

# Nonverbal Cues' Impact on Leadership Across Cultures: A Review and Propositions

2014

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NONVERBAL CUES' IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP ACROSS CULTURES: A  
REVIEW AND PROPOSITIONS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Psychology  
in the College of Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term, 2014

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## Abstract

Body language is a part of everyday life and the nonverbal cues associated with body language provide important sources of interpersonal information in a variety of environments and especially in the context of cultural diversity. The intent of this thesis is to understand how certain nonverbal cues can affect leadership within different cultures. The nonverbal cues studied will be body posture, facial expressions, and distance. The cultural regions studied are represented by China, France, Brazil, and Egypt. The appropriate nonverbal cues were identified and discussed based on the cultural context.

Research suggests that positive and erect body posture would be beneficial for leaders in all four regions in regards to self-perception and workers' perceptions of leadership. Careful selection of specific facial expressions and direct eye contact would be favorable in all regions for self- and workers' perception of leadership. Considering distance, having less distance and initiating a handshake for self- and workers' perceptions of leadership would be an advantage, but friendly touching is culturally specific. Becoming aware of how certain nonverbal cues may influence the display and interpretation of body language serves to enhance the development of leadership and the promotion of positive attitudes and loyalty in business settings.

## Dedication

For my family,  
My greatest blessing in life

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has helped me reach this point in life. First, thank you to Dr. Eduardo Salas for his immense help and dedication during the process of writing my thesis. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Carol Saunders and Dr. Daniel McConnell, for their guidance and advice to better my writing. To Nastassia Savage and Billy Kramer who have given up hours to help me reach my goals and never let me give up.

I would like to make a special thanks to my parents, Steven and Marbella Hornik. They have never left my side and encourage my everyday to be the best I can be. They made me who I am today. To my role model Robin Parritz, who has helped me immensely and has influenced me to strive to reach my dreams.

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## **Introduction**

Many aspects of leadership have been the focus of research for decades. Leaders are responsible for setting agendas, modeling effort and success, and motivating workers. The importance of leaders is high because they maintain order, formulate ideas, and resolve conflicts internally and externally in an organization. A better understanding of how individuals in organizations perceive leaders and the characteristics of leadership is necessary in order to improve relationships and performance. A leader can be viewed and defined with countless opinions and definitions. Social interactions are a large component of leadership (Yukl, 2002), with the undeniable fact that nonverbal cues play a strong role in social interactions. Researchers claim that 55% of communication is comprised of body language (Demir, 2011), underscoring the unquestionable importance of how nonverbal cues influence communication. With leadership so dependent upon social interactions and because social interactions are influenced greatly by nonverbal cues, the intersection of leadership and nonverbal social cues is an important area for study.

With respect to understanding leadership, body language and nonverbal cues are important because they portray emotion, send messages, and define relationships (Demir, 2011). For instance, the clenching of fists could represent anger, leaning forward could express respect, and leaning back might portray power. These silent but significant cues are widespread and undoubtedly influence perceptions of people (Schyns & Mohr, 2004). Such nonverbal cues can change the way people perceive you as a leader (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012). In addition, nonverbal cues can also affect the self-perception of leadership.

Not only can using selected nonverbal cues make a working environment more productive, they can also enhance the business productivity by having leaders positively interact with colleagues, competitors, and clients (Drew, 2013). Research is needed to better understand how distinct nonverbal cues can change the way someone perceives a leader or the self-perception of leadership. A more accurate perception of nonverbal cues by workers and by leaders themselves may have a positive impact on leader and member relationship (Schyns & Mohr, 2004). In this paper, three categories of nonverbal cues will be focused on: body posture, facial expressions, and distance.

Diversity in organizations is increasingly important when dealing with leadership. With the increase of globalization, organizations need to know how to respect workers of various backgrounds and cultures and maintain an open-minded atmosphere, especially when dealing with internal conflicts (Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Luque, & House, 2006). In different cultures, specific nonverbal cues could be interpreted as completely different messages and could be associated with different leadership traits. For example, direct eye contact could be a sign of respect in one culture but seen as disrespectful in others (Wesson, 1992). Leaders who are not knowledgeable about behavioral norms and expectations within different cultures may exhibit behavior that is problematic for business reputations and productivity (Drew, 2013). To examine diversity this research paper will investigate four cultural regions, centered around the countries of Brazil, Egypt, France and China. These four cultures were chosen because they represent extreme cultural diversity (Javidan et al., 2006).

The objective of this thesis is to understand how nonverbal cues throughout cultures affect leaders self-perception and workers' perceptions of leadership. With businesses becoming

more globally oriented and leaders expected to work well with individuals of diverse backgrounds, understanding how certain nonverbal cues can affect self-perceptions and workers' perceptions of leadership can lead to professional success (DePaulo & Friedmann, 1998). By learning the different features of specific nonverbal cues and cultural regions selected through articles, appropriate nonverbal cues will be proposed for the cultural regions. The aim of this paper is to help different organizations better understand how culture and nonverbal cues can affect self- and workers' perceptions of leadership and guide aspects of leadership development. Given that nonverbal cues and body language are often exhibited without considering their impact, it is essential that leaders think about and intentionally use specific kinds of cues that lead to beneficial outcomes.

