good personality, and being a "pleasant person."[22] Smiling also assumes gender-based meanings. Women tend to smile more often than males, perhaps reflecting a desire to please as a subordinate member of society. However, because smiling can be a social construction for women, their behavior may be scripted (i.e., covering other emotions) and, consequently, more difficult to interpret.

People in the public eye, such as political figures, high-profile corporate executives, and broadcast journalists, are trained to develop their *presentational* facial expressions as part of an overall "impression management" strategy. Media relations consultant Tripp Frohlichstein trains his clients to maintain an "open face" while in front of the camera: "Keep your eyebrows up and smile when appropriate. This helps you

better convey your pride, as well as intensity. When the eyebrows are flat, so are your voice and feelings. When your eyebrows are down, so is the interview, and you may be perceived as angry or negative."[23]

A person's immediate facial reaction is often an accurate measure of his or her genuine feelings; however, this expression quickly is replaced by a presentational expression. Some facial cues to be alert for include the following:

- Raised eyebrows indicate surprise.
- A set jaw reveals anger, determination, tension, resolve, or decision.
- A chin retraction is a protective action or a signal that something is scary or frightening.
- Flared nostrils express anger.
- A nose wrinkle signifies dislike, disapproval, or disgust.

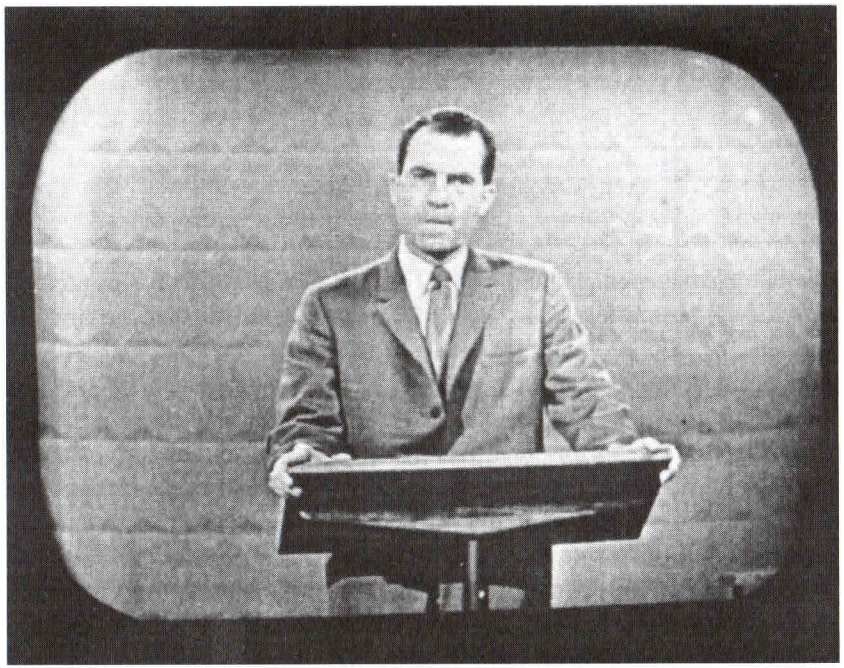
Eye Behaviors

The eyes have a mystical quality that defies rational explanation. Look in the mirror, covering your face with your hands and leaving only your eyes exposed. Think of something sad, then something funny, and finally something that makes you angry. It is uncanny how these simple orbs can express powerful emotions: eyes narrow with anger, grin with joy, fill with tears of sorrow, and widen with surprise.

Modern politicians employ media advisers to assist them in the best ways to make eye contact with as many voters as possible when giving campaign speeches. Direct eye contact with the camera, reporter, or audience heightens the candidate's credibility. For example, during the famous Kennedy-Nixon debates, the majority of voters listening on the radio felt that Nixon won the debate. However, the majority of the television audience believed that Kennedy won. This disparity can be attributed to Nixon's shifty eye behavior on camera, which undermined his honesty and trustworthiness.

The length and direction of eye contact also can be an expression of dominance and control. In the film *Death and the Maiden* (1994), Paulina Escobar (Sigourney Weaver) becomes reacquainted with Dr. Miranda (Ben Kingsley), a sadistic character who had repeatedly tortured and sexually abused her while she was his political prisoner. (Miranda had been in a position of power in an unnamed totalitarian country.) During their meetings, Miranda attempts to extend his control over her. In

Richard M. Nixon



Eye behavior can be regarded as a barometer of a person's character and intentions. During the famous Kennedy-Nixon debates, the majority of radio listeners felt that Nixon won the debate. However, most of the television audience believed that Kennedy had won. This disparity can be attributed to Nixon's shifty eye behavior on camera, which made him appear dishonest and untrustworthy. *AP/Wide World Photo.*

the final sequence of the film, both characters are seated at a concert listening to Schubert's "Death and the Maiden." Miranda is positioned diagonally above Paulina. The camera circles slowly from the orchestra to a close-up of Paulina seated in the lower orchestra section with her husband. The camera guides us as she slowly turns her head and looks directly up toward the box circle, where Miranda is seated with his family. At this point, the camera closes in on Miranda staring down at Paulina. Briefly he turns toward his son, smiles, and pats him on the head, and then turns back, resuming his fixed stare down at Paulina. The camera then returns slowly to focus on Paulina again. She avoids Miranda's stare, sitting rigidly, with a tense, fixed, forward gaze. This eye interaction reinforces the hierarchical relationship between the two

characters. Further, the elliptical circle formed by the camera movement from Paulina to Miranda and back to Paulina informs us that the issue is closed. Dr. Miranda will remain in his position of power and will never be punished for his abuses.

Posture

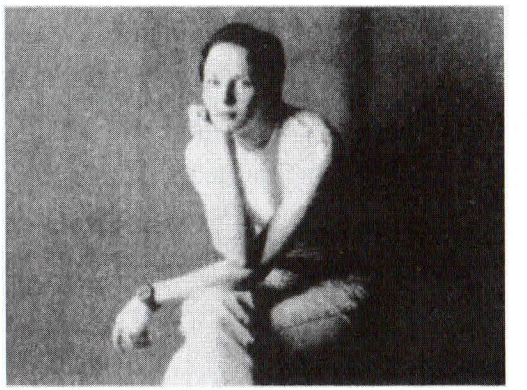
Posture refers to a stance or positioning of the body or body part. Postures can convey a range of personal information about a communicator's character. An upright posture communicates a message of confidence and integrity. A slumping posture conveys a sense of cowardice, meekness, sadness, or depression.[24] Having good posture—standing tall—is an indication of empowerment, authority, and rank in society. In contrast, slouching conveys a passive attitude, sloppiness, and incompetence. Crossing one's arms and legs is a defensive posture that suggests that the communicator is inaccessible and angry.

Examining posture in media presentations provides insight into the relative positions of power and authority. Erving Goffman points out that in many advertisements, females pose in a cant position, in which the head or body is bowed. The latent message of this body language is deference, submission, and subordination.[25] For example, a recent Nike ad featured nude portraits of five male and three female athletes. The posture of the athletes reflects a hierarchy in which the men are deemed more powerful. The male athletes are standing erect, their figures filling most of the page. In contrast, the three women are diminished in both body position and in relation to the size of the page. One woman is stooped on the lower left side of a two-page spread. The second is crouched at the bottom of the page, and the third appears in a sexually receptive position, semireclining on her back with her legs in the air.

