

Mast, M. S., & Cousin, G. (2013). Nonverbal communication. In J. A. Hall, & M. L. Knapp (Eds.), *Power, dominance, and persuasion*, (pp. 613-635). De Gruyter Inc.

### **Synopsis:**

Mast and Cousin bring together research analyzing the role that nonverbal behavior plays in conveying power, dominance, and persuasion. These are elements of what they call the vertical dimension of power. Differences in these elements come through as nonverbal behavior. A meta-analysis of studies linking nonverbal behavior to verticality found that compared to low power individuals, those with high power have more open body language, keep interpersonal distance small, and spoke more loudly. However, perceptions of nonverbal behavior can be different than documented cues. Smiling less, touching others more, and being more facially expressive were all found to be considered indicators of power or dominance, despite these stereotypes not strictly being diagnostic. The same group of people who identified these traits as powerful were also overwhelming able to correctly identify high power individuals from photographs and short video clips. Mast and Cousin also explore how nonverbal cues can have a bearing on persuasion. A message source will be more persuasive if they seem competent, sociable, and calm- all things that can be conveyed through nonverbal behavior. Additionally, gender plays a large role in how nonverbal cues are interpreted. Men are perceived as more dominant than women, and different nonverbal indicators that convey power in a man may convey the opposite for a woman, or vice versa. Finally, Mast and Cousin examine how some cultures might more clearly express and perceive nonverbal behavior in relation to power than other cultures.

### **Key Concepts**

- **Power:** “the extent to which an individual exerts control or influence over another person” (p. 614).
- **Dominance:** “the behavior of someone who has power or who seeks power” (p. 614).
- **Verticality:** “the differences in power, dominance, and influence among two or more social interaction partners” (p. 613).

### **Key Quotes**

- “When trying to infer a person’s power or dominance, people use nonverbal cues they stereotypically associate with power and dominance” (p. 618).
- “People express different types of nonverbal behavior and a perceiver’s own personality dominance influences the way he or she perceives the nonverbal behavior expressed by others and the way he or she is affected by persuasive communication” (p. 627-628).
- “Individual characteristics – like gender, personality, and cultural background among others – moderate the expression and perception of power and dominance, as well as outcomes of social interactions” (p. 629).

### **Essential Question**

- How might the differing perceptions of power between genders illustrate the gender divide in our society?