## **Background**

### **Perceptions of Leadership**

Leadership is based on the workers' perception along with the leader's. How a leader feels can impact their performance, thus potentially impacting their workers' satisfaction.

Understanding how leadership starts and progresses from a leader's perspective and from the perception of workers is important to build strong leaders in an organization.

**Self-Perception.** In terms of leadership, self-perception can be defined as how much social power someone views himself or herself to possess. Individuals who believe they have more social power could have an increase in performance and social evaluations (Cuddy, Wilmoth, & Carney, 2012). Carney, Cuddy, and Yap (2010) asked "whether high-power poses actually produce power?" Their research findings suggested that individuals who take on high power poses improve their speaking and interviewing, and take more gambling risks (Carney et al., 2010). They also wanted to determine if power posing is associated with mental physiological and behavioral changes. This was confirmed at the end of their study, when taking on high power poses was associated with increases of power related feelings (Carney et al., 2010). Leadership emergence is conceptualized as an increase in positive power-related behavior, confidence, and dominant feelings (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012). Therefore, one who is considered a leader would take on these aforementioned leadership role characteristics. Unraveling how power posing can affect self-perception of leadership may lead to the creation of techniques that can be used to enhance leadership emergence in order to train workers to become effective leaders.

**Workers' Perception.** Following the emergence of leaders, leaders must understand how nonverbal cues can change a message being relayed (Demir, 2011) and how they can alter the perception of how much power someone possesses (Carney, Hall, & LeBeau, 2005). Based on recent research, learning how to positively portray nonverbal cues in the workforce can lead to positive worker outcomes and an increase in leadership emergence (Carney et al., 2010). For example, gazing less while listening is rated as more dominant (Exline & Messick, 1967). In an influential book, Henley (1977) described how nonverbal cues could be associated with different levels of social power. Research shows that nonverbal cues is important in regards to sending and receiving information, which can then shape impression formation (Schyns & Mohr, 2004).

### **Nonverbal Cues' Studied**

The nonverbal cues selected were based on the variety within them, based on the perceptions of leadership. These nonverbal cues are widespread and important and can potentially have an impact on leadership emergence and worker satisfaction.

**Body Postures.** Body posture is defined as “a position of a person’s body when standing or sitting” from the Oxford English Dictionary. Having upright positive body posture reflects and enhances how much power you perceive yourself to have (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012). Of the two postures used most frequently in research, the first consists of upright, high power-related poses. The second consists of constricted, low power-related poses. (Huang, Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Guillory, 2011). With each pose, body posture has been shown to not only change self-perception, but also workers’ perceptions of leadership (Huang et al., 2011).

**Facial Expressions.** First impressions are created within the first few seconds of encountering a person (Willis & Todorov, 2006) and a key part of first impression involves facial

expressions. Facial expression can be considered any behaviors performed by the face that do not include verbal communication. Individuals with high social power tend to gaze more while speaking and have a more negative glare (Carney et al., 2005). Facial expressions can include having a look of disgust, fear, happiness, or even sadness, along with glaring and gazing while someone is speaking. People with more social power are seen to be skilled with facial expressions (Carney et al., 2005).

**Distance.** Distance will be defined as “an amount of space between two things or people” by the Oxford English Dictionary, can have several skills associated with it. For example, Carney et al. (2005) used the skills of the actual physical distance between two people, touching of a workers shoulder, and initiating a handshake. Individuals with higher power roles are seen to move into or invade other workers’ personal space more freely (Carney et al., 2005). Research by Antonakis and Atwater (2002) support the idea that physical distance may be seen as less attractive to workers. Research has also supported the idea that less physical distance was positive in regards to relationship building and higher follower performance (Podsakoff, Todor, Grover & Huber, 1984).

### **Representative Regions**

While considering each nonverbal cue, culture has a rather large impact on the influences on leadership. In different cultures, specific nonverbal cues could be interpreted as completely different messages and could be associated with different leadership traits. In a widely known study by Javidan et al. (2006) four cultural regions were selected for an extensive project to be analyzed and examined based on their diverse cultural context, economic strength, and high population (Javidan et al., 2006).

**China.** China is considered the representative country for the Asian region in the GLOBE study by Javidan et al. (2006). Leadership is a very important part of China's management world (Nelson, 2014). In 2006, China became one of the largest markets in the world and still continues to grow today (Chien, 2006). With international trading being essential to China having their exports at \$1218 billion in 2007 (Starmass Dram Company, 2011), learning about the culture of China has become essential for global businesses (Chien, 2006).

