

Women and Men's Nonverbal Behavior and Self-Monitoring in a Job Interview Setting

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The current study examined the nonverbal displays of men and women in mock job interviews. Specifically, we investigated how the nonverbal behavior of more successful applicants differed from the nonverbal behavior of less successful applicants. Participants served as interviewees for a mock job interview and their interviews were coded for the performance of a number of critical nonverbal behaviors. Analyses of the performances revealed differential patterns of nonverbal behavior associated with high and low likability for women and men. In addition, high self-monitors were perceived as less anxious by judges and more competent by interviewers, and as happier by both judges and interviewers as compared to low self-monitors.

Most people share a belief in the importance of positively presenting themselves to new people—starting out interpersonal relationships on the "right foot." Numerous industries are devoted to preparing people for that first encounter, whether it be a date, an introduction to a new roommate, or a job interview. The cosmetics and fashion industries are devoted to making people look right, while books, videos, and seminars have sprung up in order to teach people to say the right things and to instruct them on the proper ways to present themselves physically.

Industrial/organizational psychologists have taken a particular interest in the area of impression management, particularly in terms of applicant behavior in job interviews. While the accuracy, reliability, and validity of job interviews are still commonly questioned, the employment interview is still widely used (Judge, Higgins, & Cable, 2000; Kennedy, 1994). Consequently, knowledge regarding strategies for successful interviewing as well as information regarding biases involved in the employment interview process are extremely important.

What can people do to improve their performances in job interviews? A fairly typical preparatory text on job interviewing makes the following recommendations regarding nonverbal behavior in interviews:

Make eye contact throughout the entire interview, but don't overdo it. You're not engaged in a staring contest with Clint Eastwood. And staring without pause at the interviewer will not make his day...Keep an eye on your body—figuratively, that is. Be sure that

you don't slouch, which may convey an impression of laziness or sloppiness. On the other hand, don't sit there like a Marine at attention. It will make you seem edgy, overly aggressive, a real "Type A" personality. (Fry, 1991, p. 88)

The usefulness of these particular pieces of advice depends on two things: a relationship between nonverbal displays in general and the outcome of job interviews, and, more specifically, an association between the somewhat vague levels of nonverbal behaviors suggested by this passage (i.e., high to moderate levels of eye contact and upright but not stiff body posture) and better interview outcomes.

In fact, the somewhat limited history of work examining the effects of nonverbal behavior in interview settings does suggest that nonverbal behaviors can be influential during interviews. Anderson and Shackelton (1990) found that greater eye contact, more positive facial expressions, and more frequent postural changes by applicants in graduate selection interviews differentiated significantly between those applicants who were accepted and those who were rejected. Another study employing confederate interviewees found the demonstration of inhibited (minimal eye contact, low energy level, lack of affect, low voice modulation, and lack of speech fluency) versus uninhibited nonverbal behaviors received significantly lower ratings in almost every category by participants in the study (McGovern, Jones, & Morris, 1979). In fact, no interviewees exhibiting inhibited nonverbal behaviors were recommended for a second interview (see also McGovern & Tinsley, 1978). Finally, researchers have demonstrated that people who are skilled at encoding emotion and those individuals who are high self-monitors are evaluated more positively in initial encounters than are individuals unskilled at encoding emotion and low self-monitors (Riggio & Friedman, 1986).

Taken together, this work suggests that job applicants' nonverbal behaviors can affect their hiring outcomes. It seems reasonable that applicants receiving the highest and lowest ratings of likability and competence in their interviews would be distinguishable by their levels of nonverbal behaviors displayed in the interviews.

Individual Differences In Self-Presentation

Just as some individuals are better at expressing themselves verbally than others, there are differences in people's skill at expressing themselves nonverbally. For instance, numerous studies demonstrate women's greater emotional expressivity as compared to men. These differences exist for the spontaneous and directed expression of emotion (Hall, 1984), as well as for the decoding of emotion (Boyatzis, Chazan, & Ting, 1993; Hall, 1984). Even at a young age, girls seem to be able to match their emotional expressions to suit the situation more successfully than boys. This difference is illustrated in studies employing the disappointing gift paradigm, in which the reactions of children are observed upon their receipt of a disappointing gift. In this situation, girls are much more likely to maintain a positive expression than are boys (Cole, 1986; Saarni, 1984).

