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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN MEDIATED ENCOUNTERS

It was a remarkable achievement. Responding to allegations that he was improperly using a secret campaign fund, Republican vice-presidential candidate Richard Nixon went before the American people in 1952. What followed was an unprecedented speech in which Nixon, taking the offensive and denying the charges against him, confessed only to accepting a single personal gift—a cocker spaniel named Checkers. Making little use of his handwritten notes, his gaze focused almost continuously on the camera, Nixon won the hearts of the American people. While fewer than half of the electorate could name the Republican candidate for vice president before the speech, Nixon was a household name after it (Bochin, 1990).

This chapter focuses on the importance of nonverbal communication in mediated encounters, those we have each time we turn on a television, answer a phone, or go online. In the sections that follow, we'll examine three basic kinds of media encounters: those that keep us connected to the outside world, those that seek to influence us, and those that assimilate us into the popular culture.

INFORMATIVE ENCOUNTERS: STAYING CONNECTED

To some extent, all of us rely on mediated communication to maintain the ties we have with the outside world: keeping up with the news of the day, sharing information with family and friends, doing business, getting an education, building

Learning Objectives

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

1. Describe the role of nonverbal communication in media coverage of the news.

2. Compare and contrast the differences between face-to-face and online forms of communication in the context of everyday interactions.

3. Discuss how the relative absence of nonverbal cues affects new media efforts to build and manage social relationships.

4. Analyze how reduced social presence affects the success of distance education programs.

5. Review and explain the impact of physical appearance and nonverbal behavior on the persuasiveness of political speakers and the success of commercial advertisers.

6. Discuss how media images of physical appearance and nonverbal behavior become part of the popular culture.

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relationships, and so on. Whether it's through a television program, magazine, Internet site, or text messaging account, mediated communication is part of our everyday lives. While clearly no substitute for the immediacy of being there, modern technology lets us stay connected in ways that improve the overall quality of our lives. Of course, some media bring us closer to the real thing than others do. A news story presented on television gives us a richer and more immediate sense of the story than does a printed version reported in the newspaper. Text messaging doesn't give us the vocal or visual cues we need to appreciate fully the presence of another person, but the availability of vocal cues in a phone conversation represents a decided edge over an e-mail message. We begin this section by examining the importance of nonverbal communication in television news. Then we turn our attention to interactive uses of media.

Media Coverage of the News

Of the media sources available to us, television gives us the most graphic account of the day's news. Aside from witnessing an event firsthand, watching a live telecast is the next best thing. In addition, unlike print news, television news includes the nonverbal communication—the physical appearance, facial expressions, vocal cues, gestures, and so forth—of the people featured in a news story as well as those who report it. The presence of these nonverbal cues, as we'll see shortly, also brings a special set of challenges for those who produce the news and for those who deliver it.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION OF THE NEWS As we've seen in previous chapters, one way we communicate nonverbally is through physical appearance, which signals multiple identities (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, etc.). Despite a steady increase in the hiring of women and minorities for various positions in the industry, the face of television news anchors at the highest levels generally remains stereotypically male, white, and middle aged. In addition, an implicit if not outright acceptance of the belief that what is beautiful is good seemingly forbids the hiring of unattractive persons—particularly so for women—for highly visible anchor positions (see section below on media bias). The demand for attractiveness also requires anchors to have an attractive on-air voice, one that conforms to contemporary standards (e.g., low pitched, fluent, accent free).

Television journalists also communicate nonverbally with approach–avoidance signals and with facial and vocal expressions of emotion. In the case of newscasters sitting behind a desk, the need for ratings conflicts with the need for clear and impartial reporting to produce a highly restricted and somewhat paradoxical set of cues: approachability and detachment. Moderately close proximity, nearly continuous eye contact (levels that would be uncomfortable in a face-to-face encounter), carefully placed smiles (i.e., after an amusing story), and relaxed vocal tones enhance the apparent warmth and accessibility of news anchors while at the same time, restricted

movement, minimal vocal intonation, and a neutral facial expression add to the clarity and objectivity of the presentation. The format of most local news programs also allows for lighthearted banter—laughter, smiles, sarcasm, an occasional touch, and so on—between anchors as a way of moving from one segment to the next (e.g., sports to weather). On rare occasions, such as when reporting tragic and horrific events, nonverbal displays of emotion belie the detached reserve of most television anchors. Yet even these moments reflect the routine demands of objective journalism. A study of television reporting during the first 24 hours following the 9/11 attacks found a "crisis management" style of emotional communication that unfolded in three distinct stages. Examining facial and bodily signs of emotion, researchers determined that nonverbal leakage varied across these stages, with the least emotion shown during the first stage of reporting, when describing events and staying on task is paramount, and the third stage of reporting, when journalists regain their composure and professional demeanor. Reporters were most expressive during the second stage, when making sense of the event for the public is most likely to evoke strong emotional reactions (Coleman & Wu, 2006).

▸ Television talk show host Chris Matthews interviews Barack Obama during the 2008 presidential campaign. The nonverbal communication of today's television interviewers ranges from polite and deferential to impolite and confrontational. Studies suggest that nonverbal cues may reveal an interviewer's bias in ways that escape the interviewer's awareness.

AP Images

Of course, the script-like nature of most broadcast news presentations doesn't apply to the many television interviewers who analyze the news. On talk shows, for instance, where there is little need to follow the emotional display rules that are supposed to preserve the integrity of straight news and where advocacy journalism often blurs the line between news and entertainment, we regularly see a wide range of nonverbal behaviors, from the active listening of style of CNN's former host Larry King (e.g., eye contact, close proximity, forward lean, smiles, laughter, soft vocal tones, friendly touches) to the more antagonistic questioning of MSNBC's Chris Matthews (e.g., few back channels, interruptions, frowns, harsh vocal tones, etc.) and the sarcastic, joking style of John Stewart, Bill Mahr, and others (smirking, eye rolling, jeering, etc.). Although some critics have accused former television hosts such as Larry King of doing more casual conversing than professional interviewing, media critic Howard Kurtz (1997) acknowledges the pros and cons of such a style:

> The benefits of a softer talk show are obvious. If guests don't have to stay in a defensive crouch, sparring with the host and fending off hostile queries, they can reveal more of themselves as real

people. The downside is that they don't have to entertain tough questions—indeed, any uncomfortable question—that might make the program more than a publicity tool for whatever policy or product they are pushing at the moment. (p. 77)

If the "Larry King style" typifies a talk show in which an interviewer uses nonverbal cues to build a friendly relationship with a guest, The FOX News Channel's Bill O'Reilly and Shawn Hannity represent an opposing view, a television talk show in which interviewers set aside the usual display rules that urge them to be as polite and respectful as possible.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE NEWS Media coverage of the news sometimes includes headlines in which nonverbal communication plays a prominent role. After the jury acquittal of a white police office in the 2014 Ferguson, Missouri shooting of an unarmed black man, protestors across the country frequently were seen using a *hands up, don't shoot* gesture to represent what the protestors saw as another instance of police brutality against young black men. In one highly publicized case, for example, members of the St. Louis Rams football team came on to the playing field of a game using this protest gesture.

In political reporting, the media spin on these stories not only shapes our understanding of the nonverbal messages involved in a particular event but can also shape the course of future events. This talk or discourse about nonverbal communication, what some scholars call *meta-discourse*, offers a glimpse into how the media interpret nonverbal forms of expression and how these interpretations enter the public consciousness (Manusov & Jaworski, 2006). The fate of many politicians rests on how the media portray them to the public, and a politician's demeanor and looks sometimes count as much—if not more—in the minds of news reporters and analysts than a politician's words. The now historic "Dean Scream" is a case in point. While delivering a speech intended to rally a crowd of supporters following a disappointing result in the Iowa Caucus during the 2004 Presidential campaign, Democratic frontrunner Howard Dean shouted enthusiastically into his microphone over the loud cheering audience. Because his microphone filtered out the sound of the audience, leaving only the sound of his "scream" for television audiences to hear, his shrill display of emotion created a brief dramatic (and ridiculed) moment that television stations, in their lust for attention, broadcast over and over again, effectively ending any chance of success for the Dean campaign. In his book on the role of emotion in politics, Drew Westen (2007) offers this assessment of the media's coverage:

Dean's famous "scream" was not the scream of an unbalanced, raving lunatic, as it was portrayed on television. It was a failed attempt to use a style of political rhetoric (the old-fashioned,

pre-microphone style of yelling into a megaphone) with which
he wasn't comfortable, to fire up his base on an evening that
was a tremendous disappointment to both him and those who
participated in his meteoric rise. The interpretation spun by the
media was deeply unfair. (p. 298)

Likewise, during the 2008 Presidential debates, the Republican nominee, Senator
John McCain rarely made eye contact with his Democratic rival, Senator Barack
Obama. Many in the media were quick to call our attention to McCain's gaze
avoidance, which they interpreted as an unmistakable sign of condescension
(McKenzie, 2008). Before the debates, there were other examples of media headlines
regarding the nonverbal behavior of the candidates. For example, the media paid
a lot of attention to a "teary eyed" Hillary Clinton at a campaign stop in New
Hampshire answering an audience member's question about how Clinton remained
so "upbeat and wonderful." Most media accounts either framed the event as an
instance of a woman showing genuine emotion, or, more cynically, as an instance of a
politician manipulating her audience for political gain (Manusov & Harvey, 2011).

This type of discourse about nonverbal communication also appears in print accounts
of the news. Like television broadcasts, these accounts can shape our understanding
of important political events as well as the motivations of those ultimately responsible
for the accounts. Communication researchers Valerie Manusov and her colleagues
examined the media's coverage of the historic 1993 handshake between the Israeli
Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on the White
House lawn in Washington. The occasion for the handshake was the signing of a
Declaration of Principles for peace between Arabs and Israelis. Press coverage of the
event offered commentary on the meanings of the handshake, the first-ever between
the two men, as well as the meanings of other nonverbal cues surrounding the event.
This commentary framed the event through representations and transformative
meanings. Representations focused on how the handshake and other nonverbal
cues symbolized something embedded in the event or context that is greater and
more abstract than what those same behaviors would otherwise represent. These
representations, depending on the source of the account, included messages of peace/
hope/optimism, violence, betrayal, anguish, authority/legitimacy, agreement/promise,
and dislike. Transformative meanings offered visions of what the future could bring,
such as gaining legitimacy, increasing status, working as a cure, and taking a step
backward (Manusov & Bixler, 2003; Manusov & Milstein, 2005).