China is known to be very close knit and to have very personal relationships between workers and leaders (Hwang, 2000). Chinese workers also prefer their leaders to be friendly and have strong personal relationships with workers, to portray harmony and loyalty (Chien, 2006). (Javidan et al., 2006). Leaders in China usually favor indirect communication, in fear of disrespecting someone (Javidan et al., 2006). In fact, Chinese leaders are expected to be polite and supportive of workers (Javidan et al., 2006).

The Chinese culture is very rule orientated and is considered a very high collectivistic culture (Javidan et al., 2006). Collectivistic cultures are defined as cultures in which "people are integrated from birth onward into strong, cohesive in-groups, protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, McCrae, 2004, p. 63). Family is very important in the Chinese culture, therefore leaders need to create a bond to show they have high respect for workers and their families (Javidan et al., 2006). Leaders are supposed to show less negative emotion in front of groups and families, so that harmony is not lessened (Fernández, Carrera, Sánchez, Páez, & Candia, 2000). Leaders also tend to respect and prefer workers or other leaders to portray high confidence (Javidan et al., 2006). The term Mian-Zi is very important in the Chinese culture and is translated as respecting someone's status and reputation (Liang, 2001).

Javidan et al. (2006) studied a group of American workers who were doing business with a Chinese company. During the process, a Chinese representative needed to be brought in to help with the expectations of the Americans. One problem that arose was that the Chinese leaders were not happy with the lack of personal relationship and confidence displayed by American leaders.

**Brazil.** Being a part of GLOBE's study, Brazil provides the South American perspective for the study (Javidan et al., 2006). Brazil is considered an emerging power in the global market today being the most populous country in South America today with nearly 200 million residents (Javidan et al., 2006; Pirkle, 2014). Brazil is preparing for a long-term economic growth with the World Cup being held in Brazil in 2014, and the Olympics in 2016 (Pirkle, 2014). In Brazil, the organization's distinct hierarchy is very important and social statuses are respected (Javidan et al., 2006). In a study by Nelson (2014), empathy and loyalty were ranked high in the management section. Brazil is considered a high power distance, collectivist culture with very high rankings in teamwork (Javidan et al., 2006). For the purposes of the proposed study, in order to focus more on power distance in each culture, power distance will be defined as "the degree to which members of a collective expect (and should expect) power to be distributed equally" (Javidan et al., 2006, 70).

When leaders are working within the Brazilian culture, they should make sure their actions are not looked upon as individualistic (Javidan et al., 2006). In addition, if leaders do not involve workers with different tasks and everyone's opinions are not taken into consideration, this is viewed negatively (Javidan et al., 2006). Javidan et al. (2006) explains how in the Brazilian culture, workers need to feel involved and included in multiple dimensions. Marin and

Marin (1991) noted in a study, that Latinos prefer distances that are shorter than longer compared to non-Latinos. Being able to socially interact with people in Brazilian organizations is important to create formal relationships (Javidan et al., 2006).

**France.** In the GLOBE study carried out by Javidan et al. (2006), France was considered the largest and most economically developed Latin European country and was used to represent this region. Along with France being the most internationally visited country in 2012 (International Tourism, 2012), the French economy is the fifth largest exporter of goods and commercial services (Oxford Economics, 2008). Thus, keeping leadership strong throughout organizations and being culturally educated in France is essential to keeping worker productivity high and maintaining clients.

France has a strong power distance, individualistic culture and is very task and business oriented (Javidan et al., 2006). Individualistic cultures are defined as cultures in which “ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself or her immediate family” (Hofstede, McCrae, 2004, p. 63). Individuals in high power distance cultures are taught to moderate their emotional expressions to convey respect (Fernández et al., 2000). Individualistic cultures are also associated with expressing more negative emotions (Fernández et al., 2000).

Lagrosen (2002) visited a city in France and thoroughly interviewed and studied the French culture in the business world. He noted personal relationships between leaders and members are kept to a minimal and the demand for a formal, confident business leader is important (Javidan et al., 2006). Thus leaders need to keep their relationship with workers business-focused and they need to be careful how they interact with workers, making sure they

maintain power distance and keep emotions neutral (Javidan et al., 2006; Lagrosen, 2002).

Lagrosen (2002) reported that France is a high uncertainty avoidance culture which means workers are motivated by security.

Workers are expected to be told what to do and to obey their subordinates, and leaders are expected to lead with assertiveness (Lagrosen, 2002). It is viewed negatively to have a leader who is compassionate and sensitive (Lagrosen, 2002). He also observed that most conflicts in the organization were due to lack of or miscommunication (Lagrosen, 2002).

