Gender Differences in Nonverbal Communication Patterns / Rodne razlike u neverbalnoj komunikaciji

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Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i filozofije

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Završni rad

Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Alma Vančura

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Bachelor's Thesis

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IZJAVA

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Abstract

Nonverbal communication plays an important role in human interaction and it gives us deeper understanding of other peoples' intentions and emotions. Each person has its own unique way of nonverbally showing emotions, transferring information and sending messages. It depends on many different aspects, such as age, circumstances, context and, of course, gender. Defining gender as a social construct establishes a basis for understanding nonverbal communication patterns. People tend to add to stereotypization by analysing how people behave and whether these behaviours are in the line with gender norms. This can happen both consciously and subconsciously. Researches have shown that there are many gender differences in nonverbal behaviour, such as differences in smiling (Halberstadt, Hayes & Pike, 1988), eye contact and gazing (Swaab & Swaab, 2009), interpersonal distance (Prabhu, 2010), touch (Mayo & Henley, 2012), body orientation (Hall, 1984), gesture (Saucier & Elias, 2001), posture (Hall, 1984) and vocalics (Keeley-Dyreson, Bailey & Burgoon, 1991). This study emphasizes the importance of recognizing gendered patterns, as well as reducing misinterpretations and challenging stereotypes, in order to improve interpersonal communication. Developing the ability to be aware of our own nonverbal behaviour and trying to eliminate potential prejudices that we can develop when interpreting others, can lead us to work towards equal and inclusive interactions.

Key words: *nonverbal communication, gender, smiling, eye contact, interpersonal distance, touch, body orientation, gesture, posture, vocalics*

1. Introduction

Sex is a biological determination of an individual, while gender refers to the sociological and psychological determination (Wood 2012, as cited in Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). These two terms are often confused, but gender is far more complex, because it requires deeper understanding of how human psychology works. Many types of genders differ in various aspects such as their abilities and traits that characterize them. Some of these aspects include verbal, as well as nonverbal communication, which significantly stands out in terms of similarities and differences between genders. Nonverbal communication refers to the way people communicate with each other without using words, and "it may be intentional or unintentional" (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). This includes conveying messages and information such as a person's emotions, moods and thoughts using kinesics, facial expressions, proxemics, touch, eye contact etc. Often, this form of communication can be even more effective than the verbal form, which is why it has become the subject of many scientific and psychological studies (ibid.). Nonverbal communication is also influenced by gender norms and expectations (Spangler, 1995). There are many stereotypes about what behaviours are considered appropriate or inappropriate for each gender, depending on the environment or situations in which they find themselves. For example, individuals who identify more with feminine traits are often expected to be more expressive in their nonverbal communication, while individuals who lean towards masculine traits are often given a sense of dominance (Hall & Braunwald, 1981). These expectations and norms shape the way in which individuals transmit their own and interpret other people's nonverbal signs, and thus different patterns of communication based on gender arise.

In this paper, the focus of the discussion is on the deconstruction of gender, not biological sex. Section 2 focuses on the general discussion on nonverbal communication, its definition, importance and connection to gender. Section 3 provides a deeper insight into understanding what gender is. The following sections analyse and discuss gender differences in various types of nonverbal cues: smiling, eye contact, interpersonal distance, touch, body orientation, gesture, posture and vocalics. Finally, last section gives the conclusion of the paper.

2. Nonverbal Communication

Usually, when we hear the word ‘communication’, we immediately think about the exchange of information using words, also known as ‘verbal communication’. Despite of the extreme importance of verbal, “scientists tend to concur that nonverbal communication is phylogentically older than verbal communication” (Frank & Shaw, 2016, p. 45). and that people relied on nonverbal communication for thousands of years before they developed the ability to communicate with words and use them properly to understand each other (ibid.). Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying information and feelings without using words and plays a big role in human interaction and a deeper understanding of body language. Moore, Hickson & Stacks (2014) define nonverbal communication as “an aspect of the communication process that deals with the transmission and reception of messages that are not a part of the natural language systems” (p. 6). Its complexity lies in the fact that it operates through more subtle and often unconscious channels, channels that cover a large number of factors such as facial expressions, eye contact, body language and various other physical behaviours that can confirm or contradict what is said verbally.

Individual use of each of our senses develops different forms of nonverbal communication: the sense of sight enables a person to make eye contact with another person, with the sense of hearing, a person discerns many sounds that do not come in the form of words (e.g. the sound of crying or laughter) and the sense of touch is manifested through haptics. Nonverbal communication usually involves visual, tactile and auditory cues and is less related to the senses of taste and smell. However, there are specific contexts in which these two senses can play a role in nonverbal communication, mostly in conjunction with other sensory experiences. For example, if a person tastes or smells food that they do not find tasty, they can make different grimaces and facial expressions to express their disgust.

Nonverbal communication is inherently linked to man's evolutionary history (Hall, Horgan & Murphy, 2018). In the long past, people used non-verbal signs in the process of communication, which were crucial for social interaction. Before developing the capacity for complex speech, humans relied on facial expressions and other forms of body language to convey information and emotions (Frank & Shaw, 2016). Its value has remained the same since the ancient past until today, because “we receive much of our emotional meanings through nonverbal subcodes” Moore, Hickson & Stacks (2014, p. 4). By explaining the evolutionary development of man, Keogh (2014) emphasizes the importance of nonverbal communication:

> "Nonverbal communication occurs early on in life, before the development of language, and continues to be important in adulthood. Nonverbal behaviours are relatively automatic, are more difficult (but not impossible) to hide from others, and take priority over verbal information when there is a disparity between what is said and what is displayed. This preference is likely to be because the evolutionary development of nonverbal behaviours predated language as a form of communication" (p. 1927).