In another discourse analysis study, researchers examined British press accounts of
President Clinton's videotaped testimony to the grand jury in the Monica Lewinsky
affair (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2002). The study examined newspaper descriptions
and interpretations of Clinton's nonverbal behavior in the video and the extent

to which a newspaper presented images with accompanying text to support their claims about Clinton's appearance during the testimony. The researchers found that newspapers focused more on constructing a version of Clinton's facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, gestures, and so forth that advanced the newspaper's own political agenda, sometimes favorable to Clinton and sometimes critical of Clinton, than on providing the most objective and accurate account of Clinton's behavior. As expected, some of the tabloids contained the most sensational depictions of Clinton's behavior.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION OF MEDIA BIAS The results of some studies raise questions about a newscaster's ability to inhibit facial signs of bias (eyebrow movements, smiles, and other idiosyncratic displays) while reporting the news (Friedman, DiMatteo, & Mertz, 1980; Mullen et al., 1986; Remmers, 1980; Tankard et al., 1977). In one study, for example, researchers found that some network newscasters (David Brinkley, Walter Cronkite, and Harry Reasoner) exhibited more positive facial expressions during their coverage of the 1976 presidential campaign while referring to Jimmy Carter than while referring to Gerald Ford (Friedman et al., 1980). In a similar investigation, another team of researchers confirmed the presence of a facial bias, this time during network coverage of the 1984 presidential campaign: ABC anchor Peter Jennings, but not NBC's Tom Brokaw or CBS's Dan Rathers, displayed more positive expressions while referring to Ronald Reagan than he did while referring to Walter Mondale. The researchers also found a connection between viewers' choice of candidates and their choice of network news programs: A greater percentage of ABC viewers voted for Reagan than did NBC or CBS viewers (Mullen et al., 1986). Although these results are intriguing, we still don't know how much bias of this kind actually exists and what impact, if any, it has on the attitudes and actions of viewers.

Nonverbal signs of preference go beyond the facial bias of news anchors. In the most extensive study of television news interviewers' nonverbal behavior to date, communication researcher Elisha Babad (1999) looked at the performance of seven Israeli television interviewers. Groups of American students, none of whom understood the language of the interviews (all in Hebrew), evaluated the behavior of each interviewer without seeing the interviewee. The interviewees represented one or the other of the two major political parties in Israel. Babad found significant differences in how each interviewer acted toward different interviewees (e.g., friendly, respectful, warm, agrees with, etc.). In particular, the ratings of two high-profile interviews of the candidates for prime minister, Shimon Peres and Benjamin Netanyahu, during the 1996 election campaign, showed that the same prominent interviewer treated one of the candidates much better than the other. As Babad concludes,

> [M]y interpretation is that [the interviewer's] differential conduct
> was preferential and predisposed, that his own personal liking
> and political preference shaped his nonverbal behavior, and that
> he intended to influence viewers to favor [one candidate] and to
> demean [the other candidate]. (p. 346)

An analysis of the interviewers' nonverbal behavior revealed that each interviewer had a unique style for expressing positive and negative attitudes. But in general, they tended to signal their preferences with smiles, a relaxed face, head nods, forward lean, rhythmical hand gestures, blinking, head thrusts, sarcasm, and attempts to control the interviewee. Interestingly, more dominant and aggressive interviewers showed more preferential behavior, perhaps suggesting that these interviewers felt more justified in going after disliked interviewees.

In another study, Babad (2005b) found that the nonverbal bias of an interviewer could shape viewers' perceptions of the interviewee. In this experiment, non-Hebrew-speaking British and American students viewed one of two versions of an edited videotaped interview spoken in Hebrew, one with the interviewer using friendly nonverbal behaviors or another with the same interviewer using unfriendly nonverbal behaviors. Both versions of the video contained the same video clips of the interviewee, described as a politician, as though he was responding directly to the interviewer presented in the video. Viewers rated the politician as more genuine, convincing, optimistic, cheerful, more likely to win election, and even as more handsome, when they saw him with the friendly interviewer than with the unfriendly interviewer. While an in-depth analysis of similar experiments in seven other countries confirms the impact of this nonverbal interviewer bias, studies document various ways of minimizing and even counteracting its effects (Babad & Peer, 2010). For instance, an audience is less likely to be influenced by interviewer bias if they are instructed to ignore the interviewer, if the interviewee adopts a more relaxed demeanor in response to the interviewer, and if the audience regards the interviewee as "one of us" (in-group member) rather than "one of them" (out-group member).

Another nonverbal indicator of media bias is the physical appearance of newscasters. In the past, for example, when women and minorities simply weren't hired, the exclusive presence of white male journalists constituted an unequivocal sign of sexist and racist policies. Although few women and minorities occupy the most prestigious positions, their on-air presence cannot be overlooked. Nearly two decades ago, one study reported that 11 of the 13 stations among the nation's 25 largest markets employed at least one black in a coanchor role (Entman, 1990). As communications researcher Robert Entman argues, the presence of black news anchors, which signals an end to what he calls "old-fashioned racism" (i.e., the belief that blacks are inferior), belies

the prevalence of "modern racism," a media bias favoring stories that are likely to fuel negative attitudes toward blacks (e.g., black crime, self-serving black politics). Some studies also confirm the existence of a local news bias that favors negative stories of young blacks over positive stories (Woodruff, 1998).

As we've seen in previous chapters, a beauty bias favors attractive people in all walks of life. In the workplace specifically, attractive individuals are more likely than less attractive individuals to be hired for all sorts of jobs (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986, pp. 55–67). The need for audience approval makes it unlikely that television news anchors will ever escape this beauty bias. Consider the landmark case of Christine Craft. Nine months after being hired in 1981 as a news anchor for KMBC-TV in Kansas City, Missouri, 37-year-old Christine Craft was demoted from anchor to reporter because, as she put it, she was "too old, too unattractive, and not deferential enough to men." Craft filed a $1.2 million lawsuit against the station for alleged sex discrimination and was awarded $500,000 in 1983, but she lost it on appeal three years later. (During the same week, the California state senate unanimously adopted a resolution honoring her in connection with the state's observance of Women's History Week!) The case sparked a great deal of controversy at the time over the treatment of women in broadcasting.

Interactive Uses of Media

Whether it's a cell phone call, a text message, an e-mail, or an Internet site, every day we rely on mediated forms of communication to exchange information with others. The various uses of social media platforms continue to grow. The most recent Pew Research survey of adults (18 years of age or older) reported the following trends (Duggan, 2015):

- 85% of adults are Internet users and 67% are smartphone users.

- 31% of online adults use Pinterest, with women users far exceeding men users by a wide margin of 44% to 16%.

- 28% of online adults use Instagram, a number that has doubled since the Pew Research Center first started tracking social media platform adoption in 2012. Women users outnumber men users 31% to 24%.

- Facebook remains the most popular social media site; 72% of online adults are Facebook users, amounting to 62% of all American adults. But there has not been a significant change in the overall share of users since 2012. Those on Facebook remain highly engaged, with 70% saying they log on daily, including 43% who log on several times a day.

- 25% of online adults use LinkedIn, up from 20% in 2012.

- 20% of online adults use Twitter; a 4% increase from the 16% who did so in 2012. Twitter is more popular among adults under age 50 (30%) than among those over age 50 (11%).

The relationship between nonverbal communication and our use of media is obvious—some types of media provide access to more nonverbal cues than other types do. Face-to-face communication provides the greatest access, followed by video, audio, and text-only communication modalities. In a well-known and widely cited series of experiments, psychologist Albert Mehrabian compared the relative weight we attach to facial, vocal, and verbal channels of communication when judging a speaker's feelings; that is, whether the speaker likes or dislikes something. The results from these studies showed a heavy reliance on nonverbal over verbal messages: The speaker's facial expression accounted for 55% of the meaning attributed to the spoken message, the speaker's voice accounted for 38%, and the speaker's words accounted for the remaining 7% (Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967; Mehrabian & Weiner, 1967). Although these studies may exaggerate somewhat the relative impact of nonverbal cues (other studies suggest that nonverbal signals account for about 65% rather than 93% of the message), one overall conclusion still remains: When we need to exchange messages that convey our feelings, some communication channels are clearly more revealing than others (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996; Hegstrom, 1979; Philpott, 1983).

COMPARING COMMUNICATION MEDIA One way of comparing communication media is in terms of **social presence**, our awareness of another person during an interaction. As an attribute, it refers to a medium's capacity to approximate the conditions of face-to-face communication (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). Differences in social presence can sometimes lead to differences in communication outcomes. Early research comparing interactions with relatively few nonverbal cues (e.g., not being able to see the other person) with face-to-face interactions discovered some key differences. For example, one study found that removing visual cues from an interaction generally made it more task-oriented, more impersonal, and less spontaneous than when visual cues were available (Argyle, 1988, p. 119). To some degree, research corroborates these findings when comparing computer-mediated with face-to-face communication (Hiltz, Johnson, & Turoff, 1986; Rice & Love, 1987). What makes the difference?

▶ Recent surveys confirm that most adults are now using smartphones to share information with others.

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Freed from distracting social cues, participants in voice-only or text-only interactions may find it easier to concentrate on the task at hand, which may partly explain why researchers in one early study found that negotiation sessions were more efficient—the person with the stronger case usually prevailed—when the participants worked in a low social presence environment (no visual cues) than in a face-to-face encounter (Morley & Stephenson, 1969). The near absence of nonverbal cues in most mediated forms of communication can make it difficult to form impressions of others, contributing to judgments that such interactions are relatively cold and impersonal. Yet research shows that we form many of the same kinds of impressions using online communication that we do in face-to-face conversations—it just takes longer and involves different sets of cues (Walther, 1993, 2006). Communication researcher Joe Walther and his colleagues have demonstrated how individuals adapt to the situation by using the communication resources available to achieve their interaction goals. For instance, one study compared computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face "get-acquainted" meetings and found that CMC users asked more personal questions and disclosed more information about themselves during their meetings than did the people in face-to-face meetings (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). Another study showed that when

RESEARCH 11.1

FIND OUT MORE

Online Pauses and Silences: Do They Leave a Bad Impression?

One exception to the lack of nonverbal cues in e-mail communications is the use and interpretation of time. For instance, not responding to an e-mail—or not responding to an e-mail in a timely fashion—can create a bad impression in the mind of the person who sent the e-mail. In this study, the researchers hypothesized that waiting 12 days to respond or not responding even after a month, compared to a more expected single-day response, would leave a much worse impression of a job applicant. They found, however, that it didn't matter much if the person who sent the e-mail had an unfavorable impression of the job applicant in the first place.

To find out more about this study and to answer the following questions, see the full text (cited below).

1. What is EVT and how was it used in this study?

2. Who were the participants in this study and what did they do?

3. What were the main limitations of this study?

4. What kind of study is this? (See Appendix.)

Source: Kalman, Y. M., & Rafaeli, S. (2011). Online pauses and silence: Chronemic expectancy violations in written computer-mediated communication. *Communication Research*, *38*, 54–69.

prompted to convey greater liking toward a conversational partner, computer chat users were just as able to get the message across to their partner as were participants in face-to-face conversations. In contrast to the CMC users, participants in the face-to-face conversations got their message across not by *what* they said but by *how* they said it (Walther & Bunz, 2005).

