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Nonverbal Elements of Leadership Behaviour^{**}

In this theoretical paper, we investigate the importance of nonverbal behaviour in the context of leadership. Research on the decoding of social interactions has shown that the quality or type of relationship as well as relationally relevant emotional states are transmitted nonverbally. With this in mind, we review the existing literature on nonverbal leadership behaviour, such as research on Pygmalion leadership or political leadership. The nonverbal behaviours examined in these research areas show remarkable consistency and we therefore conclude that it is possible to deduce about effective nonverbal leadership behaviours. Still, many points remain open for further research and discussion. For example, no information is available concerning nonverbal behaviour in negative feedback processes. We conclude by outlining fruitful research directions in the area of nonverbal behaviour in leadership.

Key words: **Leadership, Interaction, Nonverbal Behaviour**

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Introduction

Why is nonverbal behaviour of interest in leadership research?

It is a well-established fact in leadership research that interaction is one of the main activities of leaders (e.g., Yukl 2002). Much of the existing research has focused on the “results” of social interactions, such as subordinates’ satisfaction with leaders, their commitment to the goals of the organization, their task-fulfilment, the quality of leader-follower relationships, etc. Seldom, however, have the means used in these interactions been examined. In this article, we will focus precisely on these means, specifically, on nonverbal leadership behaviour.

As already Argyle (1967) has pointed out, nonverbal cues are an important element in social interaction. The common expression “body-language” makes evident that there are more means of communication available than simply the spoken language. Important elements of nonverbal communication are gestures, body movements, postures, facial expressions, gaze (and even odour, Ellgring 1997; Szczesny/Stahlberg 2002). However, nonverbal communication can also include auditory cues such as prosody, volume, tempo, pitch, intruding sounds, tone, pacing, pauses, etc. (Smith 1997).

In social psychology, the role of facial expression in impression formation is long known (Mehrabian/Wiener 1967; see also the research by Ekman/O’Sullivan 1991). To cite one classic example, Mehrabian and Wiener (1967) showed that the overall impression made by a person was shaped by the following components: contents of a message, tone of voice, and facial expression. When each of these were assessed with respect to their individual importance, the following formula resulted: overall impression = 0.07 (contents) + 0.38 (voice tone) + 0.55 (facial expression). Important to note here is the dominating significance of facial impression in this formula, as well as voice tone, showing that nonverbal cues are of overarching importance. Mehrabian and Wiener made clear that, in cases of inconsistency between verbal and nonverbal behaviour, it is the nonverbal information which is allocated the greatest significance.

Research in other disciplines yields similar conclusions. For example, Masters and Sullivan (1993), who draw from ethological theories and cognitive neuroscience research, also argue that facial expression is one of the major sources of information in interaction processes (cf. Way/Masters 1996)¹.

These research results support the notion that nonverbal communication is an important means of sending and receiving information and that facial expression is a major part of this process. In the context of the analysis of leadership behaviour, the role of *verbal* communication seems to be acknowledged, for example in leadership training, and the analysis of *verbal* communication appears as a topic in general research (Thimm/Rademacher/Kruse 1995). However, the role of *nonverbal* communication in leadership interaction seems to receive much less attention. Taking into account the numerous functions of nonverbal behaviour, there truly seems to be a gap

¹ Way and Masters (1996) cite a quite impressive result in this context: It seems that the social isolation of primates whose amygdala has been partly destroyed is due to a lack of ability to form socially appropriate responses to facial displays of peers (Rolls 1992, in: Way/Masters, 1996).

between leadership research and practice. In this paper, we will therefore examine the role of nonverbal behaviour in leadership. In the following section, we will take a closer look at what is known about nonverbal behaviour in leadership to date and at functions and outcomes of nonverbal behaviour. The paper ends with a discussion of the relevance of nonverbal behaviour in the context of leadership and offers recommendations for future research.

Nonverbal behaviour and leadership

In the following section on nonverbal behaviour in leadership, we draw on research from the fields of Pygmalion leadership, charismatic leadership, political leadership, and emergent leadership. Two reasons led us to focus on these theories: a) they are all interactive and b) nonverbal behaviour plays a crucial role both in research and theory in all of these approaches.