**Egypt.** Egypt is the largest most populous Arab country (Javidan et al., 2006), and continues to grow today due to the vast history incorporated within the country. Egypt was used to represent the Arabic region in the GLOBE study (Javidan et al., 2006). The Egyptian economy has gone through many changes throughout the past few years and now the demand to be internationally competitive is essential (El-Kot & Leat, 2005). One change in Egypt would be the increase of foreign investment (El-Kot & Leat, 2005). With Egypt becoming more globally involved, the need for cross-cultural knowledge is significant for the enhancement of leadership.

Egypt is an authoritarian (Shahin & Wright, 2004), individualistic culture with very high power distance. A huge aspect of the culture is that Egyptian men do not want to appear weak when in power (Javidan et al., 2006). Loyalty and effective communication is very important in Egypt for maintaining respect from workers (Javidan et al., 2006). The demand for more emotional, personal relationships between leaders and workers are higher than most cultures and leaders have a large influence on workers (Javidan et al., 2006). Therefore, it is crucial for a leader to build strong relationships and gain loyalty.

Egypt is a very in-group culture with individuals being very devoted to their groups (Javidan et al., 2006). Being accepted as a leader is important in the Egyptian culture and leaders must prove they are deserving of the position and superior compared to others (Javidan et al., 2006). Leaders are considered a very different breed from workers and are expected to be a parental figure to their workers (Javidan et al., 2006). Thus creating the image of being a unique, distinct leader and having strong confidence is viewed positively (Shahin & Wright, 2004).

## Research Questions

This thesis focuses on how nonverbal cues throughout cultures affect self- perceptions from the leaders and perceptions of leadership from workers' perception of leadership. With certain nonverbal cues the self-perceptions of leadership might change. The specific nonverbal cues focused on are body posture, facial expressions, and distance.

*Research Question 1: From a short list of specific body language/nonverbal cues that signal leadership consisting of body posture, facial expressions, and distance: does self-perception of leadership for each nonverbal cue vary by cultures in Brazil, Egypt, France, and China?*

A key element for creating an effective hierarchy is understanding which nonverbal cues to use in different contexts. One way that workers interpret who they believe to possess more social power is by paying attention to certain nonverbal cues (Carney et al., 2005). Comprehending the usage of nonverbal cues can guide leaders using nonverbal cues to portray trustworthiness (Drew, 2013).

*Research Question 2: From a short list of specific body language/nonverbal cues that signal leadership consisting of body posture, facial expressions, and distance: does perception of leadership by workers for each nonverbal cue vary by cultures in Brazil, Egypt, France, and China?*

## Methods

This thesis is a literature review consisting of information on the topics of leadership, body language/nonverbal cues, and culture. Empirical and theoretical research was used in order to create research questions and write the overall thesis. To locate academic books, articles, and scholarly journals, online databases were searched, including but not limited to: PsycINFO, Proquest, Google Scholar, and the University of Central Florida library database, with keywords: *body language and leadership emergence, body language and power distance, nonverbal cues and culture, and nonverbal cues and leadership, Brazil in leadership, China and leadership, France and leadership, Egypt and leadership.* With the articles found, first an understanding of leadership was created with the importance of leadership in reference to businesses empathized. Following that, studies on self-perception and workers' perception of leadership based on nonverbal cues were located. The three nonverbal cues being studied were determined based upon literature: body posture, facial expressions, and distance. Finally each culture was thoroughly researched, considering all aspects and angles on how leadership is viewed. With all of this information, each culture and nonverbal cue were taken into consideration with each other, including the additional variable of the leader's self-perception and workers' perceptions of leadership. This informed how certain nonverbal cues can impact different perspectives in power roles.

## **Discussion**

Leadership has been studied for decades and will continue to be studied for years to come. Can a leader influence how much power they perceive themselves to have? Can workers' perspectives about a leader change based solely on nonverbal cues? With these questions, we need to keep in mind how cultural factors influence both overt and nonverbal messages. Without specific knowledge of the impact of culture, a person can unintentionally communicate an idea, an emotion, or even a story. Past research has investigated nonverbal cues and leadership, or culture and leadership. Very few studies have been carried out which examine leadership, culture, and nonverbal cues together. Although there are nonverbal cues that are seen as universal, other nonverbal cues are interpreted differently depending on culture (Schyns & Mohr, 2004). One of the biggest challenges for international business is cross-cultural conflicts (Dong & Liu, 2010). Based on varied findings in cross-cultural research, training should include personal space, jargon, body language, and determination of leadership (Dong & Liu, 2010). Diverse organizations will benefit through the use of culturally specific nonverbal cues, as detailed in the following sections.

### **The Impact of Body Posture on Self-Perception**

Body posture is under credited on its ability to affect someone's leadership abilities. The body has been researched in regards to social cognition, showing that body language can affect the mind and social abilities (Barsalou, 2007). The relevance of culture when examining nonverbal cues is vital. Being able to distinguish which nonverbal cues are associated with specific leadership traits is crucial in organizations with a high level of diversity in either workforce or locations. Carney et al. (2010) discovered that, in contrast to those who took on

negative positions, those who took on upright positions as in standing tall with hands on their hips showed an increase in the dominant testosterone hormone and a decrease in the stress hormone cortisol. Therefore, upright body posture is associated with positive power-related behavior, and exhibiting certain body postures can enhance a worker's ability to lead more effectively and increase confidence (Carney et al., 2010). Having upright body posture can influence someone to increase his or her leadership and communication skills (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012).

