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1 NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION ORIGINS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you will be able to do the following:

- Compare models of communication.

- Define nonverbal communication.

- Explain the types of nonverbal primacy.

- Understand the impact of channel on messaging.

Mika wasn't thrilled about attending a friend's start-of-semester get-together, but his new room-mate dragged him along to the gathering a few blocks from campus. Mika didn't know most of the people there and wasn't particularly motivated to meet someone new, so he spent a lot of time looking at his phone. After someone spilled a drink on his shoes, Mika decided to call it a night and head home. Just as he reached the door, he locked eyes with the most attractive person he had ever seen. After freezing for what felt like an eternity, he nodded and gave a shy smile, then started to turn away. Suddenly, he saw an answering smile out of the corner of his eye. Switching off his phone and running his fingers through his hair, he decided to stick around and give the evening another chance. Without even speaking a single word, Mika's nonverbal interaction with a stranger dramatically changed his attitude toward not only the party but also the whole start of the semester.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Which basic elements of communication do we observe in most human interactions?
- What are those nonverbal signals that impact our social experiences?
- How do different messages help one form a first impression?
- In what manner do we convey nonverbal messages to an interaction partner?

From the first impressions that we form about one another to the lifelong social interactions that shape and guide our lives, communication is the primary social process. Without communication, it would prove nearly impossible to navigate our daily lives. Communication allows us to signal a variety of things to one another, from letting our caregivers know we are hungry to warning each other about dangerous predators.[1] Indeed, most living creatures engage in some form of communication, from ants marking a trail toward a picnic basket, to a pride of lions using a sophisticated group hunting strategy to avoid starvation. Communication allows groups of creatures—both human and nonhuman—to navigate a complex environment that otherwise may be difficult to survive on one's own.[2] Human communication includes the most complicated forms of messaging, as humans use systems of established rule-driven strategies to send

messages among themselves for a variety of reasons. Just as we read in the story of Mika above, messaging can be subtle; from indicating interest to avoiding interaction, a variety of verbal and nonverbal messages help us to move throughout our social world.

MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

When considering how humans send messages to one another, it is first helpful to ensure that everyone has a similar shared understanding of the basic models of communication. In order to establish a common vocabulary about the process of communication, we begin with the linear model of communication, which focuses on the transmission of messages to an audience. Next, we will expand that model to include a more transactional understanding of human interaction.

Linear Model of Communication

More than 70 years ago, researchers interested in messaging came up with a model of communication that is still one of the most widely known models of communication today.[3] As can be seen in Figure 1.1, this **linear model of communication** focuses on the transmission of a verbal or nonverbal **message**, a unit of communication that has meaning, to another person or persons. Because of that focus on one-way transmissions, the linear model starts with the person who originates the message, called the **sender**. The sender begins the process of **encoding,** converting their thoughts into a specific message they hope an audience will understand. By sending that message through one or more **channels**, or ways of transmitting a message like a phone call or a written document or even a gesture, they can convey that message directly to the target person, also known as the **receiver**. Once the receiver has heard or seen the message, they then begin **decoding** the meaning from the message and trying to understand the intent