In *Pygmalion leadership research*, the basic assumption is that leaders have expectations about each of their followers (Eden 1990). Leaders act according to their expectations and, therefore, behave differently towards each follower in line with their expectations. This behaviour, in turn, leads to differences in followers' performance (e.g., Eden/Shani 1982). We will give a short outline of the theory before going into the details of the findings with respect to nonverbal behaviour.

Pygmalion research in leadership is based upon Pygmalion research in the classroom. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that teachers treated their students differently according to their (experimentally evoked) expectations about the students' performances. Eden (1990) transferred Pygmalion research to the organizational (training) context (see also Livingston 1969; King 1971). He assumed that leaders' expectations about their followers could be influenced by (false) information just as the teachers' expectations in the above-mentioned study. Thus, in an organizational context, leaders will adapt their behaviour towards their followers in accordance with their expectations. This, in turn, influences the followers' efficacy beliefs (i.e., their feeling of competence in executing certain behaviours, Bandura 1977) and, thus, their performance (see Sutton/Woodman 1989). This means that the leader's expectation becomes self-fulfilling through the differences in his / her behaviour with respect to each follower. It is important to note that leaders change their behaviour more or less unconsciously when their expectations are altered.

The central question for our overview is what behaviour leaders exhibit and, especially, what kind of nonverbal behaviours have been shown to be of relevance in the context of leadership.

As mentioned above, the original research on the Pygmalion effect was done in the classroom. Rosenthal (1973; summarised and explained in Eden 1990) reviewed several nonverbal behaviours which are connected with high expectations and which were exhibited by teachers: it seems that teachers smile more at the pupils of whom they have higher expectations; they maintain eye-contact more frequently and longer with these pupils; they get physically closer to them and show various forms of posture and body language conveying warmth, acceptance, and approval to them.

Smith (1997) summarises some further results about classroom teaching: teachers who lean towards their students are evaluated as better teachers. A decrease in eye

contact between teacher and pupils correlates with an increase in disruptions. Touching behaviour is only related to better performance of pupils when this behaviour was accompanied by a smile. Research has also shown that teachers keep a larger distance from rejected pupils than from others. It is thus evident that the attitudes of teachers toward their pupils are displayed nonverbally.

King (1971) found similar results in the context of leadership. Furthermore, he demonstrated that these processes can take place unconsciously. In his study, carried out with underprivileged workers and concerning their leaders' expectations (and their respective behaviour), King (1971) showed that the ways in which leaders look at their followers influence those followers' performance. He found that the workers who performed well and those who performed poorly could not name the differences in leadership behaviour they experienced. If the more satisfied and higher-performing subordinates were asked to pick a photo which was most similar to the way in which their leaders behaved towards them, they chose photos with enlarged pupils. Interestingly, they were still not able to state the extent to which the photos were different. This means that enlarged pupils as a sign of affection and regard was not within the scope of their conscious perception of social interaction.

Another interesting source of ideas about nonverbal behaviour in leadership is research about *transformational or charismatic leadership*. We will summarize some of the relevant research on leader behaviour in this area but, first, let us briefly outline the general background on transformational / charismatic leadership.

The concepts of transformational /charismatic leadership have long been used to describe extraordinary leaders (Bass 1985; House 1977). Whereas originally, charisma referred to attributes of leaders (Weber 1921), more recent research focuses on the behavioural side of charisma, that is, on transformational leadership (Bass 1985). In the following, we will refer to the concepts as they are used in the reviewed studies, but want to draw attention to the position that both labels, whether used as attribute (charisma) or behaviour (transformational leadership), refer to the same phenomenon (cf. Schyns 2001).

Transformational leadership is a term summarizing exceptional leadership *behaviour*, thereby departing from the more traditional trait-orientated theories on charisma (see Conger/Kanungo 1994). Bass' conception of transformational leadership includes four dimensions: (1) idealized influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualized consideration (e.g., Bass/Avolio 1995). Transformational leaders are characterized by the use of visions to influence their followers. They motivate through inspiration and stimulate their followers intellectually. Transformational leaders make use of individualized consideration, which is to say that they consider the individual needs of each of their subordinates (Bass/Avolio 1993).

In the following section, we will take a look at studies in which leadership was manipulated or in which nonverbal behaviour of existing leaders was focused upon in order to find out which behaviours are relevant in the context of transformational or charismatic leadership. For our purposes, it is interesting to first pay attention to what behaviours have been prone to examination and if nonverbal behaviours have been included. In an experiment, Awamleh (1997) investigated the perceptions of charisma.

