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Importance of Nonverbal Communication in the Employment Interview

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Importance of Nonverbal Communication in the
Employment Interview

By

Michelle E. Milano

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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Abstract

The employment interview includes elements that focus on nonverbal communication. Females and males view these nonverbal cues differently. A total of 22 male and 16 female employment interviewers completed quantitative and qualitative surveys concerning nonverbal cues. The data were analyzed using factor analysis, t-tests, and thematic analysis. Five factors, including self-presentation, coverbal cues, appearance, touch, and interviewee sex, emerged from the factor analysis. At 0.05, the t-tests show that females do perceive more nonverbal cues than do males. The qualitative results provide further insight into the quantitative results. These findings show the importance of nonverbal cues during an employment interview.

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Nonverbal behavior is a major topic of study in the communication field; however, many communication textbooks include little or no information on this subject. According to Ugbah and Evuleocha (1992), "business communication textbooks have devoted four times as much space (an average of 27 pages) to written credentials than they have to communication behaviors (an average of 7 pages)" (p. 133). Although communication textbooks do not emphasize this area, the importance of nonverbal communication in the employment interview is recognized readily by Cissna and Carter (1982), who devote much of their interview skills training workshops to nonverbal behavior.

Communication researchers do study nonverbal behavior, but not in the setting of the employment interview. Using the previous research concerning nonverbal behavior and the employment interview, this study helps to fill the gap in the field of communication.

Employment Interviewing

The employment interview serves as a tool to help an interviewer learn about prospective employees. "For the interviewee, the employment interview usually provides initial contact with a representative from the hiring firm" (Goodall & Goodall, 1982, p. 116). Because it is the

interviewee's first contact, it would seem logical that he or she would want to make the best impression possible. This may include any aspect of the communication process. Goodall and Goodall define the employment interview as a process of observation. The rater observes the behavior of the interviewee; the rater then decides through this observation whether the candidate is appropriate for the job position (Goodall & Goodall, p. 116). During this initial observation the candidate is evaluated not only on the merit of his or her verbal communication, but also on the appropriateness of his or her nonverbal cues.

During the time it takes for an interviewee to make his or her first impression, the interviewer decides whether he or she likes the interviewee. Commonly, a halo effect occurs in the interviewing process. When an interviewer likes the candidate, he or she will immediately assign more intelligence and competence to that individual; however, the individual may not be any more competent than an individual whom the interviewer does not like (Simons, 1995). Once the interviewee makes his or her first impression, the interviewer directs the interview accordingly. The interviewer may interpret answers in a positive light (positive halo) or a negative light (negative halo) (Simons, 1995).

People often base these first impressions on nonverbal communication. For example, did the interviewee firmly shake hands or make the right amount of eye contact? According to Simons (1995), these nonverbal cues are not always a true indicator of the interviewee's real personality. Although nonverbal cues may not be a good indicator, interviewers have little else on which to base an impression. In spite of Simon's statement, McMahan (1976) found that "perceivers consistently utilized the nonverbal cues as the basis of their impression of the speaker..." (p. 293).

In employment interviewing, one must have more than good credentials to gain employment. The intangibles are just as important as the tangibles. According to Passeser (1996), body language accounts for 70 percent of the total communication in an interview. Baird (1977) agrees with this figure. According to Baird, "nonverbal cues account for approximately two-thirds of the total meaning produced in face-to-face interactions" (p. 354). Therefore, one can reason that positive nonverbal communication might increase an interviewee's score on an interview evaluation.

Many studies support the notion that nonverbal communication does make a strong impression during the employment interview. Examples of these studies are

provided toward the end of this literature review. Most of these researchers are in agreement that certain nonverbal cues do make a positive or negative impression during the employment interview. Unfortunately, most of this research occurred during the 1970's and appeared in psychology journals. The findings of the current study will show if the previous findings are still accurate in the 1990's.

Nonverbal Communication

Recognizing that nonverbal behavior is an important component of communication, and interviewing is a communication situation, developing a greater understanding of nonverbal communication is a good place to begin. To do this, one must understand several terms connected with nonverbal communication. According to Knapp (1978), one usually attaches the term "nonverbal" to the method by which a signal is produced. Verbal is usually how people interpret the signal. This means the process is nonverbal and the product verbal (Knapp, p. 3). In the same way, vocal sounds may be nonverbal. For example, when people clear their throats it may be a purely physiological action with no meaning. On the other hand, traffic signals are verbal without being vocal. When the light turns green the drivers may proceed (Knapp, p. 3-4). For the purposes of this paper, nonverbal cues may be vocal or non-vocal.