Posture may also indicate the speaker's attitude toward the subject matter or the audience. Leaning toward a person is a receptive position, while slumping communicates a negative attitude. In a commercial for *Sports Illustrated,* a man standing behind the bar in his rec room leans forward (toward the camera) to tell us about a special offer to subscribe to the magazine. This posture conveys a sense of intimacy and informality, which in turn suggests friendship, honesty, and trustworthiness. This fellow is not trying to "sell us anything" (actually, he is); instead, he just wants to let us in on a good thing.

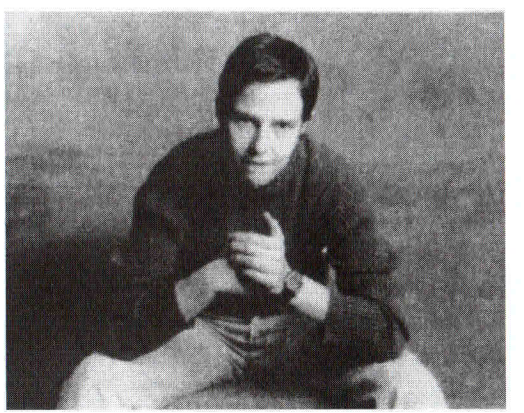
Posture

Posture can express thought, reveal character, or reflect attitudes. Examples include the following. *Photos by Jamie Clark.*

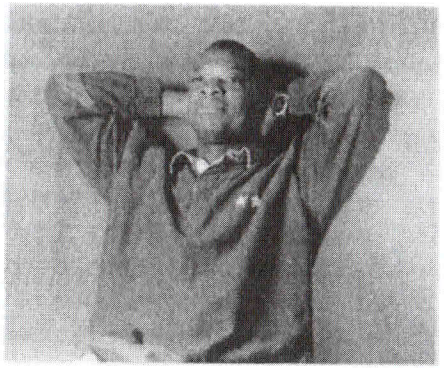


A pensive attitude

A defensive posture

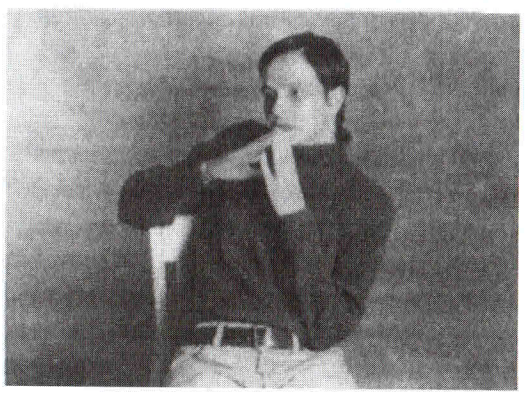


An active, assertive position



A relaxed, confident demeanor

An assertive stance



A thoughtful attitude

Gestures

Gestures refer to the act of moving the limbs or body as an expression of thought or emphasis. The meaning of gestures may vary enormously in different cultures. For instance, in the United States, an individual beckons someone to come by holding the palm up and moving the fingers toward his or her body. In Thailand, a person moves his or her fingers back and forth with the palm down to signal another person to come near. The Tongans sit down in the presence of superiors; in the West, people stand up.

However, some nonverbal gestures have a universal meaning. According to Desmond Morris, the palm punch, in which the fist of one hand is punched rhythmically several times against the palm of the other, is an angry gesture that has a primal, symbolic significance: "This has a common meaning of a mimed blow against an enemy, redirected onto the palm of the gesturer. In such cases the gesture indicates a state of barely controlled rage."[26] Other universal gestures include the chin stroke (pensiveness, concentration), chin rub (dubiousness, questioning), and the chest beat (strength, power).

Hand gestures are often used to enhance a speaker's credibility. The hand gestures of political candidates are carefully synchronized with rhetorical devices to emphasize points as well as direct audience response—either encouraging or halting applause.

Another positive hand gesture is the "steeple," in which the tips of all five fingers of each hand are touching to simulate a church steeple. Because the fingertips are pointed toward heaven, this is a very positive gesture, signaling confidence, integrity, contemplation and sincerity. The meaning of gestures may vary enormously in different cultures. For instance, in the United States, the sign in which the thumb and index finger are joined in a circle means "A-OK." However, this gesture has a variety of connotations in other cultures: In Latin America, this gesture is regarded as obscene and insulting, with associations with excretory functions. In France, this gesture means "zero" or "worthless." In Japan, the thumb and forefinger making a circle is used as symbol for money.

Proxemic Communication

Proxemic communication refers to the way that space configurations convey meaning. The use of space falls into three distinct categories:

- *Personal space* consists of the space immediately encircling our bodies, which each of us considers our own territory. Personal space is the area we maintain between ourselves and others. The boundaries of personal space may be culturally determined. For example, members of Arab nations typically stand closer when conversing than do Europeans. Moreover, the boundaries of personal space also vary *within* a culture. In the United States, women tend to stand closer together than men.

  When communicating, individuals negotiate a comfort zone for interaction. Any violation of this space creates feelings of discomfort and apprehension. As mentioned earlier, close proximity between people often is regarded as a sign of intimacy. Thus, trespassing on an individual's personal space may signify an imposition of control, reflecting (and reinforcing) status or power differences. According to Professor Ann E. Fuehrer, "The more powerful person is the one who determines the amount of physical space. They are taking the initiative to determine the degree of proximity."[27]
- *Group formation* refers to how people are positioned in relation to one another. The arrangement of people within a group often reveals the *attitudinal position* that an individual assumes with regard to the activity. For instance, students frequently sit in the same place in the classroom, even if the seats aren't assigned. To be sure, habit plays a role in students' seat selections, but where students decide to sit may also be an indication of whether they are comfortable participating in class discussions or prefer to take a less active role.

  Group formations may also indicate relative status. People in control often assume a place in the center of the group, with marginal members on the fringe. This hierarchical principle also applies to seating arrangements. In America, people at the head of the table are in control, whereas the individual seated to the left of the head of the table has the least status in the group.[28] In Japan, however, the most important person sits at one end of the rectangular table, with those nearest in rank at the right and left of this senior position. The lowliest member of the group sits at the opposite end of the table from the person with the most authority and is nearest to the door.[29]

  Group formation also indicates whether the assemblage of people forms an open or closed society. People standing in a closed formation are excluding others from joining the group, while groups in an open formation are more inclusive.

  Contact (1997) is a film in which group interactions send messages of inclusion and exclusion. Dr. Ellie Arroway (Jodie Foster) is an astronomer who finds herself in a subservient position to her male colleagues despite her considerable knowledge and expertise in the field. In one scene, Ellie stands at the end of a table in front of the door giving a presentation, while her former boss Drumlin (Tom Skerritt) sits, relaxed, in the middle of a group of peers. The group arrangement requires that Ellie confront the entire group, mostly males, while Drumlin receives their nonverbal support. In the final scene, Ellie finally is positioned in the center of a group—this time, teaching science to young children. Within the context of the film, she has assumed her "rightful" place in society—not as a scientist but as a caretaker or teacher.
- *Fixed space* refers to the characteristics associated with particular locations. In media programs, certain activities are associated with particular rooms. For instance, scenes depicting informal socializing often take place in the kitchen. In contrast, embarrassing moments often occur in scenes taking place in the more formal setting of the dining room.

