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Nonverbal marginalization

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Abstract

The nonverbal cues that accompany speech (for example, facial expressions, gestures, and eye gaze) can be as communicatively significant as the content of the speech itself. I identify what I argue is a very common—but largely philosophically unexamined—phenomenon: our tendency to allocate nonverbal cues in ways that are sensitive to conversational participants' levels of respective social power such that people with more power receive comparatively more positive and affirming nonverbal cues than people with less power. I call this 'nonverbal marginalization' and argue that it reflects and reinforces harmful social prejudices. In this paper, I introduce and empirically situate nonverbal marginalization within a broader account of nonverbal communication, showing how implicit and explicit biases are subtly reflected in automatic patterns of nonverbal behavior. I go on to propose a new conceptual resource and intervention stratagy to identify and address the various ethical, psychological, and epistemic harms of nonverbal marginalization.

> Somewhere between retina and object, between vision and view, his eyes draw back, hesitate, and hover. At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see.
>
> —Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

1 | INTRODUCING NONVERBAL MARGINALIZATION

Contemporary academic philosophy, especially philosophy of language and epistemology, has undergone an observable social turn. Much of this work concerns how social and political biases are communicated by different types of speech—for example, slurs (Anderson & Lepore, 2013; Hom, 2008), dog whistles (Keiser, 2022; Saul, 2018), hate speech (Langton, 2018; Maitra, 2021), testimonial injustice (Kukla, 2021; Lackey, 2020), silencing (Dotson, 2011; Medina, 2023), gaslighting (Abramson, 2014; Manne, 2023), and propaganda (Pohlhaus, 2016; Stanley, 2015). These literatures have almost exclusively focused on *verbal* communication as the locus of prejudice, investigating what the speaker says and how to socially and politically interpret the explicit and implied content of their speech. However, recent developments within psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics emphasize the importance of *nonverbal* communication, which includes cues like facial expression, body posture, gestures, and parts of speech not related to semantic content, including vocal tone and pitch (see, e.g., Frühholz & Schweinberger, 2021; Hall et al., 2019; Kawakami et al., 2021; Lloyd & Hugenberg, 2021; Matsumoto et al., 2013; Sagliano et al., 2022; Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2023). In this paper, I will argue that nonverbal communication is worthy of serious philosophical study and is importantly connected to issues in philosophy of mind, social philosophy, philosophy of language, and epistemology.[1] I will be evaluating social dimensions of nonverbal communication, demonstrating how patterns of nonverbal behaviors can reflect and reinforce social biases, thus upholding oppressive power structures.

[1] Here, I am interested in how exclusionary patterns of nonverbal behavior can harm members of marginalized social groups—that is, how nonverbal behavior can be *a mechanism* of oppression. The philosophical literature largely has not addressed this particular dimension of nonverbal communication—in fact, there exists little philosophical work on *any* dimension of nonverbal communication. However, framed in the right way, we can see existing work on phenomena like emotion expression and conversational silencing as being relevantly connected to nonverbal communication. I have flagged a couple such connections here:

First, Glazer (2019) has written on social oppression and emotion expression (an important subcomponent of nonverbal communication). He argues that marginalized peoples' facial cues are often ignored and/or culpably misinterpreted by members of socially powerful groups, depriving the marginalized individuals of their communicative agency—for example, harmfully misinterpreting Black women's neutral emotion expressions as angry because Black women are stereotyped as being aggressive. In this way, Glazer and I are analyzing opposite dimensions of nonverbal communication and oppression: I am mostly considering the nonverbal behaviors of the oppressor and Glazer is considering the nonverbal behaviors (specifically emotion expressions) of the oppressed.

Second, there has been philosophical work in recent years on the communicative significance of silences. We can see silences as being similar to traditional forms of nonverbal communication in that silences fall outside of what is implicitly or explicitly communicated in speech, revealing the informational richness of nonverbal behaviors—see, for example, Tanesini (2018) on how silences can communicate political dissent, Goldberg (2020) on how silences communicate (defeasible) presumptive conversational agreement, and Klieber (2024) on how marginalized peoples' (intentional and communicatively rich) silences can, in turn, be silenced and undermined by members of socially powerful groups. I will be discussing examples in which nonverbal marginalization ends up being a mechanism of silencing, suggesting that dynamics of silencing cannot be wholly understood by looking at the mere presence or absence of speech: the act of silencing is often partially—and sometimes entirely—nonverbal.

Of course, if it were the case that nonverbal communication straightforwardly followed verbal communication, extending existing work on verbal bias to nonverbal behavior might seem easy and straightforward. However, even though patterns of verbal and nonverbal behavior often correspond, a mounting body of contemporary work in cognitive science suggests that verbal and nonverbal communication are functionally and cognitively distinct (e.g., P. Buck & Knapp, 2006; Corballis, 2014; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2016; Patterson, 2006). We will see that this gives rise to cases in which agents' verbal behavior is neutral (or even positive) while their nonverbal behavior is prejudicial—for example, verbally avowing gender egalitarianism in a business meeting while at the same time not looking at one's female colleagues when they speak. In this paper, I will focus on these types of cases, illustrating the ways in which verbal and nonverbal communication frequently diverge where social bias is concerned. I will show that a focus on *nonverbal* communication enables us to recognize communicative dynamics (like nonverbal marginalization) that have so far been undertheorized in literatures which have focused on verbal communication.

To frame our discussion of bias in nonverbal communication, consider the following two cases, which I will refer back to throughout the paper:

> **Technology Company**: Mark and Ann, who work for a technology firm, schedule an important meeting with an outside consultant named David. During the meeting Ann notices that David seems to mostly be looking and gesturing toward Mark. Because of this, Ann feels that her presence in the conversation is being overlooked, which makes her nervous and causes her to stumble over her words. She comes away from the meeting feeling devalued.
>
> **Academic Conference**: Adam, Roy, and Eric have been invited to speak on a panel at a conference, presenting about a topic they all work on. Adam and Roy are White, and Eric is Black. During the panel, Eric notices that both Adam and Roy are mostly looking at each other and not nodding and smiling as much at him. This causes Eric to feel uncomfortable and makes it difficult for him to contribute to the conversation. He also experiences imposter syndrome, which makes him question his place as a Black scholar in a White-dominated field. As a result of this experience, he feels distracted for the rest of the conference and has difficulty focusing on his writing for a couple of days.

To give an account of the nonverbal dynamics described in the cases above, it will be helpful to sketch out a general model for nonverbal communication (see Figure 1):

The process of nonverbal communication minimally involves two people—one person who produces a nonverbal cue (e.g., nodding) and the other who interprets the cue (e.g., taking the nodding as a sign of agreement). We can name these two roles in nonverbal exchanges: the *producer* of some set of nonverbal cues and the *interpreter* of the (producer's) nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal communication draws on tacit, implicit knowledge which associates nonverbal cues with specific meanings (e.g., associating nodding with agreement) and is acquired via some process of social learning (e.g., learning to associate nodding with agreement).[2]

[2] The way meanings get attached to nonverbal cues is a point of discussion in the nonverbal communication literature. On the one hand, it has been argued that the meaning of (at least some) nonverbal cues is innate rather than learned (see, e.g., Matsumoto & Hwang, 2016; Tracy et al., 2015). However, pointing to variability in nonverbal communication

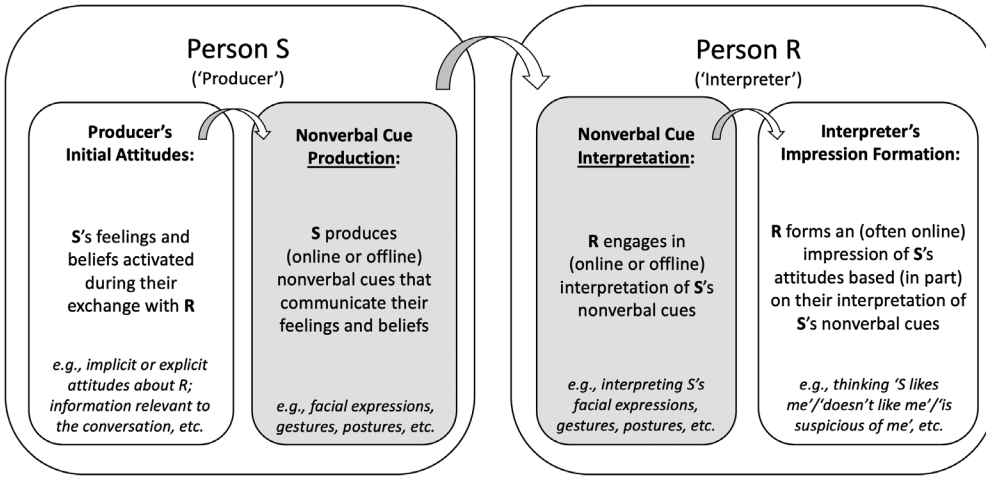

FIGURE 1 In a nonverbal exchange between persons S and R, S produces nonverbal cues that are processed and interpreted by R. S's (often online and conscious-level) feelings and beliefs cause them to produce a set of (online or offline) nonverbal behaviors, which R then detects and interprets (also online or offline). Interpretation of S's nonverbal cues then causes R to form an (often online, conscious-level) impression of S.

Nonverbal communication can be further broken down into two subcategories, characterized by distinct varieties of cognitive processing: *online* nonverbal communication and *offline* nonverbal communication (see Lakin (2006), Patterson (1995, 2006), and Bargh (1996, 1997) on types of nonverbal communication). Following standard terminologies in psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics (e.g., Henry, 2022; Khan & Franks, 2003; Wamsley et al., 2023; Yao et al., 2021), we can say cognitive processing is online when it is characterized by deliberation and explicit awareness and offline when it is more automatic, occurring without explicit awareness.[3] We can talk about

practices across and between cultures, others have argued that most (perhaps all) nonverbal behavior is implicitly or explicitly learned through socialization (see Gendron & Barrett, 2018; Gendron et al., 2014).

