

SEVENTH EDITION

# Nonverbal Communication

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Studies and Applications

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# Preface

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**T**he overall message of this textbook is that nonverbal communication is important in all settings—and all contexts. From intrapersonal communication to face-to-face interactions, to public addresses as well as computer-mediated communication, nonverbal communication lays a foundation for understanding what is important to effective message development and understanding. The aim of this textbook is to help students better understand all the theories and practices that are pertinent to becoming better nonverbal communicators.

I write this book in the first person on purpose. Like the best communication, a textbook ideally captures elements of a true dialogue with students. I want students to be able to read and feel a part of what they are reading. The goal is to help students feel as if they are being spoken with, as opposed to lectured at.

Students will discover as they read this text that much of what we consider “nonverbal communication” is a norm of human communication, and that its nonverbal form is more complex than the term denotes. Chapter 1 provides an understanding of the norms of nonverbal communication. Part 1, “Studies and Subcodes,” examines each subcode in some depth. A **subcode** is a specific area or type of nonverbal communication. Earlier editions of this text relied heavily on referenced material, providing a history of the study of each of these areas. This edition focuses more on individual applications of the contemporary research findings. With this “application orientation,” I ask you a number of experiential questions designed to have students apply these theories, to actually go out and either observe or experiment with the theories discussed. Similarly, I include numerous “Observational Studies” in each chapter to help students understand how nonverbal communication applies across a variety of contexts. Many textbooks end there; readers must take what they know and try to apply it to the world beyond the classroom and the textbook. We, however, feel that there is enough information to move beyond that point, and so I offer Part 2, “Applications.” Inclusion of “Applications” continues a tradition of this text that goes back four editions and 25 years of trying to present nonverbal communication in a usable way. Part 2 will help students build on what they have studied earlier, and it examines how each subcode operates, both alone and in conjunction with other subcodes. I look at this in several contexts, and I include “Observational Studies” here also.

The original editions of this book included a chapter at the start of the textbook (Chapter 2 in the last few editions) that looked at the research techniques necessary to

delineate the norms and create the theories of nonverbal communication. Feedback from instructors has led me to move that material to an appendix. I did this because I know that some courses that use the text do not use a research-based approach and having that material at the start of the text causes some disfluency in the flow of the material. But I also know that many of our users do take the research approach to teaching nonverbal communication; indeed, I take that approach, so I still wanted the material to be a part of this textbook. I have included the same educational approach in this appendix, and it is my hope that it will help students better understand where all the theories come from.

Some other nonverbal communication textbooks organize their materials in a visual order, starting with physical appearance and moving on to body movement and gestures, space, touch, voice, and environment. That is, the subcodes are ordered according to what you see first and recognize as nonverbal communication. I choose to order the materials to accord with what I believe many people think about first when they start to consider how nonverbal communication is used. Allow me to explain.

I look at the study of nonverbal communication more from what is considered a “sensory” perspective, meaning how nonverbal communication is processed through our five senses. I begin with the sense that many people feel is one of the senses that communicates the most to us, rather than about us: the sense of touch. Then I lead into the study of space (I define touch as the lack of any space between interacting communicators or “zero proxemics”). I move next to the sense of sight, meaning nonverbal issues that we process by seeing them. Here, I also discuss humans’ use of space, plus physical appearance, body movements, and the environment. From there I move to the sense of hearing, where we discuss how people use their voices to communicate. Next, I look at how the sense of smell communicates to us. Finally, I add a factor that we believe is also an important subcode of nonverbal communication—the use of time.

It’s important for students to see how many research studies actually exist in the discipline of nonverbal communication. At the end of each chapter, I include a list of further references, which committed students can use to guide their continued interest in the subject. Good research cannot be completed without a good review of literature, thus my reason for including as many references (both in text and at the end of the chapters) as possible. While some of the research is “classic” (albeit not dated), I did include the newest and most recent studies published. I do need to point out, however, that the historical research I do cite sets the base of knowledge from which professors teach nonverbal communication. I believe that it will be our students of today who further the scholarship of this field tomorrow.

Key features of the seventh edition include the following:

- The chapters continue to be written in a more conversational tone, as a discussion with the readers (written in first person more than any other “voice”). This was done consciously to try to engage the readers with what we are discussing.
- Each chapter includes up-to-date and historical references to studies done in each of the nonverbal subcodes.

- Each chapter includes “Observational Studies”—several per chapter—that allow for students to apply the knowledge ascertained by reading to various contexts and situations.
- Each chapter contains “Student Voices,” which exemplify the concepts being discussed as former students have recognized in their everyday lives.
- Each chapter ends with “Questions for Thought” in hopes of having professors use those for discussion, or that the readers themselves will read them and discuss them with each other.
- Each chapter includes a section of “Additional References,” which provides the students with more resources to study should they wish to look into any specific subcode in more depth. This section in each chapter is organized by subtopics that fit the discussions in the given chapter. Since some professors will take a research approach to teaching this course, these sources may prove to be invaluable.
- The textbook includes an appendix that deals solely with research methods that might be used for teaching research approaches to studying nonverbal communication. Although not intended to be a course in research methods, this appendix will give enough of a background that students can understand how researchers have developed their theories on the use of nonverbal communication behaviors/skills.
- The textbook includes an updated glossary of terminology used in the textbook and in the subdiscipline of nonverbal communication.

