COM 229- Organizational Communication

**Mini-Ethnography Activity**

(10 points)

One of the interpretive methods used by organizational communication researchers to learn about cultural variations and aspects of organizational culture is non-participative observation. (One part of ethnographic methodology). For this activity, let’s focus on non-verbal communicative behaviors. Get into group of 3 to 4 persons (no more than 4!) and decide what type of non-verbal behavior you would observe: use of space, colors, types of clothing, gestures, facial expressions, manner of greeting, vocal qualities, touch, etc. Decide which type of non-verbal communicative behavior your group is going to observe **before** the activity. We are then going to watch a 15-minute clip of a movie and record your observations of the non-verbal gesture you have chosen to observe.

1. You and your group will only observe the non-verbal communicative behavior you have chosen. Try not to let the verbal communication interfere with your observations of the non-verbal communicative behavior. (You might want to watch how they work to complement or contradict the other.) You and your group will observe the non-verbal behavior separately and then compare notes after watching the film.

2. Take notes on your observation, recording different and similar behaviors and the frequency of their occurrences. Remember while observing to vary from a wide angle to a narrow angle focus.

3. When the film clip has ended, look over your field notes. Think about what you have observed and what your interpretations are of your findings. Be as descriptive as possible, and then infer meaning or interpret what the non-verbal communicative behavior might mean in this particular context. Get together with your group members (for about 10 minutes) to discuss their findings and interpretations. What is the meaning within the context? Can you see any patterns of behavior? Are there any themes or categories you can classify the behavior into? What do these say about the organization and its culture?

4. Also, discuss what are the limitations to this type of research procedure? What is your reaction to the experience? Were you surprised at your findings? Or were they expected?

5. After discussing this matter with your group members, choose a spokesperson for the group to present to the class the themes you encountered in your observations. Turn in a copy of your notes at the end of the class period.