[3] Though I use the language of "online" and "offline" processing throughout, I do not see the account of nonverbal communication on offer as being necessarily anchored to this specific terminology. In fact, as I am defining the terms here, online and offline processing can be pretty straightforwardly translated into other popular paradigms in cognitive science with different terminologies (therefore, I urge the reader to take their terminological pick!):

(1) First alternative terminology: "*System 1*" versus "*System 2*." According to the widely popularized Dual Process Theory, System 1 processes are slow, deliberate, and analytical and System 2 processes are fast, automatic, and instinctual (Evans, 2003; Kahneman, 2011). As it is being defined here, online processing, then, roughly corresponds to System 1 processing, while offline processing corresponds to System 2 processing. I should flag, though, there are paradigm cognitive capacities (vision, decision making, etc.) which clearly involve both types of processing in ways that can be difficult to straightforwardly delineate within a Dual Process Theory framework (for critical discussion, see Evans & Stanovich, 2013; Keren & Schul, 2009). By contrast, I would suggest that the language of "online" and "offline" processing can be applied more naturally to cognitive processes (like the subtypes of nonverbal communication I am identifying) in a more fine-grained way. However, those who favor Dual Process Theory should be able to straightforwardly substitute System 1/System 2 for online/offline as the terms are being used here.

(2) Second alternative terminology: "*Explicit*" versus "*Implicit*." As the terms "explicit" and "implicit" are sometimes used in cognitive science (see, e.g., Reber, 1989; Sun, 2015), the "explicit"/"implicit" distinction seems to directly map onto the "online"/"offline" distinction as defined here. However, the meanings of "explicit" and "implicit" vary across philosophy and cognitive science. For example, sometimes the "explicit"/"implicit" labels get used to refer to the content or format

online and offline processing in the context of both the production and interpretation of nonverbal cues (more on what this looks like in a moment). Moreover, the online/offline distinction is best thought of as representing a gradient rather than a strict binary (thus, we can talk about nonverbal communication as being *partially* online—see Lakin (2006), Patterson (2006), and Bargh & Chartrand (1999) on automatic nonverbal communication). For reasons that will become clear in a moment, I am claiming that nonverbal communication defaults to being largely (and often entirely) offline.[4]

1.1 | Offline nonverbal communication

Offline nonverbal communication is the default, which means that much of the time nonverbal communication "flies under the radar" (see, e.g., Bargh, 1997; Lakin, 2006; Oishi & Graham, 2010; Patterson, 2006). And this is no accident: offline nonverbal communication tends to be more cognitively efficient. To illustrate why, consider the following case:

> **Breakup**: Reggie is listening to his friend Stefan talk through a recent difficult breakup. During the exchange, Reggie's nonverbal behaviors communicate his sympathy for his friend, which makes Stefan feel supported and reassured—for example, at various points in the conversation Reggie smiles sympathetically, leans in, and touches Stefan's arm. Reggie's nonverbal cues are subtle, but make Stefan feel supported and cared for in his moment of vulnerability.

We can imagine that the nonverbal communication between Reggie and Stefan could be online or offline (or some mix of the two), depending on how Reggie's nonverbal cues are produced and interpreted. For example, perhaps Reggie is especially aware of his nonverbal behaviors during the exchange, deliberately choosing nonverbal cues which communicate his support for Stefan (e.g., explicitly thinking "I should nod now" or "I should touch his arm now"). If this were the case, then Reggie's nonverbal behaviors would indeed be online.

But, much nonverbal communication will not be online in this way because it is expensive from the perspective of cognitive processing (see, e.g., Cowan (2010) and Gruszka and Nęcka (2017) on processing capacity limitations). For example, if Reggie is explicitly thinking about how to moderate his tone of voice and facial expressions to maximally communicate his

of the mental representation itself rather than the cognitive process—that is, a representation is explicit if its content is explicitly represented somewhere in the cognitive architecture and implicit if it is not explicitly represented in the architecture but is proxy represented in other way (see, e.g., debates on the structure of implicit bias—Holroyd, 2012; Madva & Brownstein, 2016; Mandelbaum, 2016). However, my discussion of online and offline processing is agnostic about the content or format of the representations underlying the processing. For example, I am claiming the implicit biases are reflected in our patterns of nonverbal behavior, but my account does not say anything specific about what implicit biases are or how the bias information is being represented. So, to avoid this confusion, I am mostly only using the "explicit"/"implicit" labels to refer specifically to explicit and implicit *biases*. However, those who prefer the "explicit"/"implicit" terminology for processing, should be able to (pretty seamlessly) swap the terms in.

[4] As I am framing online and offline nonverbal communication here, they are probably best understood in Marrian terms as *computational-level* phenomena (Marr, 1982). However, I would suggest there is reason to think that online and offline nonverbal communication are distinct at algorithmic and implementational levels as well. For example, a growing body of empirical work suggests that there is a functional and neurological distinction between online and offline nonverbal cue processing—see R. Buck and VanLear (2002) and Givens (2015).

concern for Stefan (i.e., engaging in online nonverbal communication), he will have fewer online cognitive resources available to listen to what Stefan is saying. Thus, nonverbal communication typically gets relegated to the offline system so that cognitive resources can be freed up for other explicit forms of communication, like Reggie thinking about what Stefan is saying and responding appropriately.

However, even though offline nonverbal communication is automatic and nondeliberate, it can still communicate the producer's person-level intentions and conscious mental states (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Chartrand et al., 2005; Lakin et al., 2008; Palmer & Simmons, 1995). Reggie is supportive of Stefan, so he engages in offline nonverbal signaling which conveys that support (even if he is not aware he is doing this). To some degree, we are continually engaging in this type of offline nonverbal communication when we interact with others, producing nonverbal cues which communicate our feelings and intentions without our awareness or explicit deliberation. For example, on a typical morning I engage in a number of short interactions when I come into work (exchanging nods and pleasantries, assuming a cheerful demeanor, smiling, etc.). I am not explicitly aware of my nonverbal cues in most of these interactions. Nonetheless, I am engaging in directed offline nonverbal signaling when I spontaneously nod and smile at my coworkers, which serves to communicate my intentions.

Nonverbal cue interpretation tends to get processed offline as well (Choi et al., 2006; Dovidio et al., 2002; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Puce, 2013; Reinhard & Sporer, 2008). For example, it is likely that Stefan is not deliberately focusing on Reggie's nonverbal cues—that is, he is not consciously attending to Reggie's body language and tone of voice and from this reflectively coming to the conclusion that Reggie intends to communicate his support. Rather, Stefan is automatically registering and interpreting Reggie's nonverbal cues. This offline processing results in an online output: namely, Stefan *feels* supported by Reggie. However, if his interpretation of Reggie's nonverbal cues is happening offline, Stefan largely will not be aware that this feeling of being supported has in part been caused by his (offline) interpretation of Reggie's nonverbal behaviors.

Therefore, we can think of offline nonverbal communication as aiming to facilitate successful communication while minimizing cognitive effort, explaining why it tends to be the default system.

1.2 | Online nonverbal communication

Of course, nonverbal communication *can* be brought online. For example, we can consciously and deliberately use our nonverbal cues to communicate or obscure our feelings and intentions. Consider Stefan's breakup. While he was being broken up with, Stefan might have tried to deliberately conceal his surprise and disappointment to "save face" and make the situation less awkward. This could involve online regulation of his nonverbal cue production, like willing himself not to cry or to look sad. Nonverbal cue interpretation can be brought online as well. Perhaps in an effort to deliver the news kindly, Stefan's partner deliberately attended to Stefan's nonverbal cues during the breakup conversation to gauge his response and react sensitively (e.g., consciously noting whether Stefan averted his gaze or if his voice shook).

In online nonverbal communication cases, people will typically have a reason to justify the expenditure of limited processing resources involved in bringing nonverbal communication online. Again, this is because online nonverbal communication on both the production and interpretation side is computationally costly relative to offline nonverbal communication. And while

it is probably rarer than the offline variety, online nonverbal cue interpretation has been robustly observed across empirical literatures and seems to track high stakes and/or emotionally charged situations—for example, in cases of suspected deception and romantic and sexual attraction (Bond et al., 2015; ten Brinke et al., 2016).[5]

1.3 | Defining nonverbal marginalization

Now with a model of both online and offline nonverbal communication on the table, we can turn to the focus of this paper: a phenomenon I have termed "nonverbal marginalization." I want to draw our attention to a few aspects of the Technology Company and Academic Conference cases, which highlight key features of nonverbal marginalization.

First, both cases involve the distribution of nonverbal social cues—David *looking* at Mark more than Ann; Adam and Roy *nodding* and *smiling* mostly at each other and not at Eric. But there is not any verbal hostility being directed at Ann or Eric (e.g., they are not being *told* they are incompetent). I will discuss the psychological motivations for engaging in this sort of nonverbal marginalization in Section 2.

Second, this nonverbal disregard is impairing Ann and David's respective performances: Ann stumbles over her words in the meeting and Eric speaks up less on the panel. I will argue in Section 3 that these types of performance impairments reflect discriminatory environments rather than genuine ability deficits. In other words, Ann has the ability to engage in the meeting and Eric has the ability to contribute to the conference panel. However, their colleagues' nonverbally marginalizing behavior prevents them from fully manifesting their professional abilities in these hostile contexts.

Third, Ann and Eric are harmed by their interlocutors' discriminatory nonverbal behaviors. As I have laid out, their experiences of nonverbal marginalization make them uncomfortable during the meeting and the panel, preventing their full participation (we will see in Sections 3 and 4 that this dynamic can have the effect of reinforcing social inequities). And the harm extends beyond discomfort in the moment. For example, Eric's distress causes him to disengage somewhat from the rest of the conference, foregoing valuable professional opportunities. Further, he is less productive following the incident because his experience of nonverbal marginalization triggers his imposter syndrome, which I will discuss in Section 3. And while a few days of decreased productivity might not seem that significant, I will argue that people from historically marginalized social groups (e.g., women, people of color, transgender people, disabled people, etc.) experience this type of harm regularly. Thus, we can imagine that the *cumulative* effect of losing a couple of days of confidence and productivity could be quite substantial if this experience occurs often.

Fourth, given everything we have said about the automaticity of nonverbal communication, aspects of the nonverbal dynamic might go consciously unnoticed by all parties. On both the production and interpretation side, we will see that nonverbal communication in nonverbal marginalization cases tends to be offline (I will argue in Section 4 this is why the phenomenon

[5] However, even though people often engage in online nonverbal communication in these particular high stakes situations (i.e., they are consciously and intentionally tracking others' nonverbal behaviors), there is empirical debate as to the *reliability* of online tracking of nonverbal behaviors in some of these contexts (i.e., the conclusions they are drawing based on the online tracking of nonverbal cues may not be totally reliable)—c.f. Vrij et al. (2019) on lying and Moore (2010) on human courtship.

can be so harmful and insidious). But why think nonverbal cue production and interpretation is offline in nonverbal marginalization cases like these?