Videotaped speeches were presented in which vision delivery and vision content was manipulated. The actor conveying charismatic leadership was “trained to maintain eye contact, exhibit vocal fluency, use facial expressions (e.g., smiles), and engage in dynamic hand and body gestures” (Awamleh 1997, 55). As expected, besides an effect of vision contents on the perception of charisma, Awamleh found that participants perceived leaders to be more charismatic when the leaders showed the above-mentioned nonverbal behaviours.

Shea and Howell (1999) used scripts to manipulate leader behaviours. In the charismatic script, the leaders exhibited some nonverbal behaviours, such as alternating between pacing and sitting on the edge of the desk, leaning towards the participant, maintaining direct eye contact, and having an animated facial expression. In their manipulation check, they could indeed show that participants attributed higher charisma to the leaders that showed these behaviours than to leaders who were trained to behave in a neutral fashion, to maintain intermittent eye contact, a neutral tone of voice, and a neutral facial expression.

Cherulnik, Donley, Wiewel, and Miller (2001) could show that students perceived more charisma when leaders showed the following nonverbal behaviours: a high amount of smiles, a high intensity of smiles and long and frequent visual attendance of the audience. These behaviours were also relevant in the perception of charismatic leadership in political leaders. Thus, we felt it could be interesting for our purposes to have a closer look at research in *political leadership*. Political leadership refers to the leadership behaviour politicians display towards the public. Research in this field often concentrates on the public appearances given by political leaders, for example, when giving speeches or interviews. Although we are not talking about direct leadership here, some results of the research in this area can be transferred to the direct leadership situation as well.

Masters and Sullivan (1993) analysed the facial expressions of political leaders and identified three functional categories of facial expression: anger / threat, fear / evasion, and happiness / reassurance and assign the respective facial expressions. These functional categories are displayed using the following facial parts: eyelids (opened / closed), eyebrows (lowered / raised), eye orientation (staring / averted / focused), mouth corners (forward / retracted / raised), teeth showing, head motion, and head orientation. Research has shown that each type of nonverbal display produces different patterns of emotional response in the viewer (Masters/Sullivan 1993). In addition, the intensity of the displays affects intensity in emotional response (Masters/Sullivan 1993). Sullivan and Masters (1988) note that the perceived homogeneity or purity of a display, that is, the degree of non-mixed display of nonverbal behaviour with respect to the expressed functions, has an impact on the perceivers’ reaction.

Research on *emergent leadership* focuses on the question as to why someone is seen or elected as a leader. Research in this field has shown that nonverbal behaviour plays a role in who is seen as leader and who is not. As Kalma and van Rooij (1982) found, emerging leaders exhibit an extended gazing pattern, especially at the end of an utterance. Kalma (1992) linked this behaviour to inviting others to take over the floor. Appointed leaders showed this behaviour more often than others. These results are

supported by Stein (1975) who also found that nonverbal behaviour is important in the emergence of leadership.

To sum up, nonverbal leadership behaviours include using a captivating voice, pacing, sitting on the edge of the desk, getting physically closer and leaning towards the follower, using eye contact, showing animated facial expressions, smiling etc. As already shown in the above-mentioned work by Ekman and O'Sullivan (1991) and Mehrabian and Wiener (1967), the special role taken on by facial expression is stressed.

However, some important points of discussion remain. With respect to Pygmalion research and theory, we have some information about how nonverbal behaviour leads to better performance on the condition that the leader really *believes* that his/her follower has high potential. However, these studies do not allow inferences about which nonverbal behaviour may help if a leader wants to develop a person's potential to a high level but is convinced that the follower has not yet reached a high level. In other words, how should the leader behave if the given information and the expectancy connected to it are different. This can be regarded as a classic case of (potential) inconsistency in communication channels. As we have seen in other cases of inconsistency, where nonverbal behaviour is seen as more informative than the actual content of a statement (Mehrabian/Wiener 1967), the effect of verbal praise may be reduced by a non-fitting facial expression. Research on transformational/charismatic leadership, political leaders, and emergent leaders allows us to assume that – in contrast to Pygmalion research where nonverbal behaviour is displayed unconsciously – nonverbal behaviour can be consciously influenced (for political leadership, see Masters/Sullivan 1993; for training of transformational leaders, see Cherulnik 1995).