  Locations may also serve as metaphors for aspects of characters' psyches. For instance, *Gaslight* (1944) is a film in which the attic represents the subconscious. Mattias Thuresson provides the following plot synopsis:

> Young Paula Alquist (Ingrid Bergman) marries the charming Gregory Anton (Charles Boyer). An elderly aunt of Paula's was murdered a few years ago in her home at Tresvenor Square. Paula inherited the apartment which the newlyweds make their home. Slowly but methodically Gregory convinces Paula that she always forgets things, is nervous, and unwell. He also makes sure that she does not get out much and has only minimal contact with other people.[30]

Gregory's ruse enables him to dig around in the attic for the aunt's hidden jewels without attracting attention. Paula remains oblivious to the nefarious intentions of her husband and does not fully remember (or understand) the events leading to her aunt's death—until she finally makes the journey up to the attic and confronts her husband, as well as her own subconscious fears and buried memories. It is in the attic that Paula (and the audience) finally discover Gregory's innermost thoughts and secrets, which he had kept hidden beneath his charming exterior.

- *Arranged space* refers to the placement of objects within a fixed space (e.g., home, office). The arrangement of a room often serves as an indication of the social dynamics among the people who inhabit the space. For example, the primary television-viewing area in a home can furnish perspective into family dynamics. In America, the furniture in the TV room often revolves around the TV screen, even though this arrangement may make it awkward for people in the room to converse with one another. Where people sit in relation to each other as they watch is also an interesting microcosm of family dynamics. The person perceived as dominant often has the choice of the prime seat and is in charge of the remote control. In contrast, people from France, Italy, and Mexico position furniture to encourage interaction among. Conversation is important for them, and facing chairs toward a television screen stifles conversation.[31]

Tactile Communication

Tactile communication, or touch, can serve as a form of support, reassurance, intimacy, or sexual interest, or as an expression of emotions (e.g., anger, exhilaration). However as mentioned earlier, touching violations also can be an assertion of power and control by high-status individuals.

In media presentations, touching behaviors can reinforce verbal content or convey independent latent messages. For instance, politicians have mastered the art of holding a handshake for an instant longer than is normally expected, sending a message of personal regard, intimacy, and trust.

The specific meaning of touch is influenced by the following factors:

- *Culture.* As mentioned earlier, high-contact cultures include Arab countries, Latin America, and Southern Europe. Cultures less inclined to touch include Northern Europe and the United States.[32]
- *The nature of the relationship.* Lovers touch each other in different ways than mere acquaintances.
- *Region of the body that is touched.* A tap on the shoulder has a different meaning from a pat on the bottom.
- *Age.* Young and older people touch most frequently when communicating.
- *Context.* The place and occasion in which the touching behavior

Gaslight

Locations may serve as metaphors for aspects of characters' psyches. For instance, in the film *Gaslight* (1944), the attic represents the subconscious. In the film, Paula Alquist (Ingrid Bergman) marries the charming Gregory Anton (Charles Boyer), who knows a secret—Paula's aunt's jewels are hidden somewhere in the attic of the home that the couple has inherited. Gregory proceeds to "gaslight" Paula—convincing her that she is hearing things—so that he can dig around in the attic for the aunt's hidden jewels without attracting attention. The attic represents Paula's subconscious fears and buried memories of her aunt's death, adding to her compulsion to ignore the noises in the attic. (*Getty Images: Hulton Archive*)

occurs help determine its meaning. What might be suitable at a drive-in movie might not be acceptable at the office.

- *The type of touching behavior exhibited.* There are subtle yet discernible differences between pats, squeezes, brushes, and strokes.

Primary Colors (1998) is a film that provides an interesting commentary on the use of tactile communications in the political arena. In one scene, campaign manager Howard Ferguson (Paul Guilsoyle) and campaign aid Henry Burton (Adrian Lester) watch presidential candidate Jack Stanton (John Travolta) campaigning. Political consultant Richard Jemmons (Billy Bob Thornton) translates the meaning behind the touching behavior exhibited by Stanton in the scene:

> You know, I've seen him do it a million times now. . . . When [he puts] that left hand on your elbow or up on your bicep like he's doing now, very basic move, he's interested in you, he's honored to meet you. If he gets any higher, gets on your shoulder like that, it's not as intimate. It means he'll share a laugh with you or a secret, a light secret, not a real one, but very flattering. If he doesn't know you that well and wants to share something emotional with you, he'll lock you with a two-hander. Well, you'll see when he shakes hands with you, Henry.

Governor Stanton displays these five gestures throughout the course of the film. After the election, Stanton greets Henry with "the two-hander," which the audience understands as a sign of affection. However, had Henry not dropped out of the campaign at an earlier stage, he might have merited a "hug," the highest nonverbal expression of affection and respect.

As mentioned earlier, an image of people holding hands is a sign of affection, protection, and comfort. People holding hands often look relaxed and secure. Indeed, holding hands can actually have pronounced physiological impact. Professor James Coan declared, "We found that holding the hand of really anyone, it made your brain work a little less hard in coping."[33]

Physical Appearance

It is undeniable that physical appearance has an impact on ways in which people relate to one another. Attractive people are considered more socially desirable, credible, and persuasive than people considered

President Bush and Prince Abdullah holding hands

In Arab countries, holding hands is an act of respect and affection, such as when President George W. Bush held the hand of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in Crawford, Texas, in 2005. (*Getty Images; photographer: Charles Ommanney*)

less attractive. In addition, good-looking people consistently receive preferential treatment.[34] Not only do we admire attractive people, but we identify with them and sympathize with their situations. Thus, even though film stars represent unapproachable ideals of beauty, audience members enjoy projecting themselves into their roles and situations.

In popular media programming characters often are defined by their appearance. Heroes and heroines are physically attractive, whereas villains often are physically displeasing in some way. Thus, ugliness is equated with evil. This practice can lead to falsely labeling an attractive person as "good" and an unattractive person as "bad."

The world of popular media programming operates according to a *hierarchy of appearance.* Physical beauty also is presented as emblematic of virtue. Thus, heroic characters are attractive because, on some level, they *deserve* it. Handsome heroes assume control of their lives and prevail over the villains—the inference being that these characters are "in the right" precisely *because* they are attractive. The heroes often are called upon to protect others—usually an attractive female. The implication is that only beautiful women are worth protecting.

Moreover, one way that we know that supporting characters are not as important as the stars is because they are not as attractive. In romantic comedies, attractive characters are engaged in a quest to find equally gorgeous partners. By extension, unattractive characters are suited only for each other. Comedy (or, worse, tragedy) occurs when people try to seek matches outside of their particular station. The cumulative media message is "know your place" when it comes to appearance.

For example, *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) is a romantic comedy that traces the relationship between Harry Burns (Billy Crystal) and Sally Albright (Meg Ryan). Harry and Sally maintain a platonic friendship. The dynamic of the film involves the two principal characters discovering what the audience can see: the two are "right" for each other (in large measure because they are both attractive).

Since they are only friends, Harry and Sally agree to fix each other up with blind dates: Harry with Marie (Carrie Fisher), and Sally with Jess (Bruno Kirby). They go on a double date, but it is clear that the two couples are physically mismatched. Jess has an obvious beer belly, the kind that hangs over his belt. And although actress Fisher is normally very pretty, her hairstyle, dress, and makeup are designed to make Marie look plain.

