

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

The authors discuss how nonverbal behavior in “verticality” influences perceptions and expressions of power, dominance, and persuasion. They do this by examining multiple research studies and using the Brunswikian lens model to organize their findings. They identify perpendicular dimensions on which they chart transactions: the horizontal dimension, which measures friendliness/warmth vs. hostility/aggression, as well as the vertical dimension, which charts power, dominance, and influence in a hierarchical fashion. They stress that the vertical dimension is present in every social context we experience and note that there are a variety of nonverbal indicators of power and dominance. They suggest that dominance behaviors, exhibited by high power individuals, often include behaviors like extended amounts of speaking, speaking more loudly, maintaining closer personal distance, and open body positions. They noted that individually these behaviors might not conclusively indicate power, but combined, they often do. They stressed that individuals display and read these behaviors differently based on factors like gender, personality, and culture. Lastly, they state that there is a need for future research to better understand why distinct behaviors are related to verticality and how context and individual situations impact the relationship of behaviors to verticality.

Key Concepts

- **Power:** Used as an umbrella term, “encompassing structural power, status, leadership and authority”, defined as “the extent to which an individual exerts control or influence over another person” (p. 614).
- **The Brunswikian lens model:** “discuss[es] how the vertical dimension is expressed in nonverbal behavior and how different nonverbal behaviors are perceived to be related to verticality” (p. 615).
- **Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (ELM):** A model measuring likelihood of persuasion that says “the lower the motivation to consciously process information...or the lower the cognitive resources of the perceiver..., the more important the speaker’s nonverbal behavior becomes in the persuasive process” (p. 620).

Key Quotes

- “When two persons interact, they continually negotiate two major relationship issues: how friendly or hostile they will be with each other, and how much in charge or control each will be during their transactions” (p. 613).
- “Too much or too little dominance may be equally detrimental to a communicator’s persuasiveness” (p. 622).
- “Depending on the interaction between personality dominance and power position, 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 effected by persuasive communication” (p. 627-628).

Essential Question

- How would future research studies need to operate in order to find answers to the questions proposed by the authors at the end of the article?