2.1. The Importance of Nonverbal Communication

One of the specific aspects that stands out in nonverbal communication is its universality (Manusov, 2016). Unlike the various languages around the world that are vastly different from each other, nonverbal signs are mostly universally understood. Regardless of the country people come from and the language they speak, nonverbal communication allows them to perform simple communication acts because "people from very different cultural backgrounds express and interpret basic categories of emotion in similar ways" Keating (2016, p. 17). For example, a smile usually indicates happiness, elation or friendship, while a frown usually indicates concern or displeasure. Its universality makes nonverbal communication a powerful tool for bridging cultural and linguistic gaps: "along with the rapid development of international communication, the emergence of generally used signs and symbols eliminate language barrier and accepted by people universally" Wang (2009, p. 158).

Nonverbal communication helps us to enhance the meaning of our verbal messages. Nonverbal cues add nuance to spoken words, making communication more comprehensive and effective. If a person tells us "I'm fine." their tone of voice and facial expressions tell us whether they are genuinely fine or if they are just pretending to be fine while they are actually upset. Although there is a possibility that we can misread these nonverbal signs and come to the wrong conclusion, we could say that nonverbal communication plays an important role in understanding of the other person's emotional state. Spangler states that "facial expression and body movement are more often considered natural and genuine than speech, which may be practiced or thought about in advance" (1995, p. 471).

Nonverbal communication can offers us the ability to express our own emotions. "Early studies suggest that a small number of emotions are associated with distinct nonverbal expressions — including facial and bodily displays, and vocal bursts — which are reliably recognized and displayed across cultures" Tracy, Randles & Steckler (2015, p. 25). Emotional content is

present in human interactions, and this content is transmitted through nonverbal signs. Some human gestures can convey support or sympathy in a way that words alone cannot, and also can signal "whether expressers should be approached or avoided, and more specific personality trait information about expressers" (ibid.).

2.2. How is Gender Related to Nonverbal Communication?

Gender plays a crucial role in the expression and interpretation of nonverbal cues from others (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). In most situations, individuals identify with traits traditionally associated with femininity or masculinity, regardless of their biological sex. Individuals with a predominance of femininity may exhibit nonverbal behaviours typically associated with women, regardless of whether they are biologically male or female. Likewise, individuals who score high in masculinity tend to show less emotional nonverbal behaviour that is generally attributed to men (LaFrance & Vial, 2016).

> "Some contexts are also gendered not just in the sense that they are more likely to be occupied by females versus males but because the behaviors expected there are presumed to have a more feminine or masculine quality to them such that whoever temporarily resides in such spaces will more likely show the expected behavior regardless of his or her sex" ibid. (p. 141).

Also, the presence of observers can have a significant impact on increasing gender-normative non-verbal communication (ibid.). When individuals are in the presence of observers, they are more likely to consciously or unconsciously begin to conform to societal expectations of gender-appropriate behaviour (ibid.).

Regarding sexual orientation, homosexuals and lesbians mostly display nonverbal behaviours that differ from those of their heterosexual counterparts (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2004). According to LaFrance & Vial (2016), this difference in nonverbal communication can be used to navigate social interactions in broader contexts:

> "the presence of even small changes in a given setting can magnify or minimize the expression of nonverbal behavior differences in men and women, such that gender differences in a given domain (e.g., smiling) will be larger in certain contexts and smaller or even reversed in others" (p. 141).

If society has set attitudes towards sexual orientation, these attitudes can influence the individual's modification of their non-verbal behaviours in order to resist heteronormative expectations (ibid).

3. Defining Gender

3.1. Sex and Gender

Before diving into the whole comparison of how different genders act in certain situations, it is important to fully understand the main difference between two terms: sex and gender. These two terms are often confused, but the simplest way to distinguish them is to define sex as biological determination of an individual, while gender refers to the sociological and psychological determination (Wood 2012, as cited in Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). Sex is initially assigned at birth based on physical characteristics such as types of hormones, chromosomes and reproductive organs. Unlike sex, gender can be seen as a social construct that encompasses behaviours, roles, activities, expectations, and norms that society considers appropriate for women, men, and other gender identities (Connell, 2009). Shaped by psychological and social factors, gender can change over time as an individual fully develops an understanding of their own identity. Moore, Hickson & Stacks (2014) provide a more detailed explanation of these two terms and emphasize that it is important to know how to distinguish between them:

> "In most cases, you can only be male or female, but your gender might fall anywhere along that continuum. You should keep in mind that much of the "sex-based" research is more about gender differences than it is about sex differences, yet the bulk of the research in communication labels it as "sex." And much of the research labels it as gender when they are really talking about sex" (p. 210).

Although traditionally, gender has been understood in binary terms and directly associated with an individual's biological sex (i.e., female or male), in the modern age, contemporary perspectives have begun to advocate a broader understanding of gender, and this multiple concept has begun to extend beyond these traditional boundaries (Connell, 2009). Gender includes various aspects such as individual identity, psychological traits and social norms, but it is mostly guided by the main factor, which is one's sexual orientation. There are many different types of genders, but some of the most common ones are: male, female, non-binary, agender, genderqueer, transgender and pangender (ibid).

A key dimension of gender is a psychological gender that refers to the degree to which an individual can identify with characteristics that are associated with masculinity or femininity in society (LaFrance & Vial, 2016). From this perspective, the behaviour of men or women is not

observed, but of individuals who are to varying degrees between masculine and feminine traits, regardless of their biological sex (Bem, 1977, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2016).