But while Harry and Sally struggle to find their romantic—and physical—counterparts, Jess and Marie get married. Unlike their attractive friends, Jess and Marie are content; their aims are not too lofty, and they happily settle for a partner whose appearance situates them within the same class in the hierarchy of appearance.

Eventually, Sally and Harry discover that they have been meant for each other all along. Order is restored to this universe, with the attractive and not-so-attractive couples finding their appropriate matches. Significantly, this hierarchy of appearance does not always apply to men—particularly when other cultural "virtues" are evident, such as wealth and power. Ironically, these measures of success become more pronounced as men grow older. Males in their fifties and sixties are at the peak of their salaries and influence.

In advertising, alluring models are typically the center of attention, as ordinary people stare enviously at them (ostensibly because of their appearance, but by implication, because of the product). These ads promote their products as a modern form of alchemy, in which base metals are transformed into gold. In this version, ordinary folks are transformed into the glamorous models—simply by using their products. However, a careful consideration of the ad can uncover this illogical premise. For example, in Pantene shampoo ads, a woman moves her head in slow motion, so that her lustrous hair sways gracefully and the light catches the nuances of her hair's texture and color. The latent message of the ad is that the shampoo is responsible for her lovely hair. After looking at the commercial, Leah Silverblatt, then nine years old, was asked whether the shampoo made the model's hair that pretty, or if the advertisers had selected a model who had beautiful hair in the first place. Leah immediately replied that the model probably had great hair to begin with.

This emphasis on appearance has become an essential factor in broadcast journalism as well. One classic illustration occurred in 1981, when Christine Craft was demoted from her position as a news anchor at a Kansas City television station at age thirty-six. Her boss, she said, explained that she came across on the tube as "too old, too ugly and not sufficiently deferential to men."[35] Now a Sacramento lawyer and Bay Area talk-show host, Craft sued the station.

Costumes

Costumes provide a wide range of information. For instance, clothing furnishes perspective into the worldview of subcultures and ethnic groups. Tom Zeller describes the underlying worldview of the costumes of "hipsters":

> Hipsters are always very conscious of what they are wearing and distinguish themselves by dressing creatively. . . . They possess an innate contempt for franchises, strip malls and the corporate world in general, . . . believe that irony has more resonance than reason . . . and enjoy declaring random things, like vodka martinis or exercise, passe.
>
> Underneath their apparent individualism, Hipsters conform just like everyone else.[36]

Moreover, costumes can represent *identity.* In the eighteenth century, the upper classes wore distinctive, expensive clothes that were beyond the means of the poor. Today, however, clothing choices transcend social class: lower-income people wear designer clothes (or knockoffs of designer clothes), while rich people walk around in tattered sweatpants.

Costumes also reveal *cultural preoccupations.* For instance, today's adults are dressing like kids as a reflection of their obsession with youth culture.

Media communicators use costumes as a dramatic device. For instance, costumes can reveal character in media presentations. Heroes wear bright-colored clothing, while villains wear disheveled, dark clothes. Costumes also function as an expression of a character's distinctive persona. For instance, wearing a trench coat in many of his films reinforced Humphrey Bogart's tough, ruthless image.

Costumes also dramatize thematic concerns associated with popular genres. In the gangster genre, the mob's flamboyant wardrobe is associated with violence, wealth, and power. Eugene Rosow comments, "The most reliably consistent trait of movie gangsters was their sartorial progression from dark and wrinkled nondescript clothing to flashy, double-breasted, custom tailored striped suits with silk ties and suitable jewelry."[37] The gangster's wardrobe epitomizes their paradoxical position in society; the characters appropriate the styles of high fashion to blend in and gain acceptance, but their clothing style is too extreme, and they are further ostracized by society. So they cultivate an "identified school of stylishness that, far from operating as camouflage, ultimately functioned like warrior dress"[38] In *Casino* (1995), director Martin Scorsese used costumes as a metaphor for the excesses in the lifestyle of the gangster. During the film, Ace (Robert De Niro) changes costumes fifty-two times; his wife, Ginger, (Sharon Stone) went through forty costume changes.

The choice of costumes can signal plot developments in a narrative. For instance, in the gangster genre, clothing often is emblematic of the mobster's rise from small-time crook to successful mobster, and

his subsequent fall. Thus, in *Casino,* Ace's demise is documented by his choice of wardrobe. Toward the end of the film, Ace rises from his desk wearing a meticulously coordinated outfit (shirt, tie, socks, shoes, and boxer shorts)—minus his trousers. This signals a radical departure for a man who throughout the film has had a fixation with appearance. Clothes define a gangster's identity—both to himself and to the audience. Therefore, slipping into sartorial neglect signals the beginning of his fall.

In *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), director John Singleton uses costumes to chart the complex issues of racial identity and alienation facing a black youth moving into maturity in South Central Los Angeles. Concerned about her son Tre (Cuba Gooding Jr.), his mother, Reva (Angela Basset), sends him to live with his father, Furious (Larry Fishburne). Furious works as a mortgage broker in the neighborhood. Furious's clothes (chinos, striped shirts, knitted tops, and glasses) exhibit the conventional insignia of a black male socialized into a white middle-class culture. Conversely, the clothes of Tre's best friend, Doughboy (Ice Cube), are political statements against the established social order. The style of the youth conveys the message of aggression and defiance against the subordination of dominant white male hegemony. In addition, the clothes represent masculinity (as defined by the black community) and imply authority, control, toughness, and independence.

Thus, the costumes in *Boyz n the Hood* signify the fundamental choices facing the African American male in American culture. If Tre chooses the conventional, banal style of the white middle class, he merits acceptance into the dominant white culture but becomes alienated from his own sense of self, repressing his black, masculine identity. By donning the street uniform, Tre assumes 'hood affinity and masculine identity but suffers alienation from the mainstream American community and is relegated to the life of the streets.

In some cases, the costumes worn in media presentations become fashion trends, assuming a cultural significance. According to Professor Harriet Worobey, Joan Crawford's trademark dresses with shoulder pads were an expression of emerging cultural attitudes and preoccupations: "In the 1940s, Crawford was in her shopgirl/independent woman stage, starring in films such as *Mildred Pierce.* The shoulder pads indicated that she had power and was able to compete with her male co-stars. Women began to wear them because they wanted to emulate her. The clothes coincided with what was happening with women in the forties, who were

having to join the workforce because of the war and were reluctant to give up this independence."[39]

Indeed, it can be argued that the costumes that appear in media presentations can *forecast* historical events. Reporter Stephanie Rosenbloom observes, "Just how much meaning should be read into fashion is a matter of debate. But few would disagree that clothes have always reflected the exuberance, the gloom, even the chaos of the moment." Barbara Bloemink, curatorial director of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, declares that fashion can "both sense and influence."[40]

For example, according to Anne Hollander, the author of *Seeing Through Clothes,* the class conflict leading to the French Revolution was heralded by the fashions of the time. Before 1789, women began wearing "simple, belted shifts," while men wore "plebeian garb" like "rough coats and unkempt neckwear."[41] Rosenbloom adds that the fashions of the sixties gave "shape and substance and color to the inarticulate impulses of the decade."[42]

Within this context, one of the striking trends at the 2005 Paris fashion show was the obscuring, by masks, hoods, hats, and swaths of fabric, of the faces of the models. According to Sarah Takesh, the founder of the Tarsian & Blinkley clothing company and a resident of Kabul, Afghanistan, a model's face was perhaps too beautiful to represent the moment. "There's such a dark blanket that has settled on the world right now," she said. Hollander agrees: The style, she said, was "muffled and hampered, taking off from the burka-clad idea; but it's essentially the same lack of female self-possession only in a different key."[43]