In the disappointing gift paradigm, the “appropriate” nonverbal display, both for men and women, is the same—happiness over receipt of the gift. Coats and Feldman (1996) have found evidence to suggest, however, that the same emotional display is not always appropriate for men and women in all situations. For men and women attempting to achieve high sociometric status among their same-sex peers, men were most effective when displaying negative emotion, while women were most effective when displaying positive emotion. Similarly, a second study found women clearly displaying happiness and men displaying anger were perceived by naive judges as having higher sociometric status compared to women displaying anger or sadness and men displaying happiness or sadness (Coats, 1996). Based on these studies, we might expect men and women to vary in their nonverbal behaviors, with men more likely to vary in terms of their negative emotion and women more likely to vary in terms of their positive emotion.

Another important individual difference in the expression of nonverbal behavior is level of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring relates to the regulation of one's behavior to the demands of a given situation in order to effectively monitor the image projected to others (Snyder, 1987). People high in self-monitoring endorse items such as "I would probably make a good actor/actress" and "I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them." Research has verified that high self-monitors are both more skilled at controlling their expressive behaviors to conform to situational requirements and better able to pose their emotions than low self-monitors (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991; Snyder, 1974). Low self-monitors, on the other hand, are believed to lack the ability to easily adapt their behaviors in response to changes in situational demands (Snyder, 1987; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986; Snyder & Ickes, 1985).

Differences in the social behaviors of low and high self-monitors were clearly demonstrated in a study by Friedman and Miller-Herringer (1991). In this study participants were informed that they had just defeated a competitor, either in the competitor's presence or alone. Low self-monitors did not conceal their emotions, showing consistency across the social and non-social conditions, while high self-monitors suppressed their overt displays of happiness when in the presence of their competitor and displayed victory gestures only when alone. Based on high self-monitors' greater ability to modify their behaviors to meet situational requirements, it was expected that these individuals would perform better in job interviews.

Goals of this Study

The current study sought to examine how the displays of nonverbal behaviors during job interviews related to subsequent applicant ratings. Participants were assigned the role of interviewee for a mock job interview and interviewers and independent judges coded these interviews for the quality of the performance and a number of nonverbal behaviors. On the basis of previous research, we expected that male and female applicants receiving the highest and lowest ratings of likability and competence would differ significantly in their nonverbal behaviors and that men and women would vary in the levels of emotion displayed, with men more likely to vary

in terms of their negative emotion and women more likely to vary in terms of their positive emotion. Finally, we expected high self-monitors to receive higher performance ratings than low self-monitors.

Method

Undergraduates were videotaped as they participated in mock job interviews with same-sex, confederate interviewers. Following the interaction, the interviewer made ratings of the interviewee's performance. The experimenters and independent judges coded videotapes of the interviewees' performances for percentage of eye contact, percentage of time spent smiling, forward lean, directness of body orientation, competence and likability, and positive and negative emotional displays.

Participants

One hundred thirty-four undergraduate management students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (67 men and 67 women) participated in this study for extra credit.

Procedure

Participants were introduced to an experimenter who told them (as part of the cover story) that she was working with a major hotel corporation in order to study the job interview process. Participants were told that while this was a study, if they were identified as particularly outstanding candidates, they might be asked back for additional interviews and could win a place in the summer management trainee program.¹

In addition, participants were told that we were also interested in how different personality variables relate to performance and ratings in job interviews, so they would be asked to fill out questionnaires both before and after they interviewed. Participants were told that these questionnaires were strictly for the use of the experimenter and would not be shown to individuals from the hotel corporation. All participants signed a consent form and then were given a short questionnaire containing, along with filler items, the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986).