Gender is a multifaceted concept that is heavily influenced by society, and that encompasses a range of identities and roles. It is not based only on biological sex, but on psychological identification with sexual orientation and various gender traits: “a key dimension known as sex-role identification or psychological gender (Bem, 1977) reflects the degree to which women and men identify with characteristics that society typically assigns to females and males” LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 140). Stepping away from traditional notions of gender, can bring a possibility to gain a deeper understanding of the many ways in which gender affects and influences nonverbal behaviour.

> “This allows us to define gender in a way that solves the paradoxes of ‘difference’. Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes. To put it informally, gender concerns the way human society deals with human bodies and their continuity, and the many consequences of that 'dealing' in our personal lives and our collective fate” Connell (2009, p. 11).

Gender deconstruction refers to expanding the typical binary categories that are described by biological sex (female and male) and focusing on numerous ways of understanding what is gender (La France & Vial, 2016). This paper will be based exclusively on gender (not sex) differences in nonverbal communication.

We will start by examining gender differences in one of the main concepts of nonverbal communication, which is smiling.

4. Smiling

As one of the universal nonverbal behaviours, smiling plays a crucial role in human interaction and it can be "a part of an emotional expression, an attitudinal message, a self-presentation, or a listener response to manage the interaction" Knapp, Hall & Horgan (2013, p. 14). Numerous studies have shown that the frequency and reason for smiling differs significantly between genders and almost all of these studies indicate that women smile more than men do under both experimental and natural social conditions (Ellis, 2016). Although the analysis of the research results indicated this, it has not yet been established whether these differences are influenced by socialization processes, cultural expectations, maybe situational context or some other causes. In an effort to reach a final conclusion, numerous theories have been put forward to determine what the primary cause of this phenomenon is. Some of these theoretical explanations include sex role conformity, submissiveness or subordination, status and power, learned expressivity, and generation of leniency (Dodd, Russell & Jenkins, 1999).

Hall, Carter, and Horgan (2000) explain Hall's (1984) meta-analysis that examined differences between women and men in the frequency of smiling. The focus of Hall's (ibid.) study was to observe which gender is more likely to show more expressive behaviour through smiling. The results showed that women tend to smile more than men in social interactions. Of course, these results differ depending on the age group.

4.1. Age

Despite numerous theories based on researches linked to smiling, there is a surprising lack of information about the developmental age when this gender difference first occurs. According to Hall's (1984) results, even though there is a strong gender difference in social smiling among adults, there is absolutely no gender difference among infants and children. LaFrance et al. (2003, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2016) found that the largest gender effect was among adolescents who were between 13–17 years of age; among older participants, the magnitude of the gender difference decreased steadily, and it was lowest among older adults who were 65 years of age or older. Based on this, the difference probably develops sometime in late childhood, or perhaps early adolescence, before the start of exploration of gender roles (Dodd, Russell & Jenkins, 1999). As someone ages, they start searching for their own identity and explore their gender role, which is why the age difference is strongly related to gender differences:

> "…age plays a key role, such that gender differences in smiling tend to be absent among young children, largest among adolescents, and smaller, though still present, in adults, and all but disappearing after late middle age." La France & Vial (2016, p. 145).

4.2. Psychology of gender roles

One popular explanation of gender differences in smiling may be that this type of behaviour is influenced by psychology of gender roles, and that smiling is an integral part of an expressive role that is socially more suitable for women and less suitable for men (Halberstadt, Hayes & Pike, 1988). Men often take on dominant and assertive roles, which make them smile less as a way to maintain a mask of control and strength. This emphasizes their dominance and masculinity, because excessive smiling can be interpreted as a lack of authority and as a sign of weakness (Hall, Carter & Horgan, 2000). Domination is thus achieved by avoiding behaviour that could be considered submissive (in this case, smiling) and by maintaining a serious facial expression. In nonverbal communication, smile can signal submissiveness and friendship, and can be associated with "an interpersonal orientation, social warmth, and expressiveness, i.e., the characteristics traditionally associated with femininity" Halberstadt, Hayes & Pike (1988, p. 590). In most cultures, women are socialized to have all of these qualities and to be more caring and supportive, which at the same time leads them to smile more often. Men usually have a higher status, which allows them greater freedom and less need to signal friendship. In contrast, lower status individuals use smiling as a means of gaining favour and avoiding conflict with higher status individuals. Therefore, women, who are often in a lower status role, laugh more often than men.

> "Smiling, in particular, has been hypothesized to vary with dominance and status, such that the lower-power person smiles more, and it has been suggested that differences in dominance and status can explain why women smile more than men" Knapp, Hall & Horgan (2013, p. 387).

4.3. Context and gender dynamics

In communication with other people, context and gender dynamics play a crucial role. For example, women are expected to adhere to social norms of femininity, which makes them smile more when interacting with mixed genders. On the other hand, men smile mostly only in situations where they want to show approachability and likability (Hall, Carter & Horgan, 2000). In a professional environment where dominance is valued, they stick to a neutral facial

expression. Also, some observational studies have shown that women smile more in social situations in which they know they are being observed, thus trying to manage impressions and adhere to social expectations that have been set unwritten (Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013). On the contrary, men are less likely to be influenced by the presence of observers, and their smiling behaviour shows no difference.