When considering leadership as an interactive process, we must take into account the factors that have an impact on that interaction. Nonverbal leadership behaviour does not happen independently, without influences from a) individual characteristics of leaders and followers and b) contextual factors that frame the interaction between leader and follower. Further, we have to be conscious of the known effects of nonverbal behaviour in general. In the next section, we will review literature on these three topics.

Nonverbal behaviour in interactions: Individual characteristics

Before we go into details as to what characteristics of leaders and followers play a role in the decoding and encoding of nonverbal behaviour, we will consider some general principles in the context of nonverbal interaction.

On the encoder's side, we can make a distinction between expressiveness and communication skills (Halberstadt 1991). Expressiveness in itself does not necessarily imply skills in sending and decoding messages. Halberstadt focuses on the communicative functions of the encoder and defines sending skills as "the ability to send relevant messages clearly when a social situation requires it, and not just whatever or whenever one is feeling or thinking about something in particular." (Halberstadt 1991: 116). In addition, Halberstadt (1991) differentiates between two elements of sending skills: First, sending skills include inhibiting feelings that are not relevant to the message to be sent. Second, it may be required to simulate feelings that are not really felt

at the given moment. Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) also discuss the display of particular feelings as part of the demands of the job, mainly in connection with the consequences of this for the health of working people.²

On the decoder's side, research into social perception has shown that the ability to decode nonverbal cues is astonishingly good. Archer and Akert (1980) demonstrated that, even after a very short presentation (milliseconds) of video-scenes that covered five different domains of social interaction (kinship, deception, status, intimacy, and competition, see also Archer/Costanzo/Akert 2001) containing nonverbal expressions of emotions, untrained people were able to give an accurate interpretation, even when the sound was turned off. These results in the absence of sound allow us to assume that most information was based on nonverbal cues.³

What particular characteristics play a role in decoding and encoding? First, we have to take into account that individual characteristics play a role in the *display* of nonverbal behaviour. To name an example, Riggio (1986) showed that women are more expressive and – as shown in the context of marriage – give more specific nonverbal cues for negative and positive messages (Noller 1992), allowing us to assume that the gender of the leader will therefore play a significant role in the nonverbal dyadic interaction of leadership. The significance of gender augments when we take into account that sex differences have been found in the *decoding process* of nonverbal communication. As decoding is generally seen to be the primary task of the follower, the particular gender composition of the leader-follower dyad should prove to be extremely important.

With respect to gender differences in the decoding process, studies using the above mentioned video scenes more often than not find that women score higher on interpersonal sensitivity. Their ability to give correct evaluations of the nonverbal behaviours displayed in video scenes is higher than that of male observers (Archer et al. 2001). These gender differences are also observed when other instruments are used (for example the PONS, Profile of Nonverbal Sensivity, another video-based instrument, developed by Hall 2001, although we must keep in mind that the targets in the PONS are only females and one could argue that this may give an advantage to female observers).

² Hochschild (1979) discussed aspects of emotional dissonance (feelings are expressed according to the rules of the organization or role demands but clash with inner feelings) and deviance (expressed feelings disregard rules or norms) in jobs from the service sector. The consequent discussion about and research into emotional labour (Büssing/Glaser 1999a, 1999b; Rastetter 1999; Zapf et al. 1999) mainly concerned itself with the mental health consequences of showing deviance and dissonance. This discussion is not taken further into account here as we concentrate on nonverbal behaviour in leadership interaction and not on the consequences of inconsistencies for the leader him- or herself. In the context of leadership, the more relevant question is whether or not followers are aware of dissonance and deviance and if so, whether or not it is a threat to the effectiveness of leadership.

³ In the scenes, the environmental background cues were minimal (no boss at a big desk, but showing only two persons of different status in a private setting).

