

Week 6 – Extra Credit

GENDER AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to examine gender differences and similarities in nonverbal behavior.

Instructions: Observe three dyads (two men, two women, and one woman and one man) that you find interacting in a social setting. Large public places such as public parks, fitness clubs, cafeterias, the university quad, etc., are good locations because it is more likely that you will be able to observe the interactions for an adequate period of time without being obvious or intrusive.

Situate yourself where you can see the faces of both participants in each dyad. Using the data sheets on the following pages, analyze the nonverbal behavior in each interaction using the variables and operational definitions below.

Participants: Describe the people you observe. Record their age, sex, and ethnicity. Also, record any other information that you think might affect their interaction. This might include the nature of their relationship (if you happen to know the participants), social status (e.g., an authority figure such as a parent or teacher would be higher in status compared to a child or student).

Setting: Briefly describe the setting. Comment on where you made your observations, the time of day, whether the participants are sitting or standing, and any other factors that you think are important. Record the length of time you observe the dyad.

Touch: Count the number of times each person in the dyad touches the other. Record with hatch marks the number of times Person A touches Person B and the number of times Person B touches Person A.

Smiling: Record the amount of smiling by using the two rating scales on the data sheet. First, rate the amount of smiles exchanged during the interaction. Then, summarize the pattern of smiles exchanged by the participants.

Eye Contact: Record the amount of eye contact by using the rating scale on the data sheet. Evaluate the proportion of time each individual spends gazing into the other's eyes.

Interpersonal Distance: Make an estimation of the distance between the bodies of the two individuals in each dyad. Approximately how much

personal space do they maintain during the interaction? Who moves closer to whom? Who moves away?

Dyad 2

Person A: Sex _____ Race/Ethnicity _____

Person B: Sex _____ Race/Ethnicity _____

Comments: _____

Setting: _____

Length of Observation: _____ minutes

Frequency of Touch

Person A touches Person B _____

Person B touches Person A _____

Smiling

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Infrequent Frequent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Person A smiles more Equal Smiles Person B smiles more

Eye Contact

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Person A gazes more Equal eye contact Person B gazes more

Interpersonal Distance

Dyad 3

Person A: Sex _____ Race/Ethnicity _____

Person B: Sex _____ Race/Ethnicity _____

Comments: _____

Setting: _____

Length of Observation: _____ minutes

Frequency of Touch

Person A touches Person B _____

Person B touches Person A _____

Smiling

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Infrequent Frequent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Person A Equal Person B
smiles more Smiles smiles more

Eye Contact

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Person A Equal eye Person B
gazes more contact gazes more

Interpersonal Distance

3. Relate your findings to the course material on gender and nonverbal behavior. Compare and contrast your results to the research literature summarized in your text.

Which results are similar? Can you suggest why?

Which results are different? Can you suggest why?

4. Many researchers (e.g., Henley, 1977) interpret gender differences in nonverbal behavior within the context of power and status differences between men and women. Comment on this interpretation, using your data and your text to support your position

Adapted from *Exploring/Teaching the Psychology of Women* (2nd ed.) by Michele A. Paludi by permission of the State University of New York Press. © 1996 State University of New York.

Reference: Henley, Nancy. (1977). *Body politics: Power, sex, and nonverbal communication*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.