“When it comes to power; hierarchical role and physical posture often reinforce one another” (Huang et al., 2011, p. 95). When a leader has to display that they are in charge, having high erect posture is a sign of dominance and can change the mind to exhibit power related behavior (Tiedens & Fragale, 2003). Also having more openness with the body is correlated to dominance (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005). In order to maintain high power distance and have people respect the different social statuses, workers need to feel and believe a leader is effective and assertive. Having upright, positive nonverbal cues is essential for leaders to increase their self-perception of social power; leaders' own perspective are likely to influence others' beliefs as well (Carney et al., 2010). Intentionally selecting this body posture might influence the leader to exhibit power-related behavior (Riskind & Gotay, 1982). Upright body posture decreases the stress hormone (Cuddy et al., 2012), which would enhance a leader's ability to calmly handle problematic situations in the workforce.

Body openness is correlated with dominant behavior (Hall et al., 2005) and expansive posture is shown to cause power-related cognitions (Riskind & Gotay, 1982). Huang et al. (2011) determined that posture usually produced stronger effects of power than the actual role. With

strong high-power body posture, a leader can convince themselves that they are confident demonstrating superiority to help with more devoted, well communicated motivational speeches (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012; Demir, 2011; Cuddy et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2011).

**Regional Variation.** Within all four cultural regions, open body posture, upright, erect posture, orienting towards another worker, and leaning forward while a worker is speaking, would all be beneficial in regards to self-perception. These traits of body posture would enhance a leader's ability to calmly handle problematic situations in the workforce (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012; Demir, 2011; Cuddy et al., 2005). Leaders in all of these regions are expected to be formal with respectful communication skills and possess high confidence. Utilizing these traits of body posture could enhance leadership performance and worker satisfaction.

### **The Impact of Body Posture on Workers' Perception**

Leaders can demonstrate confidence or enthusiasm by power posing; both of these are shown to be associated with leaders' performance evaluations (Cuddy et al., 2012). Leaders must take into consideration how certain nonverbal cues in different contexts can portray specific messages (Carney et al., 2005). Body posture can reinforce messages and help communicate more effectively (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012). Previous research has also supported the idea that posture is connected to role power, which can lead to the acceptance of leadership by others (Arnette & Pettijohn, 2012). Leaders who have open body posture and lean forwards while a worker is talking can portray their friendliness and attentiveness (Carney et al., 2005). A body posture associated with high social power and confidence is an erect posture (Carney et al., 2005). Arnette and Pettijohn II (2012) expressed how body posture could help detect intentions and emotions. Creating strong and skilled body posture could help communicate direct, clear

messages to other workers (Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012). Leaders who take on an expansive posture usually behave in-charge (Carney et al., 2010). Utilizing open body posture and leaning forward while a worker is talking would make them feel included (Carney et al., 2005).

**Regional Variation.** Workers in all these cultural regions should preserve high erect posture to show they are dominant and demand to be respected (Carney et al., 2005). A leader needs to create a very formal business environment by showing power through orienting one's body towards workers when they are talking, and remaining upright (Carney et al., 2005; Arnette & Pettijohn II, 2012). In all four regions, these appropriate body posture traits would be beneficial in keeping worker satisfaction at its highest and to keep a loyal business environment.

### **The Impact of Facial Expression on Self-Perception**

It has been long known that certain facial expressions change the way someone else feels (Buck, 1984; Dimberg, 1997), but what most people don't realize is that their own facial expressions unconsciously impact their cognition (Dimberg, Thunberg, & Elmehed, 2000). Different facial expressions activate the mind to respond with cognitive activity, causing someone to feel an emotion after moving face muscles (Cacioppo et al., 1986; Dimberg, 1990). Using the corrugator muscle in the eyebrows to create a frown (Hjortsjö, 1970) causes negative emotions as a reaction (Cacioppo, Petty, Losch, & Kim, 1986; Dimberg, 1990). When using the zygomatic muscle to elevate the lips for a smile (Hjortsjö, 1970), it causes positive emotions as a response (Cacioppo et al., 1990). This is crucial because when a leader needs to be strong and portray a certain emotion, just by using certain facial expressions they can evoke themselves to feel that desired emotion (Dimberg et al., 2000). Even being exposed to certain facial expression can cause certain emotional responses (Whalen, Rauch, Etcoff, McInerney, Lee, & Jenike, 1998).