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Linear Model of Communication
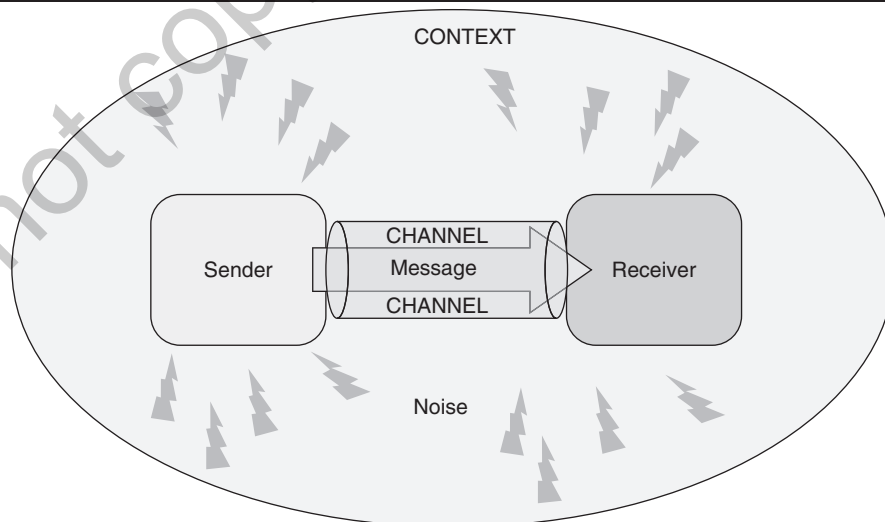
of the sender. When Ash receives a text "*Starving! Must eat now LOL*" from her new girlfriend Annabelle, as the receiver she needs to decode the message in an attempt to try to understand what Annabelle's intent was; are they canceling their later reservation and eating separately on their own, or are they getting together earlier than they had previously planned? At first glance, it's not entirely clear what was intended.

Although perhaps not a comprehensive model thus far, we now have a working set of vocabulary terms about messaging, as well as a basic understanding of how people send messages to one another. Still, the Shannon and Weaver model goes a couple steps further than this general approach, including in the model the concepts of *context* and *noise*. **Context** is defined as the setting in which communication occurs, not only the physical location but also the time and social situation wherein messaging happens. This context influences both the creation and the transmission of a message for a variety of reasons (i.e., influencing the sender's mood and even restricting the channels that they find available to them.) For example, Evan may feel the urge to text a funny meme to his best friend Ryan when they are in church on Sunday morning, but he might not do so, in part because of the emotional experience that he's having or because of his inability to get to his cell phone without offending the other congregants around him. On the other hand, he might catch Ryan's eye during the church service and make a funny face, despite their both being in a social context that discourages inattentive behavior.

The concept of **noise**, on the other hand, describes any barrier to hearing or understanding that detracts from the successful transmission of a message.[4] Noise might be as simple as a physical sound that stops you from perceiving a message (e.g., **physical noise**), to a mental state that distracts someone from correctly understanding a message (e.g., **psychological noise**). In addition, noise could also be a receiver's physical state like hunger or sleepiness that interrupt their ability to decode a message (e.g., **physiological noise**), or even may include a situation where individuals don't understand these symbols that are being used in the message due to specific words or pronunciations (**semantic noise**). The more noise present in a communication context, the more difficult it will be for a receiver to successfully decode the message that

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a sender has encoded. Take a look at an example of one possible effect of noise in this chapter's Apply feature, next.

BOX 1.1 APPLY
IMPACTS OF NOISE ON A HOMECOMING CONVERSATION

Clarice and Jessica had not been getting along for quite a while. Their mutual friends noticed the lack of respect they had shown one another at a variety of social events over the past year, and they had often commented upon the disrespectful eye rolls and sighs that each exhibited when the other walked into the room or tried to join the conversation. Finally, Clarice decided that enough was enough. At the homecoming football game, Clarice decided she and Jessica needed to have a conversation to talk over their issues with one another. Right before the halftime show on their way to order food, Clarice dragged Jessica away from their mutual group of friends over to a patch of grass away from the snack bar. She started a long monologue about their friendship and how they used to be close, taking responsibility for her own contribution to the deterioration of their relationship. As they both sat side by side watching the marching band on the field, Clarice suddenly realized that Jessica didn't even know that Clarice was talking because of the loud music and the roar of the crowd. With all the distractions on the field, combined with the sounds and the sights of the homecoming festivities, Sarah was just enjoying the evening breeze, oblivious to the relational goals of Clarice. Discouraged, Clarice decided to stop talking and watch the halftime show herself, vowing to maybe try again some other time if she got an opportunity. Clarice began to wonder if she would ever have a chance.

Even with the most detailed messaging plan, features of the context or of the relationship can impact our communication attempts. The ability of one person to effectively understand the message of another person is influenced by a variety of factors. While some of these factors are under the control of one or more interaction partners, others are due to contextual features that are relatively difficult to directly engage.