In the process of decoding nonverbal behaviour, gender stereotypes also play a role. For example, Baumgartner, Lord, and Maher (1993) give ample evidence to support the assertion that gender stereotypes are influencing the perception of women in management. Baumgartner et al. urge us to take the particular level of management women are involved in into account when examining how women in management are perceived. The relevance of gender stereotypes is also developed in ideas put forward by Carli and Eagly (1999), who emphasize the need to be more specific with respect to observable behaviour when analysing the phenomenon. They examine, for example, "eye contact". Eye contact can be described as "visual dominance". Women tend to show less visual dominance than men. For men, high visual dominance is connected with effective influence, whereas for women, low visual dominance is correlated with high social influence. Both of these studies show that the gender and status of the leader has to be taken into account as an important context variable when analysing the decoding of nonverbal leadership behaviour.

Decoding nonverbal behaviour is also dependent upon the mutuality of behaviours shown by the actors. Henley and LaFrance (1997) showed that touching and eye contact have different meanings for observers when these behaviours are exchanged mutually or when they are shown by only one of the actors. In the latter case, the nonverbal behaviours were evaluated as showing dominance. Vonk (1999) demonstrated that identical behaviour receives different meanings from an observer depending on whether or not it is displayed towards a superior or a follower. The same behaviour is judged to be more likeable when displayed towards a follower than when displayed towards a leader. Although the study did not specifically focus on nonverbal behaviour, we can expect a similar effect for nonverbal behaviour.

Other individual characteristics may also be of relevance, such as self-monitoring abilities (e.g., Snyder 1974). Persons with high self-monitoring abilities show more judgement accuracy when decoding the behaviour of others (Ambady/Hallahan/Rosenthal 1995) and are better able to influence their own expressions (Snyder 1979). Thus, this factor may be relevant both in the decoding and in the display of nonverbal behaviours.

In addition to individual factors, contextual factors play a role in decoding nonverbal behaviour. In the following section, we will have a closer look at these factors.

Contextual factors in nonverbal behaviour

Contextual factors in interactions are numerous. In the following, we will give some examples of contextual factors that are especially relevant in the context of leadership, such as, culture, duration of interaction, complexity of the situation, and familiarity of the persons with whom one interacts.

Though some nonverbal expressions of emotions seem to be the same across cultures (Ekman/O'Sullivan 1991; Elfenbein/Ambady 2002), cultural dimensions such as individualism, collectivism, and status differentiation do appear to create differences. Research has shown, for example, that the ability to decode emotions correctly increases with higher individualism (Hofstede 2001; Beck et al. 2003; Matsumoto et al. 2002).

With respect to stereotyping in the context of interaction, duration of the leader-follower relationship and complexity of the situation is additional contextual variables

of importance. As stereotypes are drawn upon in situations where there is little information about a person available, it seems likely that stereotypes will surface more often at the beginning of a leader-follower relationship.

The role that situational complexity plays may be obvious when we regard leader-follower interactions in the context of information processing. Most leader-follower interactions make complex cognitive demands on participants: a task is delegated to the follower or feedback is given; a process of joint problem solving is taking place or – even more complex – a conflict has to be resolved. These complex (and often new) situations normally demand complex cognitive information processing. According to research done by Lord and Maher (1993), information processing includes both conscious and automatic processing, where automatic processing “frees” cognitive capacity for the more complex demands needing to be solved consciously. There is ample evidence to suggest that the decoding of nonverbal cues is a highly automatic process. In such complex cognitive situations as leader-follower interactions, the automatic decoding of nonverbal cues is an economic means of gathering additional information. However, precisely the low attention given this decoding allows stereotypes to become particularly effective.⁴

With respect to the display of nonverbal behaviour and particular power relationships, Cashdan (1998) found that, in discussions, high-power/high-status women and men showed differences in their nonverbal expressions, depending on whether or not these discussions take place in a group of familiar persons or in a group of strangers. High-power and high-status women and men talked more in discussions with strangers than in discussions with peers; high-power and high-status men smiled less in discussions with strangers than in discussions with familiar persons. This research further emphasises the importance of context in understanding nonverbal leader behaviour.

Knowing that nonverbal behaviour is displayed and decoded in leadership interactions and that individual characteristics and contextual factors shape this process, we now turn to the functions and outcomes of nonverbal behaviour in general and in the context of leadership.

Functions and outcomes of nonverbal behaviour

Patterson (1990) mentions the following functions of nonverbal behaviour in social interaction: (a) providing information, (b) regulating interaction, (c) expressing intimacy, (d) social control, (e) presenting identities and images, (f) affecting management and (g) facilitating service and task goals.