In the 1970's, some researchers attempted to create dictionaries of body language; however, one cannot rigidly reference nonverbal communication. Two people displaying similar nonverbal cues may have completely different intentions. Although one cannot clearly define what each nonverbal cue means exactly, nonverbal communication does convey quite a lot of information to those who view it (Ryan, 1995; Knapp, 1978).

According to Leathers (1986), nonverbal communication plays an important role in a person's assertion of persuasiveness and power. One often bases first impressions on body language. Although not every perception made from nonverbal cues is accurate, many people make impressions and judgements based on this behavior (Ryan, 1995).

According to Leeds (1995), "in short, you are your best visual aid, or your worst." This does not mean that one should base an entire interview on nonverbal cues. Arthur (1995) recommends looking for consistency between nonverbal and verbal cues. For the purposes of this study, "coverbal" is a term that combines nonverbal and verbal cues.

Nonverbal communication is most effective when used with appropriate verbal communication. "Often the goal of nonverbal communication is to increase rapport, trust, and likability..." (Ryan, 1995). According to Martin (1995), 93

percent of communication is vocal and visual. The corresponding amount of communication devoted to voice is 38 percent and visual is 55 percent (Arthur, 1995; Hodges, 1997). According to these statistics, the majority of communication consists of nonverbal and coverbal cues.

Although all nonverbal cues are not voluntary and controllable, the communicator can control many of the cues he or she sends. This topic can be better addressed in the discussion section than in the literature review.

Nonverbal cues

A few of the nonverbal cues that can affect communication include voice, proxemics, kinesics, physical appearance, and artifacts.

Voice.

First, tone is the emotion used when delivering a message vocally. One can show "joy, anger, frustration, challenge, or even surprise..." (Martin, 1995). Tone is not the only factor that falls under the category of voice. According to Nolen (1995) "successful communicators rely on... vocal pitch and tempo." Pitch is the range of the voice including how high or how low the voice can reach (Martin, 1995). Finally, speed "is the rate at which words are delivered" (Martin). Research shows that rapid speech enhances the perception of "intelligence, objectivity,

dominance, and dynamism. A moderate or slower rate is perceived as more composed, honest, people-oriented, and benevolent" (Nolen, 1995). This previous statement makes it seem as though any rate of speech is appropriate. Nolan continues to write that using a similar tempo of speech as the other communicator may help to portray more social attractiveness.

Pauses in speech can also send messages. Although pauses are not a part of voice, they still fit well within its realm. Pauses are actually the absence of voice. Pauses often signify that the speaker is hesitating to construct the next thought or sentence. The speaker also might be reflecting whether the other speaker understands what was just said (Knapp, 1978, p. 357-358).

Proxemics.

Voice consists of the vocal aspects of nonverbal communication. Most nonverbal cues, however, are non-vocal. One of these non-vocal cues consists of proxemics.

"Proxemics is generally considered to be the study of our use and perception of social and personal space" (Knapp, 1978, p. 19). Proximity, postural mirroring, and synchronized movements can help convey information to successful decoders (Nolen, 1995).

According to Martin (1995), everyone maintains an

"invisible boundary." This boundary may be a small or large amount of space that varies by person and culture (e.g., Leeds, 1995). People move closer to those they like. Within reason, one who moves closer to another individual communicates a positive image (Nolen, 1995).

Other than physically moving closer to another individual, employers can manipulate space to assert power over their employees. By placing a desk on the same level as employees, the employer is communicating that the two people are on the same level. To communicate even more equality, an employer can move completely away from his or her desk to be nearer to the employee (Nolen, 1995). One can also label the manipulation of space as positioning. Position refers to where one person is located with relevance to another (Martin, 1995).

In the United States, space is very important. Space equals power. According to Ryan (1995), people who effectively control space around them exude a certain amount of power. Those who "possess" an inordinate amount of space also are perceived to have more power.

Posture is another element that can refer to how people use their space. Posture refers to whether a person sits up or stands with a straight back or a curved back (Martin, 1995). According to Nolen (1995), most people

perceive good posture as a sign of credibility.

Kinesics.

Kinesics is "the study of body movements" and was first identified by Dr. Ray L. Birdwhistell (Martin, 1995). "Body motion, or kinesic behavior, typically includes gestures, movements of the body, limbs, hands, head, feet and legs, facial expressions (smiles), eye behavior (blinking, direction and length of gaze, and pupil dilation) and posture" (Knapp, 1978, p. 12). According to Nolen (1995), "smiling, head nodding, direct eye contact and gaze, relaxed body positions, open body positions, and forward leaning" all promote social attractiveness and are strong nonverbal cues.

Gestures occur through the movement of the arms and hands (Martin, 1995). These gestures may include using an effective handshake, placing hands around the mouth (signifying uncertainty) and fidgeting (McCoy, 1996). Facial movements can be divided into three categories including the upper face (brow and forehead), the middle face (eyes, lids, and bridge of nose), and the lower face (cheeks, nose, mouth, chin, and jaws) (Martin, 1995). McCoy (1996) recommends using facial expressions fully. Unchanging faces are not only difficult to read, but also signify that the individual is rigid and distant.