APPLY: *Consider the features of the context in which Clarice and Jessica just interacted. What were all the individual types of noise that impacted the quality of this communication situation? What should Clarice try to avoid the next time that she wants to try to reach out to Jessica? How have you had noise disrupt your own attempts at messaging?*

Transactional Model of Communication

The linear model of communication is a relatively decent way to think about how one person might send a message to someone else. That being said, most communication is perhaps not quite as one-sided as this model may suggest. In most situations, people are sending messages at the same time to each other, with each person serving as both a sender and a receiver of messages throughout the interaction. The **transactional model of communication** better captures our understanding of that simultaneous back-and-forth between people, as seen in Figure 1.2.[5] In this model, we are able to add in the concept of **feedback**, which includes the verbal and nonverbal responses that someone gives in reaction to a message that they are receiving—a set of

responses that influence future messaging. For example, Brooke and Adam were discussing restaurants while trying to decide where to have dinner, and throughout the conversation Adam's unfiltered facial expressions helped Brooke adapt her messaging on the fly; Adam's happy or sad faces each time that she suggested a different cuisine type or location helped her eventually decide that they should order some pizza and chill on the couch with a good movie.

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Transactional Model of Communication
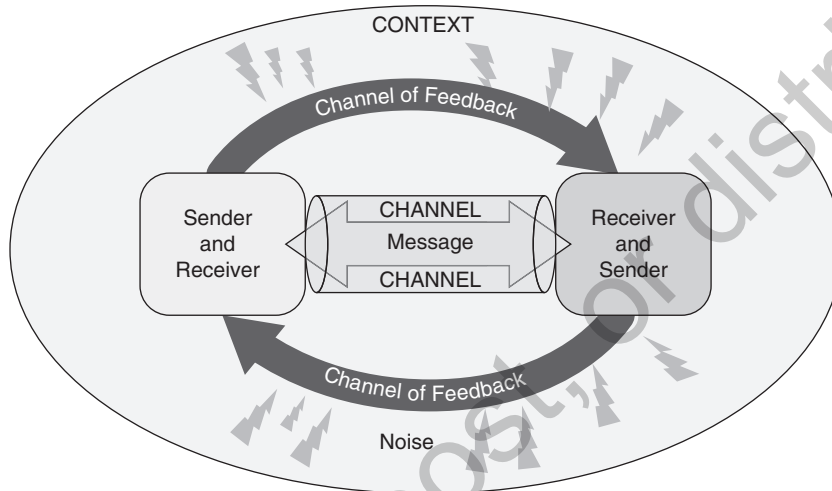
Besides the addition of feedback, you'll notice that the transactional model of communication goes beyond simple **unidirectional messaging**, or one-way messaging in which people take turns alternating between sender or receiver. Instead, this model highlights that people take on roles as both sender *and* receiver at the same time (e.g., **transactional messaging**), with messages and feedback being sent and received simultaneously throughout most communication interactions. In an example of this simultaneous messaging, when Derek got back from a campus retreat having decided that he wanted to pursue a calling to become a priest, he knew that it would involve some difficult conversations with people he cared about—most of all, his girlfriend Jae-Min. In the conversation, he tried to explain his reasons for breaking up with her given the requirement of celibacy for priests within his particular church tradition, while at the same time expressing his love for her and managing the fact that he was causing her quite a bit of pain. For her own experience, Jae-Min was working hard to manage her own emotions about losing Derek, while also trying to appear supportive and present for Derek as he discussed his new ambitions. Derek and Jae-Min sent verbal messages of hope and anger and sadness—while simultaneously using nonverbal expressions like smiles, furrowed brows, and tears. As they have difficult interactions like these, couples are often able to manage their messaging and adapt it to one another. The tone and manner of even the most difficult messages can strongly impact how people interpret both nonverbal and verbal messages, as evidenced in the popular media highlighted in this chapter's Absorb feature.