Research into the decoding of social interaction has shown that emotional states and the quality or type of relationship (involving issues such as trust, intimacy, deception, status, competition) are transmitted nonverbally (Archer et al. 2001). This idea is supported by research examining the behaviour of political leaders. Sullivan and Masters (1988) were able to show, for example, how facial displays of political leaders can evoke emotions in viewers.

⁴ Master and Sullivan (1993) even argue that the decoding of such cues can be seen in the tradition of ethological theory, which emphasizes the importance of encoding facial display as a strategy for survival and status regulation in primates.

In addition, the perception of power is connected with nonverbal behaviour (e.g., Aguinis/Henle 2001). In a study in which participants rated a *female* employee with respect to six bases of power (reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, referent, and credibility), Aguinis and Henle (2001) found that direct eye contact increases the perception of coercive power, whereas a relaxed facial expression decreases power perceptions. Body posture had an effect only on the perception of referent power. These results contrast to findings by Aguinis, Simonsen, and Pierce (1998), who found that participants rated *male* employees higher on credibility when they were described as maintaining direct eye contact. In addition, a relaxed facial expression was related to an increased perception of reward, legitimate, expert, referent, and credibility power. Body posture had no effect on the perception of power.

Research on seating distance indicates that a smaller distance is related to a higher degree of intimacy (Gifford/O'Connor 1986). In addition, side-by-side orientation indicates a higher degree of intimacy than face-to-face orientation, although not to the same extent as distance does (Gifford/O'Connor 1986).

In addition, nonverbal behaviour can convey supportiveness. As Remland, Jacobson, and Jones (1983) found in an experimental study, leaning forward, touching the subordinate, speaking in a soft voice, smiling sympathetically, gazing, and nodding are related to the perception of supportiveness whereas leaning backwards, keeping distance, speaking in a firm voice, refusing to smile, interrupting, looking away, and turning away represents being non supportive. Nonverbal behaviour accounted for a considerable extent of variance (32%) in rating of leader's consideration. To a lesser extent (13%), it explained task-orientation.

Another result, stemming from research on the Pygmalion effect, is that nonverbal leader behaviours have an effect on followers' self-efficacy (Sutton/Woodman 1989) and on their performance (e.g., Eden/Shani 1982). The review by DePaulo and Friedmann (1998) has shown that a higher level of expressiveness is linked to professional success. We can therefore conclude that the display of nonverbal behaviour is related to outcomes on the leaders' side as well.

Summarizing, we have shown that nonverbal behaviour has different functions and is related to different kinds of outcomes. All of the above-cited research underlines the importance of nonverbal behaviour in interaction processes.

General discussion

The aim of our paper was to show the relevance of nonverbal behaviour in the context of leadership and to summarize the knowledge about these behaviours from different sources. The importance of nonverbal behaviours could be demonstrated from the perspective of different traditions of research and theory (such as social and general psychology, political leadership studies).

We will now turn to the conclusion of our review and offer ideas for future research. Finally, we will draw conclusions for organisational practice.

Conclusions and future research

In general, we can conclude that the nonverbal behaviours of leaders seem to be an important means of framing the relationship between leaders and followers. These

nonverbal behaviours are multifunctional and can transmit the emotional quality of the relationship as well as the power status. It is obvious from research that sending and decoding often takes place implicitly (Knapp 1997), non-consciously (King 1971), and automatically.

In our summary, we found that only positive behaviours are described. Behaviours such as showing disapproval (by shaking the head, frowning, etc.) are not examined as a means of interaction in leadership. The interesting question arises as to whether feedback about mistakes, which may evoke negative emotions in the leaders, may result in a state of emotional dissonance (Hochschild 1990). The leader in such a situation is asked to show positive emotions towards a follower, even in the face of mistakes, instead of displaying the actual negative emotions which the leader may have.⁵

Research has shown that nonverbal behaviour evokes emotions in the viewer (e.g., Sullivan/Masters 1988) but the actual extent to which nonverbal behaviours are responsible for the effectiveness of leadership remains unclear. Knowing about (some) behaviours that leaders display towards their followers does not add to the knowledge of the overall process taking place or to the causalities in interactions between leaders and followers. We know something about some of the elements involved in the process but we are still left wondering about what else is needed for the good performance of followers. For example, leadership is said to influence followers' self-efficacy (Murphy/Ensher 1999), self-confidence (Shamir/House/Arthur 1993), and motivation (Porter/Bigley 2001). We do not yet know which nonverbal leadership behaviour has an impact on which follower attitude or behaviour.