One theory seems to be that text-based media users, at first, form impressions that lack the scope of those they form in face-to-face and telephone interactions, but the impressions are more intense (Lea & Spears, 1992, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994; Walther, 1996, 1997). That is, given the lack of nonverbal cues, CMC users don't have the social information to make *as many* judgments about the person with whom they are interacting as do individuals who participate in face-to-face or phone conversations. Additionally, this lack of social information prompts CMC users to rely more heavily on simple and exaggerated stereotypes. This is, in fact, what researchers discovered in one study comparing the first impressions of interaction partners who used CMC to work on a cooperative task with those who used face-to-face interaction (Hancock & Dunham, 2001).

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE 11.1

CAN YOU RELATE TO THIS?

Sometimes We Need Face-to-Face Communication

I recently got together with a group of guys and girls I knew from high school that I didn't get along with. First we were friends, then we were enemies. My girlfriend, who used to be friends with them, too, was the first person I called after I saw them. I began telling her what each person said, along with their gestures and expressions. We always ask each other for these clues. It was so hard to describe them to her that I had to drive over to her house and start the story from the beginning. It was so much more effective being face-to-face than trying to tell the story over the phone. The visual cues helped my girlfriend get the full effect.

Connie

Other studies also show that CMC can produce more simplistic first impressions. In one interesting series of experiments, researchers found that the same verbal responses to interviewers' questions led to more biased first impressions and racial stereotyping if the interviewers received the answers to their questions in the form of an e-mail than if they received the answers over the telephone. In the first experiment, the researchers

gave some of these interviewers (college undergraduate participants) the impression that the person they were about to interview is intelligent, while they gave other interviewers the opposite impression, that the person is unintelligent. These bogus expectancies left more of a lasting impression on the interviewers in the e-mail condition, where they had less social information to use, than in the telephone condition, where they could use vocal cues to alter their preconceived notions. A second experiment provided further support for the idea that we are more vulnerable to simplistic first impressions when the media we use deprives us of nonverbal social cues. The researchers gave the interviewers bogus photographs leading them to believe that the interviewee was either an Asian American woman or a black woman. Racial stereotyping was more pronounced over e-mail than over the telephone. That is, using e-mail, interviewers were more likely to describe the same woman as shy and timid (a racial stereotype) if they thought she was Asian American than if they thought she was black (Epley & Kruger, 2005).

Over time, new media users find ways to compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues, adapting to the resources available. One way, the use of **emoticons**, lets users express emotions by constructing facial expressions from various combinations of keyboard characters, such as :-) for smiling and :-(for frowning. One study found that including emoticons in an e-mail had limited effects. Smiley faces made no difference in readers' interpretations of positive or negative verbal statements about a college course. A winking emoticon ;) did manage to turn a positive message into a sarcastic one. Overall, the researchers found a negativity bias that led readers to interpret any e-mail message about the college course in a negative way if it contained either a frowning emoticon or a negative statement about the course (Walther & D'Addario, 2001). But a similar study, with Dutch secondary school students as participants, found that emoticons added intensity to a positively worded message (making it seem more positive) or a negatively worded message (making it seem more negative). In addition, a contradictory emoticon (i.e., a smiley face along with a negatively worded message; a frowning face with a positive message) succeeded in adding an element of sarcasm to the interpretation of the message (Derks, Bos, & Grumbkow, 2008).
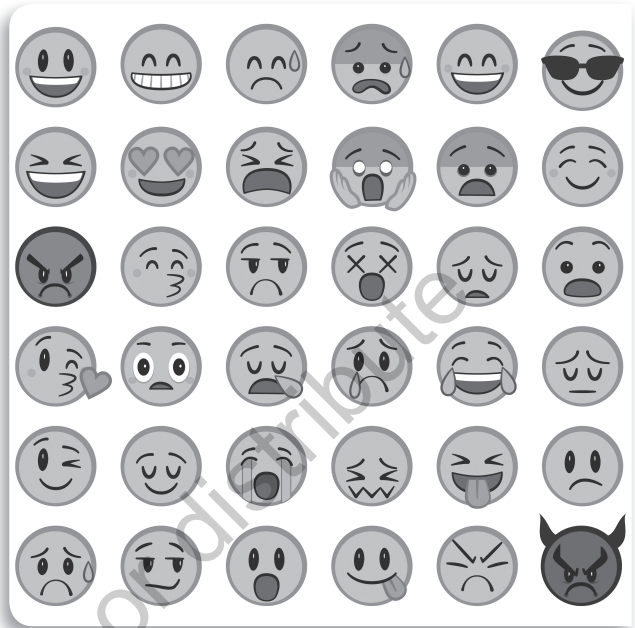
Without the benefit of facial expressions, tone of voice, or emoticons, how well do we exchange sarcastic text-only messages? Apparently, we aren't as good as we think we are. One team of researchers conducted a series of experiments to test their hunch that e-mail users, well aware of the difficulties they face, are consistently overconfident in their ability to get their messages across (Kruger, Epley, Parker, & Ng, 2005). In one experiment, pairs of participants (undergraduates) selected a list of statements, half serious and half sarcastic, about a variety of topics. Their task was to communicate the intended meaning of each statement to their partner by using either e-mail or speech. As expected, participants using speech were far more successful (73%) than were those using e-mail (56%). But, while the speakers were realistic in their expectations (78% predicted success), the e-mail users were not (78% also predicted success). In another

experiment, the researchers found that e-mail users were also more overconfident in their ability to express anger and sadness than were participants who had access to either speech-only or face-to-face channels of communication. Why the overconfidence? It appears that egocentrism is to blame. Thinking about how a statement sounds to us, we assume it will sound that way to others, even if there's nothing for them to hear. When e-mail users in another experiment had to first say their statement out loud and in a way that was opposite of how it was intended (saying a sarcastic statement in a serious one and a serious statement in a sarcastic tone), they were no longer overconfident.

So emoticons may enhance or contradict the verbal content of a message, but they may also reveal the cultural affiliation of the user. In a recent study of twitter messages, researchers found an interesting cultural difference in the construction of emoticons. Persons from collectivist cultures, particularly the East Asian countries of Japan, Korea, China, and Thailand, tend to use vertical emoticons that emphasize the eye region of the face for expressing an emotion such as ^_^ whereas persons from individualistic cultures tend to use horizontal emoticons that emphasize changes in the mouth region of the face, such as :) (Park, Baek, & Cha, 2014).

▶ Are emojis an adequate substitute for the emotional cues we exchange in face-to-face interactions?

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Other methods of conveying emotion with standard keyboard characters include embedded texts that bracket an expression (e.g., <smile>, <frown>) and explicit statements such as, "I'm kidding!" (Jacobson, 1996). There are many ways of using textual cues to replace nonverbal cues, such as the use of exclamation points to add emphasis or express excitement, a repeated vowel to inject a sarcastic tone, or capital letters to intensify an emotion.

In recent years, keyboards on computers, smartphones, and tablets have made it easy for users to insert an array of colorful pictographs called **emojis** into their text-based messages. Emojis can represent human faces, animal faces, and a variety of objects for the purpose of expressing the feelings, thoughts, intentions, and moods of the user. According to one study, the most popular emojis around the world are happy faces, followed by sad faces, hearts, and hand gestures (Goldsborough, 2014). Over

time, users find that emojis can serve a variety of functions. Based on interviews of individuals around the world, one team of researchers found that respondents reported using emojis to conceal or mask how they really felt about something, to let someone know they were thinking of them without having to put it in words (like a touch, smile, or glance they might use in face-to-face situations), to play or act silly with someone, and to communicate in a special way that is exclusive to a particular relationship (Kelly & Watts, 2015).

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE 11.2

CAN YOU RELATE TO THIS?

Social Media Users Find Ways to Account for Kidding and Sarcasm

When AOL came out, my family was one of the last families to get a computer and to use the Internet. Most of my friends were seasoned pros at instant messaging. When I got [an instant message], I found that I would get very confused about knowing whether someone was kidding. For example, I was typing to a friend and he said something mean. After he finished; he typed "JK!" I was confused by this and thought that he was insulting me again. I asked him what *JK* meant and he sent back a message saying it meant "Just kidding." I was relieved that he wasn't insulting me.

Rob

Naturally, new media users do not have the same access to the social cues and spontaneous emotional exchanges that accompany face-to-face and, to a lesser degree, phone conversations. This puts added pressure on users to compensate with strategies aimed at acquiring information about a person's identity, attitudes, and feelings (Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, & Sunnafrank, 2001). It also puts pressure on message senders to think of ways that heighten the social presence of their communication. For instance, researchers in one study found that including a digital photograph along with an e-mail request to participate in a survey was sufficient to increase their compliance rate from 58% to 84% (Gueguen & Jacob, 2002b).

Developers of new technologies continue to enrich the online and mobile messaging environment with products and services that help us connect with others. **Social networking sites**, such as **Facebook**, enable users to exchange information that goes beyond the text-based messages of the past. For more than a decade, Facebook has

been giving subscribers an opportunity to post photographs that can provide a visual image of how they see themselves and how they want others to see them, thereby contributing to the identification function of nonverbal communication that we explored in Chapter 3. One recent study of 1,744 Facebook users from 20 different countries found that profile photos conveyed important information about the user's identity and included photos representing the following categories: face shot, interests, special occasion, posing alone, humorous, family, playing sports, socializing, romantic, supporting a cause, and unique location. The photos also reflected the user's personality, the feedback they received from their peers, and how people reacted to the photo choices of their peers (Wu, Chang, & Yuan, 2015).

Facebook profile photos also reveal information about the cultural orientation and gender of the user. In a study comparing East Asian, collectivistic societies and the individualistic orientation of Americans, for example, researchers found that East Asians were more likely to use photographs that highlighted various contextual features (deemphasizing the face of the user) while Americans, consistent with a more self-focused perspective, were more likely to use images that highlighted their faces (Huang & Park, 2013). Gender also influences one's selection of profile photos. While men tend to select pictures that highlight their status (e.g., objects and clothing) and risk-taking experiences in outdoor settings, women are more likely to use pictures that highlight family relationships and emotional expression (Tifferet & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014).

The growing popularity of **avatars**, graphic two-dimensional images users can move around a computer screen, demonstrates an interest in continuing to reduce the impersonal dimensions of text-based communication. One study of instant messaging comparing the effects of avatars and emoticons found that the use of facially expressive avatars increased participants' levels of involvement in but not their overall enjoyment of an interactive problem-solving task. Of particular interest was the occurrence of some facial mimicry between avatars, raising the possibility that expressive avatars may heighten levels of empathy among users. Moreover, the researchers found that participants who did engage in more of these emotional exchanges rated and described their experience as more entertaining and liked their partner more than did the other participants (Fabri, Moore, & Hobbs, 2005). Some research reveals other interesting parallels between the nonverbal behavior of avatars and that of their human counterparts. For example, in an observational study of Second Life, a virtual community, researchers found that gender differences transferred into the virtual environment. Male dyads maintained greater distances and made less eye contact than did female dyads, and decreases in interpersonal distance were compensated with gaze aversion (Yee, Bailenson, Urbanek, Chang, & Merget, 2007). Similarly, another study using avatars found that females high in social anxiety were more likely to avert the steady gaze of an approaching male avatar than were females who were

▶ Technological innovations in computer-mediated forms of communication continue to recognize the importance of social presence.