To prepare for the interview, all participants received a brief job description for a summer management trainee program. Participants were given three minutes to read the description and prepare for their interview. Participants were led to another room containing two standard, straight-back chairs placed 68 inches apart. A confederate interviewer stood in the doorway and invited the participant "to pull up a chair and we'll get started." The interviewer read a list of pre-written interview

¹ While no job was actually available to students, post-interview questionnaires and the debriefing indicated that students were interested in the job and took the interview seriously ($M = 5.10$ and 5.02 respectively, on seven-point Likert-type scales).

questions related to academic background, career goals, and personal history. Confederates were trained to control their nonverbal behaviors, keeping them unexaggerated and constant from one experimental session to the next. Participants were videotaped through a one-way mirror. In order to control for confederate effects, two male and two female confederates served as interviewers. Analyses revealed no main effects or interactions of confederate interviewers on the dependent variables.

Following the interview, participants completed a post-interview questionnaire and were debriefed and informed that they had been videotaped. Participants were asked to sign a post-consent form granting their permission for the further use of their videotapes. (Seven participants' tapes were erased at their request.)

Dependent Variables

Participants' interviews were coded from the videotapes for percentage of eye contact, percentage of time spent smiling, forward body lean (measured in 10° units), and directness of orientation (measured in 10° units). Forward lean and directness of orientation were time-sampled every 20 seconds, and a mean score was calculated for each variable. Body orientation was dropped as a dependent variable due to lack of variability between subjects; virtually all subjects sat directly facing the interviewer. A second experimenter coded 10% of the tapes and the two sets of experimenter ratings were correlated to produce reliabilities for ratings of each of the nonverbal behaviors (percentage of time smiling $r = .81$; percentage of eye contact $r = .94$; body position $r = .96$). To produce a measure of interpersonal distance, the distance between the interviewer and interviewee's chairs was measured (in inches) following each interview.

In addition, brief segments of each of the interviews (15-second clips taken at the first and third minutes of the interviews) were viewed without sound by 18 to 24 naive judges (a total of 124 judges: 24 men, 100 women) who rated the competence, likability, and level of positive and negative emotion displayed by participants on seven-point Likert-type scales. Finally, interviewers made ratings of the interviewees' viability as job candidates, competence, likability, and levels of positive and negative emotion displayed by participants on seven-point Likert-type scales.

Analyses

Two (gender of interviewee: male or female) x 2 (level of self-monitoring of interviewee: high or low) between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to analyze participants' performances in the interviews. A median split of self-monitoring scores was used to determine high and low self-monitoring ($M = 12$ vs. $M = 7$). Men and women's self-monitoring scores did not differ significantly ($M = 9.75$ vs. $M = 9.13$, $t(120) = 1.13$, $p < .26$). While 67 men and 67 women participated in the interview phase of the study, analysis of interviewer ratings was conducted on

60 men and 60 women. Participants were removed from this analysis for various reasons including suspicion, equipment/procedural problems, and lack of fluency in English. Finally, as previously mentioned, seven participants asked to have their videotapes erased, so analyses involving videotape data were conducted on 58 men and 55 women. A chi-square confirmed that removal of participants due to suspicion/request for erasure did not differ significantly by gender or self-monitoring ($\chi^2(1, N = 20) = .20, p < .66$, and $\chi^2(1, N = 20) = .80, p < .37$, respectively).

Results

Nonverbal Behaviors

Experimenter ratings

The 2 (gender) x 2 (self-monitoring) ANOVAs conducted on the nonverbal measures revealed a main effect of gender for interpersonal distance $F(1, 115) = 4.09, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ and a gender x self-monitoring interaction on percentage of eye contact displayed by interviewees $F(1, 109) = 5.22, p < .02, \eta^2 = .05$ (Table 1). Thus, male interviewees sat further away from male interviewers than female interviewees sat from female interviewers ($M = 60.10$ vs. $M = 56.20$). In addition, high self-monitoring women showed significantly greater eye contact with their partners than high self-monitoring men ($M = 62\%$ vs. $M = 53\%$, $t(52) = 1.98, p < .05$) and low self-monitoring women ($M = 62\%$ vs. $M = 53\%$, $t(53) = 2.19, p < .03$).