On the production side, David, Adam, and Roy might be unaware that they are nonverbally engaging less positively with Ann and Eric. After all, they probably think they are acting normally during the meeting and conference, since people typically do not consciously track their own nonverbal behaviors (unless they have a particular reason to do so). However, I will argue in Section 2 that discriminatory patterns of (even offline) nonverbal behaviors reflect implicit biases (keep in mind that offline nonverbal behaviors can reflect genuine intentions and beliefs).[6] Thus, I will argue that David, Adam, and Roy's biases are reflected in their nonverbal behaviors, even though those behaviors are offline.

Nonverbal cue interpretation in these cases is also probably occurring largely offline. In other words, Ann and Eric may not be fully aware they are being nonverbally disregarded by their interlocutors (after all, absent good reason, we typically do not consciously track other people's nonverbal cues). This seems especially likely given the other cognitive processing demands of participating in the business meeting and academic conference. Ann and Eric have so many things to focus on other than their interlocutors' patterns of nonverbal behavior (like what is being said in the meeting and on the panel). Moreover, I will argue that insofar as Ann and Eric are consciously aware of their interlocutors' prejudicial patterns of nonverbal behavior, this awareness is likely fragmentary, quickly falling out of mind. And if Ann and Eric are not in a position to consciously pick up on their interlocutors' nonverbal cues, we will see that they will not be epistemically well-positioned to explicitly identify patterns of *discriminatory* nonverbal behavior.

Finally, I will argue in Section 4 that consciously recognizing this type of nonverbal discrimination is especially difficult because victims of nonverbal marginalization lack the relevant concept and label ("nonverbal marginalization") to attach to those experiences such that even when they are aware they are being nonverbally marginalized, it can be difficult to explicitly identify and address the behavior. Furthermore, I will claim that even when agents like Ann and Eric are not consciously aware of nonverbally marginalizing patterns of behaviors, they can nonetheless pick up on their interlocutors' patterns of discriminatory nonverbal behaviors *offline*, which causes them to form impressions (and perhaps beliefs) about how their interlocutors assess them—for example, thinking David, Adam, and Roy do not intellectually or professionally respect them. This affects the way Ann and Eric regard themselves: being looked at and smiled at less causes them to feel as if they are not valued within their professional communities. However, I will conclude Section 4 by suggesting that "hermeneutically intervening" by familiarizing people with the concept of "nonverbal marginalization" and encouraging them to apply it can actually lessen the harmful psychological effects of nonverbally marginalizing behavior.

[6] Of course, this is not to say that nonverbal behaviors will *always* accurately reflect our wide range of intentions and beliefs—especially given the often contradictory nature of our implicit and explicit attitudes. So, what is our nonverbal behavior revealing about us? While it has been argued in parts of the empirical literature that nonverbal behaviors reflect genuine intentions (Choi et al., 2006; Palmer & Simmons, 1995; Patterson, 1995), we might naturally still want to know *which* of our intentions and attitudes get reflected in our patterns of nonverbal behavior (and which do not). Think about implicit and explicit biases. As I will discuss in Section 2, implicit biases are paradigmatically thought of as being separate from—and often inconsistent with—attitudes agents explicitly endorse. I am arguing here that our nonverbal cues tend to reflect those implicit (rather than explicit) attitudes. This means that in implicit nonverbal marginalization cases, the agent's pattern of nonverbal behavior reflects their implicit—but perhaps not explicit—attitudes. For more critical discussion on the relationship between implicit biases and agential intentions, see Brownstein (2016), Levy (2015), and Holroyd et al. (2017).

With this necessary background now on the table, we can put forward a definition of nonverbal marginalization:

> **Nonverbal Marginalization** is the behavioral tendency to distribute nonverbal cues in ways that reflect and reinforce contextual power dynamics, such that higher power people receive more positive and affirming nonverbal cues (and fewer negative nonverbal cues) than lower power people.

According to this definition, for a pattern of nonverbal behavior to count as a case of nonverbal marginalization, the behavior needs to display *genuine sensitivity to contextual power dynamics*. We can cash out this sensitivity to power as follows: for S to nonverbally marginalize R, (1) S must be (consciously or unconsciously) tracking relevant contextual power dynamics which position R in a (comparatively) lower power status relative to other conversational participants and (2) S's nonverbal behaviors toward R must reflect those tracked dynamics.[7]

I will delve deeper into the cognitive architecture of nonverbal marginalization in the next section, but before getting there I want to further clarify three features of nonverbal marginalization in Subsections 1.4–1.6: (1.4) the extent to which people (especially members of historically marginalized groups) are aware of nonverbal marginalization, (1.5) how the positive and negative valence of nonverbal cues gets determined, and (1.6) which power dynamics are tracked by patterns of nonverbally marginalizing behavior.

1.4 | Lived experience versus automaticity: Online and offline awareness

I have suggested here that nonverbal communication—including dynamics of nonverbal marginalization—largely occurs offline. But, of course, the fact that nonverbal marginalization is recognizable gives us some evidence that the phenomenon is not altogether eluding our awareness and recognition. That people—especially members of historically marginalized groups—are easily able to recognize nonverbal marginalization in their past and present experiences suggests that aspects of nonverbal marginalization are being tracked in a way that is, at the very least, accessible for *later* online processing. So, how can we make sense of this pattern of awareness in relation to online and offline nonverbal cue processing?

[7] I take this point to be especially relevant when we consider certain types of neurodivergence, which shape patterns of nonverbal behavior. For example, children and adults on the autism spectrum often have difficulty interpreting and producing many of the "positive" and "negative" nonverbal cues used by allistic (i.e., non-autistic) people (Pelzl et al., 2023). However, an autistic person (seemingly) failing to nonverbally engage positively with an allistic interlocutor (or at least failing to nonverbally engage in a way the allistic person would interpret as being positive), would not constitute genuine nonverbal marginalization because the autistic person's nonverbal behaviors are not reflecting an attended-to power dynamic. In fact, echoing Flores' (2021) notion of an "epistemic style," we might say the neurodivergent and allistic interlocutors can have different "nonverbal styles," which ends up creating a false impression of nonverbal marginalization.

Of course, even if the autistic person is not nonverbally marginalizing the allistic person, the allistic person might still interpret the autistic person's behavior as nonverbally marginalizing—and might be (in some sense) justified in doing so, especially if the allistic person frequently experiences nonverbal marginalization in virtue of being a member of an oppressed social group. While these cases of clashing nonverbal communication styles largely fall outside the scope of this paper, one hope might be that encouraging awareness of different types of nonverbal communication could help people better navigate these nonverbal communication style conflicts which often go unaddressed.

First, it is important to emphasize that this pattern of awareness is not specific to nonverbal marginalization and reflects dynamics of nonverbal communication more broadly. Much nonverbal communication involves what we can think of as *minimal* or *partial awareness*, which tends to be fleeting and fragmentary. However, even in cases of partial awareness, nonverbal information can often be accessed later by downstream online processing to facilitate conscious online memory and recall. This enables us to identify patterns of nonverbal behavior (often after the fact) even when we are not consciously and consistently aware of them.

To illustrate partial awareness with a nonverbal communication case that does not involve marginalization, consider having a heated disagreement about a complex issue with a friend. During the exchange, you would likely have a lot to focus on, which would put you under significant cognitive load. This means that your online cognitive processing resources will mostly be occupied with the associated tasks of interpreting what your friend is saying and formulating appropriate responses such that you would not be consciously tracking their nonverbal cues. Nonetheless, you are almost certainly processing their nonverbal behavior offline (and this offline processing shapes your behavior toward your friend), even if you are not explicitly aware of it—for example, see Eskenazi et al. (2016) on automatic nonverbal cue processing. And, if you were later specifically asked to recall your friend's body language, you might be able to remember information about their posture once prompted, even if you were not engaging in much online monitoring of their nonverbal behaviors during the actual exchange ("now that I think about it, I noticed his posture was aggressive!")—see Hall et al. (2006) and Cook et al. (2010) on memory and nonverbal behavior.

We see the same pattern of awareness in typical nonverbal marginalization cases. Given competing pressure for online processing resources (especially during cognitively demanding exchanges), processing of nonverbally marginalizing behaviors will tend toward being offline. This means that awareness of nonverbal marginalization will likely be limited and fragmentary. But fragmentary awareness does not necessarily mean lack of awareness altogether. For example, imagine that in the Academic Conference case, Eric finds himself momentarily aware that he is being nonverbally marginalized by the White panelists, briefly thinking something like "Why are Adam and Roy only looking at each other and not at me?" However, this awareness is likely to quickly fall out of mind as he turns his attention to more pressing things during the panel, like how he is going to respond to questions raised by the moderator and audience. Nonetheless, nonverbal information processed offline during the exchange can be made available for later online processing. If someone asked Eric after the meeting whether or not Adam and Roy looked toward him, he might say something like "come to think of it, I noticed they were mostly looking at each other and kind of looking past me." And this online recall of formerly offline information can happen even in the absence of external cueing. Perhaps after the panel Eric sat down and engaged in (online and fully aware) reflection as to why he felt so excluded, realizing that Adam and Roy barely looked at him.

Thus, this dynamic of partial awareness explains why members of marginalized groups can be aware of nonverbal marginalization, even though people tend not to be fully aware of nonverbal communication dynamics, accommodating both the empirical work on the automaticity of nonverbal communication and peoples' lived experiences of recognizing features of nonverbal marginalization.[8]

[8] Note that while I am focusing mostly on implicit and offline varieties of nonverbal marginalization, I certainly grant that there will be examples of nonverbal marginalization that are mostly or entirely online—that is, where people are totally

1.5 | Valence of nonverbal cues

The definition of nonverbal marginalization draws upon a notion of valence, referring to "positive and affirming" and "negative" nonverbal cues. But which nonverbal cues have positive and negative valences and how does this get determined?

I am intending to avoid being overly committal with regards to the valence question. All the examples of nonverbal marginalization I discuss in this paper involve nonverbal cues that are unambiguously either positive or negative within the specified context. Frequently cited examples of positive and affirming nonverbal cues include smiling, nodding, using affirming gestures, and assuming an open and welcoming body posture, while negative nonverbal cues include frowning, brow furrowing, and adopting closed body postures (e.g., Burgoon et al., 2021; Knapp et al., 2013; Sauter et al., 2010). As I will argue in the next section, nonverbal marginalization caused by implicit bias tends to involve unequal distribution of positive and affirming nonverbal cues (e.g., looking and smiling more at higher power people at the expense of lower power people), while nonverbal marginalization caused by explicit bias tends to involve negative nonverbal cues (e.g., frowning or scowling at lower power people).