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lower in social anxiety (Wieser, Pauli, Grosseible, Molzow, & Mulberger, 2010). Cultural differences in approach–avoidance signals may also appear in virtual environments. Researchers in one study of dyadic avatar interactions found that Asians preferred greater distances in their avatar interactions that Europeans did, which is consistent with what one would expect in human face-to-face interactions (Hasler & Friedman, 2012). So there is evidence that interactions with avatars in a virtual environment may mirror some of the nonverbal behavior we would expect in real face-to-face interactions. But there is far less evidence that avatars are capable of creating the kind of social presence we often desire in our interactions with others. Perhaps the closest we can come to achieving a high degree of social presence with mediated forms of communication may be with face-to-face video chat applications (e.g., Skype, Facetime).

Social presence may not always be advantageous, however. The absence of visual cues in some situations, for example, may facilitate lie detection. In fact, the greater likelihood that certain kinds of lies, such as fabricating a story, produce more verbal and vocal than facial or body clues suggests that lie catchers use a telephone rather than a face-to-face conversation. Reducing social presence can also be desirable in research interviews, where even the slightest nonverbal signal from an interviewer can bias respondents' answers to questions (Persichitte et al., 1997). Moreover, certain people may benefit from a communication environment that minimizes social presence. Whereas shy and socially anxious individuals typically avoid face-to-face contact with others, one study found that shy persons were no less likely to use Internet services such as e-mail and chat rooms than persons who are not shy (Scealy, Phillips, & Stevenson, 2002). And a survey of university undergraduates found that nearly half felt less shy on the Internet than they did in face-to-face situations (Knox, Daniels, Sturdivant, & Zusman, 2001).

Another consequence of reduced social presence that has both desirable and undesirable consequences is a phenomenon known as **disinhibition**—being less concerned with self-presentation and the judgment of others and acting accordingly (Joinson, 1998). Armed with a sense of personal anonymity and shielded from the instantaneous and unpleasant emotional reactions of others (e.g., a look of hurt, embarrassment, anger, fear, shame), people often say things online they would never say in a face-to-face encounter (Donn & Sherman, 2002; Levine, 2000). On the positive side, this can produce more open and honest communication. But on the negative side, it can produce hurt feelings, resentment, and more (Turner, 1998).

Performance feedback is one example. Research shows that an evaluator is more likely to give a negative appraisal of someone's work when delivering it through e-mail than when delivering it face-to-face (Hebert & Vorauer, 2003). Despite the many advantages of using media to reduce social presence, the usual test for new media is how successfully they approximate the look and feel of face-to-face communication. The next section briefly considers some everyday applications.

APPLICATIONS OF INTERACTIVE MEDIA As we move further into the twenty-first century, technological innovations will continue to give us more opportunities to meet new people and to stay in touch with people we know. Whether for business or pleasure, these developments can produce convenient and cost-saving alternatives to face-to-face meetings. This section considers two applications of interactive media that are changing the landscape of our everyday lives: building personal relationships and pursuing an education.

Despite the opportunities afforded by social media, most studies confirm that we use mobile devices and social networking sites mainly for communication with a small handful of people: close friends, family members, and intimate partners. Also, instead of using them to start up new relationships, we tend to use them for maintaining or deepening already-existing offline relationships (Chambers, 2013). At times, mobile devices can actually lessen the chances of meeting new people. For example, one study found that using a mobile device can disrupt the simple exchange of friendly smiles that often occurs during brief moments of eye contact as pedestrians approach and pass each other (Patterson, Lammers, & Tubbs, 2014). Even the mere presence of a mobile device can impair the quality and likelihood of starting a conversation and building a relationship by interfering with the nonverbal signals we may otherwise use to establish a face-to-face connection and build conversational rapport (Pryzbylski & Weinstein, 2012).

Still, social uses of mediated interaction have changed the way we develop and maintain personal relationships. For teens, in particular, talking face-to-face has become the exception rather than the rule. According to the latest Pew Research Center survey (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2015), texting is their preferred method of communicating with close friends (49%), followed by social media (20%), and phone calls (13%). But teens are aware of the risks involved in relying on social media. The survey reports that 77% of teens agree that social media allows people to be less authentic than they would be offline. Among teens with dating experience, 76% say they have never dated or hooked up someone they first met online.

In the general population, one in ten Americans have used an online dating site or mobile dating app themselves, and many people know someone who uses online dating or who has found a spouse or long-term partner through online dating. Public

attitudes toward online dating have also become much more favorable in recent years, and social networking sites are now playing a major role when it comes to navigating and documenting romantic relationships. Online dating is most common among Americans in their mid-20s through mid-40s. Compared with eight years ago, online daters in 2013 are more likely to actually go out on dates with the people they meet on these sites. Some 66% of online daters have gone on a date with someone they met through an online dating site or application, a four-fold increase since 2005 (Smith & Duggan, 2013).

In face-to-face encounters, physical appearance and courtship signals play a prominent role in the initial stages, determining who gets together. In contrast, online courtship, what some call *cyber-flirting*, is more likely to begin with an exchange of text messages or a simple exchange of digital pictures. Individuals get to know each other and then decide whether to meet face-to-face (Levine, 2000). In a recent focus group interview study of Facebook users who had experience using the site to build intimacy, researchers found that it was helpful during the early stages of a relationship when the profile photos could be used as a source of information about a person and when the online messaging could be used as a way to avoid the discomfort, embarrassment, and anxiety that often accompanies face-to-face interactions (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013).

Online courtship has its costs and benefits. On the positive side, disinhibition may lead to more revealing and rewarding self-disclosures during the initial stages of an online courtship compared to a face-to-face courtship (Merkle & Richardson, 2000; Wysocki, 1998). But disinhibition can also result in the one thing people say they fear most about Internet romance: deception (Donn & Sherman, 2002). The feeling of anonymity coupled with the desire to make a good impression can tempt individuals to lie. In one survey of undergraduates, 40% admitted that they lied—mostly about their age, weight, appearance, and marital status (Knox et al., 2001). Yet a study that compared first impressions formed online and second impressions formed offline found little evidence of deception. Results showed that people were honest with each other online and most respondents reported being as or more attracted to their online partners with additional information obtained from phone calls, photographs, and face-to-face meetings (Albright, 2002). One survey reported a gender difference in online flirting. Women were more likely than men to use emoticons and other devices to convey their feelings (Whitty, 2004).

Jealousy is a potential source of conflict in a romantic relationship, and social networking sites such as Facebook can provide a source of threatening information capable of arousing jealous feelings. Researchers have shown how Facebook photos can arouse such feelings. In one study, researchers found that wall photos sent by a

romantic partner's "rival" were especially threatening when the text message contained a suggestive emoticon (e.g., a winking emoticon attached to the text message, "It was great seeing you last night") than when it didn't. Not surprisingly, jealous feelings were greater if the rival happened to be attractive (Fleuriet, Cole, & Guerrero, 2014). In another study, participants became more jealous when they saw photos of their partner touching an opposite-sex friend (Miller et al., 2014.). In both studies, however, not everyone experienced the same jealous feelings. Women tended to feel more jealous than men; and individuals with dismissive attachment styles (i.e., positive sense of self, negative sense of others) were less jealous than individuals with insecure attachment styles (e.g., fear of rejection).

FIND OUT MORE

What Do Facebook Profile Pictures Say about Our Relationships?

One of the signs of an intimate relationship is the feeling that you and your partner are connected in ways that reflect a shared identity, that you see your partner as an important part of who you are. In fact, research shows that this sense of shared or overlapping identities may indicate greater satisfaction with the relationship. Would there be any evidence of this in the photographs that people selected for their Facebook profiles? In this series of studies, researchers found that individuals who are happier in their relationships were more likely to post images of themselves and their partner as their main profile photo on Facebook compared to individuals who were not as happy in their relationships

To find out more about this study and to answer the following questions, see the full text (cited below):

1. Why did the researchers decide to study Facebook profiles in particular?

2. Was one study enough? Why did they decide to do three studies? In what ways did the research methods of these three studies differ?

3. How did the researchers recruit persons to participate in these studies?

4. How was relationship satisfaction measured in these studies?

5. Is there any reason to think that future studies might not replicate the result of these studies?

Source: Saslow, L. R., Muise, A., Impett, E. A., & Dubin, A. (2012). Can you see how happy we are? Facebook images and relationship satisfaction. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *4*, 411–418.

RESEARCH 11.2

Distance education is another application of interactive media. With the aid of online computer technology and video-conferencing systems, modern distance education programs create a real-time, multimedia, two-way communication-learning environment.

Early studies comparing distance education courses with traditional courses did not find different outcomes in terms of student learning—at least as far as grades are concerned (Storck & Sproull, 1995; Whittington, 1987). Studies also support the claim that students learn as much in online courses as they do in traditional classrooms (Francescato et al., 2006). Research continues to raise important questions, however, about the impact of distance learning environments on various social-emotional measures of success. In one early study, researchers found that students at remote locations perceived the instructor as behaving more distantly—less eye contact, fewer gestures, and more time behind the desk—than did students in the same classroom with the instructor (Freitas, Myers, & Avtgis, 1998). Such perceptions, a likely consequence of the instructor's reduced social presence, can have a negative impact on student evaluations of the course and the instructor (Geurrero & Miller, 1998; Hackman & Walker, 1990). Other early studies also found that students were less likely to form positive relationships with peers in a mediated environment than in a face-to-face setting (Storck & Sproull, 1995).

▶ Distance education is one important application of interactive media.

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Despite these early cautionary signs, there is no consistent evidence that the negative effects of reduced social presence are serious enough to outweigh the many tangible benefits of distance education offerings. Moreover, as new technology continues to enrich the social-emotional climate of these courses, student evaluations and other related outcomes are likely to improve. In fact, there is growing evidence that students and instructors adapt to these new learning environments, compensating in ways that produce social-emotional outcomes comparable in some ways to those of face-to-face settings. One study comparing online and face-to-face seminars taught by the same instructor over a two-month period found no differences in student perceptions of social presence and in their overall satisfaction with the course (Francescato et al., 2006). Research also suggests that student attitudes probably vary as a function of how much technology an instructor uses and how effectively an instructor uses nonverbal behaviors and other instructional resources to build rapport and intimacy with students (Schrodt & Witt, 2006).

In addition to the incorporation of synchronous forms of communication (i.e., teleconferences, video conferences), instructors can work to enhance the social presence of online learning environments with video recordings of lectures, personalized e-mail contact as early as possible, personal pictures of instructor and students, and coffee-shop exchanges that might occur outside the confines of the traditional classroom (Keengwe, Adjai-Boatng, & Diteeyont, 2013). Some researchers have also found that in collaborative virtual environments, the use of avatars to assist learning improved evaluations of the course and increased participants' involvement in their interactions and perceptions of others, although there was no direct evidence that their use increased the social presence of the learning experience (Allmendinger, 2010). Social presence is an ongoing concern, but as with other applications of interactive media, users continue to find innovative ways to compensate for the relative absence of nonverbal cues.