Table 1
Gender of Participant x Self-Monitoring Interaction on Percentage of Eye Contact

| Gender | Self-Monitoring | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|
| Male | Low | 30 | 58.13 | 17.36 |
| | High | 28 | 53.20 _a | 16.74 |
| Female | Low | 29 | 52.59 _b | 16.03 |
| | High | 26 | 61.57 _{ab} | 14.09 |

Note. The means represent average percentage of time spent looking at the interviewer. Means sharing the same subscript differ significantly at a level of $p < .05$.

Judge Ratings

To identify differences in the nonverbal behaviors of those individuals identified as more and less likable and competent, additional analyses were conducted. The nonverbal behaviors of those participants receiving high and low ratings of likability from judges (participants rated in the upper or lower quartiles;

upper quartile likability $M = 5.20$; lower quartile likability $M = 3.32$) were examined through the use of 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (most or least likable) ANOVAs. Means for the nonverbal behaviors are shown in Figure 1.

Analyses revealed a main effect of likability on percentage of smiling $F(1, 53) = 9.434, p < .003, \eta^2 = .15$, such that high likability was associated with a higher percentage of smiling than low likability ($M = 31\%$ vs. $M = 16\%$). Additionally, we found significant gender x likability interactions on percentage of eye contact $F(1,53) = 4.43, p < .04, \eta^2 = .08$ and body posture $F(1,53) = 5.62, p < .02, \eta^2 = .10$. As shown in Table 2, low likability was associated with higher eye contact for men and lower eye contact for women (men $M = 63\%$ vs. women $M = 51\%$, $t(26) = 2.03, p < .05$), and low likability was associated with women displaying straight posture, while high likability was associated with women displaying more relaxed posture ($M = 91^\circ$ vs. $M = 77^\circ$, $t(28) = 3.70, p < .001$). There were no significant effects of likability on interviewees' interpersonal distance from the interviewer.

Similar analyses examining the nonverbal behaviors of those participants receiving high and low ratings of competence (participants rated in the upper or lower quartiles; upper quartile $M = 5.12$; lower quartile $M = 3.13$) did not reveal any significant differences in displays of nonverbal behavior.

Ratings of Videotape Segments

Segments of the interviews were shown without sound to judges who rated interviewees' anxiousness, fear, happiness, anger, competence, and likability. Ratings of emotion were made twice for each interview; judges rated 15-second segments taken at the first and third minute of the interview. Intraclass correlations of judges ratings revealed reasonable levels of reliability for judges ratings (anger, $r = .37$; anxious, $r = .31$; fearful, $r = .34$; happy, $r = .52$). Although modest, correlations between time 1 and time 2 ratings for each of these emotions were significant (anger, $r = .24$; anxious, $r = .44$; fearfulness, $r = .49$; happiness, $r = .52$), so a composite variable was created for each emotion. Furthermore, given their similarity, our measures of anxiousness and fear were combined to form an overall measure of expressed anxiety ($\alpha = .79$).

A multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) conducted on judges' ratings of emotion revealed a marginal main effect of self-monitoring ($F(3,107) = 2.34, p < .07, \eta^2 = .06$). Univariate analyses identified main effects of self-monitoring for anxiety and happiness ($F(1, 109) = 5.68, p < .02, \eta^2 = .05$ and $F(1, 109) = 3.84, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ respectively). Low self-monitoring interviewees were perceived as more anxious and less happy than high self-monitoring interviewees (anxiety: low SM = 3.34, high SM = 3.07; happiness: low SM = 3.75, high SM = 4.09). There were no significant effects for gender or self-monitoring on judges' ratings of interviewees' levels of competence and likability.

Figure 1. Nonverbal behaviors of men and women rated most and least likable.

