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Applications of nonverbal communication

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Abstrak

Few topics encompass such a rich and broad area of investigation as nonverbal communication. Researchers in fields as diverse as psychology, ethology, communication studies, sociology, anthropology, and neuroscience have all made important contributions to our understanding of the way that humans communicate nonverbally. Yet frequently the applied implications of such research have gone ignored, unstated, or unelaborated. In part, this lack of attention to applications is a function of the kind of work carried out by nonverbal communication researchers. Such work is often very precise and exacting, employing a microscopic approach to studying human social behavior that is driven by theoretical questions. For example, to a nonverbal researcher, a smile is not necessarily a smile, as work on the distinction between felt, or Duchenne, smiles and feigned smiles has illustrated so compellingly (Woodzicka & LaFrance, chap. 7, this volume). Likewise, the nonverbal communication scholars who have made use of Paul Ekman's FACS, facial coding system (Ekman 1978), are able to determine that a particular photograph does or does not contain a genuine, felt expression of anger or sadness. Although this concern with precision has produced an extensive body of significant findings, it has a downside. Specifically, scholars of nonverbal behavior are often reluctant to generalize their typically laboratory- based research findings to real-world, everyday behavior. However, it is the precision of their work that also makes nonverbal communication research so valuable?both to researchers in related areas, and to practitioners.