Androgynous people, who identify with both traditionally feminine and masculine traits, often display unique patterns of nonverbal communication, including smiling. They do not strictly adhere to conventional gender norms like other individuals and their response can be seen as "a blend of 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviors rather than a selective display of either masculine or feminine responses depending on situational demands" LaFrance (1981, p. 146). This results with a more flexible approach to smiling that depends mostly on the context. For example, if they are in a comfortable environment, they may smile to express warmth (which is a traditional female trait), but at the same time they try to maintain self-confidence (a traditional male trait). According to LaFrance (ibid.), there are still certain differences in the smiling extent in groups that lean more towards femininity from those that lean towards masculinity:

> "The smiling extent of both groups of females is equivalent in the "masculine" context (approximately 12%) and more than three times that shown by both groups of males in the same situation. However, in the "feminine" context, sex-typed women smile more than twice that amount (over 26% of their nontalk time) while androgynous women smile only slightly more in the expressive situation (16% of nonspeaking time)" (2012, p. 146).

Additionally, observations of smiling in a laboratory study conducted by LaFrance & Cramen (1980, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2016) found that feminine women smiled more than androgynous women. Based on these findings, masculinity and smiling have a negative association for females, while femininity and smiling have a positive association for males.

5. Eye contact and Gazing

As one of the critical elements of nonverbal communication, eye contact, and gazing convey a wide range of emotions and social cues, and play an important role in a person's interactions because "as the eyes give attention, they simultaneously take in information about others

(Ellyson, Dovidio & Fehr, 1981, p. 63). Although these two aspects are quite similar, in nonverbal communication there is a difference between eye contact, and something that is called 'gaze':

> "Gaze refers to an individual looking at another person; mutual gaze refers to a situation in which two interactants are looking at each other, usually in the region of the face. Eye contact—that is, looking specifically in each other's eyes—does not seem to be reliably distinguished by receivers or observers from gazing at the area surrounding the eyes" von Cranach & Ellgring (1973, as cited in Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013, p. 295).

5.1. Visual behaviour in infants

"Sexual dimorphism is a systematic difference in size and shape between female and male members of the same species" Nikitovic (2018, p. 1). Sexual dimorphism, in both eye contact and gazing, can be seen even in the earliest age of human life, when they have not yet been influenced by cultural and social factors. The exact causes of these differences in males and females have not been determined with certainty, but several studies suggest that the main cause of this is biological in origin. With the aim to investigate further this theory, psychologists Connellan, Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Batki & Ahluwalia (2000) conducted a study monitoring the differences in visual behaviour in male and female infants. By tracking the difference in time infants spent looking at a face and time spent looking at the mobile, they confirmed that the female infants showed more interest in the face, while the male infants preferred looking at the physical-mechanical object.

> "In summary, we have demonstrated that at 1 day old, human neonates demonstrate sexual dimorphism in both social and mechanical perception. (…) At such an age, these sex differences cannot readily be attributed to postnatal experience, and are instead consistent with a biological cause, most likely neurogenetic and/or neuroendocrine in nature" (p. 166-177).

5.2. Visual behaviour of adults

Even though these gender differences in eye contact and gazing can be seen in early childhood, "they are even larger among adults (…) than it is among infants and children" (LaFrance & Vial, 2016, p. 146). Research shows that during the conversation, females tend to engage in more eye contact with interaction partners (regardless of their sex) than males do (Hall &

Gunnery, 2013). This behaviour can be related to females' tendency to appear more expressive and communicative, which coincides with social expectations and standards.

5.3. Purposes behind eye contact and gazing

Males use eye contact in a much shorter durations, but more frequent proportion (LaFrance & Vial, 2016), and what mostly leads them to keep an eye contact with another person is the tendency to establish dominance, control or convey authority (ibid.). According to Spangler (1995) there are several reasons why females are more likely to maintain eye contact. One of those reasons is that females use eye contact to establish stronger connections and successfully maintain them, as well as to convey empathy and show that they are paying attention to the conversation. For them, this behaviour serves as a tool for building relationships and facilitating social bonding. Another reason for this is that during the conversation, the listener tends to look more at the speaker than the other way around, but males tend to talk more than females do (Argyle, Lalljee, and Cook, 1962, as cited in Spangler, 1995). If females don't keep their eye contact long enough, they are more likely to be interrupted.

> "Similar findings were reported by Kennedy and Camden (1983) who "found that women who did not engage in eye contact were more likely to be interrupted by men in small group interactions." These researchers concluded that a woman was considered more vulnerable to interruptions because her lack of eye contact was perceived as an indicator of disinterest or inattention. A notable finding in the same study was that men were not interrupted when they failed to maintain eye contact" (Spangler, 1995, p. 414).

For males, the eye contact can be seen as a tool for asserting their power in social interactions (LaFrance & Vial, 2016. For this reason, they can interpret prolonged eye contact in various ways: as some kind of challenge or competition, which is especially noticeable in their interaction with other males (Swaab & Swaab, 2009).

Many studies have confirmed that gazing is far more comfortable for females than for males (Hall & Gunnery, 2013). Swaab & Swaab (2009) claim that for females, the purpose of conversation is to discuss other people's perspectives and their understandings, and the presence of visual contact makes this task far easier. By establishing eye contact, females can build mutual understanding and reach better agreements. By contrast, in conveying messages, males mostly rely on some other forms of nonverbal communication, such as tone of voice or body posture, which shows significantly less weakness and exposure to conveying their own

emotions. If two males keep an eye contact for too long, the purpose of the conversation can turn into winning the argument.

> "So, because males are less comfortable with visual contact, its absence should help them to achieve a better understanding of the counterpart, and higher quality agreements as a result. This hypothesis is consistent with findings showing that males perceive eye contact as more threatening than females (Dalton et al., 2005) and that males feel the loss of visual contact to a lesser extent than females" (Swaab & Swaab, 2009, p. 130).