Eye behaviors are a specific part of facial movement and provide information about perceptions, feeling, and expectations (Nolen, 1995). According to Leeds (1995), making eye contact is an important rapport-building tool. Leeds suggests making eye contact periodically and often throughout social encounters. Direct eye contact is often interpreted as a sign of credibility (Burgoon & Saine, 1978, p. 181).

According to Knapp (1978), eye movement can convey many human expressions including the following:

Downward glances are associated with modesty; wide eyes may be associated with frankness, wonder, naivete, or terror; raised upper eyelids along with contraction of the orbicularis may mean displeasure; generally immobile facial muscles with a rather constant stare are frequently associated with coldness; eyes rolled upward may be associated with fatigue or a suggestion that another's behavior is a bit weird. (p. 295)

According to Knapp (1978), gaze means the looking behavior of an individual. A mutual gaze means that two people are looking at each other (Knapp, p. 296). These are just a few of the movements that kinesics encompasses.

Physical Appearance.

Physical appearance can also play a role in nonverbal communication. Body size, shape, and hair can affect social attractiveness. According to Mills and Aronson (1965), an attractive female could change the attitude of a male more easily than an unattractive female. According to Widgery and Webster (1969), females attribute more credibility to attractive people than males do. Nolen (1995) stated that one often sees a taller person as more credible and these taller individuals often receive a higher salary than shorter people do. As for body type, many people consider an average body type as more attractive than a thin or heavy one. According to Burgoon and Saine (1978), professionals tend to prefer moderately short-haired, clean-shaven males (p. 155). As for women, Moats-Kennedy (1995) stated that employers prefer conservative dress and grooming for both men and women (e.g., McCoy, 1996).

Artifacts.

According to Burgoon and Saine (1978), research shows that dress indicates socioeconomic status and degree of education (p. 153). As for clothing, the individual should wear items that are compatible with the situation. If it is an informal event, he or she should dress appropriately. The same goes for formal events (Nolen, 1995). The same rule of appropriateness also transfers to color of clothing

(Arthur, 1995). Women should wear make-up tastefully and choose colors that convey enthusiasm, confidence and sophistication (McCoy, 1996). According to Knapp (1978), clothes may serve a function that tells others if the wearer is knowledgeable about the cultural rules of dress for the place and situation (p. 179). Clothing communicates many messages about the wearer. If someone likes a particular outfit, that probably means that the outfit is similar to the observer's ideal image (Knapp, p. 179).

Effective and Ineffective Nonverbal Communication

The definition of effective nonverbal communication is that which matches the verbal communication. Mirroring of nonverbal communication can be an effective method for creating rapport with the interviewer (Hodges, 1997; Siegel, 1997b). According to Ryan (1995), when trying to establish rapport, it may be necessary to adopt a nonverbal behavior pattern similar to that of the person with whom you are interacting. A study conducted by Burgoon, Buller, Dillman, and Walther (1995) agrees with this explanation of nonverbal communication. According to Burgoon et al., nonverbal kinesic pleasantness includes a frequency of smiling, pleasantness and nods (p. 172). Burgoon et al. did not specifically study interviewing; however, their nonverbal study does lend support to the area of

pleasantness in kinesics.

Indicators of ineffective nonverbal communication that exhibit deception to the interviewer include actions like rocking and twisting. This study showed that interviewees who exhibit moderate suspicion, rocked and twisted more than other interviewees (Burgoon et al., 1995, p. 172).

Gender

According to Kramer (1977), there are definite stereotypes in reference to nonverbal communication and gender. Women smile, use their face and hands, and appear to be more concerned about the listener than men. According to Nolen (1995), smiling is one of the most powerful nonverbal cues that can communicate social attractiveness. According to Leeds (1995), women naturally use facial movements during communication.

Research has shown that there is some truth to these stereotypes. According to Hall (1984), males consider emotional nonverbal communication much less important than do females. This may be why Hall found that females are usually better encoders and decoders of nonverbal communication than men. Encoding ability means accurately sending nonverbal messages to others. Decoding ability means accurately interpreting nonverbal cues from others (Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Roger, & Archer, 1979).

According to Hall (1978), females process nonverbal communication better than do males. From this last statement, one can reason that female raters will probably be more critical than male raters when evaluating interviewees who use inappropriate nonverbal communication.

According to a study conducted by Briton and Hall (1995), "Women were perceived by both male and female participants to be fluent, skilled, and involved communicators. Men were perceived as more dysfluent, less skilled, restless, and loud." Briton and Hall noted that these findings follow the general stereotypes between gender and nonverbal communication.