Costume has emerged as an important consideration in the persona of politicians. For instance, in April 2006, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama's choice of "costume" for the *Late Show with David Letterman* made the pronouncement that he was, indeed, a serious candidate. "That is a tremendous suit you have on," Letterman told Obama. "That is a very electable suit."[44] Dori Molitor, the chief executive of WomanWise, explains, "Voters are looking for a new language and new thinking. Obama helps bring in that new language visually by breaking the dress code of blue suit, starched shirt and red tie."[45]

At the same time, wardrobe can be seen as a way to identify weaknesses in a politician, as when Richard Nixon wore lace-up shoes on the beach, looking decidedly like a geek. "You neither want to be seen as somebody who cares too much about appearance or too little," said Jay Fielden, the editor of *Men's Vogue.*[46]

Wardrobe also displays the double standard imposed on female politicians. "For women it's a totally separate game, a separate psychology," said lobbyist Juliana Glover, According to Glover, a female politician cannot afford to be too well turned out, or she risks being read as untrustworthy, a virago, or worse, a vixen.[47] For example, consider the following news story about Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that appeared in the *Washington Post* in 2005:

> Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived at the Wiesbaden Army Airfield . . . dressed all in black. She was wearing a black skirt that hit just above the knee, and it was topped with a black coat that fell to mid-calf. . . . As Rice walked out to greet the troops, the coat blew open in a rather swashbuckling way to reveal the top of a pair of knee-high boots. The boots had a high, slender heel that is not particularly practical. But it is a popular silhouette because it tends to elongate and flatter the leg. In short, the boots are sexy. . . .
>
> Rice's coat and boots speak of sex and power—such a volatile combination, and one that in political circles rarely leads to anything but scandal. When looking at the image of Rice in Wiesbaden, the mind searches for ways to put it all into context. It turns to fiction, to caricature. To shadowy daydreams. Dominatrix! It is as though sex and power can only co-exist in a fantasy. When a woman combines them in the real world, stubborn stereotypes have her power devolving into a form that is purely sexual.[48]

This article would be considered inappropriate if its subject was a male. For instance, it would be considerably more difficult to find stories commenting on George W. Bush's legs. Furthermore, this kind of article conveys the message that the basis for judging a female candidate is her appearance, which ultimately undermines confidence in her qualifications for public office. Indeed, by framing Rice's position of power in sexual terms, the article conveys the latent message that, in American culture, powerful women continue to intimidate males.

Accessories

Accessories are adornments that enhance personal appearance, such as makeup, hairstyle, eyeglasses, handbags, and cosmetic surgery. Accessories can send powerful nonverbal messages about an individual's credibility, power, likability, and competency. Through selection of attire,

President Bush in Pilot Costume

The selection of words and images can influence the ways in which people perceive events and people. To illustrate, in May 2003, President Bush, in pilot gear, landed a fighter jet on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* to announce "Mission Accomplished" in Iraq. The exterior of the plane was marked with "Navy 1" on the back and "George W. Bush Commander-in-Chief" just below the cockpit window. The media instantly picked up on this term, reframing the role and responsibilities of the president. (*Getty Images; photographer: Hector Mata*)

automobiles, and hairstyles, we can assemble a unique, distinguishable *identity.* Style has become a way to advertise ourselves within mass culture; our choices tell others who we are, what we stand for, and what others can expect from us.

In American political campaigns, candidates differentiate themselves through their choice of accessories. For example, during the 2004 presidential election, President George W. Bush wore French cuffs with gold cufflinks, which, according to Alex Williams, "reinforced an impression of executive acumen." In contrast, Democratic opponent John Kerry often wore a yellow wristband from the Lance Armstrong Foundation, an advocacy group for cancer survivors, "which may lend a dash of youthful athleticism."[49]

At times accessories actually *become* the message. Cherie Bank, medical reporter for WCAU-TV in Philadelphia, recalls reporting on a

medical breakthrough involving the early detection of birth defects. "I anticipated calls from expectant mothers who wanted more information about the procedure. However, the first call I got was from a woman who wanted to know where I bought my earrings."[50]

Artifacts

The use of artifacts in media presentations can lend an air of authenticity to the presentation. For instance, in the film version of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996), the filmmaker meticulously included trappings from the period, including clothing, furniture, and curios, which transported the viewer to nineteenth-century England and Italy. In addition, the sets are an integral part of many media genres, making the audience feel familiar in these surroundings. For instance, we expect saloons in old westerns to contain swinging doors, a player piano, a long bar, and spittoons on the floor.

In addition, media communicators use artifacts to comment on the attitudes, behaviors, and values of a historical period. For instance, in *Mad Men* (2007), a cable television drama set in the 1960s, the appearance of artifacts furnishes perspective into the growing materialism of the era. Matthew Weiner, who created and wrote the series, explains, "The story is told in the details, and those details have their own life. . . . The metal fixture that clasps like a clothespin onto the guest towel—my grandmother had it, my mother had it. It's actually written into the script."[51]

Vocalic Communication

Vocalic communication refers to the quality of the voice that conveys meaning, independent of the meaning of the words spoken. Vocalic communication includes the following elements:

- *Volume:* the relative loudness or softness in our voices. Loudness can signify dominance or conviction, while a low volume may suggest insecurity, submissiveness, or evasiveness.
- *Tone:* the characteristic quality or timber of the voice. A deep tone suggests authority, power, and confidence. Nasal voices are unattractive, lethargic, and foolish. Breathy voices are judged to be youthful and artistic for males, but artificial and high-strung for females.

- *Pitch:* the relative position of a tone in the musical scale; that is, whether the voice is high or low. Flat voices are seen as sluggish, cold, and withdrawn, while variety in pitch is dynamic and extroverted. A high-pitched voice may signal lying.[52] Ending a sentence with an elevated pitch ordinarily signals that the speaker is asking a question. However, this rise in pitch may also indicate that the speaker is uncertain about what he or she is saying. Conversely, lowering the pitch at the end of a sentence conveys certainty and authority.
- *Rate:* the pace or rhythm of delivery—how rapidly or slowly we speak. A person is generally regarded as speaking with greater intensity and earnestness as his or her speaking rate increases.[53] Media consultant Tripp Frohlichstein declares, "Too fast and listeners can't follow you. Too slow and you become ponderous and boring."[54]
- *Duration:* the length of time a communicator takes to emit a given sound or sounds. Drawing out a conversation is a dominance device, in which the speaker seeks to control the conversation.
- *Diction:* the clarity of pronunciation and articulation. Garbled diction can suggest confusion, ignorance, or deceit.
- *Silence:* the *absence* of sound. Because of the expense of producing a film or television program, time is a precious commodity. Consequently, *not* talking can be a dramatic—and effective—form of communication. Indeed, the power of actors such as James Dean or Clint Eastwood often comes not from what they say but from what they don't (or are unable to) express. In other contexts silence can be soothing and encouraging.
- *Laughter:* an involuntary emotional release that can express joy, approval, surprise, discomfort, anxiety, sympathy, or ridicule. The context of the laughter determines its exact meaning. For example, people who are nervous or feel that they are in a subservient position may laugh at inappropriate times. Various categories of laughter convey different meanings. In television programs, laugh tracks punctuate programs with chuckles, giggles, snickers, and guffaws, instructing the audience not only on what is funny, but on how funny the situation is.

