

# LN230 – Nonverbal Communication

## Week 6 – Proxemics (Space and Distance)

- Definitions
- Functions
- Hall (1959, 1990):  
Categories and  
measurements
- Cultural differences

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Ali Dench



# Activity 1: How Much Space Do You Need?



- Where do you normally sit on a bus or train? Why?
- Where do you normally look when in a lift by yourself? What happens when another person comes in (Gamble & Gamble, 2017, p. 82)?
- When was the last time you were uncomfortable being too close to someone?

# Proxemics: Definition

(Burgoon et al., 2016, p. 218)

- From the the Latin: *proximus* (nearest) (Apple Inc., 2005–2018).
- Refers to “the perception, use, and structuring of space as communication.”
- You might want to use this definition for your **Major Research Project**.

# The Codes Work Together

(Patterson, 2012, p. 732)

- Even though we're studying each non-verbal code as a distinct entity, they are **often used simultaneously** (along with words) to send messages.
  - Proxemics is **partly determined** by environment and objectics (especially "**the fixed features**" like placement of furniture).
- e.g. **How does the set-up of this room dictate our options regarding proxemics?**

# The Codes Work Together (cont.)

(Patterson, 2012, p. 732)

- For example:
  - Are we encouraged to sprawl?
  - Are we encouraged to be separate or to collaborate?
  - Does it signal where the power lies?
  - Does the lay out of the furniture dictate how we should behave in this space?
  - Does it set expectations?

# The Codes Work Together (cont.)

(Patterson, 2012, p. 732)

- However, because we can move around – and move furniture around – there is a “flexible” element of proxemics.
- And, through this flexibility, choices in proxemics impact on haptics, oculesics, and vocalics.
- Can you explain this?

See your Week 2 reading:

- Patterson, 2012, p. 732
- under “Dynamic Behaviors.”

# Proxemics: Functions

## Functions:

(Patterson, 2012, pp. 736–737)

1. To produce & process messages (Burgoon et al., 2016, p. 53)
2. To provide information
3. To regulate interaction
4. To express intimacy
5. To exercise influence
6. To manage impressions

## Proxemics:

- Which of our six functions do you think proxemics lines up with?
- Can you give some examples from your own life?

e.g. My Mum is quite deaf in one ear, so I need to stand closer to help her produce and process messages.

# Responding to Readings



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Reflect on [UBM's \(2007\)](#) article – Week 5.
- What does the article say about proxemics and the information it provides **(Function #2)** regarding the interest level of the travel customer?
- Do you agree?

# Proxemics and E. T. Hall

(Wikipedia, 2020)

- Edward Twitchell (E. T.) Hall (1914-2009):
  - “an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher”
  - introduced the concept of *proxemics* and *high-context/low-context cultures*
  - is well-known for his many books, the first two being:
    - *The Silent Language* (1959) – roots of culture shock
    - *The Hidden Dimension* (1969) – science of proxemics

# Hall's Categories and Measurements

(as cited in Gamble & Gamble, 2017, p. 83)

1. **Intimate** (<1.5 feet) – for lovers, close family, significant others.
2. **Personal** (1.5–4 feet) – an invisible bubble around us - for friends and extended family.
3. **Social** (4–12 feet) – for professional and social gatherings.
4. **Public** (>12 feet) – for public spaces and formal settings of a non-personal nature.

# Activity 2: Hall's Measurements



- See Overhill, 2014, p. 70 for [metric equivalents](#).
- Let's measure these out on campus (using a standard ruler), so we can better visualise these distances.

# This Dress Makes People Stand Back, Really

(Bischof, 2014)



(Wall Street Journal, 2014)

- An attempt to make the hidden dimension visible.
- In 2014, a 27-year-old, female, American artist designed an extendable dress, [to increase personal space](#).
- The wearer can program how far the dress spreads out – via a code.
- For example, if a person gets within “15 inches” of the wearer, the dress will inflate.