Along with the other nonverbal cues that women feel more comfortable with than men do, women also tend to establish closer proximity to others and be more receptive to touch than men (Remland, Jones, & Brinkman, 1995). According to Mehrabian (1968a), men and women try to communicate a positive attitude by exhibiting eye contact and smaller distance from the interviewer as part of their nonverbal behavior (p. 307). In this study, Mehrabian also found that both men and women promote a more negative image when tense in posture. A moderately relaxed posture indicates a more positive image. Although men and women exhibit similar nonverbal cues in regards to posture, there

are a few differences. For example, Mehrabian (1968b) found that men communicate intense dislike to men by using a tense posture. Men communicate this same feeling to women utilizing an extremely relaxed posture. In contrast, females use a relaxed posture to indicate extreme dislike to both men and women (Mehrabian, 1968b, p. 29; Mehrabian, 1969).

Gender differences also occur in more difficult to control conditions such as pitch. A woman's voice will naturally be higher than the voice of most men (Martin, 1995). Other factors include body movements that portray masculinity and femininity. A man will much more likely cross one ankle over his other knee. Women are more often expected to cross their legs at the knees or ankles (Martin, 1995).

Positive and Negative Cues in Interviewing

With a firm understanding of the employment interview and nonverbal cues, it is necessary to examine how these two elements interact. According to the literature, certain nonverbal cues provide a particular impact on the employment interview. This impact can be positive or negative.

A few researchers have found that pauses interjected appropriately into an interview may be helpful for the

interviewee. Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, and Dressel (1979) determined that a pause-think-speak pattern used by the interviewee before answering a question can be useful and improves speech fluency (p. 365). Voros (1997) agrees with the previous idea. According to Voros, people who use strategic silence appear to be thoughtful.

Eye contact is another positive nonverbal cue according to the previous research. Amalfitano and Kalt (1977) found that applicants who use direct eye contact during an interview are significantly more likely to be hired than applicants who often look down while speaking. These applicants also "were perceived as more alert, more assertive, more dependable, more confident, more responsible, and as having more initiative" (Amalfitano & Kalt, p. 47; Einhorn, 1981; Imada, 1977; McGovern, Jones, & Morris, 1979; McGovern & Tinsley, 1978; Mehrabian, 1969; Washburn & Hakel, 1973).

A few other positive nonverbal cues utilized by the successful interviewee include smiles, meaningful gestures, affirmative heads nods, and comfortable postures (Einhorn, 1981, p. 226; Imada, 1977; McGovern, et al., 1979; McGovern & Tinsley, 1978; Young & Beier, 1977). According to Siegel (1997a), someone who is comfortable with relaxed arms and good eye contact begins with a positive image. Nodding

agreement and smiling helps show interest and warmth. Finally, leaning closer reduces space between two individuals. All of these cues, in moderation, present a positive image (Siegel, 1997a; Ryan, 1995).

Voros (1997) adds grooming and looks as important nonverbal cues. Clothing, height, size, and posture all count in an employment interview (e.g., Ugbah & Evuleocha, 1992; Gifford, Ng, & Wilkinson, 1985). Thomas (1997) reinforces this idea that clothing matters in an interview. Thomas states that dressing conservatively and avoiding anything distracting, like excessive jewelry, will help create a positive image in an interview.

Most of the above nonverbal cues are positive ones in relation to the employment interview. Negative cues also exist. The rate of speed an interviewer uses may be a negative influence on the interview. According to Einhorn (1981), applicants who speak softly and slowly with little vocal variation are significantly less successful during an interview than those who speak rapidly and forcefully. Einhorn also found that unsuccessful applicants tend to use few gestures, exhibit rigid posture, and pause for unusually long periods of time (p. 226). Finally, according to Siegel (1997a), negative cues include tensing the body and folding the arms. The tenseness indicates concern and

the arms create a barrier. Placing hands on the face communicates a closed mind and fidgeting is a sign of boredom or nervousness.

Not using nonverbal cues can also send messages. According to Bock and Bock (1984), when speakers provide few nonverbal cues, raters will score them with a positive leniency error. Bock and Bock explain that although a speaker does not provide cues, a rater must still evaluate (p. 338). The study shows that a lack of nonverbal cues will generally cause the rater to evaluate with a positive leniency error (Bock & Bock, p. 341). From this information, one can reason that if an interviewee does not use positive nonverbal cues, he or she should try to use very few nonverbal cues.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Understanding that many nonverbal cues exist in the American culture, the following research questions and hypothesis is relevant to employment interviewing:

RQ1: What nonverbal cues make an impression on the interviewer during an employment interview?

RQ2: What nonverbal cues make a positive impression on the interviewer during an employment interview?