Vocal cues such as dialect, tonal quality, inflection, speed of delivery, and accent transmit a wide range of information. According to psychologist Richard Wiseman, vocality can be a more accurate barometer of the communicator's intention than eye contact or gestures: "If you want to find out if a politician's lying . . . you're better turning away or shutting your eyes and just concentrating on the sound track."[55]

Dialect, tonal quality, inflection, speed of delivery, pitch, and pause inform the audience about the speaker's nationality, educational level, and social class. An accent, such as the postvocalic *R* that identifies a Bostonian or the Southern drawl, can pinpoint a person's birthplace. Accents can charm an audience; however, a heavy accent can interfere with the communication process.

A person with an accent may become the butt of jokes, undermining the seriousness of the message. For example, in the classic television series *I Love Lucy,* a running gag consisted of Lucy Ricardo poking fun at her husband's heavy Cuban accent (Lucy asks, "What do you mean, 'I've got a lot of 'splainin' to do?'"). Indeed, the history of American media is replete with exploitive films that minstralize, vaudevillize, and mimic black speech, diminishing the character of African Americans. However, according to film and cultural historian Clyde Taylor, authentic black dialect in indigenous films reveals not only black values, but the many "distinctive and richly expressive characteristics," such as semantic ambiguity, bold extravagant metaphor, and a prophetic mode of utterance.[56]

African American cultural expression can also be found in black music, which often moves black speech patterns into melody. According to jazz musician Phil Wilson, jazz was a form of dialogue among black musicians. While playing in all-white night clubs, black musicians used jazz to alert each other of coming trouble.[57]

Moreover, vocal cues can furnish insight into the *emotional context* of a speaker's remarks, including the type of emotion (e.g., anger, disappointment) and degree of emotional intensity. Vocal qualities also influence the impression that a speaker makes on the audience. A pleasing voice contributes to the credibility and attractiveness of the speaker. As a result, broadcast reporters train their voices to be low in pitch and resonant to give them an air of authority.

Nonverbal Indicators of Behavior

Nonverbal indicators provide a rich source of information about an individual's frame of mind and attitude. Terry Corpal, professor of criminal justice and a retired Secret Service agent, observes that nonverbal cues can furnish insight into human conduct: "By themselves, these behaviors

may signify nothing. Collectively, they provide a tremendous amount of information about the person."[58]

These nonverbal cues can be applied to the analysis of media presentations as well. Actors adopt nonverbal mannerisms to express their characters' internal motivations and emotions. In addition, individuals covered by the media frequently lapse into unconscious nonverbal behavior patterns. Examining these unscripted verbal behaviors can serve as an indication of the media communicator's behavior and disposition.

Deception

Examining nonverbal behaviors can be an effective method of identifying instances of *deception.* Deception is a category of human behavior that includes doubt, lying, uncertainty, and exaggeration. Psychology professor Dr. Paul Ekman has developed a mechanism for reading subtle emotional cues from facial expressions. Using a facial action coding system (or FACS), Ekman is able identify *microexpressions*—immediate reactions that, while typically lasting less than a quarter of a second, display an individual's genuine emotions.

Ekman found that the forty-three muscles of the face work in observable, predictable ways when a person experiences a particular emotion—even when an emotion is so fleeting that the person experiencing it may not be conscious of it. Ekman explains, "While everybody can smile, most people can't move one crucial muscle around the eyes that must be moved to generate the physiology of happiness."[59]

In this way, the FACS can be used to detect liars. Ekman explains, "In a fake smile, only the zygomatic major muscle, which runs from the cheekbone to the corner of the lips, moves. In a real smile, the eyebrows and the skin between the upper eyelid and the eyebrow come down very slightly. The muscle involved is the orbicularis oculi, pars lateralis."[60]

Another way to detect deception is by looking for "evasive nonverbal behaviors." When questioning a suspect, Police Deputy Tom O'Connor begins by asking a series of routine questions in order to gauge the subject's normal nonverbal behavior pattern. O'Connor then asks more direct, probing questions and then notes any involuntary changes in nonverbal behavior: "The key from my perspective as a policeman is that we must put a person in a stressful situation (one in which they know that their responses have consequences, such as a loss of reputation or confinement). White lies often are undetectable because there are no

huge consequences related to being caught. Nonverbal behavior cues are based specifically on what they do after they have heard and fully understand a critical question addressed to them."[61]

In this stressful situation, a person who is caught in a lie must concentrate on formulating a credible response. At that moment, the suspect is prone to let down his or her guard, displaying involuntary, unconscious nonverbal behaviors. O'Connor looks for downcast eyes (particularly before responding to a question), a low level of eye contact, shifty eye behaviors, lip biting, or noticeable changes in the pattern of breathing or frequency of swallowing. Other nonverbal signals of inner turmoil include hand rubbing or experiencing dry mouth.[62]

A suspect may also engage in a series of evasive nonverbal behaviors, such as dropping his or her head or clearing his or her throat, which O'Connor describes as "a delaying tactic—buying time to formulate an acceptable response."[63]

Another signal of deceit consists of hand-to-face gestures to cover up a lie. Pease observes that young children often cover their mouths with their hands "in an attempt to stop the deceitful words from coming out."[64] A variation of this hand-to-face gesture is the nose touch. Morris explains,

> Touching the nose unknowingly . . . during a verbal encounter often signals deceit. The person performing the action is unaware of it, which makes it a valuable clue as to their true feelings. Why unconscious nose-touching should be closely linked with telling lies is not clear, but it may be that, at the moment of deceit, the hand makes an involuntary move to cover the mouth—to hide the lie, as it were—and then moves on to the nose. The final shift from mouth to nose may be due to an unconscious sensation that mouth-covering is too obvious—something that every child does when telling untruths. Touching the nose, as if it is itching, may therefore be a disguised mouth-cover—a cover-up of the cover-up. However, some individuals report that they have felt a genuine sensation of nose ringing or itching at the very moment they have been forced to tell a lie, so that the action may be caused by some kind of small psychological change in the nasal tissue, as a result of the fleeting stress of the deceit.[65]

Another signal of deceit is when suspects fidget in their chairs. O'Connor observes that some suspects physically change their position when they are caught in a lie: "Their subconscious desire to leave the room is strong, so they move their bodies closer to the door."[66]

Indeed, sometimes a suspect actually will cross his or her legs, with one foot pointed toward the door—the place where they would like to be headed.