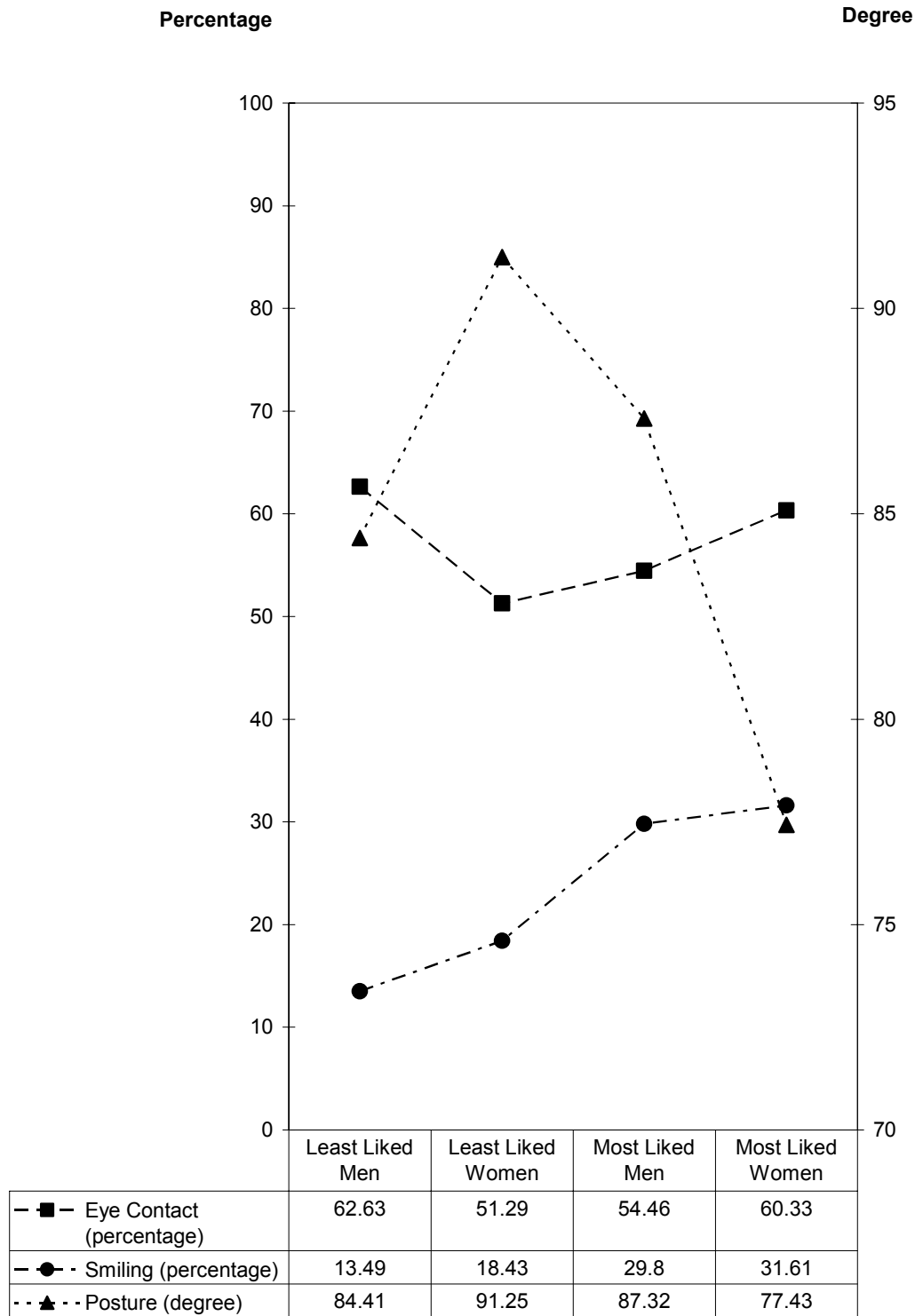


Table 2
Gender of Participant x Level of Likability Interaction on Percentage of Eye Contact and Body Posture

| Gender | Likability | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--------------|------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|
| Eye Contact | | | | |
| Male | Low | 14 | 62.63 _a | 15.14 |
| | High | 13 | 54.46 | 18.91 |
| Female | Low | 14 | 51.29 _a | 14.46 |
| | High | 16 | 60.33 | 13.10 |
| Body Posture | | | | |
| Male | Low | 14 | 84.41 | 15.57 |
| | High | 13 | 87.32 | 16.56 |
| Female | Low | 14 | 91.25 _b | 10.00 |
| | High | 16 | 77.43 _b | 10.36 |

Note. The means for eye contact represent average percentage of time spent looking at the interviewer. The means for body position represent average degree of seated body position. Eye contact means sharing the same subscript differ significantly at a level of $p < .05$. Body posture means sharing the same subscript differ significantly at a level of $p < .001$.