RQ3: What nonverbal cues make a negative impression on the interviewer during an employment interview?

H1: Females will attribute more importance to nonverbal cues in an employment interview than will males.

Methodology

Participants

The researcher sent surveys to 38 people who conduct interviews at various businesses and corporations in the cities of Effingham and Charleston, Illinois. The respondents included 16 females and 22 males. Each respondent received the same questionnaire containing the exact same questions.

Apparatus

The measurement instrument for the interview evaluations consisted of a quantitative and qualitative survey questionnaire (See Appendix A). The questionnaire asked specific questions about different nonverbal cues.

The questionnaire consisted of closed questions for reliability purposes. Closed questions allow every respondent to answer questions with the exact same choices. In this way, the researcher can more easily and accurately compare answers (Foddy, 1995, p. 123). Respondents usually find closed questions easier to answer because they do not have to recall an answer from their own experience (Foddy, p. 123). Finally, closed questions allow for simpler analysis (Foddy, p. 123). Because respondents find closed questions easier to answer, they were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire. The closed ended-questions

make the questionnaire appear more "respondent friendly."

Drawbacks to closed questions are that everyone will not interpret every question in the exact same way. Realistically, each respondent may interpret key words differently and this, in turn, will skew the answers (Foddy, 1995, p. 140; e.g. Fowler, 1988). Because of this, definitions are provided for terms that may be easily misconstrued.

Open questions are also included in this questionnaire. Because open questions do not provide answer choices for the respondent, they eliminate bias. If the respondent is offered closed choices, he or she may answer differently (Foddy, 1995, p. 129; Fowler, 1988, p. 87). The open question allow the respondents to think and answer the question freely and in their own words (Foddy, 1995, p. 128). Answers to open questions also give the researcher a better perspective of the final results when used in conjunction with answers to closed questions (Foddy, p. 128).

Besides the questions, the survey also includes a page that informs the respondents about the pertinent research information (See Appendix B). According to Fowler (1988), it is ethically necessary to inform the participants the name of the research organization, the supporting agency, a

brief study description, a statement of confidentiality, assurance that participation is voluntary, and assurance that omissions are permitted (Fowler, p. 137).

Knapp (1978) suggests many different categories for a researcher to use when observing nonverbal behavioral cues (p. 397-399). The questions used in this study were drawn from Knapp's suggestions.

Procedure

Area interviewers were asked to complete a survey containing questions about nonverbal behavior in employment interviewing. An exact copy of the survey instructions appears in Appendix C.

Data treatment

The answers to the nonverbal cue questionnaire were factor analyzed to determine the underlying structure. The individual questions were analyzed by a two-sample t-test to find any significant difference between the male and female responses. Finally, the open questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. The respondents were asked to indicate in their own words what nonverbal cues are most important to them during an employment interview. Once the data were collected, the researcher tallied the number of similar responses given for each question. For each question, one or two responses outnumbered the others.

These responses were then labeled as major emerging themes. To become a major theme, the researcher required that at least ten responses to the question be identical or extremely similar. Ten responses indicate that more than 25 percent of the respondents agreed that the specified nonverbal behavior is important to them during the employment interview.

Results

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was the first procedure conducted in this study. As a result of the factor analysis, five factors emerged. These factors included self-presentation, coverbal cues, physical appearance, touch, and interviewee sex. Table 1 shows the results of the factor analysis.

Table 1

Factor Analysis for Nonverbal Elements in the Employment Interview

Name	Factors				
	Self- Present- ation	Coverbal Cues	Physical Appear- ance	Touch	Inter- viewee Sex
Eigen- value	3.26	3.14	1.78	1.95	1.83
Percent Variance	26.51	25.48	14.27	15.84	14.87
	Hair Size	Pause Pause Length	Posture Facials	Shoulder Arm Touch	Same Sex Opp Sex

Attract	Head Agree
Jewelry	Rate
Dress	

Note. The variables listed in the table all loaded independently under the indicated factors. The variables loaded at a minimum of .6.

T-tests

The data was analyzed by t-tests to determine any significant differences between the responses of the females and males. The tests on the variables of interviewee posture and interviewee volume showed significant differences between female and male respondents. In each case, the female respondent rated the variables as more important than did males. The t-tests run on the remaining variables showed no significant difference between the answers of the female and male respondents. All tests were run using an Alpha level of .05. For results of the t-tests, see tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

T-test for Significant Differences Between Female and Male Responses in Regard to Posture

Variable	Count	M	df	SD	T-Value	Prob
----------	-------	---	----	----	---------	------

Female	16	8.63	36	0.81	2.99	.01
Male	22	7.5	36	1.34		

Note. The variables labeled female and male indicate the sex of the respondents who completed the nonverbal communication survey.