5.4. Androgynous individuals

As in any other form of nonverbal communication, androgynous individuals may consciously or unconsciously avoid some stereotypes about eye contact, and lean towards neutral and balanced style. It is difficult to state with certainty the differences in the amount of eye contact they make with others because it depends on each individual and whether they lean more towards the feminist or masculine side, or even both sides equally (Tetreault, 1984). For this reason, their eye contact cannot be interpreted through the lens of traditional expectations, leading to a wider range of perceptions about their emotions and intentions. In gaze extent, androgynous men and women do not differ significantly, but studies confirmed that "androgynous males gazed more than masculine males, and androgynous females gazed less than feminine females" (LaFrance & Vial, 2016, p. 147).

5.5. Gay and lesbian individuals

Another interesting theory is that, in the lesbian and gay community, the eye gaze is used for purposes of identity recognition, "which attests to the possibility that gaze may add a function for gay men and lesbians that is not utilized by heterosexual men and women" Nicholas (2004), as cited in LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 147). Unfortunately, to date, no research has been conducted, that would confirm or deny the theory that sexual orientation moderates gender differences in nonverbal visual behaviour.

6. Interpersonal Distance

Interpersonal distance is a form of nonverbal communication in which people convey message to each other only by using space and setting distance limits between other interactants. The

study of personal space is called ‘proxemics’ best defined as “the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture” E.T. Hall (1996), as cited in Moore, Hickson & Stacks (2014, p. 60). Hall’s (1984) studies concluded that females generally tend to keep closer interpersonal distance than males, especially when interacting with other females. With this physical closeness, they want to show others their openness and warmth during communication. On the contrary, males tend to maintain a greater distance during social interactions, especially when interacting with other males, in order to protect their personal space and thus show their independence and dominance (Hall, 1984, as cited in Hall & Gunnery, 2013). Like in every case of slight intimacy in heterosexual relationship, there is a fear of misinterpretation because of homophobic attitudes.

> “Homophobic attitudes or greater vigilance to potential threat by heterosexual men may play a role in men’s preference for greater interpersonal distance in same-sex dyads compared to women. Future research might examine interpersonal distance by varying dyadic composition and sexual orientation. It is plausible that interpersonal distance might be significantly reduced in male–male dyads of gay compared to heterosexual men” LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 150).

6.1. Cross-gender interactions

In cross-gender interactions, interpersonal distance largely depends on the relationship between the two individuals conducting the communication, which is why it often varies. Males, as well as females, when interacting with a person of the opposite sex, try to reduce the distance between them with the intention of expressing closeness and interest (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). Females, however, tend to do this less often than males do, because in certain situations they do not feel safe enough and they need time to develop trust. Because interpersonal space can be understood as some form of protection of our body territories, females can sometimes feel uncomfortable while interacting with males whom they don’t share a deep relationship with, fearing that their personal space is being violated:

“Unexpected breaches of personal space can lead to negative reactions, especially if we feel someone has violated our space voluntarily, meaning that a crowding situation didn’t force them into our space” Prabhu (2010, p. 49).

That is why females adjust the interpersonal distance between males based on their comfort level (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014).

7. Touch

The end of proxemics, also known as 'zero-proxemics' is touching (Weitz, 1974, as cited in Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014), meaning there is no space left between two people. Touch can appear in several forms, such as a kiss, a hug, a handshake, a self-touch etc. (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). "Gender differences in touching patterns occur soon after birth and continue throughout adulthood" (Mayo & Henley, 2012, p. 21), when they begin to be more and more noticeable. Some studies shows that one of the main reasons why gender differences start this early is because of the way parents treat their children. From the very beginning, parents often unconsciously touch their children in a different way, based on cultural gender norms (ibid.). For example, female children are treated more gently, mostly through cuddling, while male children might experience more active play. According to Harrison-Speake & Willis (1995), who gathered adults' views on different forms of parental touch, results have shown that as children grow from infants to teenagers, some forms of touch are becoming more and more inappropriate, especially for boys and fathers. As children grow, external differences in the perception and use of touch begin to appear; females are socialized from a very early age to be recipients of touch which is consistent with the stereotype that girls are more passive and fragile than boys (Mayo & Henley, 2012).

7.1. Opposite-gender touch

As an individual grows older, the influence of cultural stereotypes, which describe women as emotional and passive, and men as unemotional and independent, becomes stronger and starts to shape how touch is used and perceived by each gender (Mayo & Henley, 2012). It has not yet been determined with certainty which gender is more likely to initiate touch. Some studies show that in male-female interaction, men initiate touch with women more than women touch men, while other studies claim that the reverse pattern is more reliable (LaFrance & Vial, 2016). Also, there is an unproven theory that females will usually wait until males initiate first touch, but once they do, females will be the ones who touch more than males. Another theory that should be mentioned is that females usually pay more attention to where their bodies are touched, while males focus on the type of touch they receive (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). The act of initiating and receiving touch depends on a number of factors, including the circumstances, their relationship with the other person, and the way each gender perceives touch

differently. What is known is that "women are more likely than men to successfully communicate sympathy using touch, whereas men are more likely than women to successfully use touch to communicate anger" (Hertenstein & Keltner, 2011, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2016, p. 148). Researches have shown that in heterosexual relationship, "men tend to touch more intimately and for longer durations" (Hall & Gunnery, p. 656), but women touch more often than men.