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BOX 1.2 ABSORB

MESSAGE AMBIGUITY ON POPULAR MEDIA

Jimmy Fallon is known for his character Sara on *The Tonight Show's* popular recurring bit, "Ew!" In the clip below, Sara's friend Addison (played by John Cena) drops by after a long absence, and the two friends reminisce and catch up about life.

"'Ew!' with John Cena" *from* The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon. *March 8, 2018. Running Time: 5:23. Available on YouTube*.

Although ridiculous at times, the clip shows some great examples of how tone of voice and context can help clarify the meaning behind otherwise ambiguous phrases. Both Sara and Addison say the interjection "Ew!" (an expression of disgust) quite frequently through-out the clip. A casual observer might first think that both Sara and Addison are exclaiming that everything is gross or disgusting, but after a while it becomes clear that Sara doesn't always have a negative view of everything that she says "Ew!" about.

ABSORB: *How much does the meaning change for the word "Ew!" throughout the video clip? How many different meanings can you discover for it as you watch the video? What are the differ-ent cues that you rely on to determine what Sara actually means each time she says it?*

DEFINING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The words we use are very important. Indeed, the verbal content of the message (e.g., the **verbal communication**) can have critical impact on the people, places, and things with which we interact or engage. From a student ordering a burrito exactly how she wants it, to an FBI agent negotiating a hostage situation, it is important to make sure the words that we use convey the messages we intend. At the same time, much of what we *don't* say is just as important. That is, the gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and eye contact that we use (among others) can all

have a strong impact within an environment. In our example from the opening of the chapter, Mika didn't say a single word, yet he knew that he had a chance to get to know an attractive party-goer, based on a series of unspoken messages. Those messages are considered nonverbal because they do not use language to convey meaning.

Recently, **nonverbal communication** has been defined as "any communicative characteristic or behavior that intentionally or unintentionally conveys a message without the use of verbal language."[6] In this case, verbal language would include words or behaviors that directly stand for a specific word or words. For example, consider the offensive gesture of extending one's upraised middle finger in the direction of another person. Most everyone within the larger North American culture has a clear understanding of what specific words go alongside such a gesture, even though they aren't reproduced here. Even though tone and context can change our understanding of what was ultimately intended by using such a gesture (e.g., giving someone a wink *while* making the irreverent hand gesture may imply humor and friendship rather than animosity), the gesture itself is considered formal language (and is therefore—perhaps quite surprisingly—considered to be verbal communication).

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Another important point contained in the definition of nonverbal communication highlights the idea that nonverbal communication can be either intentional *or* unintentional, as shown in this chapter's Examine feature. This is quite significant, because we are not always aware of our communicative behaviors when we send a message, oftentimes messaging others even when we don't intend to do so.[7] For example, Carl and Alysa were hanging out after class at the local campus coffee shop. When Alysa offered to pay for Carl's iced caramel macchiato, she had no idea that her polite smile was interpreted by Carl to be a form of flirting. At the end of the interaction, Alysa thought she had made a new platonic friend, while Carl

had already begun picturing future romantic getaways together. What seemed to be a simple set of behaviors was interpreted quite differently by both the sender and the receiver of those nonverbal displays.

BOX 1.3 EXAMINE

THE ETHICS OF UNINTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Have you ever accidentally hit "reply all" to an email when you meant to send a private message to just one person? Or have you responded to a text on a group chat when you meant to send a personal message to a friend? Sometimes, our messages reach a wider audience than we had originally intended.

That same type of accidental messaging occurs with nonverbal communication, but perhaps to an even greater extent. Maybe a crush noticed your blush at their accidental eye contact, or a peer saw the way you rolled their eyes when they didn't understand a music reference that seemed so common among your other friends. These messages can have a similar impact as those verbal messages at the beginning of this Examine box. People can easily take note of nonverbal messages you never intended to be noticed.

