Proxemics

21. Proxemics

Proxemics is the term coined by Professor Edward T. Hall, author of such well known works as *The Silent Language* (1959), *The Hidden Dimension* (1969), and *Beyond Culture* 1977), to refer to 'the study of how man uses space – the space that he maintains between himself and his fellows and which he builds around him in his home and office'. It is the study of the ways in which individuals use physical space in their interactions with others and how this use of physical space in their interactions with others and how this use of physical space influences behaviour of all concerned. In the words of Professor Hall, proxemics studies 'how man unconsciously structures microspace – the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of his towns.'

Proxemic research is based on the concept of territoriality. Territoriality is a basic concept in the study of animal behavior. It is defined as behaviour by which an organism characteristically lays claim to an area and defends it against members of its own and other species. Occupation, cultivation, preservation and utilization of space in transactions.

species, plays a crucial role in the preservation, growth and development of the species. Occupation, cultivation, preservation and utilization of space is an intergral part of the culture of the species. The manner of occupation, cultivation, preservation and utilization of space between members of a group and across groups in humans is transmitted through culture. Culture transmission thus determines the nuances of space through generations. Since 'most of culture lies hidden and is outside voluntary control, making up the warp and weft of human existence', proxemics is also hidden and is unconsciously practised. In addition, there is also the dimension of ontogeny of proxemics in young members of a group, which closely has links with physical, cognitive and linguistic maturational milestones of development undergone by children.

Since proxemics is part of culture and is guided and influenced by culture transmission, anthropologists like Hall have investigated occupation, cultivation, preservation and utilization of space by humans from the anthropological view points, and linked the same with art, literature, architecture, etc. Within a culture, and as intercultural communication, occupation, cultivation, preservation and utilization of space is also investigated in social psychological terms. Research on personal space deals with the meaning of space to the individual in terms of the effects of crowding territoriality, architectural design, etc. Both the approaches, the anthropological approach taking proxemic behaviour as embedded in and instigated and guided by culture, and as behaviour determined by cultural factors and applicable to groups professing the culture, and the social-psychological approach taking proxemic behaviour essentially as an interpersonal communication, generally without reference to cultural factors

but having them as background for investigation, have contributed a lot for an understanding and description of proxemic behaviour. Hall (1969) recognizes that although research in proxemics has been restricted to culturally specific behaviour and although it does not encompass other environmental or personality variables, the latter are important for an understanding and description of nonverbal behaviour.

These two approaches are reflected in the manner in which investigation of nonverbal behaviour is carried out. The culture approach to the study of proxemic behaviour generally adopts naturalistic observation as the major technique whereas the investigation following the social-psychological approach to the study of proxemic behaviour generally adopts laboratory experimentation. Harper et al (1978) classifies the empirical research conducted on proxemics into (i) individual and group differences in personal space where personality, demographic, and cultural variables are the primary focus, (ii) studies focusing on interpersonal variables such as interpersonal attraction, interpersonal distance and arousal and responses to invasions of personal space, (iii) the effects of environment and variations in physical setting that affect population density, and (iv) studies on touch. Most of these empirical studies are made with experimental designs, and only a few follow the course of naturalistic observation.

2.2. Hall's Proxemics

Hall suggests that proxemics is the hidden dimension of human culture which we practise unconsciously all the time. He argues that it is impossible for man to divest himself of his own culture. Culture has penetrated to the roots of man's nervous system and it determines how

he perceives the world. Hall argues that by examining proxemic patterns we will be able to reveal hidden cultural frames that determine the structure of a given people's perceptual world. Proxemic research looks for patterned distinctions while studying individual differences; it aims to identify the role of proxemic behaviour in the social matrix. Since proxemic behaviour is an unconscious behaviour, it resembles the phenomena akin to tone of voice, or even stress and pitch in a human language. Being built into the language, these features are hard for the speakers to consciously manipulate. Likewise proxemic behaviour, born of culture and built into the social matrix, is an unconscious behaviour, and is hard to manipulate consciously.

