

People Watching: Nonverbal Communication Interpretation
Interpersonal Communication
Kim Weismann, Williston State College

I.LOC

LOC #2: Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts

- Synthesize communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts
- Apply communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts

LOC #5: Critically analyze messages

- Identify meanings embedded in messages
- Recognize the influences of messages

II. Assignment Rationale: This assignment allows students to observe other people's nonverbal communication in a way they may have not before considered. This assignment allows students to reflect upon what they learned from the textbook and what they saw in the public to synthesize and apply various nonverbal communication concepts.

III. Length of Assignment: This assignment will take approximately three weeks to complete. I assign it when the nonverbal chapter is covered. I give students one week to go through the material in class and another week to fully execute the project.

IV. Materials Needed: Students will need access to their Learning Management System, a computer, reliable internet access, a writing instrument, a notebook, and access to public locations such as restaurants, coffee shops, grocery stores, student union, etc.

V. Instructions: (This is provided to the students with the chapter information so they can plan.) For this assignment, please make sure you have read through the nonverbal communication skills chapter (chapter 7) and watched the instructor's video. Then, consider three different locations you can visit in the next week to observe for at least 15 minutes each. You will want to consider three different types of locations such as a coffee shop, a grocery store, and a sporting event or a restaurant, a coffee shop, and a big box store. I recommend you do not go to three of the same types of locations such as three different coffee shops. Try to vary your locations so you can see a variety of interactions. If possible, also consider different times of days to observe.

When you choose your locations, you will need to be present in each of those locations for at least 15 minutes and be sure you can take notes for yourself (notebook or with an electronic device). Your task is to observe the nonverbal communication that takes place in those locations. Consider different theories and concepts your book explains such as interaction adaptation theory, interactional synchrony, kinesics, emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators, adaptors, eye contact, facial expressions, vocal cues, space, touch, territory, appearance, etc. Be sure to consider how others reacted to those nonverbal communication messages as well. You should try to pick out multiple concepts for each visit.

Once you have your notes from all three locations, please discuss your observations in your small group discussion groups in the Blackboard forum. Be sure to explain your observations, synthesize the situations, and apply the concepts and theories that are appropriate for the interactions you witnessed. You should also explain how others responded to the messages. Your initial discussion post in your group should be at least 300 words. Be sure that you submit your deadline of Wednesday, of the second week of this assignment (by 11:59pm). You will want to respond to each of your groups members (groups are typically 4-5 students) by Saturday at 11:59pm. Be sure to have a thorough response of at least 100 words for a response with probing questions about what your group members witnessed. As a group, you should create a summary post explaining different types of observations that were examples of the concepts and theories. This summary post is due by Wednesday of week three in the class discussion (not the groups).

Remember, in all posts, be sure to use proper capitalization, punctuation, syntax, style, and citations.

VI. Debriefing: Once all groups have their summary posts in the course discussion, I post a synopsis of what I saw including points to consider when observing others as well as other information that may need to be clarified to the class.

VII. Rubric or Scoring Guide: Students are graded accordingly:

- Initial thorough post explaining the concepts and theories that were observed (20 points)
- Responses to each group member with probing questions and expanding on what was stated (20 points total)
- Summary post explaining what the group observed with synthesis and application of the course material (10 points)

VIII. Notes: This activity gets students more engaged in the material by observing how other people's communication impacts the world around them. The students are able to connect how they use nonverbal behaviors in different situations. Many times students acknowledge areas that they can improve their own communication.

VII. References:

Beebe, S. A., Beebe, S. J., & Redmond, M. V. (2017). *Interpersonal communication: Relating to others* (8th ed). Boston, MA: Pearson Publishing.