Nonetheless, we still might wonder how valences of nonverbal cues get determined. In many respects, this is an open empirical question. However, there is reason to think that the answer likely involves some mixture of biological, contextual, and cultural factors, which affect the meanings and valences associated with nonverbal cues. For example, psychologists have long claimed that specific facial expressions (Ekman, 1970, 1993; Matsumoto & Willingham, 2009) and patterns of looking behavior (Pruitt, 2008) have evolved to communicate certain pieces of information. But more recent work suggests that features of agents' social and cultural contexts also affect how nonverbal cues are interpreted (Barrett, 2022; Hess & Kafetsios, 2021). For example, while a smile in one social context might be interpreted as happy (e.g., seeing an old friend), in another context it could be interpreted as sarcastic (e.g., watching an especially cringe-worthy karaoke performance). Moreover, even within the same type of social context, nonverbal cues can get interpreted in radically different ways, depending on prevailing cultural norms. While standing very close to someone is considered socially inappropriate in many American and European cultural contexts, closer standing distances are often seen as friendly and welcoming in parts of Latin America and the Middle East (Kreuz & Roberts, 2017). We can see, then, that nonverbal cue valence on both the production and interpretation side is biologically and culturally complex.

1.6 | Power dynamics

The definition of nonverbal marginalization also references "power dynamics." But what power dynamics are being tracked? This is also something I mostly want to leave open. Theoretically, nonverbal marginalization could track *any* power imbalance.

Social features, including social prejudices, determine which power dynamics are reflected in our nonverbal behaviors. I will mostly focus on prejudicial varieties of nonverbal marginalization, arguing that implicit and explicit biases can, and frequently do, determine the power dynamics we

aware of nonverbal marginalization and are actively on the lookout for it during their interactions. And even if, contrary to what I am suggesting here in Section 1, most cases of nonverbal marginalization are of this fully online sort, I would argue we would still want a normative and psychological account of nonverbal marginalization and its accompanying harms of the sort I provide in Sections 2–4.

nonverbally track. This means that in many social and professional contexts, peoples' nonverbal behaviors are reflecting their cultural biases in ways that reinforce structural oppressions—for example, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, fatphobia, ableism, etc.

However, nonverbal marginalization does not *only* track historical inequities. For example, if you were unpopular in high school, you might remember what it is like to be nonverbally disregarded at social gatherings. Perhaps no one at these events explicitly said anything negative to you (or even about you), but you noticed that people tended not to look or smile in your direction. Likewise, junior academics sometimes complain that senior academics nonverbally disregard them at conferences and professional gatherings, ignoring or looking past them in exchanges without being explicitly hostile or dismissive.

So, while I have mostly chosen to focus on nonverbal marginalization cases where the power dynamic being tracked reflects a type of systemic oppression, historically privileged people (e.g., male, White, straight, able-bodied, cisgender, etc.) can be nonverbally marginalized as well. As I will lay out in the next section, nonverbal marginalization as a cognitive phenomenon ultimately just tracks power inequities—some perhaps more unjust than others.

2 | "WHY NONVERBALLY MARGINALIZE?": PSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVATION AND COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURE

If nonverbal marginalization reinforces social prejudices, why do we do it? I want to consider two versions of this question. The first involves the *psychological motivation* to engage in nonverbal marginalization: what motivates us to nonverbally marginalize? The second involves the *cognitive architecture* which gives rise to nonverbal marginalization: what mental representations bring about the nonverbally marginalizing behavior?

2.1 | Psychological motivation

Why would someone nonverbally marginalize someone else? The answer seems to lie in the importance we place on certain kinds of social connection. Signaling affiliation with socially powerful people typically comes with social advantages. We want socially well-positioned people to like us—so they will hire us, befriend us, date us, etc. But how do we make people like us? On the one hand, signaling our own affability can be overt, like explicitly complimenting someone or offering to do them a favor. But nonverbal behaviors can positively signal affiliation as well. In fact, the empirical literature suggests that our positive and negative nonverbal behaviors—including whether we look at people, how close we sit to them, and our emotion expressions toward them—tellingly reflect who we like and do not like (Chen & Bargh, 1999; Dimberg, 1990; Shimojo et al., 2003). And this nonverbal signaling of affiliation tends to be successful: we *like* people who look at us (Kaisler & Leder, 2017; M. Mason et al., 2005), smile at us (Nikitin & Freund, 2018), and nod at us (Osugi & Kawahara, 2018). Furthermore, nonverbal displays of affiliation are often more effective than overt ones precisely because nonverbal communication has this dimension of subtlety—for example, while it might seem inappropriate to endlessly praise your boss, a smile or a touch of the shoulder can make them feel closer to you and make you in turn seem more likable.

We can thus understand nonverbal marginalization as arising from this more basic tendency to signal affiliation with influential people. Stated in this way, it is clear why we might think some forms of nonverbal marginalization are not normatively problematic (at least in the way the

Technology Company and Academic Conference cases are). Nonverbal attention is a limited resource such that we cannot nonverbally attend to all people, at all times, equally in social exchanges (after all, we cannot look at everyone!). It is very natural, then, that we would preferentially allocate nonverbal attention to the people we regard as the most important within the given social context. This means that the unequal allocation of nonverbal attention will not always carry the same normative baggage. For example, in the context of your friend's birthday dinner or your child's school play, it will probably make sense to look, smile, and gesture more toward them.

So, the claim is not that nonverbal marginalization is *always* normatively problematic. Indeed, some types of nonverbally marginalizing behavior seem to be cognitively unavoidable. Rather, I am arguing that *certain* types of nonverbal marginalization are inherently problematic—specifically, patterns of nonverbal marginalizing behavior which reflect implicit or explicit biases. These are the "bad" types of nonverbal marginalization, which this paper is mostly focused on. However, properly isolating these prejudicial varieties of nonverbal marginalization will requires us to look more closely at the cognitive architecture of the phenomenon.[9]

2.2 | Cognitive architecture: Implicit and explicit bias

This brings us to the cognitive architecture that supports the "bad" type of nonverbal marginalization. For the rest of this paper, I will drop qualifiers like "bad," "prejudicial," or "normatively suspect." Hereafter, when I refer to "nonverbal marginalization" I will mean the "bad" type brought about by an implicit or explicit bias.

Consider explicit bias first. Explicit biases are conscious, intentional attitudes, formed through reasoned deliberation and reflection, which typically justify the mistreatment and/or exploitation of minority groups—for example, European Enlightenment thinkers formulating racist narratives to justify slavery (Mills, 1997) and American conservatives objecting to the legalization of same-sex marriage by claiming that LGBT people were trying to "dismantle" the family (McVeigh & Diaz, 2009). Explicit biases straightforwardly motivate various types of marginalization against members of oppressed social groups. For example, if S is explicitly biased against R, then S will not be likely to positively engage with R—either verbally or nonverbally.

In the nonverbal case, explicit biases are typically reflected in biased agents' *negative* nonverbal cues. Note that all the examples of nonverbal marginalization I have discussed up until this point have involved the relative distribution of *positive* nonverbal cues (e.g., looking and smiling more at S than R because S is more socially powerful than R). But explicit biases often manifest in nonverbally marginalizing behavior as *negative* nonverbal cues—for example, frowning, grimacing, or

[9] Note on terminology: I am using the "nonverbal marginalization" label for both prejudicial cases (where the power dynamic being tracked reinforces a social prejudice—for example, looking more at white people than people of color during a business meeting) and non-prejudicial cases (where the tracked power dynamic does not reflect a social prejudice—e.g., looking more at one's own child than other children during their school play). But, if one objects to using "nonverbal marginalization" to refer to the non-prejudicial cases (on the grounds that "marginalization" feels like a negatively laden term), note that we could easily label the larger phenomenon something more neutral like "nonverbal display of preference," reserving "nonverbal marginalization" for the prejudicial cases. However, because the term "nonverbal marginalization" is less clunky, allows for the language of "marginalizer" and "marginalizee," and is easier to use as a denominal verb (e.g., "David nonverbally marginalizes Ann," "David engages in nonverbally marginalizing behavior," etc.), I have opted for the more neutral use of "marginalization" in "nonverbal marginalization": where "marginalization" is merely denoting preferentiality.

aggressively posturing. Moreover, nonverbal marginalization brought about by explicit bias can be leveraged as a tool of control. For example, if a man holds the explicit bias that women should not work outside the home, he might refuse to look at his female coworkers in meetings or exaggeratedly roll his eyes when they speak. This type of nonverbal marginalization—manifested by his negative nonverbal cues—is explicitly communicating his disapproval and, thus, his underlying explicit bias.

On the other hand, implicit biases are unconscious attitudes passively acquired through cultural exposure, which shape our judgments and perceptions about other people.[10] Unlike explicit biases, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection and are not the product of conscious deliberation. Rather, they are implicitly manifested in biased patterns of behavior.[11] Common implicit biases include negative attitudes toward Black people (Nosek, 2007), women (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004), transgender people (Axt et al., 2021), elderly people (Kleissner & Jahn, 2020), and Muslims (Park et al., 2007) among others. Researchers have observed that implicit biases can be cognitively manifested in various ways. For example, in their characterization of implicit (also called "aversive") racism, Dovidio and Gaertner (2004) describe a "fundamental conflict" between, on the one hand "Whites' denial of personal prejudice" and, on the other hand, "underlying unconscious negative feelings and beliefs" about Black people, which is psychologically manifested in attitudes of "discomfort, uneasiness, disgust, and sometimes fear" toward Black people and/or a "more positive attitude to Whites than Blacks" (p. 4; see also Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Nail et al., 2003). And these prejudicial attitudes translate into patterns of nonverbal behavior. For instance, White people who have a greater degree of implicit bias against Black people make less eye contact with Black conversational participants and blink more often during inter-racial interactions—nonverbal behaviors which are associated with feelings of negativity and discomfort (Dovidio et al., 1997, 2002; Lakin, 2006).

Much of the nonverbal marginalization people regularly experience reflects implicit (rather than explicit) bias. In the implicit cases, the nonverbal marginalizer is not engaging in the behavior because they explicitly harbor a negative bias about the marginalizee. Rather, they have some implicit bias that is shaping their patterns of nonverbal behavior largely without their awareness.[12] Importantly, however, the behavior is not made more benign because it is caused by an implicit bias. In fact, implicit nonverbal marginalization cases are frequently *more* harmful than the explicit ones in that it is often easier to identify and dismiss nonverbal marginalization from explicitly biased people than implicitly biased people.