PERSUASIVE ENCOUNTERS: RESISTING INFLUENCE

Eight years after Richard Nixon's stunning triumph on national television (see the introduction to this chapter), he was eager once again to address the American people. But this time, television cameras recorded the birth of a new media star. It was September 26, 1960. Several points behind in the latest polls and projected as a near-certain loser in the upcoming election, Senator Kennedy had much to gain and little to lose from his decision to confront the vice president in a nationally televised debate. As history confirms, it was a good decision. Based on surveys conducted at the time, Nixon fared better among those who heard it on the radio than those who saw it on television (Bochin, 1990). Less physically attractive than his rival—a condition worsened by his pale complexion (he was recuperating from a knee infection), lack of rest, and unflattering attire—Nixon looked much worse than the tan, younger senator. No would-be persuader has disregarded the impact of television ever since. And no other single event gets more credit for changing the face of American political rhetoric and ushering in a new age of image consultants, media advisors, television ads, sound bites, and spin doctors—what many decry as an age of style over substance.

Politicians aren't the only ones on television trying to influence people. Perhaps nothing attests more to the persuasive power of television than does the amount of money advertisers spend to televise their messages. But even though the commercials might be more entertaining than some of the shows, how many turn on the television to watch an entertaining commercial? The fact that we don't choose to be influenced by much of what we see and hear makes the effect of these appeals—which rely heavily on the subtleties of nonverbal communication—all the more insidious. We begin

this section with a brief review of the research on the persuasive effects of nonverbal communication and then we offer an explanation.

The Impact of Nonverbal Communication

How many people would say they decided to buy a product because of the voice-over in a television commercial or that they voted for a political candidate because of that candidate's facial expressions? Not many. Yet there is an abundance of evidence that people are influenced in ways that might surprise them. All things being equal, sometimes a single nonverbal cue can make a difference. Sometimes, in fact, the nonverbal message is the only message we receive. First, we'll consider the impact of physical appearance, and second, we'll examine the effects of nonverbal behavior.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE How important is it to look good? Research reported in previous chapters showed that physical attractiveness has a significant impact on others, producing positive first impressions (Chapter 3), gaining the compliance of strangers (Chapter 7), attracting romantic partners (Chapter 8), and helping in the workplace (Chapter 10). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that good looks can also help a company sell a product or help a politician win an election.

In her review of the research on good looks and social influence, psychologist Shelly Chaiken (1986) cites several studies in which beauty paid off. In one study, for instance, researchers found that endorsements of a disposable razor by attractive celebrities elicited more positive attitudes and intentions to use the product than did endorsements by less attractive celebrities. In another study, student volunteers were more interested in a new

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE 11.3

CAN YOU RELATE TO THIS?

Good Looks Sell Products

When I go to the drugstore to buy a box of hair dye, I usually pick a color I like, but mostly I look at the attractive woman on the box, sometimes without even realizing that's what I'm doing. One time, my girlfriend picked out this nice hair color for me that probably would have looked pretty good. But I couldn't help noticing that I didn't like the woman on the box; I didn't think she was very attractive. I refused to buy the hair dye just because of that.

Daniela

pain reliever when the ad displayed an attractive person than when it showed an unattractive one. Men in another study were more receptive to the purchase of a brand of cologne when it was advertised by an attractive rather than by an unattractive woman. More recently, when researchers showed participants images of the same female model wearing different colored T-shirts, they found that the participants who saw the model when she had a genuine smile on her face evaluated the T-shirts more favorably than did participants who saw the model with a posed smile or with a neutral expression (Peace, Miles, & Johnston, 2006).

Studies also show that politicians benefit from being attractive. In one experiment, researchers designed a mock election. They distributed campaign flyers to their subjects, each containing the picture, party affiliation, and issue positions of a candidate. They discovered that the photograph affected the candidate's perceived image, which in turn influenced the outcome of the election (Rosenberg, Bohan, McCafferty, & Harris, 1986). In fact, the impact of a candidate's looks may be too much for the public to resist. Researchers in one experiment were surprised to discover that people made stereotypical judgments about the personality of a political candidate based on that candidate's physical attractiveness, even when they were given more reliable and objective information on which to base their judgments (Budesheim & DePaola, 1994). Another study found that evaluations of a hypothetical politician's competency, trustworthiness, leadership ability, and qualifications varied along with the facial attractiveness of the politician (Surawski & Ossoff, 2006).

Another element of physical appearance related to good looks is sexiness. The use of attractive and sexy models in advertising is well known. But does sex sell? The answer seems to depend more on the gender of both the model and the targeted consumer than it does on the sexiness of the model. Even taking those factors into account, however, the effect of sexiness on attitudes does not necessarily correspond with its effect on other measures of advertising success, such as brand-name recognition and information recall. For instance, researchers in one study of magazine ads found that when an ad for a cross-training bicycle contained a sexy female model, males liked the ad and the product more than females did, but males recalled less about the claims made in the ad. Females who judged the ad had more negative attitudes toward both the ad and the product than did females who judged the same ad without a sexy female model. When the same ad had a sexy male model, male

▶ The use of sexy and attractive models to sell products is well known and has been a part of the advertising industry for a long time. Are some consumers more likely to be influenced by these ads than other consumers?

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and female judges did not differ in any of their attitudes (Jones, Stanaland, & Gelb, 1998). For both men and women, sex appeal does not seem to have the completely positive effects advertisers would like. Sex appeal is also a cultural phenomenon, accepted as appropriate in some cultures more than in others. For example, one survey found that Asians regarded sex appeal in advertising as much less appropriate than did North American survey respondents (Sawang, 2010). Gender and cultural differences notwithstanding, as long as they catch the attention of consumers, the use of sexy models in advertising is not likely to diminish any time soon.

The impact of attractiveness and sex appeal may not come as much of a surprise. But we may be less aware of how we are influenced by other nonverbal signals related to physical appearance. In one study, researchers found that a woman received more pledges from her audience to contribute money for leukemia research when she wore a nurse's uniform than when she delivered the same message in a business suit. The woman's attire also affected her ability to obtain support for a local crime-stopping program. Audience members who saw her when she delivered the appeal in a sheriff's uniform pledged more support than did audience members who saw her make the same appeal in a business suit (Lawrence & Watson, 1991).

Some research suggests that the credibility of a speaker may depend on his or her facial features. Psychologists Sheila Brownlow and Leslie Zebrowitz (1990) hypothesized that a baby-faced speaker will have a more innocent-looking appearance than a speaker with mature facial features. As a result, the baby-faced speaker might be judged as having less expertise than a speaker with mature facial features, but the baby-faced features might make the speaker appear more trustworthy. Using videotaped broadcasts of weekday television commercials, Brownlow and Zebrowitz obtained independent ratings of the commercial spokespersons' facial maturity (baby face versus mature), attractiveness, age, smiling, trustworthiness, and expertise. As Table 11.1 shows, the results of their study provided clear support for their predictions: baby-faced men and women lost points on expertise but gained points on trustworthiness, and the results had nothing to do with differences in age, attractiveness, or amount of smiling. The effects of gender paralleled the effects of facial features: Men got higher ratings on expertise than women did, but they also got lower ratings on trustworthiness.

In the context of political negotiations, a recent study confirmed the impact of baby-faced features. Researchers gave Jewish-Israeli participants a news item containing a peace proposal along with a photograph identified as the Palestinian leader offering the proposal. The photograph included a digitized face that was altered to appear baby faced or mature faced by altering the size of the eyes and lips. Participants judged the peace proposal more favorably and rated the Palestinian leader as more trustworthy when he was baby faced than when he was mature faced (Maoz, 2012).

Table 11.1	Ratings of Male and Female Baby-Faced and Mature-Faced Commercial Spokespersons (on a Seven-Point Scale)			
	Male Baby Face	Male Mature Face	Female Baby Face	Female Mature Face
Expertise	3.18	4.39	1.64	2.44
Trustworthiness	4.21	2.96	5.50	4.98

Research shows that split-second judgments of facial appearance carry a great deal of weight in predicting the outcome of political elections (Olivola & Todorov, 2010). For example, in one study, psychologist Alexander Todorov and his students discovered that facial appearance alone produces snap judgments of politicians' competence and trustworthiness and that these judgments can predict with much better-than-chance accuracy the outcome of an election. In one study, the researchers determined that 100 millisecond exposures to photographs of the faces of the winner and runner-up in each of the 2006 gubernatorial and Senate elections was sufficient for participants (who only saw the faces they did not recognize) to make competency judgments about the faces that, in turn, predicted the winner of the election about 70% of the time. Asking participants to take some time and make "good" judgments about which of the two persons in each photograph is the most competent decreased the accuracy of their judgments (Ballew & Todorov, 2007). In fact, these snap judgments are so consistently reliable and automatic that even young children aged five to 13 years are able to predict election outcomes based on nothing more than the facial appearance of the candidates (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009).

Another promising line of inquiry with startling political implications focuses on the appeal of a digitally altered face that resembles our own. Just prior to the 2004 presidential election, Jeremy Bailenson and his colleagues conducted an intriguing experiment with a national sample of voting-age individuals. The participants were instructed to complete a survey of their attitudes toward President Bush and Senator Kerry while viewing side-by-side photos of the two candidates. The photos were altered so that a third of the participants viewed photos of themselves that were morphed at a 40–60 ratio into the photo of Bush, another third viewed photos of themselves morphed into the photo of Kerry, and another third, the control group, viewed the unaltered photos. The control group ended up favoring Bush by about the same margin as that of the election. But the participants morphed into the Bush photo favored Bush by five times the expected margin, while the participants morphed into the Kerry photo favored Kerry by a significant six-point spread (Bailenson & Yee, 2005). Considering the ease with which we can digitally alter an image and the potentially alarming practical consequences of such doctoring, future studies are likely to shed more light on how facial features affect our political judgments.

NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR The way a person looks can be persuasive. Research also shows that a speaker's nonverbal behavior can exert a strong influence on audience attitudes and perceptions. Reviews of the scientific literature usually conclude that several nonverbal behaviors can enhance in some way the persuasiveness of a speaker by creating an image of someone who is involved, enthusiastic, concerned, and responsive. These behaviors typically include eye contact, forceful gestures, open body positions, head nodding, close distances, touch, facial pleasantness, fluent speech, moderately loud vocal tones, moderately fast speech, and pitch variation (Burgoon et al., 1996).

TRY THIS

Infomercial Persuasion

OBJECTIVE: To identify the persuasive nonverbal behaviors typically used in infomercials

INSTRUCTIONS: Watch part of a popular infomercial on television (e.g., sports equipment, diet programs, cleaning appliances, hair or skin care products, etc.). Use the checklist below to note how many of the 11 persuasive nonverbal behaviors are used by the spokesperson.