Interviewer Ratings

The types of information to which the interviewers (confederates) and the judges were exposed and the tasks in which they were engaged were qualitatively different; judges viewed 15-sec, silent video clips, while interviewers were actively involved in running an interview and controlling their nonverbal expressivity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ratings of the interviewers and the judges of the videotape clips differed. In fact, relatively low correlations were found between interviewers' and judges' ratings for all variables (anger, $r = -.11$; likability, $r = .14$; competence, $r = .25$; fearfulness, $r = .30$; happiness, $r = .43$). In light of these differences, the data from the interviewers were considered separately from the data of the judges.

Following each participant's interview, the confederate who had served as the interviewer rated the participant on his or her levels of positive and negative emotion, competence, likability, and hirability. A MANOVA revealed main effects of gender and self-monitoring on interviewers' ratings of participants' interview performances ($F(3, 114) = 6.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$ and $F(3, 114) = 2.89, p < .04, \eta^2 = .07$ respectively). Univariate analyses indicated revealed a main effect of self-

monitoring for interviewers' ratings of happiness, $F(1, 116) = 4.09, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$, such that high self-monitors appeared happier ($M = 5.14$) than low self-monitors ($M = 4.65$). In addition, a main effect of gender was found for anger $F(1, 116) = 11.23, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$, such that male interviewees were rated as more angry ($M = 2.80$) than female interviewees ($M = 2.02$). It should be noted again, though, that a same-sex interviewer conducted each interview, and therefore interpretation of this finding is difficult. While it is possible that male interviewees displayed more anger than female interviewees, this finding was not replicated in our analysis of judges' ratings, and therefore the possibility that male interviewers simply rate other men as more angry than female interviewers rating other women cannot be dismissed. There were no significant differences in levels of fearfulness displayed by interviewees.

Additional ANOVAs revealed a significant main effect of self-monitoring on competence $F(1, 116) = 4.90, p < .03, \eta^2 = .04$. High self-monitors were rated as more competent ($M = 5.46$) than low self-monitors ($M = 4.98$). No significant effects were found for interviewers' ratings of likability or hirability.

Discussion

Following completion of this study, we are in a position to assess Fry's (1991) interviewing recommendations presented at the start of the paper. We would agree that eye contact and body posture can influence the ratings received by interviewees, but we also would point out that the specificity of Fry's advice leaves much to be desired. "Make eye contact throughout the entire interview, but don't overdo it." How much eye contact is enough and at what point we are "overdoing it?" "Be sure that you don't slouch, which may convey an impression of laziness or sloppiness. On the other hand, don't sit there like a Marine at attention." Where is the line between slouching and sitting at attention? The results of this study suggest that even relatively small changes in nonverbal behaviors may affect ratings of an interviewee (e.g., a greater percentage of time spent smiling (31% vs. 16%) was associated with higher ratings of likability).

Additionally, those levels of behaviors resulting in the most effective self-presentations for men appear to be somewhat different from those levels resulting in the most effective self-presentations for women. Our finding of interactions between gender and likability for percentage of eye contact and body posture suggests that the impact of nonverbal behaviors differs depending on the gender of the interviewee. For instance, men's displays of high levels of eye contact (63%) were associated with lower ratings of likability, while women's displays of similarly high levels of eye contact (60%) were associated with higher ratings of likability. The interaction of the gender of interviewees with their nonverbal behaviors may play an important role in the interpretation of interview behaviors by the interviewer.

As we examined "naturally occurring" nonverbal behavior and did not systematically vary the levels of each nonverbal behavior, we were not able to separate out the effects of each specific behavior. Thus we cannot say that those women received higher interview ratings due to their relaxed posture. The higher likability ratings earned by interviewees displaying the behaviors of the most liked

women may not have been due to any one behavior, but to a combination of behaviors. It is possible that when people show a lot of eye contact while sitting perfectly straight they are perceived as intimidating, while if they show that same level of eye contact while in a more relaxed position, they are perceived as interested and sincere. The use of naturally occurring behavior, as well as small cell sizes, may have led to our modest effect sizes. While these effect sizes were small, we believe our results to be quite important. Behaviors such as smiling, eye contact, and body posture are concrete nonverbal behaviors that may be practiced and monitored during a job interview. While nonverbal behaviors may not be the main factor influencing job interview performance, they may provide a small edge for one candidate over another equally qualified job candidate.