[10] As I stated in footnote 3, I am not wanting to commit to any particular view of what implicit biases are. To name a popular accounts, it has been argued that implicit biases are associations (Madva, 2016; Madva & Brownstein, 2016), propositional attitudes (Egan, 2008; Mandelbaum, 2016; Schwitzgebel, 2010), and aliefs (Gendler, 2011). However, my claim here that patterns of nonverbal behavior reflect and reinforce implicit biases is largely orthogonal to these metaphysical debates.

[11] For philosophical discussion on how implicit bias can be empirically measured, see Machery (2016), Buckwalter (2019), and Brownstein et al. (2020).

[12] Note, I am claiming that in implicit cases, the nonverbal marginalizer might be totally unaware they have the implicit bias and might also be unaware they are (as a result of the implicit bias) engaging in nonverbally marginalizing behavior. However, there is also some debate about the extent to which people are *truly* unaware of their implicit biases—c.f. Madva (2018) and Yancy (2008). Nonetheless, this question of whether or not people are aware of their implicit biases is mostly orthogonal to my claim that patterns of nonverbal behavior can be influenced by implicit bias. Even if it were the case that people were mostly aware of their implicit biases, they still do not always know when their patterns of nonverbal behavior are being influenced by these biases (in other words, you might know you have the implicit bias while at the same time not realizing this bias affects who you look at during meetings).

For example, if a woman knows her male coworker is explicitly sexist, she will not interpret negative nonverbal cues like rolling his eyes during her presentation to reveal anything deep about the content of her talk or her professional ability. She can just dismiss his nonverbally marginalizing behavior as being a manifestation of his explicit sexism. However, if his nonverbal marginalization manifests more subtly—as tends to be true in implicit bias cases, which involve relative distribution of positive nonverbal cues—it will likely be more difficult for her to explicitly identify the bias in his pattern of nonverbal behavior. This makes the incident harder for her to shrug off and move past. Similar points have been made about the comparative harm of microaggressions versus macroaggressions—for example, it is sometimes easier to dismiss a macroaggression than a more subtle microaggression because macroaggressions unambiguously manifest the aggressor's bias.[13]

Now with an account of nonverbal marginalization on the table, I will spend the second half of this paper discussing the psychological harms and epistemic effects of nonverbal marginalization. I will mostly focus on examples like the Technology Company and Academic Conference cases, where the nonverbally marginalizing behavior reflects *implicit* biases and involves *offline* nonverbal communication. As will become clear, these cases of offline and implicit nonverbal marginalization are arguably the most pernicious and but also, probably, the most common.

3 | PSYCHOLOGICAL HARMS

I opened this paper with the claim that nonverbal marginalization reflects and reinforces social biases. The previous section detailed how biases are *reflected* in patterns of nonverbal marginalization. This section will consider how nonverbal marginalization *reinforces* biases, arguing that biases are reinforced because (typically offline) dynamics of nonverbal marginalization subtly validate higher power people and marginalize lower power people. In this way, nonverbal marginalization ends up being a mechanism by which various unjust social hierarchies are maintained (see Haslanger (2021) and Kolodny (2023) on social hierarchies).

To illustrate how nonverbal marginalization reinforces social prejudices, I will discuss two psychological harms of nonverbal marginalization: (1) how nonverbal marginalization contributes to lower power peoples' experiences of imposter syndrome and (2) how nonverbal marginalization creates performance gaps between higher and lower power social groups (by impairing lower power peoples' task performances and facilitating higher power peoples' task performances).

[13] You might wonder: is nonverbal marginalization just a subtype of microaggression? It turns out that nonverbal marginalization is not neatly captured by the microaggression/macroaggression distinction. It will be true that most examples of nonverbal marginalization caused by implicit bias would probably also qualify as microaggressions because the nonverbally marginalizing behaviors reflect the bias and also (unlike macroaggressions) have a dimension of plausible deniability (see McTernan, 2017; Rini, 2020 on microaggressions). However, not all examples of nonverbal marginalization will be microaggressive in this way. Nonverbal marginalization caused by an explicit bias (e.g., refusing to look at the female colleague in a meeting because you explicitly hold a sexist bias) would likely manifest as *macro*aggressions, rather than *micro*aggressions—because in overt explicit bias cases there is no element of plausible deniability. And as I discussed in Subsection 2.1, nonverbal marginalizing behavior sometimes is not motivated by bias at all (e.g., looking at one's own child more in their school play). So, there will also be examples of nonverbal marginalization which are plausibly neither microaggressions nor macroaggressions.

3.1 | Imposter syndrome

Imposter syndrome, frequently experienced by members of marginalized groups, involves having negative attitudes about one's ability, where those attitudes are false. Victims of imposter syndrome characteristically feel as if they are imposters or frauds, which can lead them to become isolated from their professional and social communities (Bravata et al., 2020; Clance & Imes, 1978). Though imposter syndrome has been observed in various populations, there is still philosophical and empirical debate about what causes imposter attitudes and how they can be most effectively challenged and eliminated (Calvard, 2018; Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). To frame our discussion, consider a paradigmatic case of imposter syndrome:

> **Lawyer**: Sofia, a young Latina lawyer, cannot help feeling that she is an imposter in her workplace. Despite having ample evidence of her own professional ability, she believes herself to be incompetent relative to her White male colleagues.

What causes imposter attitudes like Sofia's? The traditional answer to the question involves ascribing victims of imposter syndrome a type of blameless irrationality or self-deception (for accounts of imposter syndrome, see Gadsby, 2021; Hawley 2019a, 2019b; Paul, 2019). These types of views typically claim that imposter attitudes are triggered by agents' knowledge that identity prejudices exist in the world but are not necessarily directly caused by discriminatory behavior in their immediate environments (these accounts resemble popular views of stereotype threat—e.g., Saul, 2013; Steele & Aronson, 1995). In other words, Sofia is aware that racist and sexist prejudices about professional women exist, and her imposter syndrome psychologically manifests this awareness. Importantly, however, her imposter syndrome does not accurately reflect what is going on in her immediate environment (because characteristic victims of imposter syndrome are competent and have evidence of this competence). Of course, the claim here is not that Sofia is blameworthy—after all, her experience of imposter syndrome is caused by her awareness of very real sexist and racist social inequities, which unjustly disadvantage her. Yet, on this view, Sofia's epistemic behavior is (at least in some sense) suboptimal given the evidence she has.

This sort of explanation also has implications for institutional policy. According to the blameless irrationality view, Sofia's coworkers can be said to be doing their professional due diligence in their treatment of her (e.g., engaging with her at work, giving her favorable performance reviews, etc.). As such, whatever imposter feelings Sofia still has can be attributed to her awareness of existent cultural biases rather than anything going on in her immediate environment. This often lets institutions (and individuals) pass the prejudicial buck, as it were. For example, an institution can claim they have done all they can to make minority employees feel welcome, blaming any employees' residual imposter attitudes on more general social biases.

However, having introduced nonverbal marginalization, we can now put forward another explanation of these types of imposter syndrome: pervasive patterns of nonverbal marginalization within institutions cause members of minority groups to experience imposter syndrome. To illustrate how nonverbal marginalization can cause imposter syndrome, consider how patterns of nonverbally marginalizing behavior are produced by the marginalizer and interpreted by the marginalizee. Recall from Sections 1 and 2 that the marginalizer's (often implicit) biases are reflected in their patterns of (often offline) nonverbal behavior. The marginalizee, then, interprets (also often offline) the marginalizer's nonverbally marginalizing behavior, which affects the conscious-level (i.e., online) impressions the marginalizee forms about themselves and about the marginalizer. I am claiming that repeatedly experiencing nonverbal marginalization can cause

marginalizees to begin seeing themselves as imposters (even when they do not consciously register the nonverbal marginalization) because they are offline interpreting the marginalizing behaviors (e.g., not being looked at, smiled at, etc.) as evidence that they are unwelcome or incompetent.

For example, we can imagine that Sofia's coworkers' nonverbal behaviors sometimes reflect their implicit racist and sexist biases in patterns of nonverbal marginalization towards her—for example, failing to nonverbally engage with her as much in meetings or in social settings. Assuming Sofia hasn't acquired the "nonverbal marginalization" concept (more on this in Sections 4.2–4.4), we should assume that she processes and interprets their nonverbally marginalizing behaviors offline. Offline processing of their nonverbal marginalization (e.g., not looking at her in meetings, frowning when she speaks, etc.) would cause her to form the conscious-level impression that they regard her as incompetent. Thus, their nonverbal marginalization causes and maintains her imposter attitude. However, because she is largely processing her interlocutors' nonverbal cues offline, she probably will not realize that her imposter attitude is formed on the basis of her interlocutors' biased nonverbal behaviors. This makes it seem to Sofia and her nonverbally marginalizing coworkers as if she forms the imposter attitude spontaneously, seemingly lending support to the traditional view that imposter beliefs reflect general cultural biases rather than specific features of discriminatory environments. However, we can now more accurately diagnose the etiology of her imposter attitude as originating from patterns of nonverbal marginalization within her environment.

I should emphasize that I am not claiming that all cases of imposter syndrome are caused by nonverbal marginalization. However, I am claiming that nonverbal marginalization can—and frequently does—harmfully contribute to experiences of imposter syndrome, subtly lending epistemic support to marginalized peoples' imposter attitudes. Note as well that the explanation on offer here importantly shifts the dynamic of epistemic blame in cases where imposter syndrome is being caused by nonverbal marginalization. After all, it might be that victims of imposter syndrome like Sofia are updating their beliefs about their professional competence according to the available evidence. However, their evidence in part consists of the (probably offline) processing of others' (also probably offline) patterns of nonverbally marginalizing behavior, which epistemically supports a harmful and false imposter narrative. Hence, the available evidence (nonverbal marginalization and all) can end up supporting the marginalizee's imposter beliefs. Laid out in this way, we see how patterns of nonverbal behavior can play a significant cognitive and epistemic role in creating and maintaining harmful imposter attitudes.

3.2 | Performance gaps

Nonverbal marginalization can also explain certain performance gaps between higher and lower power social groups that have been observed in social psychology—for example, men and White people outperforming women and people of color on various types of assessment (for discussion, see Mendoza-Denton, 2014; Salehi et al., 2019; Shockley, 2021). These results have been historically—and even contemporarily (Jussim et al., 2015)—explained by appeal to genuine ability differences between groups. While many of these performance gaps disappear when other social factors (like the structure of the assessments and the unequal distribution of resources between groups) are controlled for, some performance gaps seem to remain and this gets pointed to as support for these innate ability explanations. I will close out this section by demonstrating how nonverbal marginalization can shed novel light on certain types of performance gaps better than commonly cited ability explanations.