Enrique loves his wife Kayla and holds her in the highest regard. However, last week he caught Kayla looking out the window at their neighbor Jake as he was doing some yard work shirtless. When Enrique called her out on it, Kayla joked that he shouldn't care if she ogled the neighbor, as he was far too young for her anyway. Even though she laughed it off, Enrique noticed she couldn't stop herself from blushing. These nonverbal behaviors gave Enrique a bit of a pause because they were incongruent with the words she was saying.

EXAMINE: *What should people do when confronted with an unintended message they've "sent"? Do you think that you should be held responsible if one of your unintended nonverbal cues cause someone else to do something that gets them in trouble or hurts a relationship? We likely want others to give us the benefit of the doubt when we express our feelings unintentionally through nonverbal cues; are we willing to do the same for those around us?*

Why Isn't ASL Considered Nonverbal?

One common misconception about a class in nonverbal communication is that it is going to be a sign language class. Interestingly, sign languages in general—and American Sign Language (ASL) specifically—are actually considered verbal forms of communication.[8] ASL is a system of language that is communicated through gesture. Even though no words are audibly spoken, hand gestures and facial expressions combine to send specific and discrete language-based messages. Not all verbal messages are necessarily **vocal/auditory messages**, or messaging conveyed through the use of sound. We can use verbal communication to visually send messages through the written word or through the interpretation of specific gestures used in sign language. These signs are considered verbal communication because each sign has a direct verbal meaning attached to the sign, one that is codified and made formal much in the same way that languages are developed and acquired throughout a culture. For example, when Campbell—who is hearing-impaired—orders

food at a restaurant without using vocal sounds, she may try to point to items on the menu or mime certain types of food. If she is fortunate enough to find a restaurant that employs a server who uses ASL, she can simply sign the items that she wants, using, for example, the sign for *taco*—a chop of the blade of one hand into the folded palm of the other. With an interaction partner who understands ASL, the use of hand motions can be as clear as spoken or written word.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION PRIMACY

One of the key reasons why nonverbal communication is so important to human interaction is that it has represented many important "firsts" for individuals, for interpersonal interactions, and even for the species as a whole. For this reason, we often describe nonverbal communication as having **primacy**.[9] We typically pay attention to nonverbal messages first and foremost in an interaction.

In an example of this happening within a long-term relationship, Juanito and Marieta are celebrating their fifth anniversary as a couple. After a great dinner and evening of salsa dancing, Juanito pulled a gift out of his jacket pocket and presented it with a big flourish. Marieta's eyes lit up, and she smiled as she said, "I thought we decided not to give each other gifts this year! You're terrible." After opening the envelope and discovering two tickets to a show featuring her favorite musician, Marieta sighed with delight and gave Juanito a kiss squarely on the lips. "I can't believe you did this, you monster!" she whispered, drawing him in for another kiss. Even though all of Marieta's words *should* have made Juanito think his gift was unwelcome, he knew he had made the right decision because he was paying attention to her nonverbal behaviors. The surprise and delight on her face, coupled with some passionate kissing for good measure, made it clear that Juanito had made this an anniversary to remember. When verbal and nonverbal cues seem to conflict in meaning, people often default to the more trusted nonverbal emotional displays to interpret the situation.

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Primacy of Species

Over the course of human history, researchers have discovered that humans' early ancestors were not able to use verbal language.[10] In fact, verbal language likely began with *homo sapiens*, although some scholars have noted that bone structures in Neanderthal may have allowed for complex sound to be vocalized.[11] However, primates of all sorts are able to live in community and share the division of labor, including caring for children and sharing food that has been hunted or gathered. How did such interactions occur if verbal language wasn't a part of the lives of our early ancestors? Nonverbal communication like grunts or slight vocalizations were likely the early auditory forms of communication, and facial expressions or gestures may have indicated important things like danger or social position or even the presence of spoiled meat. The idea that nonverbal communication came first over the course of our species' evolution is known as **phylogenetic primacy**, highlighting that our nonhuman ancestors had likely figured out social signaling before humans existed in our current form.