This study also highlights the importance of interviewees' levels of self-monitoring. High self-monitors were perceived as less anxious by judges, as more competent by interviewers, and as happier by both judges and interviewers than low self-monitors. These results are logical, but they are fairly unique. For instance, in a chapter regarding self-monitoring in organizational settings, Snyder and Copeland (1989) expressed surprise at the scarce research conducted on the effects of self-monitoring style on interview behaviors and outcomes. They hypothesized that high self-monitors may pay particular attention to the cues of the interviewer in order to respond in the most appropriate and favorable fashion. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, may attempt to present themselves as accurately as possible so as to assure that they are only hired for positions that are a "good fit." This strategy will only win them the job if there is a high degree of congruence between their personalities and values and the requirements of the position.

In addition, we found that high self-monitoring women displayed greater eye contact than high self-monitoring men. The difference in percentage of time with eye contact may be due to the gender of the interviewer in combination with the gender of the interviewee. Participants were interviewed by a same-sex interviewer and therefore greater eye contact may have been more appropriate for female participants speaking with female interviewers than male participants speaking with male interviewers.

We chose to involve undergraduate management students in this study because these students were, or would soon be, seeking employment. The interview was constructed to mimic a typical first-round screening interview. While the use of undergraduates may decrease the generalizability of this study with some populations (i.e., more experienced job-seekers), their use may actually increase the generalizability of these findings to a large portion of our recent college graduate workforce. While many of these students indicated they had some experience as interviewees, most indicated their experience was fairly limited. Participants' low level of interview experience may be the reason that, while nonverbal differences between individuals rated more and less likable were found, no differences were found in displays of nonverbal behaviors between individuals receiving high and low ratings of competence (upper and lower quartiles). It is likely that students have a great deal more experience in their daily lives presenting themselves in a likable

manner as opposed to a competent one and therefore may have evolved more strategies for achieving the goal of likability than competence.

Median splits were used for the analysis of our data primarily due to the prevalence of these sorts of comparisons in related literature. Self-monitoring and nonverbal research frequently makes comparisons between those who are, or display, high or low levels of these variables. We analyzed the most and least likable and competent individuals because we felt that these individuals would best illustrate the differences in nonverbal behaviors. The use of participants scoring in the upper and lower quartiles raises the potential problem of regression to the mean. While this problem must be recognized when considering our results, the reasonable levels of reliability found for our judges' ratings suggest that these nonverbal displays were consistently associated with higher or lower ratings of likability.

Clearly the nonverbal behaviors of applicants can affect interviewers' ratings of those applicants. What is not so clear is the process or processes mediating the effects of those behaviors on interviewer ratings. One likely mediator of those judgments is the level and positivity of affect elicited in the interviewer for the applicant. Studies have shown that when applicants emit high levels of nonverbal behaviors, interviewers' ratings of them are more positive (Imada & Hakel, 1977; Rasmussen, 1984), presumably because these behaviors increase ratings of applicants by generating positive affect in the interviewers (Cardy & Dobbins, 1986). This positive affect creates a halo effect, leading the interviewer to infer the existence of additional positive characteristics in the applicant. Future studies should attempt to isolate affect as a mediator and further examine the moderating effects of gender and self-monitoring on interviewee performance ratings.

Based on this single study we are hesitant to make generalizations regarding the most effective nonverbal self-presentations for all or most individuals, but it is our hope that this research will begin to provide a richer understanding of the specific effects of nonverbal behaviors in the employment interview. Eventually, the illumination of these processes may provide aid to individuals who consider themselves interpersonally unskilled in managing the first impressions they project to others, providing them with more precise guidelines by which they can positively control their self-presentations.

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