Little research has been done to date on the effects of the interaction and combination of different nonverbal behaviours (e.g., touch *and* smile)⁶ or the interaction between nonverbal behaviour and the attributes of the sender. Furthermore, it is possible that isolated nonverbal behaviours that contrast with each other (e.g., smiling without the appropriate body position) have a similar effect as incongruent verbal and nonverbal behaviours: they are perceived as not trustworthy.

These ideas as well as the results on contextual factors in nonverbal behaviour lead to the conclusion that we should avoid a naive concentration on elements of nonverbal behaviour without considering interactive processes and contextual variables.

⁵ The effect of negative expectations was investigated using the paradigm of the so-called "Golem-effect" by Davidson and Eden (2000). The related research focuses on the question as to whether the effect of negative expectations (i.e., the Golem-effect) can be prevented. No information about how leaders transmit their (negative) expectations was provided in this study (Davidson/Eden 2000). However, because of the literature on differences in facial expressions, for example, or the literature on the differences between faked and non-faked positive emotions and the enormous decoding capacity of human beings, it seems reasonable to expect that negative attitudes can be decoded, even if leaders do not want this.

⁶ An exception is a study by Burgoon, Buller, Hale, and Truck (1984) who focused on the joint effects of proximity, smiling, eye contact, body lean, and touch on intimacy, non-intimacy, and dominance.

With our focus on leaders' nonverbal behaviour, we found some possible variables which may affect leadership behaviour and its effects on followers. However, more research is needed in this area. Some examples are named in the following:

First of all, we can assume that the *characteristics of the followers* are important for how leader behaviour is perceived. Research on implicit leadership theories (e.g., Schyns/Felfe, in review; Schyns/Sanders 2004) hints in this direction, but this research is less focused on the perception of nonverbal behaviour than on the perception of verbal leadership (in both studies, participants rated a written speech given by a leader). Thus, more research is needed on how follower characteristics (e.g., implicit leadership theories or even implicit relationship theories, Uhl-Bien 2003) influence the perception of nonverbal leader behaviour.

The results of some studies show that the demographic characteristics of followers may be of importance in this context. According to Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy, and Thomas (2000), social perception ability improves with practice and age. In addition, there is a vast amount of research showing that women are generally better decoders and also encoders (Noller 1992) of nonverbal behaviour than men (Ambady et al. 1995; Archer et al. 2001; Hall 2001), though differences are small (Patterson/Foster/Bellmer 2001).

Thus, in future research, the *characteristics of the leader and follower* also have to be taken into account. As Bar-On et al. (2000) found, men are better than women in controlling their emotional expression. Having shown that men and women differ in their abilities to display (Riggio 1986) as well as to decode nonverbal behaviour (Costanzo/Archer 1989), research is needed to address the question as to how the composition of a leader-member dyad shapes the interaction between leader and member.

Situational aspects may also alter the effects of behaviour. DePaulo and Friedmann (1998) explain that nonverbal expressiveness is responsive to contextual cues. We also argued that isolated behaviours as well as nonverbal behaviours displayed by only one partner in communication have effects different from those of combined use or mutual behaviour (Henley/LaFrance 1997). Other contextual factors of relevance (in addition to those mentioned above) may be the situational and behavioural fit: smiling in crisis situations may be regarded as cynical rather than supportive. This idea is supported by Bucy (2000) who found that political leaders were rated more favourably when the nonverbal behaviour they showed was considered to be appropriate to the message they conveyed.

The *effect of inconsistency of verbal and nonverbal behaviour* on leadership effectiveness has not yet been discussed or tested. Although we know that persons rely more on nonverbal behaviour than on the content of a statement in the case of inconsistencies (Mehrabian/Wiener 1967), more research is needed on the effects these inconsistencies have on followers' performance.