Table 3

T-test for Significant Difference Between Female and Male Responses in Regard to Volume

Variable	Count	M	df	SD	T-Value	Prob
Female	16	8.13	36	1.09	4.15	.01
Male	22	6.23	36	1.57		

Note. The variables labeled female and male indicate the sex of the respondents who completed the nonverbal communication survey.

Thematic Analysis

In addition to answering by marking a number along a 10-point scale, respondents were also asked several open-ended questions. These questions asked respondents to name their preferences for specified traits in interviewees. The

38 surveys were then examined for common themes. For each question, one to three themes emerged. These results are located in table 4.

Table 4

Emergent Themes from Respondent Answers Concerning
Employment Interviewing

Variable	Themes	Respondents
Women's hair	Neat	22/38
	Well-groomed	18/38
	Clean	15/38
Women's size	No importance	18/38
Women's clothing	Neat	21/38
	Clean	17/38
Women's jewelry	Minimal to	
	moderate	15/38
Men's hair	Neat	31/38
	Clean	14/38
	Short	12/38
Men's size	No importance	16/38
Men's clothing	Neat	17/38
	Clean	15/38
Men's jewelry	Minimal	13/38

Touching	Handshake only	31/38
Positive facials	Smiles	35/38
Negative facials	Frowns	18/38
Posture	Straight back	29/38
Volume	Average or normal	27/38
Rate	Average	17/38
Gestures	Hand gestures	16/38

The number of respondents who answered with a common theme is listed in column three of table 4. Themes that occurred in more than half of the surveys included neatness of women's hair and clothing and neatness of men's hair. Preferred touching was limited to handshakes. Preferred facial expressions included smiles. Finally, respondents indicated that interviewees who sit up straight in a chair displayed the respondents' preferred posture.

Discussion

Research Question 1

As noted in the factor analysis of the data, many nonverbal cues made an impression on the interviewers who responded to the survey. These cues emerged in five factors. The important cues in factor one, self-presentation, include hair (-.91), body size (-.78), attractiveness (-.70), use of jewelry (-.66), and dress (-.62). Important cues included in factor two, coverbal cues, were pauses (.89), length of pauses (.88), head agreement (.69), and speech rate (.65). Factor three, physical appearance, included posture (.77) and facial expressions (.69). Factor four, touch, included shoulder touching (.84) and arm touching (.84). Finally, factor five, interviewee sex, included the comfort levels of the respondents while they interviewed same sex (-.95) and opposite sex (-.76) interviewees. Nonverbal cues that did not load included interviewee use of space, eye contact, speech volume, and interviewee use of gestures.

From these results, one can identify the important nonverbal factors that interviewers notice during an interview. As mentioned previously, Voros (1997) noted that many nonverbal factors are important in the employment interview. Passeser (1996) reinforces this statement by

writing that body language accounts for 70 percent of the total communication in an interview. The factors found in the factor analysis show what nonverbal elements are most important to interviewers. Out of the many nonverbal and coverbal cues, this study helped to surface specific ones that are relevant to the employment interview. These nonverbal cues can provide both positive and negative impacts on the employment interview.

Research Question 2

The respondents indicated that several nonverbal cues make a positive impression during an employment interview. These cues included all of the variables that loaded onto factors two (coverbal cues), three (physical appearance), and four (touch). From these results, one can argue that these factors can positively influence the interviewer when used appropriately.

Coverbal cues include pauses, length of pause, head agreement, and speech rate. The literature review supports this finding. According to the literature, appropriate placement of pauses, head agreement, and speech rates are important to the employment interview.

Physical appearance includes posture and facial expressions. Although the literature does support that posture is an important element, the respondents and

researchers tend to disagree on what type of posture. The qualitative results of this study show that a rigid posture is preferred to a relaxed one. Only nine respondents indicated that a relaxed posture is important. The previous research shows that a relaxed posture is the preferred one. As the research in the literature review was conducted over twenty years ago, it is possible that interviewers preferences have changed over time. Mehrabian (1968b) found that males and females generally use a relaxed posture with someone they dislike. The respondents may agree with this finding and in turn, prefer a rigid posture from applicants.

The literature also asserted that eye contact is of great importance during the interview (Amalfitano & Kalt, 1977, p. 47; Einhorn, 1981; Imada, 1977; McGovern, Jones, & Morris, 1979; McGovern & Tinsley, 1978; Mehrabian, 1969; Washburn & Hakel, 1973). Eye contact did not load independently with any factor; however, facial expression did load. The respondents in this study may have included eye contact as an element of facial expression when completing the nonverbal cue survey. Smiles and head agreement both emerged from the qualitative analysis. The literature also supports this finding.

