Master’s Thesis: Nonverbal Communication in Small Group Leadership:
Using Nonverbal Competence to Increase Group Cohesiveness

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty in Communication and Leadership
School of Professional Studies
Gonzaga University

Under the Mentorship of David Givens

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Communication and Leadership

By
Angela Tice
December 2011
We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

[Signature]
Thesis or Project Director

[Signature]
Faculty Mentor

[Signature]
Faculty Reader

Gonzaga University
MA Program in Communication and Leadership Studies
Abstract

Cohesiveness is an important component of small groups and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the group. The purpose of this study was to research leaders’ nonverbal cues and the potential effect they have on group cohesiveness. Grounded in Burgoon’s expectancy violations theory, Pearce and Cronen’s coordinated management of meaning theory, and Mead’s symbolic interactionism theory, this study examines the leader’s ability to demonstrate their competence in nonverbal communication, and as a result increasing the group’s cohesiveness. The data for this exploratory study came from two different surveys, non-participant observations, and participant interviews. This study revealed that positive nonverbal communication does have a positive effect on group cohesiveness.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Importance and Goal of the Study

Cohesiveness is an important component of small groups, and it contributes to the overall effectiveness of the group. McBride (2006) writes that the more cohesive the group, the happier and more productive the group is. Shelley (1959) states that when all group members agree on the relative task-status, interaction is facilitated, conflict is minimized, and group efficiency and harmony are promoted. Due to the varying cultures and backgrounds that can be included in any small group, establishing cohesiveness can be a challenge. When leading a small group, it is important to understand the appropriate times to use nonverbal competence to avoiding misunderstandings, it pays a high reward by enhancing our self-esteem, and gaining the esteem of others (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002). An effective way for a leader to increase the cohesiveness of their group is to become competent in nonverbal communication. Also, nonverbal competence is important to carefully attend to interaction within the group in order to correct inadvertent messages, and if possible, to eliminate them (2002). The use of small groups to increase effectiveness within organizations, the educational system (for both teachers and students), and the government has been growing in popularity for the past several years. When it is not possible for the leader of a group to seek or give feedback, the alternative of being trained in nonverbal competence allows the leader to become more accurate at giving and “reading” nonverbal messages (2002). By consciously becoming more competent nonverbally, the leader of the group is also consciously working to increase the cohesiveness of their group, and in turn the group’s effectiveness.
1.2 Organization of Remaining Chapters

This thesis will first address the theoretical basis and philosophical assumptions for the pilot study on the effects of nonverbal communication and group cohesiveness. The review of the literature follows by first examining nonverbal cues, focusing on the intentional and unintentional cues, positive and negative cues, and the paralinguistic and the physical cues, and second examining group communication, focusing on the nonverbal cues with group member intentions, group leadership, and small group dynamics. Next is the scope and methodology, including the design, sample, and instrumentation of the study, and the ethical considerations and procedure as well as the strengths and limitations of the implementation of the study. The analysis follows with the results of the data gathered from the study, including the surveys, the observations, and the interviews. Last are the discussions of the results, the overall limitations of the study, recommendations for further study, and the conclusions drawn about nonverbal communication and group cohesiveness as a result of this study.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

Griffin (2009) states that the process of interpersonal communication is mutual and ongoing, and that both verbal and nonverbal messages are used with another person to create and alter the images in both minds. According to Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, and Dannels (2002), the process of nonverbal communication is: ongoing; can be intentional or unintentional; ambiguous; the foremost mode for expressing emotions; culture based; and nonverbal messages are more believable than verbal messages. This is due to the importance and prevalence of nonverbal messages in interpersonal communication. One’s verbal and nonverbal messages are either validated or discounted by other people’s perception of their character and competence (Griffin, 2009). Nonverbal communications, as suggested by researchers, have the most important role in interpersonal communications and account for a majority (about sixty-five to ninety percent) of the meaning within an interaction (Crane & Crane, 2010). However, the context of the interaction also plays a large part in the outcome of the interaction itself. The situational context within which an interpersonal interaction happens allows one to interpret what is said and what is not said through the nonverbal communication that takes place (2010). Ligons (1973) states that people make inferences about the speaker’s attitudes from the nonverbal behavior that accompanies their verbal communication. Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, and Dannels (2002) write that the characterization of nonverbal communication differs in many ways from the ways verbal communication is characterized.
2.2 Theoretical Basis

Upon careful examination of the different communication theories, the expectancy violations theory of Burgoon contains several aspects that can guide the research of the use of nonverbal competence to increase group cohesiveness. Within the expectancy violations theory, Burgoon includes the analysis of personal space expectations and interaction adaptation. Burgoon’s expectancy violations theory predicts the responses that the inappropriate actions of a communicator will elicit (Griffin, 2009). The lens of the expectancy violations theory allows for the examination of non-examples of nonverbal competence. Another theory that lends itself to guiding the research of the use of nonverbal competence to increase group cohesiveness is Pearce and Cronen’s coordinated management of meaning. The theory of coordinated management of meaning suggests that communication is used by all of us to make sense of an interaction by coordinating our actions with the behavior of others (2009).

A third theory that provides an opportunity for guidance in the use of nonverbal competence to increase group cohesiveness is Mead’s symbolic interactionism. According to Griffin (2009), Mead’s focus for this theory was to understand the way we attach labels to people and their actions, and especially our own. One more theory, Berger’s uncertainty reduction theory, focuses on the idea that people have the desire to know what we can expect from someone before they invest in a relationship with them (2009). Berger states that the relational variables of nonverbal warmth and self-disclosure are crucial to reducing the uncertainty in a relationship, and Berger also focuses on human communication and how it is used to gain knowledge and create understanding (2009). An integration of these theories from both the socio-cultural and socio-
psychological traditions and how they apply to the use of nonverbal competence in order to increase group cohesiveness will provide the guidance and the foundation needed to perform further research. This review will first examine the information provided from several different research articles, then a rationale for conducting the research will follow, and then this review will end with a research question that will be further addressed. This study will determine whether nonverbal cues, when purposely used by leaders of small groups, will increase the effectiveness of the group.

2.3 Philosophical Assumptions

Pearce’s theory of coordinated management of meaning states that the context in which people say things is not nearly as important as the way people communicate (Griffin, 2009). Nonverbal communication is an integral part of the way people communicate. Griffin (2009) writes that Pearce says that the emergence of relationships comes from the dynamic dance over coordinated actions and meanings. Burgoon’s expectancy violations theory includes various nonverbal behaviors including, but not limited to, eye contact, touch, and facial expression (Griffin, 2009). Mead’s theory of symbolic interactionism analyzes the way we look at the world (Griffin, 2009), and a closer examination of the affect of nonverbal communication on the effectiveness of small groups is one way to look at the world. By increasing the knowledge of what kind of person we are interacting with we provide ourselves with an improved forecast of future interaction(s) and how they will turn out. Berger’s axiom of nonverbal warmth states that when nonverbal expressiveness increases, one’s uncertainty toward the expresser decreases, therefore, when the nonverbal expressiveness remains at low levels or is negative, uncertainty levels actually increase. When one is assured of the nonverbal
warmth of another, the exchange of positive nonverbal behavior increases, however, when this assurance is not there, the exchange of positive nonverbal behaviors remains in the low and uncertain phase of the relationship (2009). Another axiom of Berger’s applies as well, the axiom of self-disclosure. As most people wait to see what their listener’s response will be before they express their own feelings, attitudes, and values, when a leader does not express themselves competently nonverbally, they decrease the amount of certainty and the amount of self-disclosure within their group.