Most leadership concepts expect leaders to create a positive relationship with their followers and to exert a positive influence on the mood, motivation, self-esteem, etc. of each follower. As nonverbal behaviour is often unconsciously displayed, this means that the leaders' beliefs and expectations also have to be positive. The question remains unanswered as to whether or not leaders can successfully transmit positive

missions, values, or attitudes by nonverbal behaviour if they do not really believe in them. Considering the rapid and widespread ability of non-trained people to evaluate social interactions correctly (shown by the work of Archer/Akert 1980), one can assume that followers are able to perceive discrepancies. The success of "faking" can, therefore, be doubted. This is underlined by research into the facial expression of emotions, which has shown that true and faked smiles differ in several observable aspects (Ekman/Friesen 1982). It would therefore be interesting to see what the effects of dissonance actually are and how negative effects can be prevented.

Limitations

Although we assume that our review will be helpful in understanding nonverbal behaviour in leadership, we would like to draw attention to some limitations. First, we concentrated only on a few leadership approaches. Although we chose the ones that seemed to us to be most important for nonverbal behaviour, there may be other relevant approaches which we have overlooked. We excluded interactional approaches such as Leader-Member Exchange (e.g., Graen/Uhl-Bien 1995), as we thought they offered too little information concerning nonverbal behaviour. A second limitation may have resulted from the fact that we concentrated on leadership relevant approaches and only occasionally referred to data from other backgrounds (e.g., social psychological). Although this was necessary due to space constraints, a broader review might be able to suggest interesting directions for leadership research.

Conclusion for leadership practice

The sending and decoding of non-verbal behaviour has been described as an important element in leadership interaction. The processes that explain how these cues have an effect on leadership outcomes have simply not yet been analysed – especially not in those cases where there are many cues and where they are contradictory to verbal cues. Consequently, no simple recipe for leadership practice can be given. Concentrating on some elements of nonverbal behaviour without taking into account the contextual variables seems a risky enterprise.

Nevertheless it appears worthwhile for leaders to be – at the very least – aware of the effects of nonverbal cues and know some contextual and personal variables that are relevant. Furthermore, knowledge about the fact that nonverbal cues play a prominent role when dissonance occurs may be helpful for understanding the demands of leadership.

This may put the leadership interaction in the context of "emotional labour", meaning that a special demand here is to cope with the demand to display different emotions than those felt.

At this point, the question once again arises as to whether or not the automatic processes of coding and encoding of nonverbal cues can be influenced. Can leaders reach perfection in displaying behaviour even when this behaviour is not in line with the emotions they actually have?

Another reason to control the display and decoding of nonverbal behaviour is the fact that leaders have to lead intercultural teams, thus, culturally *specific* nonverbal behaviour may not be decoded correctly by means of automatic information processing (for an

overview on culture specific problems in leadership see Schyns/Meindl forthcoming). They demand more cognitive attention. Here the following question surfaces: Can decoding (and encoding) of nonverbal behaviour reach the status of a conscious process?

An evaluation of sensitivity trainings showed that people can be trained to interpret social interaction scenes more correctly (Costanzo 1992). We can therefore conclude that decoding can be improved. Persons with high self-monitoring abilities may have an advantage because in general they show more judgement accuracy when decoding behaviour of others (Ambady et al. 1995) and are able to influence and change their own expressions (Snyder 1979). Even if it is clear that decoding nonverbal leadership behaviour is an important process for followers, the question remains unanswered as to whether such training may be helpful for leaders. It could be argued that it may make leadership easier if leaders are aware of the nonverbal information sent by their followers. But the opposite may also be true: If leaders become conscious of too much information concerning the mood of their followers, they may experience too much pressure to concern themselves about these feelings and this may ultimately complicate the leadership task in some situations.

In certain respects, the demands of leadership can be compared with those of a therapist, who also has to display belief in the empowerment of her or his clients. The crucial elements which Rogers (1951 1980) proposes for a successful therapist-client relationship, such as congruency, empathy, authenticity, and the ability to show unconditional positive regard, may also be of great value for the leader-follower relationship. Of course, this implies that leaders truly believe in their followers in order to be able to display congruent positive nonverbal behaviours towards them. This may be one of the most difficult aspects of leadership in a more general sense: Whereas verbal behaviour can be easily trained and, in a limited sense, certain kinds of nonverbal behaviours as well, trust in the abilities of followers belongs to a more general system of beliefs about others which lies deeper and is much more difficult to acquire, if it is not already present. Such a belief however appears to be a key factor in the display of nonverbal leadership behaviour that is to have a positive impact on the leader-follower relationship.

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