Sexual Attitudes

Nonverbal behaviors can furnish perspective into cultural attitudes. For instance, sexual attitudes often are communicated through nonverbal indicators. Men are permitted to be more sexually aggressive and therefore are more overt in their nonverbal cues, including winking and the dominant gaze. Another nonverbal sexual overture occurs when a man turns his body toward the object of his attention and points his foot at her. According to Pease, the gesture in which thumbs are tucked into the belt or the tops of the pockets also indicates sexual readiness: "The arms take the readiness position and the hands . . . highlight the genital region."[67]

Because females are more culturally constrained, they have had to be less direct in their expression of sexual interest. Consequently, women utilize a catalog of subtle nonverbal indicators of sexual interest. For example, a sideways glance, in which a female gazes sideways at the companion from a lowered head, signals secret approval. *Preening* behavior (e.g., smoothing his collar, smoothing his hair) is another sign of sexual interest. The head toss, in which the woman's hair sways over her shoulder or away from her face, is also considered a signal of preening. Licking the lips, slightly pouting the mouth, or applying cosmetics to moisten or redden the lips are all further indicators of a courtship invitation.[68]

Another nonverbal sexual cue is the body stroke, in which a female absentmindedly caresses her own leg. According to Morris, the latent meaning of the gesture is "I find you attractive": "When people find their companions attractive, they may unconsciously do to their own bodies what they would like their companions to do to them. . . . A casual stroking of the body while listening to a companion, or while talking to them, indicates a desire to be caressed by them, regardless of what statements are being made at the time. Leg stroking is the most common form of this reaction."[69]

Jan Hargrave observes that when a woman sits with one leg tucked under the other and points the folded leg toward the person who she wants to attract, the nonverbal message communicated is "I feel very comfortable

with you. I'd like to get to know you better."[70] Another female sexual posture is the "leg twine," in which one leg is twined tightly around the other. Morris explains, "Because of the tight way in which the legs wrap around one another, it gives the impression of self-hugging, and this adds a mild sexual quality to the gesture."[71] Other indications of sexual interest include open legs while sitting or standing and rolling hips while walking.

However, as noted earlier, these nonverbal cues are not always reliable measures of sexual interest. At times, it is simply comfortable to position yourself in a particular way. Consequently, it is reasonable to regard these nonverbal cues as *indicative,* but certainly not a *guarantee* of sexual interest.

In the United States, the body language adopted by females is indicative of the cultural polarization between "good" and "bad" women in American culture. Images of virtuous women in photographs, television programs, and films display a modest, submissive demeanor, typified by soft smiles and a slightly tilted head. The virtuous woman refrains from looking directly at the object of her attention, instead looking with lowered eyes or with a sidelong glance. Her body language also displays her vulnerability; she often places an object (e.g., her hair, hands, or a male) between herself and the camera to shield herself. These virtuous women refrain from behavior or postures that might excite men. The model may sit sideways. If seated in frontal view, her legs are usually closed, or knees folded to the side. These women also typically keep their arms close to their bodies.

In contrast, the "bad" or immoral woman assumes a more direct pose. Her head is erect, and her eyes look straight into the camera. These women adopt open postures, moving their arms and legs away from their bodies, signifying sexual receptivity or aggressiveness. In entertainment programming, women who assume these nonverbal behaviors generally are villainesses or temptresses, whose transgressions are beyond redemption. For example, in a scene from the film *Basic Instinct* (1992), Catherine Tramell (Sharon Stone) positioned herself in a sexually provocative pose in front of a group of male interrogators to distract her questioners and control the interrogation.

In many media programs, these "bad" women are often killed off (as unfit to live) or exiled. In *High Noon* (1952), Helen Ramírez (Katy Jurado) was the former illicit lover of town marshal Will Kane (Gary Cooper). As the "bad" girl, Helen's dark hair and complexion and direct, defiant gaze and posture are juxtaposed with the pure blond innocence

and demure demeanor of Amy (Grace Kelly), Kane's fiancée. Ironically, when an outlaw he put in prison returns with his gang to take revenge on Kane, it is the spurned Ramírez who defends Kane, while Amy chooses to leave him. Despite Helen's good heart, she must be punished for her moral transgressions, and she is forced to leave town. (Ironically, although Kane—the protagonist—was complicit in this moral transgression, he goes unpunished.)

Increasingly, however, these "immoral" nonverbal behaviors have become more widespread in mainstream media presentations. In fashion magazines such as *Vogue,* the models are routinely found in poses described earlier as belonging to "bad" girls: direct gazes, legs positioned in a provocative manner, and pelvis thrust forward, so that it is the closest body part to the camera. These models appear comfortable with their sexuality as a vital part of their total identity.

At the same time, this trend also can be regarded as a further exploitation of the bad-girl image: Webster University graduate student Samantha L. Harms observes, "In these ads, the company logos are placed prominently near the models' spread legs, in an effort to attract the attention of the readers. The ads definitely associate their products with sex."[72]

Nonverbal Communication Analysis: Smoking Behaviors in Film

Why do smoking behaviors appear so frequently in films?

Long before product placement emerged as a commercial incentive for the film industry, cigarettes were an integral part of the worldview of film. In 2000, women in Hollywood movies were twice as likely to smoke as women in real life (42 percent of female lead or supporting actors smoke on film, compared with 24 percent of U.S. women overall). Among males, 38 percent of actors smoke compared with 29 percent of men in everyday life.[73] In 2005, all five Oscar nominees for Best Actor played heavy smokers. Of the thirty finalists in the Academy Awards' six main categories, only *Pride and Prejudice* does not include smoking scenes. Among those with the more than fifty smoking scenes were *Brokeback Mountain, Capote, Good Night and Good Luck,* and *Walk the Line.*[74] Smoking behaviors are also prevalent in international films. For instance, Korean movies released in 2005 have an average of more than five and a half scenes that feature someone smoking.[75]

A nonverbal approach to media literacy can furnish perspective into smoking behaviors in films, as well as identifying cumulative messages about smoking that are conveyed in film. Because of its strong visual properties, smoking behavior can be a particularly effective form of nonverbal communication. Smoke creates a texture in the air as it catches the light, so that it can be used to create a mysterious, romantic, or surreal worldview.

Smoking behaviors can be an effective way to reveal character in films. For instance, Humphrey Bogart's image as a tough guy was exhibited by the way that he held and inhaled his cigarettes. In contrast, smoking gestures (e.g., lighting someone's cigarette, removing a cigarette from a cigarette case) can also be handled with savoir faire, reflecting an upper-class sophistication. For example, in *Now, Voyager* (1942), Charlotte Vale (Bette Davis) falls in love with debonair Jerry Durrance (Paul Henreid) on a South American cruise. In one scene, as the couple come to an understanding about their feelings for each other, Durrance proposes, "Shall we have a cigarette on it?" He suavely opens his cigarette case and extracts two cigarettes. Lighting both, he then gallantly hands one to Charlotte.

Because it is difficult to display internal states of consciousness in films, smoking behaviors can be used to signal what characters are thinking and feeling. Gestures such as twisting, flicking, or waving the cigarette are signals of emotional turmoil. In *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), Frankie Machine (Frank Sinatra) is an emotional wreck, on the verge of a nervous breakdown. In one scene, the camera focuses on Frankie's shaking hands as he tries to light a cigarette. Indeed, whenever Frankie becomes agitated, he lights up—the message being that smoking steadies the nerves.

An actor's smoking behaviors also indicate his or her character's level of self-esteem. Blowing smoke through the nostrils is a sign of a superior, confident individual. Allan Pease observes, "The faster the smoke is blown upwards, the more superior or confident the person feels; the faster it is blown down, the more negative he feels."[76]

Smoking behaviors in film can also project a character's attitude toward others. Blowing smoke straight ahead (in the direction of the other person) can be a statement of aggression, dislike, contempt, dominance, or indifference. According to Pease, extinguishing a cigarette also can be an expression of attitude toward others: "If the smoker lights a cigarette and suddenly extinguishes it earlier than he normally would, he has signaled his decision to terminate the conversation."[77]

Smoking is central to the worldview of many films and television programs, reinforcing the notion that cigarettes are integral to activities such as socializing at bars. Cigarettes also are a part of the wardrobe of glamorous professionals such as detectives, gangsters, show business personalities, and journalists.

