

TITLE: Reading It Accurately: The Role of Receptive Nonverbal Communication in Student Leadership Assessment

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Unpublished Master's Thesis: Spring 2002

ALSO PUBLISHED as a poster session presentation at the Society of Industrial Organization Psychology Conference (Orlando, FL), April 2003.

OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between a measure of leadership in students and their skills in receptive nonverbal communication (NVC).

METHODOLOGY: Participants (N=222) were incoming first-year students at a large southeastern university. They were administered the Student version of the Leadership Practices Inventory and the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy Scale (DANVA: Nowicki & Duke, 1994) while attending a weekend college orientation program. Seventy-two percent of the respondents were female.

KEY FINDINGS: Overall the most frequently engaged in leadership practice was Encouraging, followed by Enabling and Modeling, Inspiring and Challenging. Females engaged significantly more in Enabling and Encouraging than did their male counterparts, and this was also true the two subscales of nonverbal communication accuracy.

Inspiring, Enabling, and Encouraging were hypothesized to have a relationship with nonverbal communication accuracy for both facial expression and paralanguage (tones of voices), while Modeling and Challenging were postulated to be unrelated to NVC. Four of the ten relationships were significant: Challenging and Inspiring were positively correlated with paralanguage, and Encouraging was positively correlated with facial expression and paralanguage. Gender was not found to moderate any of the proposed relationships.

The author concludes: "An area overlooked in the leadership literature, especially student leadership, is how R-NVC skill is connected with effective leadership especially with dimensions involving interpersonal relationships and interactions. This research demonstrates those students with higher in some leadership practices involving interpersonal relationships have better ability to correctly identify emotions of others" (p. 85-86).