Up until this point, I have mostly considered nonverbal marginalization from the perspective of members of oppressed social groups, who are the victims of nonverbal marginalization. But I now want to consider the experiences of socially *powerful* groups, who as a result of the nonverbally marginalizing behavior of others receive comparatively *more* positive and affirming nonverbal cues than their less socially powerful counterparts. Take an example which will be familiar to many readers: a graduate seminar. Consider nonverbal marginalization in the seminar room from two distinct perspectives: the powerful person(s) being nonverbally validated and the comparatively less powerful person(s) being nonverbally marginalized.

> **Graduate Seminar**: Imagine a small graduate seminar led by a prominent faculty member.
>
> **Nonverbal Validation in the Seminar Room**: When White male student Kyle speaks in the seminar, he tends to get nonverbally acknowledged in a positive and preferential way by the other students and the faculty member. For example, when he contributes to the discussion they look, nod, and smile at him, which he takes to be indicative that his comments are welcome and valuable. These subtle nonverbal affirmations end up affecting the fluency and frequency of Kyle's comments, making him come across as more knowledgeable and articulate than the other students. Therefore, the positive nonverbal validation he receives causes him to perform *better* than the other students.
>
> **Nonverbal Marginalization in the Seminar Room**: On the other hand, the women and people of color in the seminar do not receive the same degree of positive nonverbal attention. For example, when they contribute to discussion, the faculty member and other students do not look at them or nod their heads as much. This makes them feel anxious and causes them to second-guess the quality of their comments. As a result, the women and people of color end up contributing less frequently to the seminar and when they do speak their comments tend to come across as less polished than Kyle's (e.g., they stumble over their words more because the other seminar participants' less validating nonverbal behaviors make them feel less comfortable).

Note that there is a genuine performance difference (qua philosophical ability) on display in the seminar. Kyle is contributing more frequently to discussion than the non-White and non-male students and the quality of his comments (at least in certain respects) is better. But is this performance difference best explained by a genuine ability difference? In other words, does the performance difference in the graduate seminar suggest that Kyle is a better philosopher than the other students? Clearly not.

To make this point especially clear, consider another presumably familiar example. Think about the experience of delivering the same talk to a nonverbally engaged audience (exhibiting positive nonverbal behaviors like nodding and smiling) versus a nonverbally disengaged audience (exhibiting negative nonverbal behaviors like frowning, looking at their phones, and staring into space). The positive nonverbal feedback from the first audience will almost certainly translate into a better talk performance. However, receiving positive or negative nonverbal cues obviously does not alter your underlying philosophical ability. It is just that receiving positive nonverbal cues makes you feel more confident, so you end up delivering a better talk. Sullivan (2015) calls these positive signals "microkindnesses" and claims they subtly communicate respect, recognition, and

affiliation (pp. 132, 154; see also Estrada et al., 2018). I am arguing, then, that much the same way microaggressions can impair performance of marginalized groups, microkindnesses can facilitate performance of socially powerful groups.

Given all of this, how should we frame the performance differences in the seminar room? First, we should imagine that it is something the students and faculty are probably consciously tracking. For example, the faculty member and other graduate students will likely conclude that Kyle is the most competent student in the seminar based on the quality of his in-seminar contributions. Taking the performance difference on display to be an indication of a genuine ability difference, the other graduate students might more readily defer to Kyle, judging him to be more knowledgeable on the topic. The faculty member might even be likely to write him a better recommendation letter based on the quality of his in-class contributions.

However, clearly the performance difference is not due to any innate ability difference between the students. Rather, it is fostered by an environment of subtle nonverbal marginalization in the seminar room: the White male student receiving more positive and affirming nonverbal cues than the women and people of color, which causes him to perform better and them to perform worse. Given what we have said about the subtlety and pervasiveness of nonverbal marginalization, we should imagine that there will be many cases like this, in which biased patterns of nonverbal behavior undermine the capacity of members of historically oppressed groups to fully manifest their abilities (and where these performance deficits are erroneously assumed to reflect genuine ability deficits). Hence, understanding nonverbal marginalization can help us explain certain performance gaps while resisting empirically and socially questionable innate ability explanations.

Finally, I want to suggest that rejecting innate ability explanations by appealing to more empirically and philosophically credible alternative explanations of performance gaps (like nonverbal marginalization) can help us undermine the implicit and explicit biases which motivate patterns of nonverbal marginalization in the first place. I will demonstrate this by showing how innate ability explanations contribute to what I call "bias-reinforcing feedback loops."

To illustrate how bias-reinforcing feedback loops are generated, consider the racist bias that White people are intellectually superior to people of color. Holding this (implicit or explicit) bias will motivate the nonverbal validation of White people and the nonverbal marginalization of people of color. Reflecting on the relationship between nonverbal communication and performance, we should expect that these patterns of nonverbal engagement will sometimes cause White people to outperform people of color in intellectual domains. However, if performance differences are taken to be indicative of ability differences, then the performance difference (driven entirely by biased patterns of nonverbal behavior) will seemingly provide evidence for the prejudice that initially motivated the preferential patterns of nonverbal validation/marginalization. And then the bias—now further reinforced—should be even more likely to motivate future racist patterns of nonverbal engagement. Thus, nonverbal marginalization (when coupled with tacit acceptance of the innate ability explanation of performance gaps) creates feedback loops which end up reinforcing marginalizers' biases:

Bias-Reinforcing Feedback Loops:

1. Social biases (e.g., "group A is superior [in some domain] to group B") motivate the (online or offline) nonverbal validation of members of higher power social groups and the nonverbal marginalization of members of lower power social groups (nonverbally validating As and marginalizing Bs).

2. These patterns of nonverbal marginalization and validation undermine the performances of members of lower power social groups and facilitate the performances of members of higher power social groups, which can create performance differences between the groups (validating As and marginalizing Bs will cause As to outperform Bs).
3. Observed performance differences between higher and lower power social groups are then taken to be evidence for the social biases which initially motivated the patterns of nonverbal validation and marginalization (observing that As outperformed Bs is taken as evidence for the original bias "group A is superior to group B"—even though the observed A/B performance difference was caused by a difference in nonverbal engagement rather than a genuine ability difference between As and Bs).
4. The observed performance difference strengthens the original bias, thereby motivating further nonverbal validation of higher power social groups and nonverbal marginalization of lower power social groups, (strengthening the bias "group A is superior to group B" will translate into further nonverbal validation As and marginalization of Bs).
5. And so on…

Hence, we see how patterns of nonverbal marginalization reinforce biases through these loops, impairing performances of lower power groups and facilitating performances of higher power groups, which feeds back into the origional biases (i.e., the biases motivate nonverbally marginalizing behaviors, which cause the performance gaps, which further strengthen the biases… and so on). However, appreciating the relationship between nonverbal marginalization and task performance should make clear why interventions to nonverbal marginalization (of the sort I discuss in the next section) are important. Developing interventions that challenge patterns of nonverbal marginalization in ourselves and others can undermine performance gaps between higher and lower power social groups, thus enabling members of historically oppressed groups to fully manifest their abilities and competences.

4 | EPISTEMIC EFFECTS AND INTERVENTIONS

Now that we have seen how nonverbal marginalization reflects and reinforces social biases, in this section, I will discuss two noteworthy epistemic effects of nonverbal marginalization: *epistemic oppression* and *hermeneutical injustice*. Laying out these epistemic effects will also allow us to answer an important lingering question: why do we so often fail to recognize nonverbal marginalization if it is as common and pernicious as I claim? I will conclude the section by proposing what I call a "hermeneutical intervention," which can help us address the psychological and epistemic harms of nonverbal marginalization.

4.1 | Epistemic oppression

Dotson (2012) defines epistemic oppression as "persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one's contribution to knowledge production" and claims that epistemically oppressive exclusions involve infringements on "the epistemic agency of agents" and "produce

deficiencies in social knowledge" (p. 24). Dotson (2012) characterizes epistemic agency as follows:

> Epistemic agency will concern the ability to utilize persuasively shared epistemic resources within a given epistemic community in order to participate in knowledge production and, if required, the revision of those same resources. A compromise to epistemic agency, when unwarranted, damages not only individual knowers, but also the state of social knowledge and shared epistemic resources. (ibid)

Epistemic oppression can be understood as involving infringement on epistemic agency, which harms the general state of social knowledge within a given epistemic community. We can think of infringements of epistemic agency as taking the following two possible forms: an agent can be epistemically oppressed in their capacity as an *acquirer of knowledge* (e.g., if they were prevented from asking questions and learning from others) or as a *transmitter of knowledge* (e.g., if they were prevented from sharing their knowledge and participating in the revision and expansion of shared epistemic resources). Dotson (2012) discusses the work of Collins (1990), who noted the relative lack of serious engagement with Black feminist scholarship within the academy in her seminal book *Black Feminist Thought*. Collins claimed that work from Black feminist scholars has been excluded and ignored from academic spheres, which Dotson argues constitutes an epistemically oppressive dynamic. We can then say that Black feminist scholars have been epistemically oppressed as knowledge producers because existing inequitable power structures have prevented them from contributing to the production of social knowledge within academia.

I am claiming here that nonverbal marginalization infringes on the epistemic agency of historically oppressed people. In particular, pervasive patterns of nonverbal marginalization impair peoples' abilities to acquire and produce knowledge within their epistemic communities, reinforcing oppressive social hierarchies. Thus, I am arguing that nonverbal marginalization can exemplify both dimensions of epistemic oppression.

First, experiencing nonverbal marginalization can hinder people in their acquisition of knowledge. For example, being nonverbally marginalized often causes people to feel intimidated, which discourages them from asking questions. This prevents them from acquiring knowledge from others. Think of Ann in the Technology Company case, who is being nonverbally marginalized by the consultant, David. David's nonverbal marginalizing behavior blocks Ann out of the meeting, making her too intimidated to ask questions of David (even though he has been hired to share his expertise with Ann and Mark). Thus, David's (presumably offline) nonverbal marginalization of Ann prevents her from acquiring knowledge.