Research shows that the nonverbal behavior of a group can be affected by the task assigned during that group’s interaction (Puccinelli, Tickle-Degnen, & Rosenthal, 2003). The leader of that group can also affect the nonverbal behavior of a group and the leader’s ability to demonstrate their competence in nonverbal communication, and as a result increasing the group’s cohesiveness. Further, those groups that are cohesive tend to be happier and more productive (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003). According to Kolb, Jin, and Song (2008), most teamwork training effectively covers relationship management, yet not much attention is directed toward communication and conflict. It is important for researchers to continue doing context studies, as the small group context has received little attention in the literature (Remland, 1993).

2.4 The Literature

2.4.1 Nonverbal Communication.

When looking at nonverbal communication in terms of clarity, nonverbal cues are useful when they repeat the verbal message, as they provide a visual reinforcement for the receiver of the message (Littlefield, 1983). Nonverbal cues are substitutes for words, and according to Littlefield (1983), when a nonverbal cue contradicts the verbal message
of the sender this contradiction serves to provide insight into the motivation of the sender upon receipt of both the verbal and nonverbal messages.

2.4.1.1 Intentional and unintentional nonverbal cues.

Because there is so much of one’s behavior that operates outside the level of awareness, controlling nonverbal messages, as the sender, is not possible one hundred percent of the time (Griffin, 2009). Stewart (2009) discusses the idea that whether the nonverbal cues are intended or unintended, universal or culturally bound, they play an important part in our interactions with others. When receiving nonverbal cues that are substituted for words, the receiver is forced to speculate as to the intent of the sender of those nonverbal cues (Littlefield, 1983). When there is an inconsistency between the verbal and nonverbal messages, there is also a lack of trust on the part of the receiver toward the sender of the message, and as mentioned previously, the nonverbal message tends to take precedence over the verbal message when this inconsistency is apparent. Remland (1981) discusses that the majority of what is communicated during face-to-face encounters is conveyed by through the words that are not spoken, or nonverbal communication. Also, there is a perceived inconsistency when the words the sender speaks appear to contradict the feelings that are expressed in their faces, voices, and with their bodily movements and gestures. This inconsistency has a tendency to be resolved by trusting the nonverbal messages over the verbal messages. Therefore, the messages sent nonverbally are powerful and attention should be focused toward those that will work toward establishing stronger, more positive interpersonal relationships, or behavioral synchrony, within small groups in order to increase effectiveness. Behavioral synchrony refers to the degree that two people’s behaviors coordinate with each other, and
behavioral synchrony also indicates the degree of intimacy and equality people have with one another (Stewart, 2009). Stewart (2009) also discusses the idea that when two people achieve behavioral synchrony and their nonverbal cues are “in sync”, there is usually a relational message sent of support, agreement, and solidarity. When the behavior in an interpersonal interaction appears to be naturally synchronous there is a likely chance that the interaction will reflect positively on the relationship (Stewart, 2009).

2.4.1.2 Positive and negative nonverbal cues.

Not only can nonverbal cues show the current state of a relationship, but nonverbal cues can also help move the interactants to a different type of relationship. Therefore, in order to better understand the positive nonverbal behaviors that are so important in interpersonal interactions, it is also important to take a look at those nonverbal behaviors that are considered negative as well. According to Burgoon, Pfau, Birk, and Manusov (1987), some of the more negative forms of nonverbal behaviors include face covering, body blocking, and postural tension. Those nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate rigidity and stiffness are less random movements, less gesturing, and less head turning. Those nonverbal behaviors that are less expressive include less vocal potency and gestural animation. They also stated that some of the nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate less immediacy and involvement include less eye contact, head nodding, facial pleasantness, and direct orientation. The nonverbal behaviors of looking, laughing, and smiling are attributed as being powerful and positive nonverbal signals in interpersonal relationships, as establishing synchrony, along with such behaviors as forward body lean, gentle tone of voice, open posture, and tender touch (McAdams, Jackson, & Kirshnit, 1984). Facial expressions, vocal qualities, body movements,
distances between interactants, and other associated voice elements are all included under
the concept of nonverbal messages (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002). These
elements, among others, are those that are considered to fit into two categories of
nonverbal communication.

2.4.1.3 Paralinguistic and physical nonverbal cues.

According to Ligons (1973), the support system for the verbal messages we
convey is nonverbal communication, and this nonverbal communication can be divided
into the two categories of the paralinguistic (inflection, intonation, etc.) and the physical
(facial expression, gestures, etc.). Rashotte (2002) states that the elements of speech rate,
tone of voice, pauses, voice volume, pitch and self-interruptions (such as coughing or
laughing) are considered paralinguistic, or verbal. Also, the elements of body movements
(use of space, positioning), facial expressions (wrinkling the nose, smiling, frowning,
etc.), and gestures (movements of the hand/arm) are considered physical nonverbal
behaviors. It is imperative that one understands these two categories of nonverbal
behaviors, and that during small group interactions, understanding the importance of
nonverbal behaviors as well as understanding how to interpret them. Gatica-Perez (2009)
writes that in accordance with the spoken word, nonverbally there is a wealth of
information conveyed during group conversations, and some of these nonverbal signals
are intentional while others are the result of automatic processes. Moreover, it is known
that social cues are rapidly, often automatically and correctly, interpreted, and it is the
interpretation and display of nonverbal cues, or signals, that determines a good part of our
social constructs and actions.
2.4.2 Group Communication

From casual peer chatting to formal meetings, regular group discussions, and presentations, small group interactions are governed by complex conscious and subconscious rules (Gatica-Perez, 2009). Beebe (1979) says that it is very important to understand nonverbal communication in order to be able to determine the way we respond to others, yet it is important to remember that the culture from which each person learned their behavior can vary, thus the responses to nonverbal behavior can vary as well. Therefore, it is important within any small group to adopt certain normative behaviors that apply to the group when they are interacting.

2.4.2.1 Nonverbal cues and group member intentions.

Allmendinger (2010) supports this idea by stating that when structuring interactions in small groups, nonverbal signals play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining the motivation of those involved in the group interaction. It also important to note that in small group interactions, even though there is only one person speaking, the rest of the group members can be exhibiting a vast array nonverbal cues that may have an impact on the interaction. Whether they are consciously or subconsciously exhibited, these nonverbal cues provide a unique addition to the group’s interaction (Beebe, 1979). Because these nonverbal cues provide a unique addition, one must take into account that the kinesics, bodily gestures or movements, allow for the positive or negative feelings of the group member to be indicated (Littlefield, 1983). Furthermore, the roles of a small group and the verbal interactions of the small group are both impacted in an important way by nonverbal communication (Beebe, 1979). Littlefield (1983) continues this idea and discusses that within a group, the participation and communication flow are often
influenced by the regulation of the nonverbal cues. Pell (2005) adds to the discussion with the idea that facial cues, in particular, have been the focus of researchers interested in emotive communication, and in particular the use of facial cues to regulate interpersonal behavior (Pell, 2005). When analyzing the concept of regulating nonverbal cues, it is also important to understand the intentions of the sender of the nonverbal message. A group member’s intentions are paired with their nonverbal cues (Littlefield, 1983). Whether positive (nods, winks, smiles, general eye contact, positive facial expressions) or negative (barriers with body position, ignoring, demonstrating disinterest, negative facial expressions) these nonverbal cues can contradict, substitute, compliment, and indicate these intentions. By understanding these nonverbal cues and the potential of their use, a group member can influence, even manipulate, the kind of interaction occurring within the group. By keeping their hands on the table, facing anyone who speaks with their whole body, and maintaining eye contact with the speaker, the member of the group is demonstrating their understanding of nonverbal cues and using them to indicate their involvement in the listening process of the group as well as encouraging reciprocation (Littlefield, 1983). When these actions are performed, the result is the increase of the cohesiveness of the group.