Touch included arm and shoulder touching. The

respondents answered negatively to the questions involving touch. The qualitative results showed that the respondents indicated the handshake to be the acceptable type of touching during the interview. No research provided results on this nonverbal cue during the employment interview.

Research Question 3

As previously noted, interviewers regard some nonverbal and coverbal cues as negative. Nonverbal cues that make a negative impression on the interviewer include those variables that loaded onto factors one (self-presentation) and five (interviewee sex).

Self-presentation includes hair, body size, attractiveness, use of jewelry, and dress. The previous research included findings on appearance, size, and clothing. The previous research agrees with this finding.

The findings on interviewee sex do not provide much insight for this study. Many of the respondents wrote that they are either very comfortable interviewing either sex or uncomfortable interviewing in general.

From the thematic analysis, one can understand better what an interviewer regards as negative nonverbal communication from an interviewee. A majority of interviewers indicated that they consider neatness of hair as the most important part of the interviewee's hairstyle.

An interviewer who saw a candidate with messy hair would immediately look at that person in a negative manner. In regards to women's clothing, the majority of respondents also looked for neatness. Like hair, lack of neatness in clothing provides a negative example for the interviewer. Neatness was an important theme that emerged from this analysis. Because these cues are viewed negatively by the interviewer, the interviewee who misuses these cues may make a negative impression during an interview. These findings are all consistent with the previous literature.

Hypothesis

The results of the t-tests support the hypothesis. As Hall (1978) pointed out, females do attribute more importance to nonverbal cues in an employment interview than do males. This study shows that this is true in the case of posture, $t(37) = 2.99$, $p = .01$, and speech volume, $t(37) = 4.15$, $p = .01$, of the interviewee. Female respondents placed significantly more importance on both of these variables than did male respondents. These results show that females do perceive more nonverbal cues than males. As mentioned in the literature review, Hall (1978) found that females process nonverbal cues better than males. The fact that females are better decoders means that they are able to more accurately perceive and interpret

cues from others (Rosenthal, et al., 1989). This means that an interviewee who faces a female interviewer may need to be more aware of his or her controllable nonverbal cues than the interviewee who faces a male interviewer.

As outlined in the review of the literature, nonverbal cues contribute a great deal to the first impression that an interviewee makes. From the various forms of analysis used in this study, it is apparent that some prevalent nonverbal cues have little or no effect on the employment interview.

Respondents had little to say about vocal nonverbal cues. Respondents also did not perceive proxemics to be a major factor. It is possible that the respondents were less aware that voice and proxemics are parts of nonverbal communication in the context of the employment interview as they were about the other elements involved in this study. Even so, when voice and proxemics were included in this context, the respondents still did not attribute much importance to them.

Respondents did answer that kinesics, physical appearance, and artifacts were the nonverbal cues to which they paid the most attention. These are some of the elements that previous researchers have also found important to the employment interview.

Obviously, not all nonverbal cues are important to the employment interview. A few of this study's results disagree with the previous research. These results include the lack of emphasis placed on eye contact, gestures, and the type of posture. As outlined in the literature review, eye contact and gestures were very important to the employment interview during the 1970's. The previous researchers also found that interviewers preferred that interviewees sit with a moderately relaxed posture rather than a rigid one (Einhorn, 1981, p. 226; Imada, 1977; McGovern, et al., 1979; McGovern & Tinsley, 1978; Young & Beier, 1977). This is not the case for this study.

Limitations

This study was conducted using real interviewers to gain the most accurate perspective on interviewing as possible; however, this study does have a few limitations. The 38 respondents used in this study worked as interviewers in many different fields. These fields ranged anywhere from part-time retail sales, to corporate office work. The diversity of the interviewers provided an overall perspective of interviewing. A more segmented study focusing on the interviewing for one occupation may shed more light on specific interviewing preferences.

Another limitation to this study was the small number

of respondents involved. A total of 16 females and 22 males answered the interviewing survey. A larger number of respondents may have provided more insight on this study.

Finally, the questionnaire may have been a limitation. This survey was used for the first time during this study. Some of the questions may not have been necessary; other more pertinent questions may have been added. In addition to this, the questionnaire did not encompass all of the important nonverbal elements that may contribute to the employment interview. One of these elements is chronemics, or time elements. Other important elements may also have been overlooked. If this study is replicated or built upon in the future, the researcher may use a more refined questionnaire.

Future Research

This study shows that many nonverbal and coverbal cues are important to interviewers; however, these are not the only aspects of communication that are important during an employment interview. As mentioned previously, Simons (1995) states that nonverbal cues do not give a full picture of the interviewee's personality. Future research in the area of employment interviewing may help shed light on the other important factors of an interview.

Staying with the topic of nonverbal cues in the

employment interview, further research could focus on the perceptions of interviewees. Although the perceptions of interviewers will eventually control the outcome of the interview, it would be interesting to discover what nonverbal cues the interviewees perceive as most important.