Research regarding facial nonverbal cues has shown that emerging leaders have shown to gaze overall more at workers, making them pay more attention (Kalma & van Rooij, 1982). Direct eye contact would help portray a leader's confidence and is helped to create power related behavior within a leader (Wesson, 1992). In order for a worker to believe in their leader, the leader must first believe in themselves. These facial expressions could lead to a more personal connection between workers and leaders. The beginning of transferring a message or an emotion first begins with the sender's mind. Making sure a leader does not feel or express negative emotions in certain regions is critical for a cohesive work environment.

**Regional Variation.** Leaders in Asian, South American, and Arabic regions should utilize increased skilled facial expressions, direct eye contact, and increased positive facial expressions. This is especially important when a leader needs to handle stressful situations and maintain a self-assured image (Javidan et al., 2006; Carney et al., 2005). When considering China and the impact of facial expressions on self-perception, taking into consideration that a leader does not use angry or disgusted facial expressions is important; this might provoke unwanted feelings within the leader. These traits in facial expressions would be very rewarding in worker output.

Since Latin European cultures frown upon emotional relationships between leaders and members (Javidan et al., 2006), leaders may want to maintain more neutral facial expressions since different facial expressions are associated with different emotions. Maintaining direct eye contact would be efficient.

### **The Impact of Facial Expressions on Workers' Perception**

Facial expressions are one of the main features noticed when meeting someone for the first

time (Wesson, 1992). This creates an impression within the first few seconds of coming into contact with someone. It has been suggested that people automatically react emotionally to others facial expressions (Buck, 1984; Dimberg, 1997). When someone displays a certain facial expression, an individual who is exposed to it have mimicry-cognition and they feel an emotional reaction themselves (Lundquist & Dimberg, 1995). For example, negative facial expressions unconsciously portrayed in an individual caused someone to have increased activity in their amygdala, which could implement negative behavior (LeDoux, 1996; Dimberg et al., 2000). With leaders needing to be self-assured and gain loyalty (Javidan et al., 2006), leaders should portray the emotional facial response they want their workers to mimic (Dimberg et al., 2000). This is very important in the business world when communicating with clients or workers; one look can cause the wrong impression or even change how someone else feels.

Looking down is a sign of accepting another's power (Demir, 2011), therefore leaders in regions where they demand authority, direct eye contact would be helpful (Wesson, 1992). Direct eye contact also portrays confidence, shows consideration and is associated with high social power (Carney et al., 2005). Using smiles and gazing while another is speaking shows empathy (Carney et al., 2005) and can relay the positive emotions when someone is in need. High power individuals are seen as having fewer facial expressions of fear and sadness (Carney et al., 2005). Fernández et al. (2000) indicated that showing extreme emotions in the face could be viewed as disrespectful in some high power distance regions. Collectivistic cultures should more comfortable expressing facial emotions (Fernández et al., 2000). Having worried or sad facial expressions would be considered a sign of weakness, along with looking down while someone is speaking (Carney et al., 2005).

**Regional Variation.** Increasing more positive facial expressions would be helpful in gaining trust in Southern American and Arabic regions. Also direct eye contact would be seen as beneficial and proper. Utilizing positive expressions and direct eye contact would portray interest and to establish power relationships, which is important within these cultural regions (Wesson, 1992).

In Asian regions, less direct eye contact would be seen as more appropriate with Asian cultures and more positive, skilled facial expressions. The Asian culture has very emotional and personal relationships between leaders and workers (Javidan et al., 2006), keeping in mind that a leader should not use negative facial expressions would be important. However for Latin European regions, direct eye contact is important and would be considered essential in a business environment. Showing a lot of emotional expressions may be seen as a sign of weakness, so workers should maintain more neutral facial expressions (Javidan et al., 2006).

### **The Impact of Distance on Self-Perception**

With communication being the basis of an organization, distance is important in the effectiveness of social interactions. But how can distance impact self-perception of leadership? Considering how the distance is managed throughout the different regions is important because within each culture, individuals will exhibit different norms (Napier & Ferris, 1993). Having enough confidence to initiate a firm handshake is looked at as high in social power (Carney et al., 2005; Wesson, 1992). Authority and trust are at the base of a business, and a leader who in comprised of confidence and goodwill can express it by initiating a firm handshake (Wesson, 1992)

With more interaction and less distance, leaders can create an emotional attachment,

which is essential for a healthy relationship in some regions (Bolino & Turnley, 2009). Kerr and Jermier (1978) conceptualized the premise: with more distance, leaders may become ineffective. Leaders that do not have this physical contact with their subordinates might not view themselves as a leader. Leaders can not only show their social status and social skills but also feel that they are leading and are needed to maintain a cohesive business. In order to maintain the status of having power, someone must be physically present and portray their confidence. More distance creates a barrier between leader and worker that can effect information being exchanged and can make monitoring performance difficult (Bass, 1990; Antonakis & Atwater, 2002). Being present in the workforce and clearly displaying definite social statuses can cause a leader to feel like they hold power thus exhibiting leadership qualities. Chun, Yammariono, Dionne, Sosik, and Koo Moon (2009) conveyed that when leaders and workers are physically close, there is high personal relevance and more direct interpersonal relationships are established. In order to be treated with respect, leaders must be present and demand it, thus boosting confidence and performance in their management. There was no research found with the impact of friendly touching and self-perception.