2.4.2.2 Nonverbal cues and group leadership.

Group cohesiveness can be defined in more than one way, and whether it is defined as the degree of attraction the group members feel toward one another, the amount of loyalty within the group as a whole, or the fact that the members feel a “groupness”, the group climate and interaction are just as important as what the group has been tasked to complete (McBride, 2006). Seating position influences how the sender of
the message in the group is influenced by others and thus how their message is received (Littlefield, 1983). Littlefield (1983) also states that the closer a member of the group sits to the center, the more positively perceived, the further away from the center, the perception is that the are aloof or uninterested. According to Beebe (1979), the negotiations designed to end the conflict in Vietnam were delayed for eight months due to disagreements about the seating arrangement. They eventually agreed upon a round table so that all negotiators would be equidistant from each other, thus reflecting equal status among them. This is just one example of how the variables of nonverbal communication are an important part of affecting the influence of communication in small groups. Beebe (1979) writes that nonverbal communication largely contributes to the affecting of the meanings of messages as they are communicated to others. According to Bonito and Sanders (2009), the outcomes of a group’s communication, especially the regularities and functionalities, are contingent on the relevant beliefs and attitudes of the group members as well as the practical demands of the group’s task. The beliefs and the attitudes of the group determine the degree of cohesiveness within the group. Hagstrom and Selvin (1965) define cohesiveness as the capacity of groups of people to act in concert, to control the behavior of the members, and to maintain a sense of group identity. They maintain that the roles in small groups are highly interdependent and the effectiveness of the small group depends upon the degree to which members conform to the group’s norms.

When the group’s cohesiveness increases so does their effectiveness. Engleberg and Wynn (2003) state that when analyzing the effectiveness of a group, it is important to consider that increased productivity and increased cohesiveness have a reciprocal
relationship in the group functionality. According to Kolb, Jin, and Song (2008), organizations benefit greatly from effective teamwork. Unfortunately, despite possessing the necessary members, tools, and resources, not all groups today have successful outcomes. However, effective ways to improve worker performance are sought more and more today, and group performance is one of the most important focal points (Robertson & Huang, 2005). Numerous scholars have studied the value and properties of group effectiveness, and the studies have shown that the abilities of the leader are important in terms of group effectiveness (Kolb, Jin, & Song, 2008). This can be applied to the group leader’s nonverbal communication abilities as well as their skills in verbal communication.

2.4.2.3 Nonverbal leadership and small group dynamics.

Schubert, Baird, and Bowes (1974) write that because influence and persuasion are involved in small group dynamics, the expectation is that those individuals that exhibit more facial/nonverbal cues are those individuals seeking leadership positions. Littlefield writes that certain elements at work and inherent in the dynamics of the exchange are more clearly understood when the function of the nonverbal cue is identification, and by accenting the nonverbal, the leader suggests certain important dimensions of the message (Littlefield, 1983). Remland (1981) states that leaders, when demonstrating an understanding of nonverbal communication and how to use it effectively, can improve their leadership performance. For instance, leaders can use the nonverbal behavior of eye contact to control the outcomes of interpersonal interactions and to attain and maintain positions of power within the group (Lamb, 1981). Thus, the communication skills of the leader are directly related to the interpersonal influence they
can exert on the members of their group, and leadership effectiveness can be viewed as a compilation of these interpersonal relationships (Remland, 1981). By increasing one’s understanding of nonverbal behaviors one is able to increase their interpersonal relations skills by becoming more aware of their own nonverbal behaviors as well as those of their small group (Ligons, 1973). It is important to also consider that everyone has differing abilities in conveying and interpreting nonverbal communication, and they therefore vary in their abilities to monitor and control their nonverbal communication (Riggio, 2006). When considering the fact that differing abilities can have an effect on the outcome of the nonverbal communication, the complexity of the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication should also be considered. Cesario and Higgins (2008) write that as a means of communication in interactions, nonverbal cues are social tools. It is common practice to isolate the nonverbal cues from any contextual features of the interaction, and this may have an unintended obscuring effect as to the complexity of the interaction. Yet, Riggio (2006) writes that in order for someone to be skilled in nonverbal interpretation they must have a heightened sensitivity to the nonverbal messages of others, and also be able to interpret the nonverbal messages of others accurately. Another aspect of nonverbal communication that also necessitates that one be skilled is nonverbal communication, which is the ability to accurately send nonverbal messages to another.

People can be trained to more accurately “read” nonverbal messages when it is not possible to seek or give feedback (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002). It is important to remember that a leader should avoid sending unintentional or incongruent nonverbal messages, therefore carefully attending to the interactions the leader has with the group can at least correct, if not eliminate, inadvertent messages (2002). A leader
needs to become receptive to nonverbal cues in order to be an effective communicator (2002). There are many different approaches available for the leader of a group to increase their nonverbal competency and thus increase the effectiveness of their group. It is clear that nonverbal signals are critical to the communication of small groups, and these nonverbal signals can sometimes be the most important part of our message. Virtually every sector of our society is in the position where understanding and effectively using nonverbal behavior is crucial (Stewart, 2009).

2.5 Purpose of Study

In order to have a cohesive group it is important to establish and maintain communication between the members of that group. Griffin (2009) agrees with Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, and Dannels (2002) in that interpersonal communication is ongoing and mutual. One aspect of interpersonal communication that can help establish and maintain cohesiveness is nonverbal communication. Crane and Crane (2002) discuss that nonverbal communication, which comprises sixty-five to ninety percent of interpersonal communication, has a greater impact on interpersonal communication than verbal communication. Therefore, nonverbal messages are more believable than verbal messages (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002). Even when working in groups it is difficult to be completely aware of your nonverbal communication. When writing about nonverbal communication, Griffin (2009) mentions that it is impossible to control one hundred percent of one’s nonverbal messages. When one’s nonverbal behaviors are inconsistent with their verbal behaviors, the nonverbal is trusted over the verbal (Remland, 1981). Stewart (2009) states that when the verbal and nonverbal behaviors are synchronous, there is a greater chance of them reflecting positively on the interpersonal
interaction and on the relationship. When the nonverbal behaviors are negative, there is an increase in the chance of them reflecting negatively on the interpersonal interaction as well as on the relationship (Burgoon, Pfau, Birk, & Manusov, 1987). By establishing trust, and positively interacting with group members, the leader works toward synchrony between their verbal and nonverbal behaviors as well as between the members of their group. There is a plethora of ways to communicate nonverbally and nonverbal communication can be divided into two categories, the paralinguistic (inflection, intonation, etc.), and the physical (facial expressions, gestures, etc.) (Ligons, 1973). This study focuses on the physical category of nonverbal communication, in particular the four areas of the eyes, lips, shoulders, and hands.