Second, experiencing nonverbal marginalization can prevent people from transmitting knowledge to others. This harms both the person being nonverbally marginalized and others within their epistemic community who could have benefited from the marginalizee's expertise. Think about Eric in the Academic Conference case, who is nonverbally marginalized by the two White conference panelists. Their nonverbal disregard makes it difficult for him to participate in the discussion and share the research he was invited to discuss. Clearly, Eric is harmed by his fellow panelists' nonverbally marginalizing behavior toward him (he feels uncomfortable, he is unable to share his work, his imposter syndrome is triggered as a result of the experience, etc.). But Eric's greater epistemic community is also harmed—specifically, the other conference attendees, who came to the panel to hear about the panelists' research and did not get to learn about Eric's work.

Thus, nonverbal marginalization can epistemically oppress members of historically marginalized groups because patterns of nonverbal marginalization impair peoples' abilities to acquire and transmit knowledge, thereby isolating them from social knowledge production.

4.2 | Hermeneutical injustice

The second epistemic harm of nonverbal marginalization (which I will focus on more because it relates to the intervention I will propose at the end of the section) involves hermeneutical injustice. The term "hermeneutical injustice" comes from the work of Fricker (2007), who defines hermeneutical injustice as the experience of "having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (p. 155). By "collective hermeneutical resource," Fricker is referring to the shared concepts and epistemic resources a society generates and makes use of. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when members of marginalized social groups are prevented from participating in the processes of creating and maintaining these conceptual resources such that the concepts which do emerge end up disproportionately reflecting the interests and lived experiences of socially powerful groups at the expense of marginalized groups. Fricker illustrates this by discussing the concept of marital rape (previously referred to as "marital duty"), which historically was not categorized as a type of rape, reflecting the interests of men who crafted the conceptual resource to their own exploitative advantage.

It should be stressed that not all hermeneutical deficits (i.e., collective conceptual gaps) involve *injustice* in the relevant sense. Rather, hermeneutical injustices involve hermeneutical deficits that reflect social prejudices. Fricker (2007) argues that hermeneutical injustice is "essentially discriminatory" because it "affects people in virtue of their membership of a socially powerless group, and thus in virtue of an aspect of their social identity" (p. 153).

Circling back to nonverbal marginalization, I am claiming that oppressed peoples' experiences of nonverbal marginalization are also often accompanied by a further hermeneutical injustice, because they typically lack the hermeneutical resources that would enable them to (fully) make sense of the nonverbally marginalizing behavior. For the rest of the section, I will propose that the missing hermeneutical resource is the "nonverbal marginalization" concept. Thus, there is a sense in which this paper attempts to address the hermeneutical injustice by proposing a missing hermeneutical resource. We can think of this move as a "hermeneutical intervention."

But before getting to the meat of the hermeneutical intervention, why think there is even a hermeneutical deficit here? There does not exist a term for the phenomenon I have been calling "nonverbal marginalization" (at least as far as I am aware). As such, it is not been recognized or discussed within mainstream social discourse. To illustrate, contrast nonverbal marginalization with "mansplaining" and "gaslighting," concepts which have been recently introduced into social discourse to fill existing hermeneutical gaps. While you were likely unfamiliar with nonverbal marginalization before reading this paper (at least as a specifically labeled concept, even though you will almost certainly recognize it in your own experiences), you might already be familiar with the term "gaslighting." And if you already possess the "gaslighting" hermeneutical resource, you will probably find that you are able to identify and call out the behavior (to some degree) in virtue of having the concept. In this way, the possession of the hermeneutical resource can actually lessen the harmful effects of the behavior—for example, if you already know what gaslighting is, you might be less psychologically rattled when someone tries to gaslight you. Thus, while introducing the "gaslighting" hermeneutical resource does not entirely nullify

the harms of being gaslit, having the concept makes it easier for potential victims of gaslighting to identify and address the behavior. Note, of course, that I am not meaning to claim that lacking the hermeneutical resource makes it entirely impossible to be aware of gaslighting. But the suggestion is that the hermeneutical resource (i.e., the "gaslighting" concept) has made it easier to identify and call out gaslighting behavior. Therein lies the power of hermeneutical resources.

However, unlike in the case of gaslighting, there does not exist (prior to the writing of this paper) a "nonverbal marginalization" hermeneutical resource, which points to a hermeneutical *deficit*. And this deficit generates hermeneutical *injustice* when members of historically marginalized groups are harmed because they (1) experience nonverbal marginalization *and* (2) do not possess a hermeneutical resource (like the "nonverbal marginalization" concept) which would enable them to straightforwardly make sense of their experience of being nonverbally marginalized.[14]

But—you might wonder—how harmful is this hermeneutical injustice (especially compared to other harms of nonverbal marginalization discussed in this paper)? I will argue that the hermeneutical injustice is actually very significant. As we will see, it is difficult—and sometimes impossible—to fully address the other harms of nonverbal marginalization and have an open discussion of nonverbal marginalization, without first in some way addressing the hermeneutical injustice. To illustrate why this is, I will consider two paradigmatic manifestations of hermeneutical injustice (see, e.g., Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2012a; Oliveira, 2022) in relation to nonverbal marginalization:

> **Manifestations of Hermeneutical Injustice**: Experiencing hermeneutical injustice in virtue of (i) being a member of a social group G, (ii) experiencing anti-G oppression, and (iii) lacking the widely shared and recognized hermeneutical resource to describe this type of oppression can manifest in difficulties:
>
> 1. Recognizing and/or "making sense of" (type or token) anti-G oppressive experience(s) to oneself
> 2. Communicating (type or token) anti-G oppressive experience(s) to others within—and outside—of group G

Again, contrary to how Fricker's account of hermeneutical injustice is sometimes interpreted, I am not claiming that lacking a hermeneutical resource to describe a significant aspect of one's oppression means that one will *necessarily* be unable to recognize or understand the oppression (see also Dotson, 2012; Goetze, 2018; R. Mason, 2011; Medina, 2012b). Rather, I am making the more modest claim that the concepts we have access to (i.e., the "shared hermeneutical resources") significantly shape—but perhaps do not wholly determine—how we cognitively

[14] However, that there exists a "nonverbal marginalization" hermeneutical deficit does not mean that all examples of nonverbal marginalization will necessarily involve hermeneutical injustice. Recall from Section 2 that there will be examples where one's nonverbal behaviors are sensitive to tracked power dynamics (thus qualifying as nonverbal marginalization) but where the power dynamic being tracked is not normatively suspect or prejudicial—for example, looking and smiling more at your child than other children during a school play. Of course, if you are not familiar with nonverbal marginalization, you will not have a hermeneutical resource to attach to the preferential patterns of nonverbal behavior you display toward your child. But this hermeneutical deficit does not reflect social prejudice or cause harm to the other children. Thus, this is an example of nonverbal marginalization with an accompanying hermeneutical deficit which we would not say involves hermeneutical *injustice*.

process and understand aspects of the social world, including how we categorize our experiences with the concepts we have (see 1 above) and how we relate to other people in our own social group and in other social groups (see 2 above).

This caveat is especially significant if we consider accounts of hermeneutical injustice beyond Fricker. For example, on Medina's (2012a, 2012b) view of hermeneutical injustice, marginalized communities often successfully generate hermeneutical resources which correspond to their distinctive experiences of oppression. Nonetheless, they experience hermeneutical injustice in virtue of not being well positioned—for conceptual, social, and/or political reasons—to translate the hermeneutical resources they have developed into the language of dominant groups. Walking the line between Fricker's original account of hermeneutical injustice and other accounts like Medina's, my argument here is that possessing *widely shared* hermeneutical resources helps members of marginalized groups more easily identify, communicate, and address their distinctive experiences of oppression. This applies both to contexts in which members of the same marginalized group are communicating with each other and contexts in which members of marginalized groups are trying to communicate their experiences of oppression to members of other groups. Moreover, this idea that being familiar with shared social concepts enables easier recognition of social phenomena does not only appear in the epistemic injustice literature. For example, it is also widely discussed in the philosophical and empirical literatures on concepts and visual recognition (Cheung & Gauthier, 2014; Gauthier et al., 2003; James & Cree, 2010) and social categorization (Allidina & Cunningham, 2023; Macrae et al., 1994; Neufeld, in press; Rosch, 1978).

4.3 | Nonverbal marginalization as hermeneutical injustice

Now with a fuller account of hermeneutical injustice on the table, we start to more clearly see why nonverbal marginalization is often accompanied by hermeneutical injustice. Consider the first manifestation of hermeneutical injustice, which involves recognition. Victims of hermeneutical injustice can experience difficulty making sense of their experiences of oppression because they lack the hermeneutical resource(s) which would enable them to fully recognize and conceptualize those experiences *as* instances of oppression. To use Fricker's now famous example, prior to the introduction and popularization of the term "sexual harassment," it was difficult for women being sexually harassed to recognize that their experiences were examples of gender-based oppression. Rather, victims of sexual harassment tended to erroneously blame themselves, assuming the unwanted attention must have been something they had caused—see Fricker's (2007) discussion of Carmita Wood in chap. 7.

We see this failure of recognition in cases of nonverbal marginalization. In virtue of lacking an appropriate hermeneutical resource, people have difficulty identifying nonverbally marginalizing experiences in that they simply are not on the lookout for the phenomenon and thus often struggle to recognize it when it occurs. For example, we should imagine that Ann and Eric are not able to recognize the sexism and racism implicit in their interlocutors' nonverbal behaviors because they are not familiar with "nonverbal marginalization" concept and, thus, are not engaging in online monitoring of other peoples' nonverbal behaviors. This means that at the level of conscious awareness, they would be largely insensitive to—and thus struggle to explicitly recognize—biased patterns of nonverbal behavior. Thus, like victims of sexual harassment prior to the popularization of the "sexual harassment" term, victims of nonverbal marginalization like Ann and Eric will tend to blame themselves, assuming it was their fault they felt crowded out of the exchanges and did

not speak up more when, in fact, they lacked the conceptual resource needed to identify their interlocutors' patterns of oppressive behavior. This explains why nonverbal marginalization tends to go unrecognized.