On the other hand, nonverbal cues are not reserved specifically for the employment interview. Nonverbal cues occur almost everywhere in almost any situation. Future research that may offshoot from this study could involve nonverbal cues that occur in interviewing other than that for employment.

Conclusions

Employment interviewing contains many complex elements. Nonverbal cues account for only a small part of the overall job of interviewing. This study helps to provide a clearer idea of what elements are important and unimportant to the employment interviewer. This study also shows how females and males differ when placing importance on these elements.

The previous literature conducted on the topics of employment interviewing and nonverbal communication help to develop the research questions and hypothesis for this study. This study shows that females do perceive more nonverbal cues than do males during the employment

interview, particularly in the areas of interviewee posture and voice volume. It also shows what nonverbal cues are most important to employment interviewers. As noted, most of the findings from this study agree with the previous research; however, these results showed that the respondents placed little importance on eye contact and preferred a rigid posture from the interviewee. These findings concerning eye contact and posture disagree with previous research. A retest of this study may provide more concrete results concerning the differences found in this study from previous ones on the same topic.

This study provides results concerning nonverbal behavior and the employment interview for the field of communication. This information adds to the previous research in this area and provides direction for the future.

Appendix A

Nonverbal Behavior in Employment Interviewing

Name of subject: _____

Contact address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Please remember that your name will be kept confidential. I only need the above information so that I may contact you, if necessary, to clarify your answers. If you do not wish to be contacted after completing this survey, please indicate this by placing an "X" on the appropriate line.

I do not mind being contacted in the future: _____

No, I do not wish to be contacted in the future: _____

1 Indicate your sex by marking (1) for female and (2) for male: _____

2 How favorably do you react to an interviewee who uses a great deal of space during an interview? For example, the interviewee may sit leisurely in his or her chair taking up twice the space of an individual who sits very straight in a chair.

Unfavorably 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Favorably

3 How comfortable do you feel interviewing someone of the same sex?

Uncomfortable 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Comfortable

4 How comfortable do you feel interviewing someone of the opposite sex?

Uncomfortable 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Comfortable

5 How much importance do you place on the physical attractiveness of the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

6 How much importance do you place on the hairstyle of the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

7 How much importance do you place on the body size of the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

8 How much importance do you place on the clothing of the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

9 How much importance do you place on appropriate use of jewelry by the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

10 How well do you react to an interviewee touching you on the arm?

Not Well at all 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Very Well

11 How well do you react to an interviewee touching you on the shoulder?

Not Well at all 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Very Well

12 How much importance do you place on the interviewee's facial expressions?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

13 How much importance do you place on the eye contact of interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

14 How much importance do you place on the posture of the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

15 How much importance do you place on the volume of the interviewee's voice?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

16 How much importance do you place on how fast the interviewee talks?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

17 How much importance do you place on the amount of pauses the interviewee uses?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

18 How much importance do you place on the length of pauses the interview uses?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

19 How much importance do you place on the amount of head agreement or nods of yes used by the interviewee?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

20 How much importance do you place on the interviewee's use of gestures?

No Importance 1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10 Most Important

21 If you feel more comfortable interviewing someone of one sex more than the other, please specify which sex you prefer interviewing and why.

22 Explain what your ideal interviewee would look like. Include the following categories in your description:

- a) hair for women:
- b) body size for women:
- c) clothing for women:
- d) jewelry for women:
- e) hair for men:
- f) body size for men:
- g) clothing for men:
- h) jewelry for men:

23 How do feel about the interviewee touching you during an interview.

24 Where would you feel uncomfortable being touched by the interviewee?

- 25 Where would you feel comfortable being touched by the interviewee?
- 26 What facial expressions do you react to most positively?
- 27 What facial expressions do you react to most negatively?
- 28 What is the ideal posture that you would prefer from an interviewee?
- 29 What is the ideal volume that you would prefer from an interviewee's voice?
- 30 What is the ideal rate of speed that you would prefer from an interviewee's voice?
- 31 What type of gestures do you prefer from an interviewee?

Appendix B

Research Information

My name is Michelle Milano and I am a graduate student in speech communication at Eastern Illinois University. I am currently working on a thesis that focuses on nonverbal communication in the employment interview. The purpose of the study is to find out what nonverbal behavior is most and least influential to the interviewer. Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Participation is completely voluntary. If any questions appear on the survey that you are not comfortable answering, you should feel free to omit any answers.

Appendix C

To complete this survey please place an "X" on the line. The number "1" on the line indicates the most negative response. The number "10" on the line indicates the most positive response to the question. The last part of this survey consists of open-ended questions. Please answer these questions as completely as possible in the space provided.

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