When working in groups there are several personalities and expectations for behaviors. In order to work toward a cohesive group it is important to have an understanding nonverbal communication and to adopt normative behaviors (Beebe, 1979). Because nonverbal communication allows for the positive or negative feelings of the group member to be indicated (Littlefield, 1983), a working understanding of how to use and interpret nonverbal communication is beneficial. Regulation of nonverbal communication influences the participation and communication flow within a group (1983). The leader can influence the group interaction by understanding how to regulate nonverbal communication and therefore affect the cohesiveness of their group. The group climate, or cohesiveness, is just as important as group task completion (McBride, 2006). Task completion is affected by the cohesiveness of the group, which in turn is affected by the beliefs and attitudes of the members. The beliefs and attitudes of the group, for the most part, determine the degree of cohesiveness within the group (Bonito & Sanders,
The group’s productivity and the group’s cohesiveness have a reciprocal relationship within group functionality (Engleberg & Wynn, 2003). Finding the balance between the two, productivity and cohesiveness, requires a working knowledge of nonverbal communication and how to use it effectively. The abilities of the leader are important in terms of group effectiveness, especially the leader’s skills in nonverbal communication (Kolb, Jin, & Song, 2008).

Influence and persuasion strongly impact small group dynamics, therefore the leaders are those in the group who exhibit nonverbal communication more confidently and effectively (Schubert, Baird, & Bowes, 1974). In order to improve their leadership performance, the leaders of the group need to demonstrate understanding and effective use of nonverbal communication (Remland, 1981). However, the leader must also vary in their abilities to monitor and control their nonverbal communication due to the fact that everyone has differing abilities in conveying and interpreting nonverbal communication (Riggio, 2006). One skilled in nonverbal communication is also skilled in nonverbal interpretation of the behaviors of others (2006). People can be trained to be skilled in nonverbal communication in order to be more effective communicators and increase the effectiveness of their group (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002).

By analyzing the nonverbal interactions of leaders with their groups a better understanding of what creates group cohesiveness and how the leader influences this cohesiveness on a nonverbal level will be attained. First, by examining the aspects of nonverbal communication such as intentional and unintentional nonverbal cues, positive and negative nonverbal cues, and paralinguistic and physical nonverbal cues for the differences and how they effect the interpersonal interactions of those in small groups.
Next, by examining the aspects of group communication such as nonverbal cues and
group member intentions, nonverbal cues and group leadership, and nonverbal cues and
small group dynamics for their differences and how they effect the interpersonal
interactions of those in small groups. By conducting a study of the nonverbal behaviors
of the leaders of small groups, an understanding can be reached as to how and why some
groups are more cohesive than others, and further steps can be taken toward being able to
educate in the field of leadership and the effective use of nonverbal communication to
increase small group cohesiveness and thereby increase leader and small group
effectiveness. All too often leaders of small groups, whether they are formal or informal,
tend to either misunderstand or misinterpret the nonverbal communication that takes
place within the group. The leaders of these small groups also have the tendency to miss
important cues that are given to them as well as miss the opportunity to use nonverbal
cues to the group’s advantage. The goal of this study was to research leaders’ nonverbal
cues and the effect they have on group cohesiveness when they are used in a competent
manner.

Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology
3.1 Scope

In conducting this study of the use nonverbal competence within small groups, the focus was on the cohesiveness within the group, and whether the level of nonverbal competence of the participants played a contributing role in the cohesiveness of the group. As the concept of nonverbal competence within department meetings was the catalyst for this study, two of the department meetings within one junior high school, within one district, were observed for further analysis. Time limitations narrowed the opportunities of observing meetings from other junior high schools, as well as other levels of education, such as the high schools and elementary schools within the district. Other districts were also a consideration, as were other places of business where departmental meetings are the norm, yet were ruled out due to time constraints.

While examining nonverbal competency within the two department meetings, it was critical to take into account the apparent cohesiveness of the group. As each department within the department varied in their degree of cohesiveness, these data were extremely important in determining which nonverbal competencies were effective in increasing the cohesiveness of the group. There is a strong possibility that another category will emerge during the analysis of the observations, the nonverbal competencies that were effective in decreasing the cohesiveness of the group. In other words, this study attempted to determine which nonverbal competencies increased the cohesiveness of the group as well as which nonverbal competencies had no impact, on the cohesiveness of the group. By focusing on the department meetings within a junior high school, and including varying personality types and a wide variety of subjects taught, this study
allowed for adaptation to other arenas as well as varying age groups (students, managers, department leads, etc.).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Design

As this study focused on the interpersonal interactions within department meetings, and the context of the situations in which the data was gathered was constrained by time to the meetings within one school, the qualitative research approach was the most appropriate. According to Neuman (2005), the qualitative research approach focuses on interactive events/processes, is situationally constrained, and involves few cases to be analyzed. During the qualitative research approach, the researcher may also focus on several factors while intensively comparing a limited set of cases (Neuman, 2005). This study compared two different department meetings while focusing on the patterns of nonverbal competence that emerged and these comparisons also included whether the different levels of cohesiveness within each group as determined by the positive and negative verbal and nonverbal behaviors exhibited throughout each of the meetings.

3.2.2 Sample

Because this sample consists of the people from the department meetings of one junior high school, and this study was designed based on theoretical interest, the theoretical sampling method was applied. Neuman (2005) writes that when the selection of sample cases is guided by theoretical interest, this method is considered theoretical sampling. The staff that participate in these meetings are both men and women that vary in age from early 20’s to mid 60’s, possess varying degrees and certificates, and are
mostly Caucasians. The theoretical sampling for this study focused on nonrandom samples where the researcher determined specific events to observe (Neuman, 2005). The participants were the staff at one junior high school, and included the department meetings with departments from all of the subject areas. By focusing on a smaller sampling framework, as opposed to staff or departmental meetings from other schools, other districts, other venues (corporate, students, etc.), the scope of the study was narrowed, and therefore the focus and context of the use of nonverbal competencies within a familiar context to the researcher. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) write that the important issues at hand when conducting qualitative research are the accessibility and suitability of the research participants for the research. A key point in any qualitative study is knowledge of the organization, as this increases the chances of developing detailed contextual knowledge (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

3.2.3 Instrumentation

After informing the staff that the surveys and observations would be focused on studying the relationship between communication including body language and group dynamics, permission from each of the staff members to be observed was obtained. Each of the two departmental meetings was observed, with the participants unaware of what aspect of their nonverbal communication was going to be analyzed so as to allow them to remain “natural”. By first attaining data through surveys about the perceived cohesiveness of each department, as well as the perceptions of specific aspects of nonverbal behavior, a preliminary perception was formed as to the level of cohesiveness of each department. The surveys were adapted from two different sources, Stokes (1983) and Seashore (1954). The notes from these observations were then analyzed for the
nonverbal communication aspects of the interactions, in particular for the nonverbal competence of the leaders of the group. Not only does this observation method allow for shorter time constraints, but also allows the researcher to focus on specific issues during the observations. This direct approach allows for more focused observations because the researcher is not participating and can therefore watch for specific issues (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The *Nonverbal Dictionary of Gestures, Signs, and Body Language Cues* (Givens, 2002) was the resource used to ensure the correct interpretation of the nonverbal competencies that were used during the interpersonal interactions in the observed departmental meetings. Two different scales, non-verbal cues positive, and non-verbal cues negative, were developed by the researcher from the information provided in the *Nonverbal Dictionary of Gestures, Signs, and Body Language Cues*, and they were used to analyze the nonverbal behaviors observed during the meetings for each of the groups. These scales were used, along with the information from the surveys, to help determine which of these nonverbal cues, or competencies, increased group cohesiveness, and as a by-product which of these nonverbal competencies decreased, or had a negative impact on, group cohesiveness.