7.2. Same-gender touch

Same-gender touch refers to any kind of physical touch between two individuals of the same gender. The psychological and social implications of same-gender touch vary depending on factors such as the context in which the touch occurs and also, according to F. N. Willis & Rawdon (1994, as cited in Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014) it can be influenced by some cultural effects. In many societies, same-gender touch is often restricted by social norms, which is particularly visible in relationship between two males. Many studies show that males feel less comfortable touching a person of the same gender compared to females (Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013). Touch contact between two males often questions their strength and independence, and in order to reduce the perception of weakness, they avoid certain types of touch with other males as much as possible. According to Roese, Olson, Borenstein, Martin and Shores (1992, as cited in Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013) males generally have a greater need to avoid any type of behaviour that could be perceived as a form of homosexuality and establishing contact that implies romantic or sexual intentions with a person of the same gender. In contrast, females often use touch as a way of expressing friendship and support, and touch between two females, such as hugging or holding hands, is more socially acceptable because it is considered a natural part of female friendship (LaFrance & Vial, 2016). Females have greater freedom to come into contact with other females through touch, without thereby questioning their femininity. Same-gender touch can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context in which it occurs. For example, males generally feel more comfortable touching other males in situations that require some kind of physical support, in sports, or during an emotional moment where they are using some sort of touch (such as hug) to comfort their grieving friend, which is considered socially acceptable (Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013). This can sometimes represent a big obstacle in making and maintaining friendships because females can use touch as an expression of connection and sympathy, which automatically deepens their friendship, while males have to know how to limit touch to a certain context to avoid misinterpretation, which makes it difficult

for them to show signs of affection to their friends. All of these factors indicate that "like gazing, male–male and female–female dyads differ most in interpersonal touching, such that female–female dyads exhibit the highest levels of interpersonal touch and male–male dyads the lowest" (Kneidinger et al., 2001; Montemayor & Flannery, 1989; Stier & Hall, 1984, as cited in Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013).

7.3. Sexual minorities

Attitudes towards sexual minorities (people who identify as gay, bisexual, lesbian, asexual, non-binary etc.) greatly influence their own and other people's attitudes towards same-sex touch (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). There is not enough information to conclude exactly how sexual orientation affects actual touch behaviour, and only unconfirmed conclusions from previously conducted researches can be presented:

> "Because the existing research suggests a high degree of vigilance on the part of heterosexual men with respect to same-sex touch, it might be expected that same-sex dyads among gay men would touch significantly more than male–male dyads among heterosexual men. For women, it is less clear that sexual orientation would interact with gender to influence touch behavior, but this is an empirical question" LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 147).

8. Body Orientation

Gender differences in body orientation can be observed in the varying ways that males and females move and position their bodies in social context. Body orientation is strongly related to interpersonal distance because it refers to only a person's position at a certain angle, in an already determined interpersonal distance:

> "A second factor that is associated with distance is the sociofugal-sociopetal axis. (…) this factor refers to the angle formed by the axis of the interactants' shoulders. At level 0, the interactants are face-to-face (maximum sociopetality); at level 8, they are back-to-back (maximum sociofugality)" (Moore, Hicskon & Stacks, 2014).

As already mentioned in the previous two chapters, many studies indicate that males tend to approach males more closely than the other way around, which has a great effect on the angle of the approach (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). Males, in order to prove their dominance

and adapt a more confrontational stance, are generally more inclined to face directly toward the person with whom they are communicating (Hall & Braunwald, 1981). Females, on the other hand, usually stand slightly sideways, or tend to orient their bodies at a certain angle. In their studies, Hesaton and Pedersen (1972) confirmed this theory, concluding that

> "females allowed others to approach closer to their sides than to their front; males allowed others to approach closer to their front than to their sides; males were allowed to approach both males and females more closely off-center to the left than were females, although no difference was found for approaching off-center to the right" (as cited in Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014, p. 66).

Gender differences in body orientation are significantly less noticeable than in other forms of nonverbal communication, especially because the difference in body orientation disappears in context of heterosexual flirtation (Fichten, 1992, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2004). When flirting, both males and females orient their bodies towards the other person. There is another orientation measure that indicates who is in front of the other while walking. Costa's research (2010, as cited in Hall & Gunnery, 2013) of people of different genders walking in groups in Italy showed that in 74% of the time males walked in front of females, and in same-gender groups of three people, whereas females walked abreast and had different body orientation than males, who walked in a follow-the-leader style (mimicking the movements of a leader)

9. Gestures

Gesture, as a best way of reinforcing verbal messages and expressing emotions, plays a crucial role in nonverbal communication and it includes any form of body movement, such as arm and head movement, facial expression etc. (Prabhu, 2010). Females are more likely to use broader gestures such as larger arm movements and actions involving the whole body. With their large arm movements, they emphasize points in the conversation and thus strengthen verbal communication with physical signs (LaFrance & Vial, 2016). One interesting fact about gender differences in manual gesturing, based on the research by Kimura (1973, as cited in Saucier & Elias, 2001), is that when males lead a conversation they usually make more movements with their right hand, and when they listen to the others talking, they are most likely to move their left hand. These differences in manual gestures were not observed in females and "this result is consistent with claims that there is a sex difference in hemispheric specialisation wherein males are more functionally lateralised than females" Saucier & Elias (2001, p. 239). When interacting

with someone, females also engage in more head nodding, using it as a back-channel response to convey that they are attentively listening to the speaker (LaFrance & Vial, 2016).

9.1. Facial expressions

When it comes to facial expression, it is specific for men to show more subdued facial expressions which include less overt display of emotions in order to maintain a calm attitude. Women tend to use more expressive facial gestures to express their current emotions (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2004). However, these same gestures are sometimes interpreted as less authoritative, especially in professional settings. If women use expansive gestures, others often perceive them as aggressive, thereby stepping away from gender norms and leading to social pushback.