____ Close-ups	____ Head nodding	____ Moderately loud voice
____ Direct eye contact	____ Smiling	____ Pitch variety
____ Open body positions	____ Touch	____ Moderately fast speech
____ Big, forceful gestures	____ Fluent speech	

The nonverbal communication of political leaders becomes especially important during televised debates, where their every move is observed and judged by millions of voters. Even subtle signals contained in their voices may have unanticipated effects. In one study, researchers measured the vocal dominance expressed in voice samples obtained from 19 presidential debates, including the 1960 Kennedy–Nixon debate. Surprisingly, these measures were able to predict the popular vote outcome of all eight presidential elections (Gregory & Gallagher, 2002). Although we cannot calculate the persuasive impact of nonverbal cues on such a large scale, most political speakers realize the importance of conveying the best image possible. Prior to the 1976 presidential election, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford engaged in a series of nationally televised debates. Concerned about his image after the first debate, Carter's media

advisor asked communication scholar Dale Leathers to offer some recommendations. Based on his analysis of the first debate, Leathers concluded that Carter could enhance his credibility by looking down less often before answering questions, paying more attention to Ford when Ford was speaking, shifting his gaze less often, slowing down his rate of speech, injecting more emotion into his voice, and hesitating less often (Leathers, 1997).

The 1996 presidential campaign offered a stark contrast in styles between the nonverbal communication of Bill Clinton and that of his rival Bob Dole. In his analysis of the two candidates, Leathers focuses on the nonverbal immediacy behaviors of both:

> Clinton's posture is open and relaxed. Moreover, Clinton looks like he is enjoying himself while interacting with an audience. If you had to choose a single word to characterize Clinton's nonverbal communication style, it would probably be pleasant. In contrast, Senator Dole often looks stern, serious, and unapproachable during his appearances in public. Clinton's great edge in pleasantness and likability may certainly be traced to the fact that he seems to minimize the distance between himself and those with whom he interacts, and he does so with a style that accentuates informality and close personal contact. Dole, in contrast, appears to cultivate a stiff informality that makes it difficult for people to get close to him at least in a figurative sense. (p. 241)

In his book, *The Political Brain*, Drew Westen (2007) suggests that the nonverbal demeanor of a political candidate can offer subtle cues to the candidate's character that can have an impact on voters:

> When the younger Bush's pollsters detected in early 2000 that his infamous smirk was creating "the wrong impression," they rapidly coached him on how to reflect gravitas instead of hubris. As it turns out, voters were not being "irrational" in their initial negative "take" on Bush's facial movements. They were detecting what turned out to be perhaps the central character defect that colored his presidency, a pathological certainty and smugness without regard to the facts. No one appears to have systematically coached Dukakis on the wooden use of his hands, Gore on the hinds of condescension in his demeanor, or Kerry on the emotional messages conveyed by his periodic lack of vocal intonation or facial movement. What candidates' faces, tone of voice, and gestures often reveal are aspects of their character to which voters

respond—and to which they sometimes should respond because
they may provide a window into the soul of a person who can only
be seen through a television glass darkly.

Sometimes the impact of nonverbal communication can be remarkably subtle. Researchers in political psychology have discovered, for example, that even a brief exposure to a political leader's facial expressions can evoke emotions in observers that lead to changes in attitudes toward that leader. In one series of experiments, they found evidence of empathy and emotional contagion (see Chapter 5). The facial muscle activity of students who were shown brief videotaped excerpts (with no sound) of then-President Ronald Reagan's and former senator Gary Hart's facial expressions mirrored each of the expressions they saw (McHugo, Lanzetta, & Bush, 1991; McHugo, Lanzetta, Sullivan, Masters, & Englis, 1985). In another experiment, researchers showed students videotaped excerpts of happy and reassuring facial expressions of all the Democratic candidates in the 1984 presidential election. The students' emotional responses to these facial expressions were more likely to produce changes in attitudes toward the candidates than were the students' party affiliation, stand on the issues, or assessment of the candidates' leadership abilities (Sullivan & Masters, 1988).

The idea that emotional contagion may be implicated in the process of political persuasion prompted one team of researchers to study what might be the "essence" of charismatic leadership (Cherulnik, Donley, Wiewel, & Miller, 2001). In their first experiment, college undergraduates role-played a candidate for president of student government at their university by giving a brief campaign speech. The researchers selected both charismatic and noncharismatic speakers (male and female) based on the speakers' nonverbal style (facial expressiveness, smiles, and eye contact). Observations of audience members' reactions to the speakers showed that when they were listening to the charismatic speakers, they smiled more often, displayed more intense smiles, looked away from the speaker less often, and spent more time looking at the speaker. In a second experiment, the researchers used videotaped excerpts from the first presidential debate between George Bush and Bill Clinton. Students watched the most and least charismatic excerpts for both Bush and Clinton. Whereas a contagion effect generally occurred for Clinton, it did not occur for Bush. Students smiled more and looked away less while watching the charismatic Clinton than while watching the noncharismatic Clinton. In contrast, a reversed pattern occurred for Bush: Students smiled and looked less during the charismatic Bush than during the noncharismatic Bush. The researchers concluded that Bush's charismatic style might not have been as genuine as that of Clinton's and was therefore less likely to produce an emotional contagion effect. One implication of this study is that coaching a speaker to act charismatic may not yield the desired effect if the speaker's nonverbal communication seems deliberate rather than spontaneous.

Even the facial expressions of a political rival can affect audience perceptions. Communication researcher John Seiter and his colleagues studied these perceptions in a series of laboratory experiments in which audience members view videotaped debates prepared by the researchers in a split-screen format so viewers can simultaneously view both debaters. In one experiment, they found that the facial expressions of a speaker's opponent during a debate affected judgments of the speaker. When the opponent displayed disagreement by rolling his eyes, shaking his head, and so forth, viewers had more positive attitudes toward the speaker, rating him higher on competence, character, composure, and sociability (Seiter, Abraham, & Nakagama, 1998). In another experiment, Seiter (2001) found that when a nonspeaking debater expressed nearly continuous disbelief by frowning, head shaking, mouthing "No" or "What?" audience members regarded him as deceptive and the speaker as truthful. However, moderate signs of disbelief lowered the truthfulness ratings for both speakers. Another study found that audience members regard even moderate expressions of disbelief as inappropriate, most likely viewing such behavior as a violation of the turn-taking rules expected in formal debates (Seiter & Weger, 2005). The mediated format of these debates heightens viewers' awareness of these nonverbal reactions. In an experiment using live rather than videotaped debates, the researchers still found some support for the idea that moderate expressions of disbelief have a negative effect. When expressing disbelief (compared to being stone-faced), viewers judged the nonspeaking debater as behaving inappropriately and as having a weaker speaking delivery. On the other hand, viewers did not judge her overall as any less competent nor did they downgrade the quality of her arguments (Seiter, Kinzer, & Weger, 2006).

Perhaps the best advice for a nonspeaking debater is to remain composed and wait until it's your turn to speak. Indeed, this is precisely the advice offered to former Vice President Al Gore after one of his presidential debates with George W. Bush. During one of the debates, Gore's occasional sighs of exasperation were easy to hear, leading reporters and others to speculate about how much this kind of "rude" behavior may have damaged his performance (Smith, 2000). Similarly, President Bush's smirks, grimaces, and contorted facial expressions during one of his presidential debates with John Kerry were so pronounced that they actually undermined his support among many undecided voters (reported in Seiter, Kinzer, & Weger, 2006).

Explaining the Impact of Nonverbal Communication

Psychologists Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1986) believe that nonverbal signals alone can be persuasive. According to their **elaboration likelihood model**, targets of persuasion generally take one of two different routes on their way to accepting a persuasive message: the **central route** or the **peripheral route**. Listeners who are

willing and able to grapple with a speaker's ideas (individuals who know a lot or care a lot about the speaker's message, for instance) tend to take the central route, which involves *message elaboration* or rational thinking about issue-relevant arguments (i.e., weighing the pros and cons of a speaker's position). In contrast, listeners who are relatively unwilling or unable to engage in message elaboration tend to take the peripheral route—they rely on various decision rules about when to accept or reject a speaker's message. These decision rules represent a default option that listeners can use when they need or desire a simple way to make up their minds; thus, not much thinking is needed.

When a listener takes the peripheral route, situational circumstances determine which of many different rules the listener will follow. Many of these rules are not relevant to nonverbal communication, such as agreeing with a speaker because most people do or because it is personally advantageous. But many nonverbal cues reinforce decision rules that recommend accepting the message of a credible speaker, a speaker you happen to like, or a speaker who appeals to your emotions. Thus, nonverbal cues that convey expertise and trustworthiness, that are personally appealing (e.g., good looks), or that arouse emotions become especially influential when listeners cannot or will not engage in issue-relevant thinking.

The value of the elaboration likelihood model is that it helps us understand why nonverbal cues may be persuasive with some listeners but not with others. The more likely a listener is to focus on the issues, the less likely it is that he or she will succumb to the influence of nonverbal cues. Research indicates that the persuasive impact of nonverbal communication decreases with listeners who (1) are involved in the topic, (2) enjoy thinking about issues, (3) hear opposing positions from different sources, (4) are able to concentrate without distractions, and (5) have prior knowledge of the topic (O'Keefe, 1990).

ENTERTAINING ENCOUNTERS: ABSORBING POPULAR CULTURE

When MTV first appeared in 1981, the marriage of music and fashion became more prominent than ever before. Consider Madonna's impact. Before 1983 (the year she became a hit on MTV), the oversized tailored shirt and tight jeans were among the most conspicuous garments of young teenagers. Madonna's videos *Borderline*, *Lucky Star*, and *Like a Virgin* introduced her first look:

> a short black dress, big cross earrings, silver and rubber bracelets, black crosses, and many silver chains worn around the neck, and a bare midriff. The short tube skirt, tank tops, cropped leggings, and fingerless gloves that Madonna wore became "required attire" among the younger teenage set. (Rubinstein, 1995, p. 214)

Buying a few new outfits is one thing, but sometimes mimicking the look of a media idol is not so benign. In the early 1990s, for example, one study estimated that 250,000 to 500,000 high school male seniors had used or were then using dangerous anabolic steroids not to enhance athletic performance but to emulate the muscularity of their media idols ("Deadly Search for Beautiful Bodies," 1993). Another example is the growing international trade in unsafe and potentially deadly skin-bleaching products that claim to turn dark-skinned individuals into more popular and successful lighter-skinned individuals, a claim boosted by media images linking status and celebrity with skin color. For example, one widely viewed television commercial seen on Indian satellite channels and on YouTube features a superstar Indian actress promoting a skin cream called Fair & Handsome. The commercial shows a glum dark-skinned Indian man who, after using the cream, becomes light skinned, confident, and attractive to women (Van Marsh, 2007).

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE 11.4

CAN YOU RELATE TO THIS?