Because the nonverbal scales used for this study were developed from the *Nonverbal Dictionary of Gestures, Signs, and Body Language Cues*, the reliability of the instrument is quite high. Neuman (2005) states that, qualitative researchers use a variety of techniques, such as non-participant observations. The scales can be used for any group observation to determine the positive and negative nonverbal competencies of the members, which in turn can help to determine how to increase the cohesiveness of the
groups involved in the study. Achieving reliability is easier than achieving validity, and reliability is necessary to achieve validity (Neuman, 2005). The fact that the data was collected from observations of meetings and analyzed in terms of the Nonverbal Dictionary, and the interpretations are based off of experiences with the information provided Givens’ *Nonverbal Dictionary*. According to Neuman (2005), reliability is determined to be persuasive descriptions that tend to reveal the researcher’s experiences with the empirical data as genuine. In order to increase reliability, a non-biased colleague also analyzed the data and our results were compared, thus increasing the accuracy of the coding. Due to the lack of information available during the research process of this study, the coding is merely preliminary and suggests that this study is a pilot study and therefore leaves room for interpretation and revision as well as further research.

### 3.2.4 Ethical Considerations and Procedure

After obtaining permission from all involved (principal, other staff members, etc.) to survey and observe, two departmental meetings were observed in as unobtrusive manner as possible. The participants would only be informed that they are being observed for a study on communication between body language and group dynamics, but the details will not be revealed in order to allow for more natural behavior within the meeting. The notes from the observations were reviewed and analyzed in accordance to the two nonverbal scales and then categorized as to whether nonverbal cues were positive or negative. The scales separate out the positive and negative nonverbal cues, and the cohesiveness and nonverbal perception survey allows for correlation of the data from the observations and the cohesiveness of the group. During the review of the observations for the nonverbal cues, the level of cohesiveness of the group was also ranked in order to
facilitate the correlation of the data to determination of which nonverbal cues increase cohesiveness, as well as which decrease cohesiveness. Eight participants were also interviewed in order to substantiate the data gathered from the surveys and the observations. An un-biased colleague then reviewed all of the data collected in order to ensure accurate and non-biased coding of the data.

There are also ethical considerations for this research design, beginning with ensuring that the subjects not be harmed either physically or mentally in the name of science. The process of attaining permission from all of the participants, as well as informing them that they are participating in a communication study, minimizes the risk of physical harm or injury. However, there is the dilemma of whether or not to inform the participants of the exact nature of the study, and if informed, considering whether this alters the resulting data of the study. Neuman (2005) discusses the importance of balancing the value of advancing knowledge with the value of noninterference in the lives of others. Confidentiality is another ethical consideration, as keeping the subjects' privacy completely and strictly confidential is important, thus the results from the observations should not be released for the purposes of the study.

3.2.5 Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths to this study is that this study provided evidence about something affecting something else, such as the nonverbal cues affecting the cohesiveness of the group. Another strength of the observational design is that any questions or concerns about interpretations can be addressed by reviewing the observation notes again. Internal validity is also another strength to the observational study, as the observations notes are a concrete source of information. A limitation,
however, to the observational study is the external validity and in turn the ability to
generalize the findings beyond the study sample. The external validity could be
compromised as the surveys might sensitize a participant and effect changes in them, as
well as the possible difficulties in generalizing from the settings of an observational
design. Because the research is based upon clearly defined situations, there is the
possibility that it will be difficult to recreate the study with the same conditions. Another
limitation of observational research is that the behavior of the subjects may be affected by
the knowledge of being studied. A third limitation is that the data were gathered from the
observations of the actions that took place; the actions were described after they
happened.
Chapter 4: The Study

4.1 Introduction

This study took place in a public junior high school and was conducted using two surveys, the observation notes from two different department meetings, and qualitative interviews with eight of the participants (four from each department). The participants were informed that they were participating in a study of communication and nonverbal behaviors and that the information gathered would only be applied in general terms when analyzed and discussed for this study. They were not informed as to the details of the study nor the particular research that was being conducted. Each participant was given a packet with the permission slip for their data to be used and a copy of the cohesiveness perception survey as well as a copy of the aspects of nonverbal behavior perception survey, which was to be returned before the observations of the department meetings. In addition, eight participants were interviewed in order to gather qualitative data and clarify the data from the surveys. The expectation was that these tools would help to form a preliminary understanding of the level of cohesiveness for each group being studied.

Then an unobtrusive non-participant conducted each of the observations and the focus was on the nonverbal interactions between the leader of each group and the members of each group.

The goal was to gather data on the two departments in order to examine the nonverbal behaviors of the leader of the group in relation to the cohesiveness of the group. Seventeen permissions slip and survey packets were distributed to the seventeen participants, of which fifteen were returned. Department A consists of nine members and eight members completed and returned these packets, one of which was the department
leader. Department B consists of eight members and seven members completed and returned these packets, none of which was the department leader. Each of the departments meets as a whole twice a month and the members meet occasionally based upon the needs of each member and the requirements of the group as a whole. The observations were conducted during the meetings where the entire department participated. The interviews were conducted on an individual, face-to-face, basis as time allowed.

The coding of the data collected from the cohesiveness perception surveys, the aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys, the non-participant observations, and the qualitative interviews was done initially by the researcher and then correlated with the coding of an unbiased colleague who was not part of the study. When analyzing the cohesiveness perception surveys, both the researcher and the second coder separated the questions and answers into categories. After some explanations of their thoughts for their categories, they concluded with the categories of entire department, personal, and meeting time. Entire department refers to the questions that address everyone in the department, personal refers to the questions that address the individual participant, and meeting refers to the questions that address the department meetings. When analyzing the aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys, both the researcher and the second coder divided the data into the categories of eyes, hands/gestures, and lips.

4.2 Data Analysis and Results of the Study

4.2.1 Surveys.

4.2.1.2 Cohesiveness perception surveys
The cohesiveness perception surveys (merely titled survey number one on the copies distributed to the participants) were designed to measure the members’ perception of their groups’ cohesiveness. The possible responses were: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree, and they indicate the level of cohesiveness perceived with strongly agree being the highest and strongly disagree being the lowest. In Table one, the category of entire department (questions pertaining to every member in their department), seven of the seven members surveyed from department A responded that

they at least agree with all of the questions in this category. This means that all seven participants either agree or strongly agree that their group is cohesive. Two of the eight participants from department A responded with agree to all questions in the entire department category, while two participants responded with an even mix of agree and strongly agree for the entire department category. Four of the participants from department A responded with strongly agree to all the questions in the entire department category. Also referring to table one, in department B, one of the seven participants agreed to all questions in the entire department category, while three participants responded with an even mix of agree and disagree for the entire department category. Three of the participants from department B responded with a mix of agree and strongly disagree with no answer of disagree for any of the questions in the entire department category.