In addition, filmmakers frequently use smoking behaviors as a *narrative device.* Film is a visual medium that emphasizes plot, or action—people doing things. Because movement is a key element in film, smoking be-

haviors draw the audience's attention during static scenes dominated by dialogue. In *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), Jim Stark (James Dean) and gang leader Buzz (Corey Allen) pause for a smoke before dueling in a dangerous "Chickie Run." The cigarette break is a significant moment in the film. During this brief interlude, the two rivals reflect on the quest for meaning in a changing and impersonal world. Jim asks Buzz, "Why are we doing [the Chickie Run]?" Buzz replies, "You've got to do something." But as soon as they have finished their cigarettes, they again retreat behind the facade of cool detachment and resume their competition.

Smoking behaviors also can be a sign of intimacy between people. The communal aspects of smoking (e.g., offering someone a cigarette, lighting up together) often foreshadow later scenes in which the characters become closer. For instance, *Great Expectations* (1998) includes in a scene in which Estella (Gwyneth Paltrow) introduces Finnegan Bell (Ethan Hawke) to her friends, including her current lover, Walter Plane (Hank Azaria). Finnegan immediately pulls out a pack of cigarettes and, taking one, gives Estella his "last cigarette"—a measure of his devotion. Finnegan leans toward her to light her cigarette, so that the two characters are suddenly in very intimate proximity to each other. In this two-dimensional medium, the smoke forms a visual line, or *vector,* that connects characters physically and, by extension, emotionally as well. Having been excluded, Plane asks the waiter for a cigarette.

Further, smoking onscreen also has strong sexual implications. Critic Richard Klein observes that the phallic properties of cigarettes play a suggestive role in sexually volatile scenes: "In those aroused by the spectacle of masterly women giving themselves leisure (all nostril, mouth and fingers), smoking languorously and slow, the moment of lighting up seems to spark the most energetic erotic excitement."[78] Often when two characters meet and establish a sexual chemistry, one character (or both) pulls out a cigarette. Moreover, smoking after a lovemaking scene is a familiar cliché in film and television.

The use of cigarettes in media programs often is presented as a rite of passage to adulthood. For instance, in *Stand by Me* (1986), the young boys, out on their own for the first time, celebrate their independence by smoking cigarettes around a campfire.

Trainspotting (1996) offers a nihilistic worldview, in which characters are on their own, with nothing (not even parents) to rebel against. The characters are locked in the present, and smoking cigarettes (and shooting heroin) represents a rebellion against themselves—against their futures.

Actors also use smoking behaviors as a performance prop. George Burns and Groucho Marx used cigars for dramatic pause and emphasis. For instance, they controlled the timing of their lines by lighting the cigars. They also waved the cigars around for emphasis and (in Groucho's case) wagged the cigar in a suggestive way after a sexually suggestive quip.

Conclusion

Even though the appearance of smoking in films initially was noncommercial, films served as a very powerful indirect advertisement for tobacco products. Clearly, smoking remains a very attractive activity in films. Smoking is central to the worldview of many films, reinforcing the notion that cigarettes are an integral part of the culture. Smoking accompanies particular activities, such as socializing at bars and sexual encounters. Moreover, smoking is used as a symbol of rebellion, a rite of passage to adulthood, or a communal activity that promotes a sense of membership in a group.

Cigarettes also are used as a dramatic device to advance the plot. Lighting a cigarette establishes a pause in the action for new disclosures and fresh insight into character and relationships. Cigarette smoking often functions as a bonding ritual between characters in the narrative; the communal aspects of smoking (e.g., offering someone a cigarette, lighting up together) offer opportunities for characters to pause in the action and honestly share their thoughts and feelings.

The nonverbal approach to media literacy identifies the cumulative messages about smoking in film. This approach furnishes perspective into the continued popularity of smoking, despite efforts to educate the public about its dangers.

Summary: Nonverbal Analysis of Media Content

I. Nonverbal communications analysis can help the audience member to decipher media messages, by the following four lines of inquiry:
   A. Do the nonverbal communication behaviors reinforce verbal messages? Explain.
   B. Do the nonverbal communication cues provide subtextual information about the speaker? Explain.
   C. Are there "unscripted" nonverbal behaviors that are at variance with the verbal message? Explain.
   D. Do the media communicators manipulate nonverbal behaviors to create a particular image or impression?
   E. How does the study of nonverbal communication furnish perspective into cultural attitudes, values, behaviors, preoccupations, and myths that define a culture?
   F. What role do nonverbal cues provide in the depiction of media stereotypes?

II. Nonverbal communication behaviors

Facial expressions	Eye behaviors
Posture	Gestures
Proxemic communication	Tactile communication
Vocalic communication	Physical appearance
Accessories	

See the grid above to identify the nonverbal communication behaviors that apply to the following questions:

A. What types of nonverbal communication behaviors does the subject display?
B. What functions are fulfilled by these nonverbal communication behaviors?
   1. Do these nonverbal communication behaviors classify information? Explain.
   2. Are these nonverbal communication behaviors intended to persuade? Are they successful?
   3. Are these nonverbal communication behaviors used to regulate the communication process? Explain.
   4. Are these nonverbal communication behaviors intended to establish or maintain the communication relationship? Are they successful?
   5. How do you interpret the nonverbal communication behaviors?
   6. What emotions are conveyed through nonverbal communication behaviors?
   7. Do the nonverbal communication behaviors support or conflict with the verbal communication?
C. What do these nonverbal communication behaviors reveal about the subject's character, state of mind, or attitude?
D. What do these nonverbal communication behaviors suggest about the subject's status or credibility?
E. What messages are conveyed by the communicator's nonverbal communication behaviors?
   1. Do the nonverbal communication behaviors reinforce verbal messages?
   2. Do the nonverbal communication behaviors reveal "unscripted" nonverbal behaviors that are at variance with the verbal message?
   3. Do the nonverbal communication behaviors reveal "scripted" nonverbal impression-management behaviors? What are the intended messages?

III. Additional questions to analyze specific nonverbal communication behaviors
   A. Posture
      1. What are the characters' postural styles (rigid, relaxed, nervous, calm, friendly, contentious, attentive)?
      2. What messages do these postures convey?
   B. Proxemic communication: What kinds of proxemic communications are taking place?
      1. Personal space: What is the physical distance between the characters?
      2. Group formation
      3. Fixed space
         a. What does the architecture tell you about the characters' lifestyle?
         b. What is your emotional response to the environment (warm, formal, private, familiar, distant, confining?
   C. Tactile communication
      1. Which characters touch each other? Who initiates the touching?
      2. What does the touching signify?
   D. Vocalic communication
      1. What tone of voice is used?
      2. Is there an accent or dialect?
      3. How fast does the character speak?
      4. Are there long silences or pauses, and what does this mean?
   E. Physical appearance
      1. What is the shape of the body (obese, thin, muscular)?
      2. What does the body type tell you about the character?
      3. What are the comparative heights of the characters?
      4. Does this signify anything as to dominant-subordinate relationships?
   F. Accessories
      1. How are the characters dressed, and what does this tell

you about the character (social class, education, ethnic origin)?
2. What artifacts does the character wear?
3. What types of clothing are the main characters wearing?
4. What other material accessories (e.g., home, technology) do the characters have?