While authors always make the final decisions about how they will write a textbook, it is a highly collaborative process between writer, publisher, reviewers—and ultimately, students. Since this is a seventh edition, I’ve had the opportunity to get a great deal of useful feedback, and much of it has informed some of the changes in the seventh edition. Let me provide some explanations here.

New to the seventh edition are the following:

1. There are over 175 new sources—most all from the last 6 years (since the sixth edition was published in 2014), where new studies look at new issues that arise in our changing society.
2. More emphasis is put on social media since this is perhaps the most prevalent form of interaction in our society today.
3. I continue to take a research-based approach to the material, and I include an appendix that deals with conducting research—including methodology and the basics of studying nonverbal communication. I have updated this material and kept it in the textbook, since many people who teach the course like to take a research-based approach while teaching the course.
4. The book provides a historical grounding, because it is the historical material that lays the groundwork for contemporary studies. You do not find contemporary studies that do not point back to the historical studies in nonverbal communication. For that reason, you will see that I cite both historical and contemporary research studies.

5. There are updated “Student Voices” in each chapter. My hope is that if students can see examples of how others apply these concepts to everyday life, they will be able to do some of that application in their own lives.
6. There are updated “Observation” activities. These activities are geared to help students apply theory into practice.

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## Ancillaries Provided With the Seventh Edition

An instructor's manual which includes the following:

- In-depth chapter summaries
- Sample test questions
- PowerPoint lecture slides. The slides are editable, so the user can either use the notes provided or narrow them down and can change the pictures used.

# Introduction

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**A**s an author, I consider that “nonverbal communication” is a norm of human communication and that the nonverbal form of communication is more complex than the term denotes. For that reason, I begin with a discussion of exactly what nonverbal communication is, how different communication scholars approach the subject, and the components of this area of our discipline. I include quite a bit of the historical research and information about nonverbal communication, because that is crucial to seeing where we are today.

I next look at the subcodes (or channels) that are considered a part of this field of study and how nonverbal communication functions. Chapter 1 discusses the relationship between perception and nonverbal communication, which helps in understanding the factors that assist us in filtering the nonverbal messages we receive. In addition, I look at how we use nonverbal communication and how our brains process it. Finally, I look at other factors that affect how we use and interpret nonverbal messages, including age, cultural backgrounds, race, status differences, and sex and gender differences.

I believe that research is an extremely important aspect of the study of nonverbal communication, so I briefly discuss the importance of basic research methods here. Later in the text, in the appendix, I present a whole section approaching how to conduct nonverbal communication research. Earlier editions of this textbook included a chapter on this topic early in the book, but I opted to rearrange the approach in the sixth edition and have continued that here in the seventh edition. Your professors may ask you to read the appendix prior to starting your study of the nonverbal subcodes, or perhaps your professor will have you look at it at a point later in your semester. Regardless, I hope the material in the appendix will be helpful for you to understand the “how’s and why’s” of nonverbal communication theories and perhaps become a nonverbal communication scholar yourself. After reading the introductory chapter, you may wish to study the appendix prior to reading the rest of the textbook if you wish to make better sense of the research you will be reading about throughout the rest of the book. It would be my suggestion to do that, since a great deal of nonverbal communication research is cited and discussed in each chapter.

Before you begin your journey in Part 1, we need to accomplish the following:

- Agree on what nonverbal communication is
- Be able to define nonverbal communication and know how verbal and nonverbal communication differ from each other with respect to several important dimensions
- Understand the historical foundations of what we call nonverbal communication
- One fact that cannot be stressed enough is that nonverbal communication cannot operate within a vacuum. Nonverbal communication usually functions along with the verbal aspects of communication to “create a message.”
- Explain how nonverbal communication clarifies what we communicate verbally
- Acquire a basic understanding of the nonverbal subcodes that are studied in later chapters of this text

The chapters you will be reading in this book are based on research conducted by social scientists who use various methods in conducting their studies.

This first section, then, provides the foundations for what we later examine in detail. We will attempt to identify several significant aspects of nonverbal communication for later study. As noted in the preface, much of what we examine may seem rather obvious and may be something you already know. What might surprise you, however, are the deviations and the effects of violating expectations based on the nonverbal subcodes. You might also be surprised by how much you are continually being influenced—and are influencing others—by means of nonverbal communication. For those reasons, throughout this textbook we will look at how you use nonverbal communication to affect others and also at how you are influenced by it.