**Regional Variation.** In order to be treated with respect, leaders must be present and demand it, thus boosting confidence in their management. Within all four regions, leaders need to maintain less distance, and initiate handshakes when appropriate.

### **The Impact of Distance on Workers' Perception**

Showing respect in different cultures is important when communicating in businesses. As a leader it is very important to maintain confidence and to not look weak or incompetent (Liang, 2001). A leader should be the first to initiate a handshake because it is a sign of dominance and

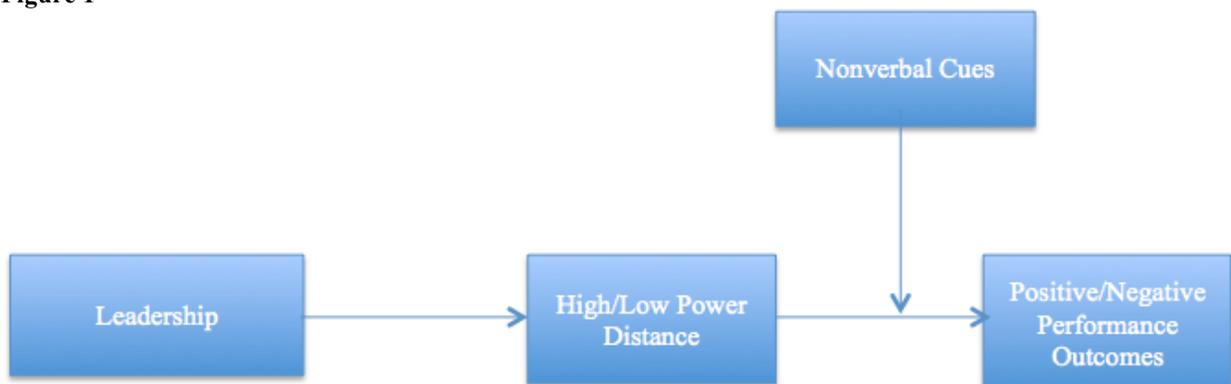
high social power (Carney et al., 2005). With a handshake being a form of an introduction in the business world, initiating a firm handshake is a perfect way to portray confidence and maintain connections (Wesson, 1992). Wesson (1992) states that someone who offers a handshake means openness and goodwill. However, imposing on someone's personal space could be considered disrespectful in some regions. With many corporations becoming more global, the importance of understanding how the distance between two people affects worker performance is crucial. Some research has found that workers who interact less with their leaders are less satisfied with their job (Baird & Diebolt, 1976). A leader who freely touches and invades the privacy of another worker is seen as having higher social power but is also shown to be a form of a companionate behavior (Carney et al., 2005). Increasing distance leads to the decrease of strong high-quality relationships between leaders and members (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). If a leader is distant and unseen, this would contradict the mental image of an ideal boss.

**Regional Variation.** The need for a leader to be present in Asian and Arabic regions cannot be overemphasized. Closer physical distance within organizations would be appropriate to show support and consideration (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Within these regions, having less distance, more friendly touching, and initiating a handshake would be a key to maintaining strong bonds with workers. However, less physical distance and initiating a handshake for leaders in South American and Latin European regions is recommended. Friendly touching might be viewed as inappropriate in regions with high demand of respect. Identifying and practicing these behaviors could create an effective leader who is respected by these cultures.

## Conclusion

Inside every organization, there is a distinctive culture (Larson & Kleiner, 2004). This includes an organization's ethics and rules that have an influence over an organization and its workers (Larson & Kleiner, 2004). Regardless of the specific organizational culture, individuals have their own set of values and norms that affect the workplace every day. Taking into consideration how both culture and individuals influence situations in the workforce is crucial for a cooperative, well-functioning business. With research, it has been shown that job satisfaction has been related to organizational commitment and important business outcomes (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). The need to be open minded and to understand how cultures expect their workers to act is important with the workforce being more diverse today (Javidan et al., 2006). A key element in this process could be enhanced through the appropriate nonverbal cues. Nonverbal cues can be seen as either universal or culture-specific (Kleinsmith, De Silva, & Bianchi-Berthouze, 2006). The model posits that leadership is the basis of an organization; from leadership stems either high or low power distance depending on the culture. Following power distance nonverbal cues are then used as a key mediator in influencing positive or negative performance outcome. Please see figure 1.