Based on observation of human beings in social situations, Hall (1969) classifies the distances maintained by humans into intimate, personal, social and public distances. Each of these distances has a range from a close phase to far phase. At intimate distance, the presence of the other person is unmistakable and may at times be overwhelming because of the greatly stepped up sensory inputs. Sight (often distorted), olfaction, heat from the other person's body, sound, smell and feel of the breath all combine to signal unmistakable involvement with another body. Personal distance designates the distance consistently separating the members of noncontact species. It might be thought of as a small protective sphere or bubble that an organism maintains between itself and others. In the social distance, intimate visual details in the face are not perceived, and nobody touches or expects to touch another person unless there is some special effort. The boundary line between the far phase of personal distance and the close phase of social distance marks the limit of domination. People who work together tend

to use close social distance. It is also a very common distance for people who are attending a casual social gathering. Impersonal business occurs at this distance. Public distance is well outside the circle of involvement. Several important sensory shifts occur in the transition from the personal and social distances to public distance.

The hypothesis behind the proxemic classification system is this: it is in the nature of animals, including man, to exhibit behaviour which we call territoriality. In so doing, they use the senses to distinguish between one space or distance and another. The specific distance chosen depends on the transaction, the relationship of interacting individuals, how they feel and what they are doing. Proxemic patterns simultaneously consolidate the group and isolate it from others by reinforcing intragroup identity and making intergroup communication more difficult. Also proxemic patterns differ in different cultures. Space perception is not only a matter of what can be perceived but what can be screened out. Man's sense of space is closely related to his sense of self, which is in intimate transaction with his environment. Man can be viewed as having visual, kinesthetic, tactile, and thermal aspects of his self which may be either inhibited or encouraged to develop.

Hall identifies eight dimensions of proxemic behaviour. These are (i) postural-sex identifiers (sex and postural status of the interactants), (ii) sociofugal-sociopetal axis (face to face Vs. back to back positioning of shoulders), (iii) kinesthetic factors (the different distances between persons that provide a capability for touching one another), (iv) touch code, (v) visual code (based on retinal areas used, for example, the use of fovea for direct gaze), (vi) voice loudness, (vii) thermal code (the heat transmitted by a human body),

(viii) olfaction code (the presence and degree of undifferentiated breath and body odours). Many of these dimensions encompass some aspects of the other nonverbal behaviours considered separately, namely, the voice, kinesics, and visual behaviour. However, underlying all of these dimensions is the factor of physical distance which, other things being held constant, will determine how much we hear, see, feel, smell, etc. Indeed, distance, that is, manipulation of distance, can be considered a necessary (but not a sufficient) condition for nonverbal communication itself.

Proxemic behaviour is seen by Hall (1969) as a function of eight different dimensions listed above. He considers this total of eight classes of events as sufficient to describe the distances and the means determining distances employed by man. The systems are biobasic, rooted in the physiology of the organism. Not all of the eight factors are of equal complexity, nor do all of them function at all times. The thermal and olfaction inputs are present only at close distances. Vision is more complex than either of these, and it is normally screened out only at very close distances.

The postural-sex identifiers determine the sex and basic posture of the two individuals -- whether they are standing, sitting, squatting or prone. These are the minimum distinctions. The sociofugal-sociopetal axis describes the spatial arrangements or orientations that push people apart and pull them in -- orientations that separate and combine people, that increase interaction or decrease it. The kinesthetic factors revolve around the potential to strike, hold, caress or groom.

In essence, Hall's proxemics studies types of distance (intimate, personal, social and public),

features of space (fixed feature space, such as buildings, semi-fixed feature space wherein activities are organized and objects manipulated, and informal space, such as space maintained between interactants without being aware of it), identifies the means (media) that are exploited for proxemic communication (postural-sex identifiers, sociofugal-sociopetal axis, kinesthetic factors, touch code, visual code, voice loudness, thermal code and olfaction code), discusses the relationship between distances and media, and the biological bases of media. It studies also the hierarchy of media and their functions in communication, based on the phylogeny of media. How the types of distances, various types of media and the interrelationships between the two are exploited in a culture and across cultures is also focused upon. Other areas of investigation covered are as to whether there are universals in patterns of proxemic communication, whether such universals are conditioned by biological bases, the role of language in proxemic behaviour, the function of language-like utterances in proxemic behaviour, and proxemic behaviour vis-a-vis socialization processes. Hall's proxemics is based on the assumption that in spite of the fact that cultural systems pattern proxemic behaviour in radically different ways, the proxemic behaviours are deeply rooted in biology and physiology. Secondly, proxemic behaviour is patterned and we seek the patterns and not individual differences in the study of proxemic behaviour. Thirdly, communication occurs simultaneously on different levels of consciousness ranging from full awareness to out of awareness. Fourthly, by making observations of the way animals handle space, it is possible to learn an amazing amount that is translatable to human terms.