Primacy of Individual

Not only is nonverbal communication the earliest type of communication for our species, but also it's the earliest form of communication for each individual member of our species across the lifespan. The idea that nonverbal communication comes before any other form of communication in each individual experience is known as **ontogenetic primacy**. It's a pretty complicated phrase to describe a very simple concept: from the moment of birth, infants have to communicate with other humans nonverbally because they haven't yet acquired a verbal language system.[12] Starting with those early moments of life, most infants can communicate their needs through crying and receive help from a caretaker in return. These infants receive love and affection without using or understanding formal language, and they are still able to communicate basic emotions (like contentedness) during those early interactions. Even the earliest experience of nursing allows for nonverbal communication to occur far before a verbal

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language system is required. For example, consider a child crying to indicate hunger to his mother. Assuming that this child is being breast-fed, the mother will pick up the child and hold him to her chest. Significantly, the two will make eye contact, and then even the grasping and kneading behaviors of the child serve as an early form of touch expression. Think about that one interaction and all that it entails: sound, touching, being touched, eye contact, and other forms of auditory communication and affection. Indeed, small children are often given positive affirmations for those early attempts at communicating despite not having learned a formal language.

To be sure, the vast majority of children eventually develop a verbal communication system.[13] From learning what to ask for—or in some cases what to demand—children quickly learn that verbal language allows for greater specificity in achieving their goals. That being said, most young parents will acknowledge the greater urgency conveyed by nonverbal forms of expression like crying or a tantrum. Why does ontogenetic primacy matter within the human experience? It is, at its most basic, each person's earliest form of communication in their own lifespan. Whether you had a relatively pleasant upbringing or an unfortunately unhappy early life, nonverbal communication is the way that you first communicated throughout those earliest interactions. In the Upgrade feature, we discuss the impact of digital experiences across the course of the lifespan, something which further impacts the ways we engage one another in an increasingly technology-driven world.

BOX 1.4 UPGRADE
DIGITAL PRIMACY AND DIGITAL LIFE

While we typically talk about the variety of screens that we now encounter as part of our daily life, the devices themselves are actually quite adaptable to send all manner of message types across a multitude of apps. Interestingly, one begins to wonder about the ways that we first encounter unknown others as we engage in mediated interactions through our smartphones, our tablets, and even sometimes through our smartwatches or headphones. It seems that nearly all of our senses can be stimulated in some way through these digital devices, whether through actual physical encounters or the implied experiences associated with perception and memory of past experiences.

At the same time, we have yet to deeply consider the ways that the primacy of our interactions with other people might also be impacted by the ways that we engage one another. While there are theories that highlight some of the relational impacts of primarily-mediated interactions, we know that many of our relational interactions cross a variety of face-to-face and screen-based encounters. It may become useful to stop and consider what types of digital connections are most appropriate, not only for the relationship type but also for the desired outcome. While we can all agree that it is better to initiate a break-up during a real-time conversation than through a physical postcard, one wonders how the earliest interactions around a specific topic or encounter might impact our evaluation of that other partner and their motivations. One might be well-suited to consider the impact of digital primacy on our nonverbal and verbal interactions across a variety of topics.

UPGRADE: *What do you think is the impact of using digital devices to perform a variety of social tasks and interactions? Have you and your friends figured out a set of "rules" for what sorts of topics or outcomes should be allocated to certain apps or screens (or perhaps not be mediated at all?) Does a serious conversation that starts online seem more or less important because it began on a device rather than in-person? Or is all interaction equally important, and there is no impact based on the primacy of our devices? Do you think most of your interaction partners would agree?*