Mimicking a Media Icon

As a high school student, I was very involved in various musical and theatrical groups at my school. We all had our favorite stars that we tried to emulate, but only a few people would go so far as to try and be just like them. I remember one girl who wanted to be just like Mariah Carey. She tried to sing like her, dress like her, and did her hair the same way. I thought that was totally pathetic, but a lot of teenagers do things like that.

Katie

In this section, we'll focus on one important way that entertaining encounters with the media become socializing encounters as well—through a process known as *modeling*. Mass media scholars Melvin DeFleur and Everette Dennis (1998) explain:

> The mass media, and especially television and movies, present many depictions of people acting out patterns of behavior in various ways. These can be ways of speaking, relating to members of the opposite sex, dressing, walking, or virtually any form of meaningful action. These depictions can serve as "models" of behavior that can be imitated, and people who see the action depicted may adopt it as part of their own behavioral repertoire. (p. 471)

The most straightforward explanation of how and why individuals adopt behaviors depicted in the media is **modeling theory**, a derivation of psychologist Albert Bandura's (1977) more general social learning theory. Modeling theory contains five basic propositions: (1) an individual encounters a media portrayal of someone (model) performing an action; (2) the individual identifies with the model; (3) at some point, the individual imitates the action of the model; (4) performing the action is rewarding to the individual (i.e., positive reinforcement); (5) having been rewarded for imitating the model, the individual is likely to perform the action again (DeFleur & Dennis, 1998).

EXERCISE 11.2

TRY THIS

Mimicking Media Icons

OBJECTIVE: To identify instances of modeling for class discussion

INSTRUCTIONS: Can you think of specific cases where the actions or look of a well-known celebrity or other media personality became part of the popular culture? Try to come up with examples for a media icon who popularized:

1. A hair style
2. An article of clothing
3. A distinct gesture
4. A speech mannerism
5. An accessory

Whether in sitcoms or dramas, talk shows or reality programs, sporting events or musical productions, television offers countless opportunities to witness performances that are relevant to our everyday lives. By giving us idealized images of how we should look and act in all sorts of situations, television invites us to join the crowd. Despite the pressures to conform, not everyone accepts the invitation. For those who do, a belief that the benefits outweigh the risks is often motivation enough. In the sections that follow, we'll examine modeling theory in action. First, we'll consider media portrayals of physical appearance, and then, we'll examine media portrayals of nonverbal interaction.

Media Portrayals of Physical Attractiveness

The mass media play a significant role in the modeling of attractiveness, not only by presenting various images of beauty but by creating in consumers the desire to emulate those images. According to the results of one study, which examined the contents of nearly 4,300 television commercials, approximately one out of every four television commercials we see contains some form of attractiveness-based message, selling us on the importance of good looks (Downs & Harrison, 1985). Media portrayals in film and television that repeatedly equate attractiveness with positive qualities—the protagonists are usually good looking—contribute to the halo effect we bestow on attractive people (see Chapter 3). Media representations of good looks also vary by culture. For example, a study of advertisements from fashion and beauty magazines in Singapore, Taiwan, and the U.S. found that women's faces predominated in Asian ads with their emphasis on cosmetics and facial beauty products. But women's bodies were the focus in the clothing ads that dominated U.S. magazines (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005).

▶ Media icons like Lady Gaga can have a great deal of influence over large segments of the population.

Although both men and women want to be attractive, research generally confirms what most of us probably suspect: The media perpetuates the stereotype that being attractive is more important for the well-being of women than it is for men. Of course, there is a long history of such stereotyping. Television advertisements from the 1950s through the 1970s consistently used women for decorative purposes and portrayed women as more concerned than men with their personal appearance (Ferrante, Haynes, & Kingsley, 1988; Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988). Although the gap has narrowed somewhat in recent years, research also shows that network television ads and MTV commercials are more likely to present women rather than men as young and attractive and as sex objects (Lin, 1998; Signorielli, McLeod, & Healy, 1994; Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988). And it's not just true of commercials. A study of primetime comedy, drama, action-adventure, and magazine television programs arrived at the same conclusion (Davis, 1990).

What are these attractive female images that we see in the media every day? Marketing researchers Basil Englis and Michael Solomon and psychologist Richard Ashmore

(1994) reject any notion of a single image. While certain universal standards of facial beauty may exist (see Chapter 3), there is tremendous cultural diversity as well. Cultural gatekeepers (fashion editors, film directors, and so on) often have the final say about the images on magazine covers or in the movies. Based on the terms these cultural gatekeepers use to distinguish among beautiful models (incorporating both appearance and behavior), the researchers proposed a typology of female good looks:

1. The feminine/classic image typically has light hair, Nordic features, and a soft image; is not heavily accessorized; and is usually slightly older.

2. The sensual/exotic image is sexual in a classy, understated way and is ethnic looking (deviating from white European norms).

3. The cute image is youthful and shorter, wears casual attire, and looks awkward but natural.

4. The girl-next-door image is outdoorsy, casual, active, and athletic.

5. The sex kitten image wears skin-revealing attire, seems cool and detached, and strikes uncomfortable-looking poses.

6. The trendy image wears current and faddish clothes, strikes challenging poses, and is often ethnic looking.

In their study of fashion magazines and music videos, the researchers found that the media favored the classic/feminine, sensual/exotic, and trendy images over the others. They also found that the prevalence of an image varied according to type of magazine (*Cosmopolitan* favored classic/feminine, *Seventeen* favored trendy), and in the music videos, the image varied according to the type of music (classic rock favored classic/feminine, new wave favored trendy, and so forth).

While there may be some diversity in the media's portrayal of good looks, thinness is still popular when it comes to their depictions of the ideal feminine physique (White, Ginsburg, & Brown, 1999). The slightest attention to female performers in any of the media confirms the presence of this ideal—the result of a steady emphasis on being slender. As one researcher concluded over twenty years ago:

> [P]resent day women who look at the major mass media are exposed to a standard of bodily attractiveness that is slimmer than that presented for men and that is less curvaceous than that presented for women since the 1930s. This standard may not be promoted only in the media and it may not even originate in the media, but given the popularity of television, movies and

magazines . . . the media are likely to be among the most influential
promoters of such thin standards. (Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, &
Kelly, 1986, p. 531)

Children absorb media images promoting thinness at an early age. One study of
popular animated cartoons showed that underweight characters were more likely
than overweight characters to possess all sorts of good qualities, such as intelligence,
attractiveness, emotional well-being, and good judgment (Klein & Shiffman, 2006).

Studies show that these media images leave a lasting impression. One team of researchers
discovered that even 30 minutes of exposure is enough to alter a woman's image of her
own body. They found that viewers felt thinner than they normally felt after watching
30 minutes of television commercials containing thin models (which is usually an
overestimation of their body size). The research suggests that the desire to lose weight
comes at a later stage. First, viewers identify with the thin models—even imagining that
they look more like the models than they really do. But when reality sets in, they begin
to experience dissatisfaction with their bodies (Myers & Biocca, 1992). Of course, these
results do not take individual differences into account. Some viewers will feel more
dissatisfaction than others will. Perhaps the single most important factor is the degree
to which a viewer has internalized the media conception of beauty. Research shows that
for males and females alike, the more a viewer embraces the media ideal, the more he
or she is likely to be dissatisfied (Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Hargreaves & Tiggemann,
2002). One exception may be whether a person is taking steps to achieve the ideal, such
as dieting or exercising. Then, according to some research, that person may actually feel
better after seeing ideal media images (Mills, Polivy, Herman, & Tiggeman, 2002).

For those who do not reject the media ideal, an important factor is the discrepancy
between one's own body and the ideal media image. For many women, thin media
images activate this discrepancy and make them feel heavier than they really are
(Lavine, Sweeney, & Wagner, 1999). Studies show that the greater the perceived
discrepancy is, the more dissatisfaction one feels (Posovac & Posovac, 2002). Since
the ideal media image for females of all ages is thin, it's not surprising that heavier
girls and women feel more dissatisfaction after viewing these media images (Durkin &
Paxton, 2002; Henderson-King & Henderson-King, 1997). Generally, women who are
dissatisfied with their bodies have a tougher time coping with exposure to media images
of thin and attractive people. One team of researchers examined women's feelings
about their bodies after exposure to images of attractive professional models as well
as attractive non-models. They found that, compared to satisfied women, dissatisfied
women felt much worse after making these comparisons. In addition, while dissatisfied
women felt worse about themselves after seeing images of professional models as well
as non-models, satisfied women only felt worse after seeing images of the non-models,

▶ While there may be some diversity in the media's portrayal of physical attractiveness, being thin is still in when it comes to depictions of the ideal feminine physique. What are the consequences of these media images?

istockphoto.com/Yaromir_M

suggesting that satisfied women don't compare themselves to images of attractive women with whom they have little in common, such as professional models, whereas dissatisfied women do. The researchers also found that dissatisfied women spend more time comparing themselves to other women than satisfied women do (Trampe, Siero, & Stapel, 2007). Finally, research shows that race plays a part. One study found that black women with low levels of body-esteem reported less satisfaction with their own bodies after exposure to advertisements containing images of thin and attractive black models, but not after similar exposure to thin and attractive white models (Frisby, 2004).

The impact of these images is far reaching, extending to virtually all parts of the globe. In fact, a study of female body dissatisfaction in 26 countries across 10 world regions found that exposure to Western media, combined with body mass index (BMI), predicted body dissatisfaction among women, particularly in high socioeconomic environments. As the authors of the study warn,

> The implications of the present work are clear: Across the globe, societies now face the urgent task of promoting more realistic and healthier body weight ideals, and challenging associations between extreme thinness and femininity, success and health. Only a response at the sociopolitical and economic levels, in combination with the current focus on the individual, can be expected to result in more positive body images among women and men in different cultural spheres. (Swami et al., 2010, p. 321)

If mere exposure to these images takes its toll, we might expect that people who see more of them in their everyday lives would feel more dissatisfied with their appearance than would people who see much less. Researchers found support for this in a study of 382 students in the ninth and tenth grades. More frequent TV viewers and magazine readers expressed greater dissatisfaction with their bodies, idealized body types like those found in the popular media, and were more likely to adopt dieting and exercise programs (Hofschire & Greenberg, 2002). More dramatic support comes from a study comparing the body images of 20 sighted women, 20 women who lost their eyesight after age 15, and 20 women who had been blind since birth. The researchers found that the congenitally blind women had the most positive view of their bodies while the sighted women had the least positive view ("Out of Sight," 1999).

Gender differences in the desire to be attractive also surface at an early age. In one study of elementary school children, communication researcher Cynthia Hoffner (1996) asked the children to identify their favorite television character, to indicate how much they wanted to be like that character, and to indicate what particular traits the character had in five different areas: attractiveness, strength, humor, intelligence, and social behavior. For the boys, the best predictor of how much they identified with the character was the character's intelligence; for the girls, the best predictor was the character's attractiveness.

Media images of physical appearance create and sustain many of the stereotypes we use in our snap judgments of other people. Research shows that increased exposure to these images brings an increased reliance on stereotypical judgments (see Research 11.3). For instance, a study of 10- to 13-year-old boys and girls found that the more time they spent watching television, playing videogames, and reading magazines, the more likely they were to have negative attitudes toward obese girls and boys (Latner, Rosewall, & Simmonds, 2007).