**Figure 1**



In regard to body posture, all four regions all are expected to have high power related body posture. Not only does having erect, and open body posture enhance leadership traits (Arnette & Pettijohn, 2012), but it also portrays high social power in a leader (Carney et al., 2005). In addition, leaning forward and orienting towards another worker while they are speaking is of high importance for all cultures in regards to self-perception and worker perceptions of leadership. All of these cultures expect their leaders to be successful and formal. Thus we propose:

*Proposition 1: Utilizing positive, upright high power body posture is beneficial in all four cultural regions discussed regarding self- and workers' perception.*

Reflecting on facial expressions, leaders are expected to maintain a positive attitude and create a supportive atmosphere in all cultures. For self-perception, all regions except for the Latin European region should utilize skilled facial expressions, positive facial expression, and direct eye contact. In Latin European regions, more neutral facial expressions should be used.

In South American and Arabic regions, exposing workers to positive facial expressions and making direct eye contact while they talk would be favorable in worker productivity. The Latin European region would benefit from having leaders display neutral facial expressions, increased negative emotions when needed, and direct eye contact. Within the Asian region, indirect communication is utilized more (Javidan et al., 2006) therefore direct eye contact might be seen as disrespectful. Thus we propose:

*Proposition 2: Utilizing more skilled facial expressions and having more positive facial emotions is beneficial in the cultural regions with higher personal relationships, i.e. China, Brazil, and Egypt, regarding self- and workers' perception.*

Considering physical distance within the different regions, more distance would be problematic in regard to self-perception and worker perception (Napier & Ferris, 1993). Increased distance within these cultures leads to weaker relationships (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Since physical distance has been shown to have a negative impact on job satisfaction and loyalty, leaders in all these four regions should create less distance with workers (Sundstrom, Burt & Kamp, 1980). All regions would benefit from the leader initiating a firm handshake when considering the leader's self- and workers' perception.

China and Egypt would be positively impacted through workers' perceptions more friendly touching, although friendly touching should be kept to a minimum in France and Brazil. There was no research found on the impact of friendly touching on leader's self-perceptions; therefore, there was not enough evidence to make a confident conclusion. Thus we propose:

*Proposition 3: Utilizing less physical distance and initiating a handshake is beneficial in all four cultural regions regarding self- and workers' perception.*

Overall, past research consistently finds that nonverbal cues are a high impact influence on the perception of leadership. With leadership being the basis of an organization it will always be in demand for a productive organization environment, however leadership strategies can be

manipulated and improved just by utilizing culturally appropriate nonverbal cues (Carney et al., 2005; Arnette & Pettijohn, 2012). In conclusion, nonverbal cues have been shown to be important for perceptions of leadership given diverse cultural regions. In the table below, a summary of which nonverbal cues would be appropriate regarding self- and worker's perception within each cultural region is stated. Please see table 1.

**Table 1**

	Self-Perception	Worker Perception
Body Posture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open body posture</li> <li>• Upright erect posture</li> <li>• Orientating towards another worker.</li> <li>• Leaning forward while a worker is speaking</li> </ul>	All four cultural regions	All four cultural regions
Facial Expressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skilled facial expressions</li> <li>• Direct eye contact while worker is speaking</li> <li>• Increased positive facial expressions</li> </ul>	China, Brazil, Egypt  Especially in China, the use of negative emotions would not be beneficial. In France, leaders should utilize neutral facial expressions but keep direct eye contact.	Brazil, Egypt  In China, when relaying negative information the use of a concerned facial expression would be beneficial and less direct eye contact would be appropriate. In France, less facial expressions, more eye contact, and increased negative emotion when needed is beneficial.
Distance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less distance</li> <li>• Initiate a handshake</li> <li>• More Friendly touching</li> </ul>	All four cultural regions  No research for friendly touching and the impact of self-perception.	China, Egypt  Brazil and France should keep friendly touching to a minimum.

## **Future Research**

While more people realize the importance of nonverbal cues are, research has been steadily expanding. However, nonverbal cues and how they vary within different cultures have not been frequently studied together. Given that this thesis is a literature review and not an experimental project, many types of information were limited. Research data on leadership was limited to the cultures studied, facial expressions and self-perception, and physical distance and self-perception, with additional data related to initiating handshakes and self-perception. No information was discovered on the impact of friendly touching on self-perception. For the future, a well-designed experiment would be beneficial in terms of examining these cultures and analyzing how the leaders display nonverbal behaviors. With such a study, these cultures would need to be analyzed though different business settings and the nonverbal cues would be examined through self-perception and worker perception. Control groups would be used, using a variety of nonverbal cues. Surveys could be used to better understand how workers view these nonverbal cues and how they impact leadership. Data would be provided in determining which nonverbal cues effective leaders take advantage of in the specific cultures, and how workers want their leaders to behave. In determining how a leader should utilize specific nonverbal cues, a leader could potentially create loyalty within workers, increase their communication skills, and achieve important business goals. Research to also be studied to how leaders in different cultures should utilize their nonverbal cues when coming into contact with one another.

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