Primacy of Interaction

Our ancestors used nonverbal messaging to communicate long before modern humans were around, and each individual human on this planet has explored their social world through non-verbal messaging long before any understanding of a verbal language system is developed. In addition to those forms of primacy, each time we interact with someone we exhibit a common form of primacy as we pay attention to their nonverbal behaviors before we consider any words that they might be using. This type of primacy is known as **interactional primacy**, and it high-lights that our first impressions are often based on nonverbal characteristics and behaviors of another person. Consider the first day of an in-person class, perhaps your favorite class from back in high school (or even the class you are in right now). From the moment your instructor walked into the room, you began to make decisions about them based solely upon the way they looked or acted and on how they treated the people around them.[14, 15] Did you think they were going to be a difficult teacher, or relatively simple to understand? Did they seem easygoing, or harsh and severe? Did you think that the instructor was going to be a good one, or were you wor-ried that it might be smarter to reenroll in a different section with a different instructor? Is the instructor likely to be funny, cranky, or serious? You probably paid attention to a wide variety of observed personal characteristics of the instructor in order to determine how you might best engage them over the course of the semester, all before they even had a chance to say a single word. In this chapter's Measure feature, we look at how this interactional primacy may influ-ence our subsequent perceptions of a person.

BOX 1.5 MEASURE
SELF-ASSESSMENTS AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Our briefest interactions with others often influence how we feel about them. At the slight-est observation of someone else's behavior, we can make correct and incorrect guesses about a wide range of other personal characteristics of that individual.

Scholars have figured out some connections between our initial perceptions of other people and our resulting attitudes toward those people.[16, 17] The following is a shortened and modified list of questions inspired by some early research on first impressions and attitude formation.

Instructions: Think carefully about *someone you just recently met*, someone with whom you have not interacted significantly—perhaps the barista at the coffee shop on the corner, or a new neighbor down the street. Then, write the number (1 through 7) that best corresponds with your attitudes toward each statement

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

_____ 1. This person seems considerate of others.

_____ 2. I imagine that this person is highly intelligent.

_____ 3. I think this person has a decent sense of humor.

_____ 4. I would expect that this person will do very well in life.

_____ 5. It seems unlikely that this person is easily irritated.

_____ 6. This person is probably quite popular.

Add up your score and see what you get. The lowest score you can receive on this assessment is 6, while the highest score is 42. The higher your score, the more likely your first impression of that person was influenced by an impression of interpersonal warmth, or a belief that the person would be pleasant and likely be a good friend. The lower your score, the more likely you evaluated that person as cold or unpleasant.

MEASURE: *Are you surprised by your scoring of that other person? Was your impression of this relatively new person warmer or colder overall? Think about the things that person did—or the ways that they behaved—that may have impacted your evaluation of them as a person. If your scoring of the other person is low, what kinds of observed behaviors might you eventually try to avoid in your own life? If your scoring of the other person is high, what positive characteristics do you hope you incorporate into new interactions?*

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

These first impressions that we form are made based upon a variety of different things that each person naturally observes and evaluates in most any interactions. Indeed, nonverbal messages can come through almost any of our senses, from seeing a coworker's facial expressions, feeling the affectionate touch of a best friend, smelling the cologne or perfume of a romantic partner, or hearing the heartbeat of a child during a long embrace. (Taste is the only sense through which we don't directly have a nonverbal code, and even then burgeoning research is looking at the area of how food and communication are intermixed.[18] Some scholars even highlight taste as a way of communicating!) And to be sure, these are only the face-to-face channels of communication, not counting the range of nonverbal messages that can still be expressed in mediated ways.

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Nonverbal communication also occurs across a variety of mediated channels, like phone conversations, text messages, emails, television and film, radio, Zoom or FaceTime; the list is as long as the number of communication technologies that exist. In the realm of the written word, through messaging like text messages and emails, **emoticons** and **emojis**—text-based images or graphics that replicate facial expressions or other visual cues—serve as proxies for nonverbal communication. On phone conversations or on the radio, the vocal characteristics of the speaker, including the pauses between speaking, serve as nonverbal indicators that may contain information about the speaker's emotional state. Television and film contexts provide for a rich expression of nonverbal messages, but lose some of the interactivity of actual interaction. Zoom, FaceTime, or other synchronous video messaging services allow for a variety of real-time interactive nonverbal messages to be shared, but some scholars argue that they lack some of the important features of messages allowed through face-to-face interactions.[19] We explore the impact of channel selection in this chapter's Engage feature.

