

Running head: GENDER DIFFERENCE IN NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The Gender Differences in Nonverbal Communication

9028

Evergreen Valley College

Abstract

In order to determine the difference between the average amount of nonverbal communication used between men and women, my partner and I constructed an observational study where 40 selected participants were observed for 2 minutes each within a bar setting. The sample group of participants consisted of 20 males and 20 females. The study showed that there was a significant difference in the amount of times women use hand gestures in comparison to the amount of times men use hand gestures.

Gender Differences in Nonverbal Communication

Communication has always been an important skill that all people should develop. Previous studies have hinted at the idea that men and women communicate differently. Hall (1978) suggested that women tend to be better at using and decoding nonverbal communicating cues, especially facial expressions. In a stereotypical beliefs study by Kramer (1977) it was suggested that women were believed to use the face and hands to express their ideas more than men. While another study by Briton (1995) suggested that women are believed to employ more expressive and involve more nonverbal communication than men, and that they are more skilled at sending and receiving nonverbal messages.

In order to further investigate the idea that women have better communication skills than men, my partner and I constructed a study where 40 participants were observed. Twenty men and 20 women who were in a bar setting were observed for 2 minutes each. While the individuals were engaged in a conversation, the two minute timer was set and the amount of times hand gestures used were tallied. We hypothesized that because women have better communication skills than men, that women will have a higher average use of hand gestures than men.

Methods

Participants

The participants were 40 individuals, 20 male and 20 female, all above the age of 21. The individuals were all found in a social bar setting located in downtown San Jose. The participants were between the ages of 21 and 40, this is just an approximation because the participants were not approached or inquired.

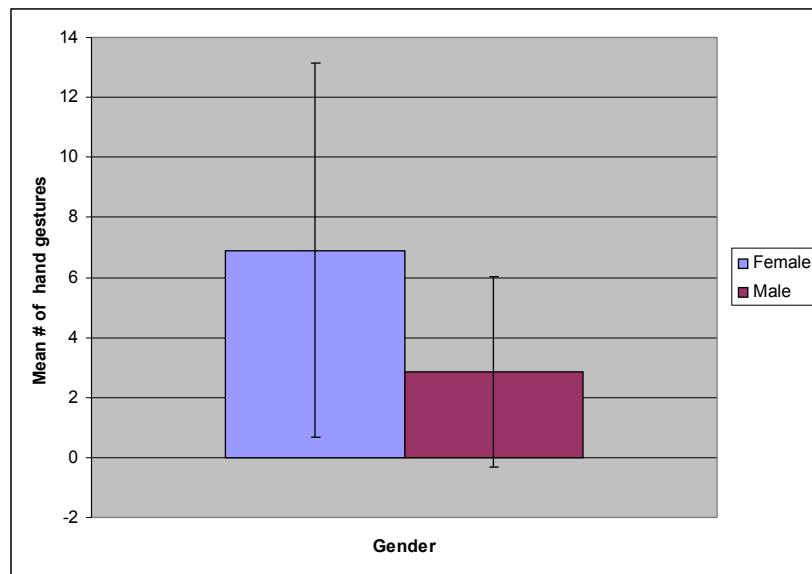
Procedure

While in a highly social setting (a bar), 20 men and 20 women were identified and

observed. As the observers we identified the male or female participant and set our timers for two minutes. Making our observation as discreet as possible, every use of nonverbal communication was recorded. For the purpose of this study, nonverbal communication was defined as communication other than written or spoken, such as hand gestures. Hand gestures were only recorded when there was a definite distinction between the end of one gesture and the beginning of another.

Results

The difference in the mean of hand gestures used by men ($M=2.85$, $SD=3.18$) and the mean number of hand gestures used by women ($M= 6.9$, $SD=6.24$) was statistically significant $t(38)=2.59$, $p < 0.05$, two tailed.



Graph 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Number of Hand Gestures Used by Gender.

Discussion

The data collected did support our hypothesis that women would use more hand gestures than men. There is a significant difference in the number of hand gestures used by women and men. We believed that women would use more hand gestures than men because of the stereotype that women are more social and outgoing than men. Women are also believed to express their feelings more than men, which we believed is connected to the way women communicate and the amount of hand gestures they use. I believe that further research in this area would be extremely helpful in analyzing why women are better at expressing themselves.

Some of the sampling problems in this study could have been that the individuals being observed may have mild case of Tourette's syndrome that causes to have constant movement, that movement could have easily been confused for a hand gesture. Another sampling problem could have been the attempt to grab a drink or a straw could have been counted as a hand gesture when the gesture had nothing to do with communication.

References

- Briton, N J, & Hall, J A (Jan 1995). Beliefs about female and male nonverbal communication. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 32, 79(12). Retrieved November 5, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP Database
- Hall, J. A. (1978). Gender effects in decoding nonverbal cues. *Psychology Bulletin*, 85, 845-857.
- Kramer, C. (1977). Perceptions of male and female speech. *Language and Speech*, 20, 151-161.