**Table 1 – Entire department**
*(7 questions)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department A (8 participants)</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department B (7 participants)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the personal category (questions pertaining to the participant themselves), referring to table two, one participant from department A responded that they agree for all questions, except for the question about gossiping, to which the response was disagree. Four participants from department A responded that they strongly agree for all questions, again with the exception of the question about gossiping, which was strongly disagree. Three participants from department A responded with a mix of agree and strongly agree to the questions in the personal category, yet again with the exception of the gossiping to which all three replied that they disagreed. Also referring to table two, in department B, two participants from department B responded that they agree for all questions, with the exception of the question about gossiping, which was disagree. Two participants responded that they disagreed for all questions, including the gossiping question. For department B, three participants responded with a mix of agree and disagree to the questions in the personal category, and yet again the gossiping question was the exception with all the replies of disagree.

Table 2 – Personal
(5 questions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department A</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department B</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last of three categories for the cohesiveness perception survey is meetings. Looking at table three, Department A had two participants respond with strongly agree for all questions in this category and four participants responded with agree for all questions in this category, also two participants from department A responded with a mix of agree and strongly agree for the questions in the category of meetings. For the category
Table 3 – Meetings
(4 questions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department A</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department B</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of meetings, also referring to table three, department B had two participants respond with agree to all questions, and three participants responded with disagree to all questions.

Two participants from department B responded with a mix of agree and disagree to the questions in the category of meetings.

4.2.1.3 Aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys.

The aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys, merely titled survey number two on the copies distributed to the participants, were designed to measure each members’ perception of specific nonverbal behaviors. By measuring the members’ perceptions of different nonverbal behaviors, the results of this survey combined with the results of the cohesiveness survey helped to determine the beliefs and attitudes of the members of the group toward the group itself. As stated earlier in this paper, the beliefs and attitudes of the group, for the most part, determine the degree of cohesiveness within the group (Bonito & Sanders, 2009). As will be seen, the leader of department A is competent in the use of nonverbal communication and was successful in the use of nonverbal communication to their group. The leader of department B, on the other hand, was neither successful nor unsuccessful in the use of nonverbal communication; therefore there is no measure of success in the use of nonverbal communication to their group. By dividing the questions into three different categories, eyes, hands/gestures, and lips, the responses from the participants were sorted by these categories and then sorted between
positive and negative subcategories within these categories. When looking at table four, one can see that within the category of the eyes, all eight participant’s responses from department A agreed that the nonverbal behavior of prolonged eye contact in the first question was positive. Also seen in table four, all seven of the participants from department B agreed that the nonverbal behavior of prolonged eye contact in the first question was positive. The responses for the category of hands/gestures for department A showed that all participants agree that gesturing with palms down is a positive behavior. The final category within the aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys is the lips. Both departments A and B had all participants respond with an even split of positive and negative perceptions of these questions.

Table 4 – Aspects of Nonverbal Behaviors Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eyes (5 questions)</th>
<th>Hands/Gestures (5 questions)</th>
<th>Lips (4 questions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department A</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department B</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Berger focuses on human communication and how it is used to gain knowledge and to create understanding (2009). When a leader does not express nonverbal warmth to their group, the level of self-disclosure remains very low, therefore the level of cohesion within the group remains low as well. The reciprocal is true for the leader who exhibits nonverbal behaviors that are warm and positive. When the leader demonstrates high levels of nonverbal warmth with their positive behaviors, consequently the members of their group feel they are part of a cohesive group (2009). In order to gain understanding, and in turn feel cohesive, the members of a group need to be able to reduce their level of
uncertainty about their leader, which can be done through the use of positive, warm nonverbal behaviors.

4.2.2 Observations.

Non-participant observations were made of each of the department meetings, with the focus of the observation being the nonverbal cues used by the leaders to communicate with their group members. The positive and negative nonverbal cues were decided upon based on the responses to the aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys from the participants of the two departments. The leader from department A exhibited cues from both the positive and negative sections of the nonverbal scales used to record the observation. As seen in table five, of the nonverbal cues used by the leader of department A, ninety-two percent of the cues were positive (67 out of 72), while only eight percent of them were negative (5 out of 72). Seventy-five percent of the observed positive nonverbal cues from the leader in department A involved the eyes (50 out of 67), while twenty-five percent involved the hands, shoulders, and the positive of the lips (10 out of 67 for hands/shoulders and 7 out of 67 for the positive of the lips), yet one hundred percent of the negative nonverbal cues involved the negative of the lips (5 out of 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>Hands/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(prolonged</td>
<td>Gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contact, initiating</td>
<td>(gesturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contact, and gaze</td>
<td>while speaking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department A (8 participants)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department B (7 participants)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the responding participants from department B, also seen in table five, as well as the majority of the responding participants from the study, agreed upon the perceptions of positive and negative nonverbal cues, based on the results from the nonverbal perception surveys. Of the nonverbal cues used by the leader of department B, only twenty-three percent of the cues were positive (11 out of 48), while seventy-seven percent of the cues were negative (37 out of 48). Fifty-four percent of the observed positive nonverbal cues from the leader in department B involved the hands and shoulders (6 out of 11), while twenty-eight percent of the observed nonverbal cues involved the positive of the lips (3 out of 11), and eighteen percent involved the eyes (2 out of 11). The negative nonverbal cues were divided between the eyes, at forty-six percent (17 out of 37) and the hands and shoulders at fifty-four percent (20 out of 37).

4.2.3 Interviews.

All four participants from department A responded that in some way the nonverbal communication skills of their leader influenced their group’s cohesion and effectiveness, their sense of belonging within the group, and that the nonverbal communication skills of their leader are important for group cohesion. Interviewee number one from department A said, “I feel that [our] department head’s nonverbal communication greatly influences our cohesiveness.” Interviewee number two stated, “Our leader’s nonverbal skills are very important to the cohesiveness of our department.” The third interviewee commented, “The nonverbal skills of our department leader greatly affect the effectiveness of our group.” The fourth interviewee responded with, “My feeling of inclusion if greatly influenced by my leader’s nonverbal skills.” All of these responses reflect the positive influence of the leader’s nonverbal skills on the members’
perceptions of the group’s cohesiveness and effectiveness. These quotes reflect the personal opinions of the four participants and all of these opinions are positive toward the nonverbal competence of their leader.