BOX 1.6 ENGAGE
DIVERSE CHANNELS, DIVERSE CHOICES

Across the diversity of a modern society, it is very common to have regular interactions among people from different backgrounds who have new perspectives based on their everyday life. Brandi was excited to move to a university located deep in a city center, as her main life experiences before that point occurred in a suburban setting where everyone *appeared* relatively similar at first glance. Upon arriving for her second year of college after a summer working at a regional camp, Brandi reflected on the many different ways that she knew how to make friends and meet new people. While she was probably pretty popular at camp that

summer—she didn't like to brag—Brandi had a lot of difficulty getting to know her neighbors she encountered in the hall in her new downtown apartment building. She regularly tried to look people directly in the eye and extend her hand for a shake, but she often found that these behaviors seemed unreciprocated by her neighbors, whether intentionally or not.

Although Brandi quickly learned that not all of her neighbors relied primarily on face-to-face channels to navigate their daily lives, she did find it strange that so many of her neighbors had their faces buried in their phones or tablets and took little to no interest in her at all. After a conversation with one friendly long-term resident helped her realize that people valued privacy in such a densely populated environment, Brandi realized that her own way of doing things was not always the most common—or even most desired—in every environment.

ENGAGE: *What things might Brandi do that her classmates and new neighbors find to be strange? Do you think Brandi will end up behaving similarly to those around her in a few years, or will she continue her outgoing suburban ways? How have you managed your relationships across a variety of channels as you transitioned to college life?*

Channel Reliance

Many scholars have even looked at characteristics of these channels more intentionally, trying to determine which channels are most important for communicating a full range of messages. Indeed, humans have a form of **channel reliance** in which we tend to rely on specific channels (like vocal or visual cues, for example) for specific types of messages (e.g., paying the most attention to vocal cues when receiving a deceptive message).[20, 21] This channel reliance will be discussed across multiple chapters in this book where appropriate. Significantly, the interactivity of a variety of channel types may impact our ability to receive an intended message, as the degree to which we can engage the message sender may influence what nonverbal characteristics we pay attention to.[22]

A SUMMARY OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION ORIGINS

Although the transactional model of communication is the preferred way of thinking about the basic elements of human communication, most all models highlight the complexities of messaging. Whether you prefer to think about messaging using the linear model or the transactional model of communication, it is difficult to ignore the complexity of both verbal and nonverbal messaging in our lives. Nonverbal communication includes a specific set of characteristics or behaviors that send messages to our friends, family, coworkers, romantic partners, and any other individuals that we engage with throughout our lives. Because nonverbal communication has come first throughout every aspect our existence, humans tend to rely on nonverbal messages much more than any verbal forms of communication. Just like verbal messaging, these nonverbal messages are sent by an individual using a specific channel; often, that same individual is receiving messages simultaneously, trying to decode the intended message despite many noise and features of the context that may impede the successful transmission of

the message. With so many different nonverbal and verbal messages present in our daily lives, it is not surprising that we grow increasingly reliant upon certain types of messages over the course of our life span, influenced in part by the interactivity of the channel through which we received that message. Throughout the rest of the book, we will explore specific features and contexts of the nonverbal messages in our daily lives.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- What elements of the models of communication are most unexpected to you, personally?

- How can you define nonverbal communication in your own words?

- Knowing the impact of first impressions, how will you manage your nonverbal self to make sure that your messages fit your goals?

- In what way do you expect to use nonverbal communication to influence your close relationships in the future?

KEY TERMS

channels

channel reliance

context

decoding

emojis

emoticons

encoding

feedback

interactional primacy

linear model of communication

message

noise

nonverbal communication

ontogenetic primacy

phylogenetic primacy

physical noise

physiological noise

primacy

psychological noise

receiver

semantic noise

sender

transactional messaging

transactional model of communication

unidirectional messaging

verbal communication

vocal/auditory messages