2.3. Empirical Research on Proxemic Behaviour

As already pointed out, empirical research

on proxemic behaviour has been conducted generally under three areas (Harper, et al 1978): individual differences in proxemic behaviour, interpersonal relationships revealed through proxemic behaviour, and environmental factors that influence proxemic behaviour. In addition, touch as a proxemic behaviour has also received elaborate attention in empirical researches on proxemic behaviour. The studies on individual differences in proxemic behaviour focus on sex differences in proxemic behaviour, age in relation to developmental aspects of personal space as well as differences in proxemic behaviour due to age differences, proxemic behavioural variations due to cultural and ethnic differences, differences in proxemic behaviour due to differences in factors, and proxemic behaviour of psychiatric populations. The studies on proxemic behaviour of interpersonal relationships focus on familiarity and liking, intimacy, arousal and interpersonal distance, interpersonal similarity, influence of proxemic behaviour on interpersonal perception, interpersonal distance and negative social experience, interpersonal task orientation, seating arrangements and interpersonal interaction, and territorial invasion of personal space. The empirical studies of environmental factors impinging on proxemic behaviour focus on distance and behaviour in shrinking/shrunken space, crowding, competitive and cooperative situations, large and small groups, influence of task and sex differences in the effect of crowding, social isolation and stress, behaviour differences among unacquainted individuals, the effect of different architectural designs on individuals, reactions to various fixed spaces, and study of prison setting. Empirical studies on touching behaviour have focused upon body accessibility, the conditions under which a person will permit another to touch him, the meanings people attach to touching and being touched, the loci of acceptable touch, etc.

The present trend in the study of proxemic behaviour is governed and guided by trends of studies mainly in psychology. Experimental investigation holds the day; naturalistic observation is kept to the level required for formulating initial hypotheses and is reluctantly used in aid of experimental investigations. However, this author finds that naturalistic observation in proxemic behaviour studies has to play a greater role than is grudgingly assigned to it by psychologically oriented studies for the following reasons. The role of experimentation in research on proxemic behaviour is also stated below:

(1) Naturalistic observation and experimental investigation are not contradictory to each other.

(2) Naturalistic observation can easily and profitably precede experimental investigation.

(3) Naturalistic observation supplies relevant and essential variables for experimentation.

(4) Naturalistic observation sets the realistic setting for experimental investigation.

(5) Naturalistic observation is adequate in many cases; cases in which the findings could be based only on intelligent observations of patterns and their networks are many.

(6) Naturalistic observation is most appropriate if the subjects are too individualistic.

(7) Experimentation clarifies the situation.

(8) Experimentation brings out the hierarchy.

(9) Experimentation brings out matter not observed in naturalistic observation.

(10) Within group, comparison is facilitated by experimental findings in a more objective manner.

(11) Dividing points/features between items observed otherwise as continuous is facilitated by experimentation.

(12) Most of the experimental investigations ignore culture and the biobasic rootedness of nonverbal behaviour.

(13) Experimentations in one system of nonverbal behaviour ignores nonverbal behaviour in other systems of nonverbal behaviour.

In other words, study of proxemic behaviour, in the nature of things, demands that both naturalistic observation and experimental investigation are employed.