# Claiming Space: Message and Functions

<b>Functions</b> (Patterson, 2012, pp. 736–737)	<b>By closing a bedroom door, our message may be:</b>
1. To produce & process messages (Burgoon et al., 2016, p. 53)	
2. To regulate interaction	<b>“I want to be alone!”</b>
3. To provide information	<b>“Leave me alone!”</b>
4. To express intimacy	<b>“I need privacy!”</b>
5. To exercise influence	<b>“This is my space only!”</b>
6. To manage impressions	<b>“Let me cry in private!”</b>

# Activity 3: Claiming and Protecting Space



- Do you have any spaces (e.g. chairs, desks, rooms, ...) in your home that you claim as your own?
- How do you communicate that they are yours?
- What happens if your territory is invaded?

# Proxemics: Protecting Space

(Gamble & Gamble, 2017, p. 81)

- “We employ three kinds of markers” to protect what we perceive to be our space:
  1. “**Central markers**” – like a bag on a chair – to stake our claim.
  2. “**Boundary markers**” – like hedges, fences, work cubicles – to set up a barrier.
  3. “**Earmarkers**” – like nameplates, monograms, a number on a rubbish bin.
- How do you, personally, employ these markers?

# Proxemics: Personal Space and Gender

- What do you think?
- Think about the people in your life?
- Who seems to need or who takes more **personal, living, and/or storage space**: men or women?
- Does having more space equate to having more power?

# Personal Space and Gender (cont.)

(as cited in Gamble & Gamble, 2017, p. 84)

- Based on Spain (1992):
  - “women tend to need, use, and command less personal space than men”
  - “even the way women sit and move” takes less space, generally
  - “the space surrounding a woman is perceived as more public ... and accessible” —so people get closer to females than they would to males.

# Madrid: The Campaign Against Manspreading

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2jlyXq0\\_q0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2jlyXq0_q0)

- VideoScribble (2019, July 21)
- An interview with 'Anti-Manspreading Chair' Designer Laila Laurel



(Taylor, n.d.)

How is COVID  
affecting  
our use of space?

# Responding to Readings



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Reflect on [McArthur's](#) (2020) article.
- What observations does he make about COVID-19 and proxemics?
- What does he claim happens at puberty?

# Proxemics: Cultural Differences

- We learn how to use and structure space ‘appropriately’ through the process of socialisation.
- Re-read [Kirch](#) (1979, pp. 420–421) (from Week 2) for [cultural differences](#) between American, French, German, and Latin American behaviour.
- It would be interesting to know if these cultural patterns are still true for today.

# Proxemics and Faith

- Have you ever adjusted your own or society's proxemics norms in order to obey God?
- Consider Jesus talking to the woman at the well, touching lepers, and socialising with tax collectors.

# Activity 4: Your Current Kitchen



- Draw a sketch of your current kitchen.
- What are its good and bad points?
- What would you change if anything?

What do we mean by  
the kitchen work triangle?

# Organizing the 5 Zones of Modular Kitchen:

(Saviesa, 2019)

- Video clip 2–2.20 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4bjhFULq5w>

# Responding to Overhill (2014)



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Read the introductory quote (by Hall) and the first sentence of the article.
- Look at Figure 1 on p. 68.
- What was Christine Frederick (1913) trying to do?
- Write down your answer.

# Responding to Overhill (2014) (cont.)



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Read the second sentence of the article.
- What is the problem with Christine Frederick's (1913) concept?
- Write down your answer.

# Responding to Overhill (2014) (cont.)



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Read the third sentence of the article.
- Why is Hall's work being referred to?
- What is the problem with Hall's measurements?
- Write down your answers.

# Responding to Overhill (2014) (cont.)



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Read the fourth sentence of the article.
- What is the purpose of Overhill's piece of research?
- Write down your answers.

# Responding to Overhill (2014) (cont.)



(RODNAE Productions, 2021)

- Read the rest of Paragraph 1.
- What did her findings show?
- Now, read Paragraph 2 and the Conclusion.

# Major Project: Design a Functional Kitchen Space

“Use the Overhill (2014) reading as a basis for this assessment.”

What does the rest of the task include?

# Revision Questions

1. What does the code of proxemics deal with?
2. Explain how choices in proxemics impact on haptics, oculosics, and vocalics?
3. What measurement does Hall give for personal space?
4. In what ways do you, personally, mark or protect your space/s?

# Homework

- Work on Assessment 3: Role Play and Description
  - due Week 8 (after the study break)
  - during the class: perform the role play and submit the description (before 11:55 p.m.)
- Read:
  - Fattah, 2005
  - Moon & Tai, 2018

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