However, all of the four respondents in department B felt neutral toward the influence of their leader’s nonverbal communication skills on the group’s cohesion. This neutrality suggests the group does not aware of the importance of nonverbal communication, and this lack of awareness could be a result of the leader not being competent in the use of nonverbal communication. They were split two with no influence and two with some influence when responding to the importance of the leader’s nonverbal communication skills and their feeling included in the group, yet all four were again in agreement that the leader’s nonverbal communication skills have little or no influence on the effectiveness of the group. The first interviewee stated, “I have never really paid attention to the leader’s nonverbal communication skills, so I guess I don’t see it affecting cohesion much.” The second interviewee remarked, “Negative nonverbal communication skills affect cohesiveness sometimes causing members to hold their opinions in order to remain safe.” Interviewee number three said, “Being part of a team is also the members’ job. I think we are a team in spite of the leader and sometimes I feel the leader isn’t part of the team.” Interviewee number four remarked, “I don’t feel a part of the group based on the nonverbal cues I receive. Generally I feel overlooked and tolerated.” The responses from department B indicate that the leader of department B is not competent in the use of nonverbal behaviors to influence the effectiveness of their group. However, according to these responses, the leader’s use of nonverbal behaviors has somewhat negatively affected the cohesiveness of the group. Even though some
members do not place importance upon nonverbal behaviors when considering cohesion, phrases such as “in spite of”, “not part of the team”, and “don’t feel a part of the group” suggest otherwise.

Upon examination of the data from each of the surveys, the cohesiveness perception surveys and the aspects of nonverbal behavior perception surveys, the data from the observations, and the data from the qualitative interviews, there became a clear distinction between the two departments in terms of the participant’s perceptions of cohesiveness as well as the nonverbal competence of their leaders. The first indicator of the differences in the department cohesiveness was the overall result of the cohesiveness perception survey, where each department demonstrated whether they were cohesive based on their perceptions of the groups’ cohesiveness. The second indicator was the overall result of the non-participant observations demonstrating the differences between the two department leaders and their nonverbal competence when running department meetings. The third and final indicator was the overall result of the interviews and the differences in the personal perceptions of the department members.

Based on these indicators, as well as the analysis of the data gathered during the study, department A perceives that they are a cohesive and effective group with a strong leader who is competent in nonverbal cues when communicating. On the other hand, based on these indicators and analysis of the data gathered during they study, department B does not perceive that they are a cohesive group and it is not clear whether or not they perceive that the ability of their leader to use nonverbal cues may influence the leader’s to effectively lead their group. These results are derived from the perceptions of the department members, the observations of the department meetings that recorded the
actual nonverbal cues used by each of the leaders during their meetings, and the responses attained from the qualitative interviews with eight of the seventeen participants.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 First indicator.

For the first indicator, the overall results from the cohesiveness perception survey, department A demonstrated that all the participants perceived the department as a cohesive one, in varying degrees, yet a cohesive department. Department B demonstrated that the participants differed in their perceptions of their groups’ cohesiveness, with some feeling there is a good degree of cohesiveness, while others perceive that the department lacks the necessary cohesiveness that was addressed in the survey, thus demonstrating that the department is not a cohesive one. According to Allmendinger (2010), nonverbal signals play a very important role in the ability of leaders to establish and maintain the motivation and thus the effectiveness of the group.

4.3.2 Second indicator.

The second indicator involves an examination of the observations results. The fact that the leader of department A used a large percentage more of the positive nonverbal cues versus the negative cues indicates that the leader is competent in the use of nonverbal cues. This competence in the use of nonverbal cues by the leader suggests in an increase in the cohesiveness of the group they are leading. This confirms the determination made from the first few indicators, that department A is a cohesive group. The fact that the leader of department B used a large percentage more of the negative nonverbal cues versus the positive cues indicates that the leader in incompetent in the use
of nonverbal cues. This incompetence in the use of nonverbal cues by the leader may suggest a decrease in the cohesiveness of the group they are leading. This confirms the determination made from the first few indicators, that department B is not a cohesive group. Remland (1981) writes that the communication skills of the leader can possibly have a direct effect on the interpersonal relationships between the members. Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, and Dannels (2002) state that a leader should carefully attend to their messages and be intentional in the messages they send nonverbally.

4.3.3 Third indicator.

The third and final indicator of the differences in department cohesiveness involves the overall results from the qualitative interviews conducted with eight of the participants. The responses from the participants in department B reflect dissonance between the group’s level of cohesion and their awareness of their leader’s nonverbal communication skills. During the interviews, the two that did not seem to see importance in the leader’s nonverbal communication skills and their inclusion in the group showed no emotion and were matter of fact in their answers. The two that saw importance in the leader’s nonverbal communication skills and their inclusion in the group showed emotion and even sought to clarify their comments. The answers of the four interviewed participants in department A reflected that they agree that there is importance in the leader’s nonverbal communication skills and their inclusion in the group, and all four sought to clarify their comments. Interviewee number four commented, “Our leader’s nonverbal skills are warm and friendly, which influence the group’s cohesion by quite a lot.” The third interviewee replied, “In my opinion, both verbal and nonverbal communication are important.” Interviewee number two stated, “Our leader’s nonverbal
communication influences the group’s cohesion greatly. It helps determine how the
correction flows and helps people feel that they are included.” The fourth interviewee
said, “Because they are positive, the nonverbal skills of our leader greatly influence the
effectiveness of our group.” These responses suggest that the participants that were
interviewed from department A perceive the nonverbal communication skills of their
leader play an important role in the level of group cohesion.

The first interviewee of department B mentioned, “Our department leader shows
their personal feelings during meetings and generally I feel they show they are giving up
on us.” Interviewee number four stated, “I do not feel that the nonverbal skills of our
leader are a big factor in the effectiveness of our group.” The second interviewee
responded, “I feel that our leader’s nonverbal skills have a negative affect on our
cohesiveness and that they reveal that they do not have empathy with their team.”
Interviewee number three said, “I do not feel a part of the team, and I have not noticed
whether our leader’s nonverbal skills have affected this.” These responses suggest that
the participants that were interviewed from department B do not perceive the nonverbal
communication skills of their leader play an important role in the level of group cohesion.
Nonverbal communication allows for the feelings of group members to be indicated,
whether positive or negative, and the regulation of nonverbal communication can
strongly influence the participation and communication flow of the group (Littlefield,
1983). The interview responses suggest that department A members are allowed to
indicate their feelings because the participation and communication flow of department A
is regulated in a positive manner by their leader’s use of nonverbal communication. The
interview responses also suggest the group members from department B may or may not
be allowed to indicate their feelings because the participation and communication flow of department B is regulated in a negative manner by the use of nonverbal communication by their leader.
Chapter 5: Summaries and Conclusions

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Being that this was a pilot study there are several aspects of the study that can be considered limitations. To begin with, the time frame within which the study was conducted was extremely limited. There were only a few weeks in which to distribute and gather the surveys and permission slips as well as to perform the observations and analyze the data, and this also limited the sample size as well. Not clearly identifying the target and audience for the questions on the survey is another limitation. There were some misunderstandings as to whether the focus of the questions was the department or the students that each member teaches, as well as whether the perceptions of nonverbal cues were based upon their own actions or the actions of others/their leader of their department. A significant limitation to the results of the study was the fact that the surveys were not anonymous, which could have negatively impacted the results of the survey because the participants either might answer differently, or more participants might have turned in their surveys. Those in the non-cohesive department may have felt safer turning in their surveys, thus providing more data for the analysis. The final limitation was the list of questions for the positive and negative aspects of nonverbal cues surveys, which was too vague and may have skewed the answers given by the participants.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Study

One consideration for further research based upon this study of the relationship between nonverbal communication and group cohesiveness is a more specific focus on one or two nonverbal cues exhibited by the leader. Another consideration is several short-
term studies to gather more data in order to provide a more reliable baseline from which to plan other research. A final consideration for further research is a long-term study where the data gathered would not also demonstrate whether the group was cohesive and the leader was competent in nonverbal communication, but also to track the increase or decrease of the level of cohesiveness after providing some training to the leader on nonverbal communication and how to use it effectively.