FIND OUT MORE

How Do Media Images of Racial Stereotypes Influence Public Policy?

Research has shown for a long time that media portrayals of minority groups often reinforce stereotypes about those groups. In these two experiments, the researchers were interesting in finding out whether media images of black stereotypes influence support for public assistance programs when those programs would be assisting blacks. In the first experiment, the researchers found that participants who viewed images of black looters during Hurricane Katrina (representing the "black criminal" stereotype) were less likely to feel empathy for and less likely to support assistance programs for black evacuees in need of assistance than for white evacuees in need of assistance compared to those participants who viewed images of non-looting black evacuees or those participants who saw no images of evacuees at all.

The second experiment examined the impact of the "promiscuous black female" stereotype. One group of participants listened to a rap song with many references to explicit sexual acts and degrading comments about the sexual performance of men, a second group of participants listened to a rap song with no sexual references, and a final group of participants listened to a non-rap song with no sexual references. As in the first experiment, participants primed with a black stereotype (the "promiscuous black female") showed less empathy for a black woman in need of help and were less inclined to support social programs that offered assistance than did the other two groups of participants. The same effect was not found when the woman in need of help was described as white rather than black.

(Continued)

RESEARCH 11.3

(Continued)

To find out more about this study and to answer the following questions, see the full text (cited below).

1. How was this research described as different than the research that had already been done?

2. Who were the participants in these experiments? Do you think the results might have been different with a different group of participants?

3. Why did the researchers decide to do a second experiment, following up on the first?

4. What did the researchers do in the second experiment to find out whether the music would affect empathy and help for a woman in need?

5. What were some of the limitations of these experiments?

Source: Johnson, J. D., Olivo, N., Gibson, N., Reed, W., & Ashburn-Nardo, N. (2009). Priming media stereotypes reduces support for social welfare policies: The mediating role of empathy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35, 463–476.

Media Portrayals of Nonverbal Interaction

Whether in daytime soaps or primetime sitcoms, movies or magazines, media portrayals of everyday life give us an endless stream of images about how to relate to one another: parents with children, superiors with subordinates, men with women, and so on. How does a steady diet of such images affect us? According to modeling theory, we may pick up the behaviors of characters we identify with. We can only wonder how far-reaching the consequences are and how much modeling actually takes place.

Social scientists are a long way from offering any definitive answers. Many researchers are interested in learning about the implicit messages contained in media images rather than in how much we are affected by them. When focused on nonverbal interaction, these studies show how media reflect and perpetuate various stereotypes—how men interact with women, for example. Whether the portrayal appears in a feature film, an action-adventure series, a music video, or a television commercial, the male/female stereotype is relatively clear and consistent: Female characters are more likely than male characters to exhibit deferential and nurturing behavior (Wood, 1994, Chapter 9). In the extreme, these images are not inconsequential. Many of the classic films of the 1940s featuring screen idols such as Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, and John Wayne, for instance, rarely showed the male stars taking no for an answer from their leading ladies.

When the world discovered, soon after his death in 1985, that media idol Rock Hudson was gay, people were stunned that a movie star known for his portrayals of tough, masculine men could be homosexual. He didn't fit the stereotype. But even

today, the media stereotype of a gay man persists. For example, a recent study of North American television shows found that male actors playing the part of a gay man tend to change the tone and pitch of their voice to fit the feminine-sounding stereotype of a gay man (Cartei & Reby, 2012).

Media depictions of women's behavior often differ from those of men. Music videos, for example, tend to portray male characters as adventuresome, domineering, and aggressive but female characters as affectionate, dependent, nurturing, and fearful (Seidman, 1992). These differences even turn up in children's television ads. One study found that girls were more likely than boys in Saturday morning commercials to engage in all sorts of shy and submissive behaviors: nervous giggling, face covering, gaze aversion, snuggling, peeking out from behind an object, showing fear, and so forth (Browne, 1998). Gender differences also appear in news photographs. One study of a major daily newspaper showed that the photos of women were more likely to picture the women as smiling and submissive than were the photos of men (Rodgers, Kenix, & Thorson, 2007).

Another media portrayal of nonverbal interaction that may lead to extensive modeling among viewers is that of expressing emotions. Some stereotypical portrayals are easy to see, such as those that encourage us to follow well-known cultural display rules: not laughing at another's misfortune, not being a sore loser, not showing fear to an adversary, being humble, exhibiting shame during a confession, and so on. These portrayals also include gender-appropriate displays, such as men showing anger or concealing their emotions, and women showing a greater range of emotions and typically showing greater vulnerability with displays of fear, sadness, shame, and the like.

According to one estimate, in a typical 30-minute television sitcom, viewers are exposed to 68 instances of emotional expressions (Houle & Feldman, 1991). What are we learning from these portrayals? In one study of the most popular prime-time family sitcoms among two- to 11-year-olds, communication researchers Audrey Weiss and Barbara Wilson (1996) discovered that episodes usually centered on incidents that evoked negative emotions such as fear, anger, or embarrassment in the main characters (often child characters). Humor often accompanied these incidents and, more often than not, other characters did not respond directly to the individuals who experienced negative emotions. As the researchers concluded,

> The prevalence of nonresponsive reactions in family sitcoms could
> convey either harmful or beneficial information to children. On
> the one hand, frequent ignoring responses may suggest to a child
> viewer that negative feelings are unimportant to other family
> members. Such disconfirmation of negative emotions among

television families might influence expectations that children themselves develop about their own family's support and concern when they feel bad. On the other hand, young viewers may learn from family sitcoms which emotional responses are inappropriate or unacceptable. For example, if family sitcom characters ignore a child who is misbehaving or throwing a temper tantrum, young viewers may learn that such negative emotional reactions are inappropriate. (p. 22)

Research often shows that television portrayals are not very realistic. Emotional expressions in particular do not mirror the frequency, context, or range of those expressed in real life. One study found that television characters tend to show emotions much more often than people do in everyday life. They also show certain emotions (such as anger and sadness) much more often, while other emotions (such as disgust and fear) are shown much less often. Interestingly, the researchers observed that television characters tend to show their true emotions regardless of the context (Coats, Feldman, & Philippot, 1999). In other words, they rarely mask their emotions and thus do not follow the display rules most of us take for granted (e.g., don't be a sore loser; don't gloat, etc.). What impact do these portrayals have on children who watch a lot of television? In a series of follow-up studies, the researchers found that frequent viewers (as much as 40 hours a week or more) exhibited different nonverbal strengths and weaknesses compared to infrequent viewers. Frequent viewers were more expressive when genuinely experiencing emotions but less expressive when trying to pose an emotion. Frequent viewers were better able to express emotions common on television (happiness and sadness) than emotions uncommon on television (fear and disgust). Frequent viewers demonstrated greater skill at decoding others' facial expressions. Finally, frequent viewers tended to share television characters' inclination to show true emotions regardless of the context (Coats et al., 1999). As the authors conclude, "[C]hildren whose primary source of information about nonverbal behavior is learned from television do not appear to fully appreciate the complexities of emotional dissemblance" (p. 172).

In recent years, scholars have been implicating the media in the unintended transmission of intergroup bias. According to one perspective, media consumers may pick up or, to use their concept of contagion, become "infected" with the nonverbal bias exhibited by the persons they observe on mainstream television programs (Weisbuch & Pauker, 2011). Nonverbal bias includes more negative, unfriendly nonverbal cues and fewer positive, friendly nonverbal cues directed toward particular social groups. Exposure to nonverbal bias may cause individuals to adopt a bias of their own through implicit learning or some other relatively unconscious process. One study examined the presence of nonverbal bias found in television programs watched

by more than 100 million weekly viewers (Weisbuch, Paulker, & Ambady, 2009). They found that black characters were more likely to be the targets of nonverbal bias from their co-characters than were white characters. Another study of 18 popular television programs found a similar bias exhibited toward overweight characters (Weisbuch & Ambady, 2009). Furthermore, correlational studies as well as controlled experiments have revealed that observers of programs exhibiting this kind of nonverbal bias are more likely to show signs of bias compared to observers who are not exposed to nonverbal bias (Weisbuch & Pauker, 2011). These studies suggest that efforts to remove explicit (i.e., verbal) signs of discrimination may not be sufficient to eradicate the continuing problems resulting from intergroup bias.

SUMMARY

Few things in life will replace the satisfaction we derive from face-to-face encounters with others, yet we find ourselves in an ever-shrinking world that relies more and more on mediated communication. Informative encounters, those that keep us connected to the outside world, include traditional uses of the media (such as getting the daily news) and modern uses that include interactive media (such as e-mail, texting, and videoconferencing). Nonverbal communication is an important part of news broadcasts, and attention to it reflects the need for viewer ratings as well as for objective reporting, a set of constraints not found on many talk shows. Nonverbal cues can reveal subtle newscaster bias or they can overshadow other forms of inadvertent discrimination. News presentations reflect a beauty bias: Reporters, especially women, are more likely to be attractive.

We use various forms of media to exchange information with others; some exhibit greater social presence—a closer approximation to face-to-face communication—than do other forms.

Although social presence is not always desirable, it remains the most important criterion for judging the effectiveness of new media. People often go online or rely on mobile messaging for social reasons, which continues to change the way people go about building their relationships with others. Distance education is also becoming increasingly popular, placing demands on instructional designers to incorporate new technologies that facilitate the social presence of the learning environment.

Nonverbal communication in the media may also influence us in various ways. Studies show that attractive individuals in advertisements and in politics are more persuasive than their less attractive counterparts. Sexy models in advertising may succeed only in getting our attention. Clothing, such as wearing a uniform, can be persuasive. Baby-faced individuals may appear more trustworthy but are also seen as less competent than mature-faced individuals. Faces that resemble our own may also be influential. Certain nonverbal behaviors tend to be more persuasive than others, such as those reflecting

greater immediacy and expressiveness. Research shows that a political leader's facial expressions can be persuasive, creating an emotional reaction that affects our attitude toward the leader. As an explanation of why nonverbal signals are persuasive, the elaboration likelihood model helps us understand when people are most likely to resist or succumb to the influence of these signals.

Media presentations do more than inform, persuade, and entertain—they socialize. Media consumers absorb the images of popular culture through *modeling*, a process that begins when a consumer identifies with a media portrayal, retains it, tries it out, and likes the results. Modeling theory can explain why media consumers often want to alter their looks by becoming more fashionable or thinner, for example. It can also provide some insight into the widespread acceptance of certain patterns of nonverbal interaction, such as those that are typical of male–female relationships, those that involve the expression of emotion, and those that may inadvertently transmit bias toward marginalized social groups.

KEY TERMS

Avatars 413
Central route 427
Disinhibition 414
Elaboration likelihood
   model 427

Emojis 411
Emoticons 410
Facebook 412
Modeling theory 430
Peripheral route 427

Social networking
   sites 412
Social presence 407