But, there is an obvious hermeneutical fix here. Amending the shared hermeneutical resource to include the concept of "nonverbal marginalization" should enable people to more readily identify oppressive patterns of nonverbal behavior in real time. This happens because the acquisition of the new concept helps people cultivate sensitivity to patterns of nonverbally marginalizing behavior (both their own behaviors and the behaviors of others). To illustrate how this sensitivity can be facilitated by concept acquisition, imagine that Eric in the Academic Conference case comes to possess the concept of "nonverbal marginalization" such that he is consciously on the lookout for nonverbally marginalizing patterns of behavior in professional settings. This should allow him to recognize his fellow conference panelists' patterns of nonverbal behavior more easily *as* instances of nonverbal marginalization, enabling him to see the White panelists' behavior as a reflection of *their* implicit racial biases rather than of *his* philosophical ability. Of course, this hermeneutical recognition does not change the fact that Eric is still being nonverbally marginalized. However, being familiar with the relevant hermeneutical resource would hopefully mean that his internal conception of his professional competence ends up (relatively) unscathed such that he will be less likely to internalize the incident. And the less he internalizes the incident, the less likely it is that he will experience the other harmful effects of nonverbal marginalization (imposter syndrome, performance impairment, epistemic oppression, etc.).

Moving on, the second manifestation of hermeneutical injustice involves the ability to communicate experiences of oppression to others. I claim that this type of communicative impairment is also common in nonverbal marginalization cases. In fact, it is extremely difficult to describe experiences of nonverbal marginalization to other people (or call people out for engaging in nonverbally marginalizing behavior) without all parties first possessing the relevant concept. To illustrate, consider what a call-out for nonverbal marginalization would look like if none of the parties possess the concept. What should Ann say if she wants to call out David for nonverbally marginalizing her? The complaint would probably be awkward and might look something like: "David, you were not looking at me in the meeting as much as you were looking at Mark. . . ." However, thinking back to Section 1, David's nonverbal communication in the meeting is almost certainly occurring offline. So, on the conscious-level, he would be largely unaware of his nonverbal behaviors. Moreover, like Ann, he also lacks the "nonverbal marginalization" concept so he lacks motivation to engage in the cognitively costly task of monitoring his nonverbal behaviors. This means that David probably is not consciously aware of his nonverbal cues at all, even though his biases end up being manifested in his spontaneous nonverbal behavioral patterns. Therefore, he would probably dismiss her complaint offhand as being mistaken or even "overly sensitive" (to invoke a common sexist trope).

Thus, without the "nonverbal marginalization" concept, Ann fails to communicate her experience to David, making her call-out unsuccessful. And while both Ann and David are affected by the conceptual deficit (after all, the deficit also causes David to be unaware of his nonverbal behaviors), Ann uniquely experiences a hermeneutical injustice in that this deficit prevents her from understanding and communicating this key part of her experience of oppression. However, in an alternative scenario where both possess the "nonverbal marginalization" concept, we should think that Ann would be able to identify David's nonverbal marginalization (and successfully call him out for the behavior) and David would be able to recognize that he was nonverbally marginalizing Ann and productively address his actions (e.g., apologizing to Ann, vowing to be more careful in the future, etc.).

Zooming out, we can now answer the "lingering" question I opened the section with: if nonverbal marginalization is so common and pernicious, why are not we aware of it happening (and, relatedly, why are not we addressing it)? Reflecting on the manifestations of hermeneutical injustice, we are now able to explain why nonverbal marginalization frequently occurs, but nonetheless tends to go unnoticed. Without a concept to pick out nonverbal marginalization, we struggle to identify patterns of nonverbally marginalizing behavior, which means we are not able to address the behavior (e.g., calling people out, openly discussing harms of nonverbal marginalization, etc.). However, this also explains why it is quite easy to identify nonverbal marginalization with the hermeneutical resource now on the table: the "nonverbal marginalization" concept gives us a label to attach to nonverbally marginalizing experiences, which enables us to recognize that these experiences reflect systemic prejudices.

4.4 | Habituation and the "hermeneutical intervention"

As I have stated, this paper is introducing a new hermeneutical resource: nonverbal marginalization. Assuming we are motivated to avoid nonverbal marginalization (and, thinking back to Section 3, I claim we should be), I am proposing that the possession of the hermeneutical resource should enable us to identify (and call-out) instances of nonverbal marginalization. My prosed hermeneutical intervention can be thought of as achieving what Fricker (2007) calls "hermeneutical justice." But, I want to stress that it is not about merely *possessing* the concept for the sake of it. Rather, I am claiming that acquiring the concept gives us an important *tool*, which we can then use to go about doing the hard work of training ourselves to be sensitive to biased patterns of (ours and others') nonverbal behavior via a process of behavioral habituation. I will finish this section by sketching how this type of intervention works.

When you acquire a new hermeneutical resource, you can start cognitively deploying it, training yourself to be sensitive to its manifestations. For example, if you are learning to bird watch and a more experienced birdwatcher tells you about yellow warblers (which are commonly found in your area), you can train yourself to be sensitive to yellow warblers. On walks you might train sensitivity to this new category ("yellow warbler") by deliberately looking out for the warbler's yellow color and listening for their distinctive melodic songs. Likewise, sensitivity to patterns of nonverbally marginalizing behavior (facilitated by the acquisition of the "nonverbal marginalization" concept) can be similarly trained. When you acquire the "nonverbal marginalization" concept, you can start deploying it, consciously tracking (yours and others') nonverbal cues. Cultivating a sensitivity to nonverbal marginalization, you will be able to more easily identify nonverbally marginalizing patterns of behavior and communicate them to others. This all seems straightforward and positive.

Note, though, that this stratagy of consciously tracking of one's own nonverbal behaviors and the nonverbal behaviors of others will certainly involve bringing nonverbal communication online—for example, deliberately paying attention to your and others' patterns of nonverbal behaviors to spot instances of nonverbal marginalization. However, recall from Section 1 that online nonverbal communication is comparatively effortful and involves additional cognitive resource expenditure compared to (the default) offline nonverbal communication. Given the processing costs, then, we might wonder whether the hermeneutical intervention being proposed is really feasible since it calls for this effortful online monitoring of nonverbal communication. In other words, even if you are very committed to challenging unjust social biases and hierarchies, you might find the idea of consciously and laboriously monitoring your nonverbal behaviors (and

the nonverbal behaviors of people you interact with) for the rest of your life to be unsatisfying and unrealistic.[15]

There is a light at the end of the intervention tunnel, though: you should not expect to be reflectively monitoring all nonverbal communication (at least in this onerous, resource-intensive way) for the rest of your life. This is where *habituation* comes in. Through the process of what I am calling "deliberate habituation,"[16] when we consciously and deliberately perform an action enough times, performance of the action ends up becoming automatic. The habituated behavior goes from being mediated by online processes to being mediated by offline processes, from being cognitively expensive and subjectively effortful to being cognitively efficient and seemingly automatic. The philosophical literature (especially on virtue ethics—Carron, 2021; Kerr, 2011; Sherman, 1991; Buddhist philosophy—Garfield, 2021; Heim, 2017; McRae, 2015; and emotions—Gendler, 2011; Munch-Jurisic, 2020a, 2020b) and empirical literature (especially on implicit bias—Devine et al., 2012; Holroyd & Kelly, 2016; Mendoza et al., 2010) discuss this sort of habituation as a strategy for deliberately cultivating less biased patterns of spontaneous behavior which reflect our values. For example, if you want to train yourself to leave the toilet seat down, you can start by deliberately reminding yourself to leave the seat down each time you use the restroom. Over time, however, you should habituate the action, automatically leaving the seat down without needing to think about it. Thus, while it requires considerable conscious effort on the front end, through the process of deliberate habituation we are able to alter our automatic offline behaviors to reflect our interests and values.

The hermeneutical intervention I am proposing to nonverbal marginalization involves this sort of habituation. Bringing nonverbal communication online in the short term (despite the additional cognitive resource expenditure) should cause people to habituate more equitable *offline* nonverbal behaviors in the long term. For example, perhaps you recently acquired the concept of nonverbal marginalization and as a result want to avoid nonverbally marginalizing behaviors. This will almost certainly involve bringing your nonverbal communication online in many situations—for example, deliberately making sure you look and smile at your female colleagues when they valuably contribute in department meetings. On the face of it, this type of hermeneutical intervention might seem like an awkward and onerous way to go about correcting for your own biases (which you might worry is not sustainable forever). However, because online conscious monitoring affects gradual changes in patterns of spontaneous offline behavior, over time you should find yourself spontaneously exhibiting more equitable nonverbal behaviors, even when you are not engaging in effortful online monitoring.

Given the numerous harms of nonverbal marginalization detailed in this paper, it seems clear that the long term benefits of habituating more equitable offline nonverbal behaviors are worth the cognitive processing costs of bringing nonverbal communication online in the short term. So, while the "hermeneutical intervention" might be difficult at first, I have argued that habituating

[15] It is worth emphasizing the role contextual stakes will play here. For example, perhaps you will not bring nonverbal communication online when you are spending time with a few close friends because the stakes seem low and you think you are not likely to nonverbally marginalize your friends (or be marginalized by them). Conversely, consider the potential harm of slipping into offline nonverbally marginalizing behavior in an important business meeting with your colleagues, some of whom are women and people of color. Given the higher stakes, it makes sense to be especially vigilant of your nonverbal behavior in these circumstances, deliberately bringing your nonverbal communication online to avoid causing harm (despite the extra cognitive processing costs).

[16] There are vast empirical literatures on habituation and I use the term "deliberate habituation" (which the agent consciously initiates) to contrast with automatic and subpersonal forms of habituation—see, for example, Rankin et al. (2009) and Uribe-Bahamonde et al. (2019).

a sensitivity to nonverbal marginalization is well worth the effort. Of course, I am not suggesting that the hermeneutical intervention will solve all of our (nonverbal marginalization) problems. But, we can think of the type of hermeneutically facilitated habituation I have described here as being one resource in our expanding intervention toolbox, which can help us start thinking in a more critical and systematic way about nonverbal bias.[17]

5 | CONCLUSION

I have herein laid the groundwork for future developments in the philosophy of nonverbal communication, stressing the communicative richness of our nonverbal cues and demonstrating how our nonverbal behaviors can reflect and reinforce widely held social prejudices. Further, I have introduced the concept of "nonverbal marginalization," which can help us begin to identify and address the numerous harms of discriminatory nonverbal behavior.

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[17] Achieving true nonverbal justice will certainly involve a multiplicity of approaches. For example, while the recommendation I have proposed in this section (that people work toward habituating more positive and inclusive nonverbal behaviors) might be useful to many neurotypical individuals, it is admittedly probably less relevant for certain neurodivergent individuals—like autistic people who do not use nonverbal cues in the same way as allistic people. But this might not strike us as especially worrisome if we recall from footnote 7 that neurodivergent people may be less likely to engage in nonverbal marginalization altogether. Thus, given that there exists a diversity of nonverbal engagement styles, we should appreciate that interventions aimed at nonverbal justice will not be one-size-fits-all.

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