5.3 Conclusions

According to Silberman (2006), how one communicates nonverbally comprises ninety-three percent of how people will respond to them. When the leader of a group is conscious and competent in the use of nonverbal communication, the members of their group respond in a more positive manner. The leaders establish a high level of mutual trust and cooperation by demonstrating nonverbal competency (Yukl, 2010). Burgoon’s expectancy violations theory analyzes personal space expectations and interaction adaptation, which the leader of a cohesive group portrays positive use of both of these aspects (Griffin, 2009). The leader of department A, the cohesive department, has established this cohesiveness because they have demonstrated an understanding of personal space expectations, adapted to the interactions they have with the group members, and a competency in the use of nonverbal communication.

An important component of small groups is cohesiveness, which contributes to the overall effectiveness of the group. In order to establish cohesiveness within a group, a leader with good interpersonal skills is needed, especially when there are conflicting loyalties and there is difficulty in gaining commitment from members within the group (Yukl, 2010). Department B is conflicted as to what they consider important in their
leader’s nonverbal communication skills, and as a result there seems to be a lack of commitment among the existing members, on the other hand, department A seems to have this commitment from its members. Pierce and Cronen’s coordinated management of meaning states that communication is used by all to make sense of an interaction by coordinating one’s actions with the behaviors of others (Griffin, 2009). The leader of department A has demonstrated that they are adept at making sense of their behaviors and actions as well as adept at coordinating them with the behavior of their group members, thus increasing group cohesiveness.

Griffin (2009) writes about Mead’s theory of symbolic interactionism and how important it is to understand the way we attach labels to people and their actions. When a leader’s actions during a meeting demonstrate their incompetence in the use of nonverbal communication, they can sabotage the effective communication of their message (Silberman, 2006). When this sabotage occurs, the members of the group attach labels to the leader, usually negative, thus undermining the cohesiveness of the group. It is important that a leader provide clear objectives and to be able to build and maintain cohesiveness in order to work to the maximum effectiveness of the group. (Yukl, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to research leaders’ nonverbal communication skills and the effect they have on group cohesiveness when used in a competent manner. After conducting the study and analyzing the results, there is a clear correlation between competently using nonverbal communication when leading groups and the cohesiveness of the group. There is also a clear correlation between the perceptions of the group as a whole and the level of cohesiveness within the group. The more united the group is with their perceptions of cohesiveness and their understanding of nonverbal behaviors, the
more cohesive the group. By demonstrating competence in the use of positive nonverbal communication, the leader can positively influence the cohesiveness of the group. The importance of the leader being competent in nonverbal behaviors in order to increase group cohesiveness has not yet been established, but the initial research shows a positive correlation between the use of positive nonverbal communication and the higher level of perceived group cohesion. Further research in this area is needed in order to confirm the findings from this study as well as for the purpose of developing training programs for leadership teams in order to increase the cohesiveness within their groups, which in turn would increase the effectiveness of the group, thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of the organization or department.
References


from


Appendix A

SURVEY 1

Answer each of these to the best of your knowledge in regards to your department meetings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree

1. Department members spend time getting to know each other.
2. Department members feel free to share information with each other.
3. Department members feel free to contribute to discussions.
4. Department members feel part of the group.
5. The department shares feelings of unity and togetherness among the members.
6. Department members arrive on time to meetings.
7. Department members are receptive to feedback and criticism.
8. Many members engage in gossiping about each other.
9. Department members look forward to participating in department meetings.
10. I feel a part of the group (department).
11. I look forward to participating in department meetings.
12. The atmosphere in our department meetings is comfortable.
13. Some of the department members could be/are my friends.
14. Department members treat each other with respect.
15. Department members feel our department is cohesive.
16. I feel our department is cohesive.
Appendix B

SURVEY 2

Briefly answer each of these to the best of your knowledge in regards to your department meetings:

1. What does prolonged eye contact mean?
2. What does breaking eye contact mean?
3. What does avoidance of eye contact mean?
4. Initiating eye contact means?
5. What does the direction of the gaze mean?
6. Gesturing with hands – palms down means?
7. Gesturing with hands – palms up means?
8. Gesturing with hands while speaking means?
9. Touching face, hair, arms, and/or clothes means?
10. Shrugging shoulders means?
11. Upward curvature of the lips means?
12. What does a downward curvature of the lips mean?
13. Tightened/compressed lips mean?
14. Relaxed lips mean?
Appendix C

Nonverbal Cues Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>Nonverbal Cue/Behavior</th>
<th># of occurrences w/in observation</th>
<th>% of Cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged eye contact</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating eye contact</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaze toward members</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands palms up</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesturing while speaking</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward curvature of the lips</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed lips</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGATIVE</th>
<th>Nonverbal Cue/Behavior</th>
<th># of occurrences w/in observation</th>
<th>% of Cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breaking eye contact</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding eye contact</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaze away from members</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands palms down</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesturing while speaking</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching/fidgeting with</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>face, hair, arms, clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrugging shoulders</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downward curvature of the lips</td>
<td>_____________________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tightened lips</td>
<td>______________________</td>
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</table>
Appendix D

(I asked these questions after clarifying the definitions of nonverbal communication skills and group cohesion.)

Qualitative Interview Questions:

1. How much do you feel the leader of your department's nonverbal communication skills influence the group's cohesion?

2. How much do you feel the leader of your department's nonverbal communication skills affect your feeling of inclusion in the group?

3. How important do you feel the nonverbal communication skills of your leader are to the cohesiveness of your department?

4. How much do you feel the nonverbal skills of your department leader influence the effectiveness of your group?
Appendix E

Permission Slip

I, ______________________________, give my permission for Angela Tice, masters student at Gonzaga University, to use the information gathered from the surveys I filled out and her observation of our department meeting to complete her master’s thesis. I understand that the information being gathered will only be used to complete Angela’s master’s thesis and none of my personal information will be released. The focus of the data gathered from the surveys and observations will be on studying the relationship between communication including body language and group dynamics.

Printed name: ________________________________ Date: _____________

Signature: ________________________________ Date: _____________
MENTOR AGREEMENT (To be submitted with Thesis Proposal)

You have been asked to serve as a Mentor for Angela Tice, who is completing the requirements for her Masters Degree in Communication and Leadership Studies. As a mentor you are asked to share ideas with this student and read the next to final draft of their thesis. You are not expected to directly supervise this student's work but rather meet with them as a "young colleague." If you are willing to serve as a Mentor for him/her, please sign this agreement.

I am willing to serve as a Mentor for Angela as she completes her thesis. I realize I do not need to supervise their work in any direct fashion and will only serve as a more experienced colleague with a younger colleague. I will provide help in the way of suggestions, ideas and resources and am willing to review drafts of their written work. I also agree to read the next to last draft of the student's thesis and will sign my name on the title page of their final draft. My signature on the thesis only indicates that I have read it and is no indication of the quality of the work. I will not be asked to assign a grade or make any evaluative comments to the course convener.

Signature

Title: Adj. Prof.

Email and telephone number: givens@gonzaga.edu  509–624–4794

Date: Sept. 21, 2011