9.2. Sexual orientation

Some studies point out that sexual orientation can slightly moderate gender differences in hand gesturing and "there are stereotypes expecting gay men to engage in more sociability, often expressed in more hand movements while talking compared to hetero sexual men, but whether this is truly the case remains to be examined empirically" Webbink (1981), as cited in LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 150).

People are usually convinced that they can distinguish heterosexuals from homosexuals just by observing their gestures. For example, there is a stereotype that lesbians often attempt to act and look like males and, in order to achieve that, they use masculine gestures such as making crude and rough facial expression or walking as if their legs were longer than they are, while gay men are more likely to adapt some feminine gestures such as the swaying hip, the pursed mouth or crossed leg (ibid.).

> "These are popularly shared ideas which attempt to pigeonhole lesbians and gay men into easy categories and are a homophobic response to the challenge to gender identification which homosexuality presents. There are straight people as well as lesbians and gay men who behave in the manner of these stereotypes. Likewise, it is inaccurate to assume heterosexuality of all women and men whose appearance conforms to societal norms" Mayo & Henley (2012, p. 254).

10. Posture

Gender differences in body posture can be applied to the ways in which different genders hold and position their bodies in different contexts. Men mostly take expansive positions, such as sitting or standing with their legs spread apart and their arms away from the rest of the body, taking up more space. These kind of postures are mostly associated with assertiveness and dominance (Mayo & Henley, 2012). On the other hand, women generally have more compact posture, such as sitting with their legs crossed or holding their hands closer to their body, which gives others the impression of modesty.

> "This sex difference in posture expansiveness has been linked with differences in dominance and social power. Body openness in adults is positively related to dominance (J. A. Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005), and research on children reveals that one of the key differences between dominant and submissive individuals is body expansiveness (Weisfeld & Beresford, 1982). With regard to adults, research has also found that expansive postures cause power-related feelings (Tiedens & Fragale, 2003) and behavior as well as changes in hormone levels normally associated with high rank (Carney, Cuddy, & Yap, 2010)" LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 149).

10.1. Clothing and its influence on posture

Also, the footwear and clothes worn play a big role in posture, so for example high heels cause the pelvis to tilt forward, which is particularly visible in creating an arch in the lower back that helps emphasize one's curves. While wearing high heels, it is more difficult to maintain balance resulting in a more measured gait (Moore, Hickson & Stacks, 2014). Also, tight clothing, which is more often worn by women, restricts movement and encourages a more upright posture. Loose clothing, which is specific to men's fashion, allows greater freedom of movement which contributes to a more relaxed posture. The enactment of feminine scripts may require an upright, compressed body posture, "and thus androgynous women might be expected to display less restricted and more relaxed body postures compared to feminine-typed women" LaFrance & Vial (2016, p. 150). These behaviours may be exhibited to a greater extent by individuals with higher femininity scores regardless of gender, and androgynous women and men may fall somewhere between sex-types (ibid.).

11. Vocalics

The voice plays a big role in nonverbal communication. Vocalics, as another form of nonverbal communication, "refers to the nonverbal messages of the voice that add to the meaning or verbal communication, or that can stand alone as a meaning-making entity" and can also be understood as something that "gives verbal messages their full meaning, but vocalics are not the words" Moore, Hickson & Stacks (2014, p. 238). Vocalics is important in nonverbal communication because they "tend to involuntarily convey emotions" Mishra (2018, p. 21). Gender differences in vocalics are perhaps the most obvious differences in the whole nonverbal communication. These differences refer to the tone, pitch, loudness, and many other elements of voice in different genders.

According to Hall (1981, as cited in Keeley-Dyreson, Bailey & Burgoon, 1991), there are three main reasons for gender differences in nonverbal sensitivity. The first one is externalizer/internalize hypothesis which indicates that externalizers "are individuals who "show overt expressions but experience few electrodermal responses" (p. 590), while "internalizers have the opposite experiences" (p. 590). Researches showed that males are internalizers and females are predominately externalizers and superior decoders on nonverbal cues, especially when it comes to emotions (Buck, Buck, Miller, & Caul, 1974, as cited in Keeley-Dyreson, Bailey & Burgoon, 1991):

> "It has been surmised that if there is a difference in decoding abilities based on the distinction of externalizing/ internalizing, it would be that the externalizer is more aware of the nonverbal cues used to express emotions" (p. 590).

Other two reasons for gender differences in vocalics are related to their differences in brain hemisphere specializations, and, of course, social roles which are stereotyping masculinity and femininity (Hall, 1981, as cited in Keeley-Dyreson, Bailey & Burgoon, 1991). From the young age, "males are taught to inhibit their overt behaviour (p. 590)" to appear more dominant and authoritative, while females are encouraged to express feelings in their speech with the aim of emphasizing emotional content. Study by Leaper and Robnett (2011, as cited in Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013) claim that women tend to use various intonations such as rising intonation at the end of the sentence, which is why statements can sometimes sound like questions. This can be interpreted as a lack of confidence, or conversely as a strategy to engage the listener.

Biologically, men have deeper voices than women. Likewise, men generally speak louder than women, mostly because of physical differences, but also because of social expectations to appear more masculine (Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013). When women speak, they use more variations in pitch, which makes their speech sound more expressive, while men's speech is more monotonous and "their voices are less variable than women's (Hall 1984, as cited in Hall & Gunnery, 2013, p. 648)". Some studies have shown that women are more likely to use fillers like "umm" or "you know", which can be related to the societal expectation to sound more polite and less assertive, or "to signal that they want another person to speak" Hall, Horgan & Murphy (2018, p. 278).

Cultural norms have a significant influence on the voice. For example women are expected to avoid interruptions, while men are allowed to interrupt others in addition to emphasize their authority. This sometimes presents them as intrusive because it may seem like their main goal is to take over the conversation and ignore what the interactant has to say.

> "Intrusive interruptions are more likely to discourage the original speaker from continuing. Thus, a relatively small gender difference when considering interruptions in general becomes substantially larger when considering intrusive interruptions specifically" Anderson & Leaper (1998, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2016, p. 150).

Society often interprets vocalics through the prism of gender stereotypes. For example, a man with a higher-pitched voice may be perceived as less authoritative, while women with a lower-pitched voice appear more competent and less feminine (Borkowska & Pawlowski, 2011, as cited in Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013). People often believe that they can guess someone's sexual orientation based on the pitch of their voice. One of the main and most common stereotypes is that gay men use effeminate qualities, including the pitch of their voices. However, Baecke, Corthals & Van Borsel's research (2011, as cited in Knapp, Hall & Horgan, 2013) found that "although gay men do use a higher pitch than heterosexual men, it is significantly lower than that of typical heterosexual female" (p. 334). This study proves that there is no clear evidence that the voice pitch of homosexual men matches the voice pitch of heterosexual women.

Finally, LaFrance and Carmen (1980, as cited in LaFrance & Vial, 2016) examined how a person's biological gender and their psychological gender orientation in two types of vocal behaviour: interruptions and filled pauses. They looked at these behaviours in two completely different contexts: one focused on emotional expressiveness and one focused on task. They

found out that androgynous women and men interrupt their interactants way more often than sex-typed men and women do. In task-focused context, androgynous women and masculine men interrupted more often, and in emotionally expressive context the least number of interruptions were initiated by feminine women. Also, masculine men used more filled pauses than feminine females and androgynous males.

> "Thus, this research illuminates how biological gender, psycho logical gender, and gendered aspects of the specific context interact to determine nonverbal behavior in ways that would not be evident if all three factors had been examined separately" (p. 151).

12. Conclusion

Having a clear understanding of gender differences in nonverbal communication is crucial for understanding how we perceive and interact with others. Various nonverbal cues, such as eye contact, smiling, touch, body language and vocalics, often convey more meaning than spoken words alone, which makes them crucial to human communication. Gendered patterns of communication are more than just cultural artefacts, because they reflect deeper social structures and power dynamics that influence how individuals are understood and treated.

Gender differences in nonverbal communication are significant because they improve the clarity of communication and give us a deeper insight into how different genders feel in various contexts. Although we sometimes use lies to cover up what we really feel on an emotional level or to distance ourselves from the influence of the outside world, our nonverbal cues and reactions often give us away. However, there is always a chance of misinterpretations of nonverbal cues, that usually leads to misunderstandings that further reinforce existing gender biases and stereotypes. Perceptions like these can have serious consequences in personal relationships, social interactions, and even the workplace, where it is extremely crucial to communicate clearly and understand the messages others are sending.

There are many different forms of nonverbal communication, but in this paper we examined few of the most common ones. All of these forms of nonverbal communication can help us to enhance the meaning of our verbal messages, but gender plays an important role in the way each individual utilizes these cues. Influenced by psychology of gender roles, smiling is considered to be an integral part of an expressive role that is socially more suitable for women

and less suitable for men. As two of the most powerful tools for taking in information about others, eye contact and gazing are perfect ways for men to show their dominance, and for women to express their empathy. When it comes to interpersonal distance, as a way to convey messages to others only by using space, and touch, meaning there is no space left between two people, they differ the most depending on the genders of the two interactants (opposite-gender, same-gender). On the one hand, gender differences here are the most noticeable, mainly because of the fear of misinterpretation and homophobic attitudes. On the other hand, gender differences in body orientation are significantly less noticeable than in any other forms of nonverbal communication, but if you pay close attention to a certain angle people orient their bodies, you can see that females usually stand slightly sideways, while males are generally more inclined to face directly toward the person with whom they are communicating. Gestures, such as facial expressions and body movements, are forms of nonverbal communication that are perhaps the most influenced by gender stereotypes because people are usually convinced that they can distinguish heterosexuals from homosexuals just by observing their gestures, which can lead them to false conclusions. Gender differences in body posture can be applied to the ways in which different genders hold and position their bodies in different contexts. Men mostly take expansive positions, while women generally have more compact posture. Lastly, vocalics is closely related to individual's biological status than to gender, but society often interprets vocalics through the prism of gender stereotypes. For example, a man with a higher-pitched voice may be perceived as less authoritative, while women with a lower-pitched voice appear more competent and less feminine. All of these nonverbal cues among homosexuals, androgynous and other non-heteronormative individuals often display a deviation from traditional gender expectations and norms. By using different gestures, facial expressions etc. that do not conform to societal expectations, they often tend to develop a more fluid communication style.

The main motif for conducting studies about gender differences in nonverbal communication is to uncover the way in which these patterns influence societal structures, as well as to develop a better understanding of barriers to effective communication across genders. Developing the ability to be aware of our own nonverbal behaviour and trying to eliminate potential prejudices that we can develop when interpreting others, can lead us to work towards equal and inclusive interactions. As well as enhancing communication, this awareness also promotes gender equality by giving individuals the freedom to express themselves authentically without fear of misinterpretation.

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