In addition to the above, study of proxemic behaviour would do well if a three dimensional approach is adopted. Proxemic behaviour used for communication can be looked at from the point of view of proxemic communication in and with cultural artifacts, proxemic communication in social groups or proxemic communication predominantly governed by and for social group axioms/dicta, and proxemic communication between individuals. While the proxemic communication between individuals is also guided by social group axioms/ dicta, individuals can and do relax the conditions imposed by the dicta, in their interpersonal transactions. As a result the proxemic behaviour dictated by social norms get modulated at the encounters between individuals. Proxemic communication in and with cultural artifacts also modulate the proxemic behaviour generally prescribed by social dicta in the sense that the former reflects not only the social dicta but also the ideals of the social dicta, along with varying values attached to adherence to social dicta as well as deviations from them. It provides a window for viewing what is hidden, what is intended, and what the aspirations are. It provides for the imaginary. All the above three dimensions are anchored on to the biological and environmental constraints and potentialities on the one hand for their existence, and on the other hand these dimensions

in their turn modulate the values/interpretation and exploitation of biological and environmental constraints and potentialities.

2.4. Cultural Artifacts and Proxemic Behaviour

Of the artifacts societies/humans have created, we devote our attention to the study of proxemic communication in and through the cultural artifacts of dance, music, theatre, sculpture and temple organization in the Indian context. A chief characteristic feature of these artifacts is one of replication of social organization and environmental factors. The replication is necessary to bridge the gap that is inevitable between artifacts and actual environment. The function of authenticity is to bridge the gap between an artifact and the actual environment, primarily. Thus, the most important communicative processes of cultural artifacts should be sought in the deliberate attempts to create distance where no distance is involved and to close the distance where some distance is involved.

Take, for instance, the use of curtain in a Tamil streetplay or in *kathakaḷi*. It creates distance between the actors and the audience, where there is practically no distance involved. It creates distance between actors on the 'stage' when different actors are involved in different functions within the same scene. Its removal suddenly closes the gap between the two and serves the function of uniting the characters to bring a unity of purpose to the scene. Thus the device has two broad functions -- one, separating the entire artifact from the audience, creating a distance between the audience and the artifact, and second, creating distance between characters, pursuits, etc., within the scene. Classification of ragas based on spatio-temporal assignation for every one of them in

Carnatic music is another attempt to bridge the distance between different media. At the same time, the ragas are employed as symbols of the mood intended to be conjured. Where there is distance, where there is difference between actual condition and intended condition, the distance is eliminated and the intended condition is brought in through playing a raga which is appropriate for what is intended to come/occur. Temple organization is an area which fully exploits proxemic behavioural patterns. Take, for example, the placement of an elitist Hindu temple (Thirumalai, 1983) in a small town in Tamilnadu. The elitist Hindu temple is located generally in a place which is the middle of the original town, with Brahmin streets on the bank of the river, close to the temple. The other Hindu castes are generally indicated their ranking on the basis of the distance of their settlements from the temple, proximity indicating a higher rank. This neat geographic representation of castes is largely watered down these days and yet the original scheme of things can be easily retrieved. Also that geographical distance plays a great role in maintaining social distance is attested in the fact that the habitats can be divided into three kinds and placed in geographic contiguity, with distance between the three. The Brahmin hamlet is closest to the temple and is located on the river bank or near the water source. The non-Brahmin caste Hindu streets have a socio-petal distribution surrounding the temple, in an order of progressive reduction in closeness to temple, corresponding to reduction in ranking. The lowest of the social strata occupy the periphery or may occupy space outside the periphery. The distinction between major and minor deities is also well attested via their placements in the town. The non-vegetarian minor deities also find their temples placed not in the centre of the town but in its periphery. The minor

deities within an elitist temple are also governed through geographic distance depicting their social status/proximity to the presiding deity of the elitist temple. The mischievous ones among the minor deities are at a distance and require special supplication.

The proximity between the central deity of the temple and others is also easily demonstrated by their placement, at least in bronzes. The sanctity of the main idol clubbed with social distance is maintained through an organization of chambers leading on to sanctum sanctorum. A distance is maintained between the deity and the devotee through various means; one such means is that admission is prohibited to anyone, except the priest, to enter the sanctum sanctorum. And the sanctum sanctorum is approachable only through various chambers placed before it. This established distance is broken and closeness is created when the *utsav murti* is taken on a ritual procession periodically around the temple on a fixed route. God, thus, closes the distance between himself and the devotee. Note that distance is created for one purpose and that the same is closed for another purpose. Both are maintained, both coexist through the innovation of the institution of *utsav murti.* The institution of *archaka* in elitist temples, in comparison to its nonexistence or its existence with lesser functions in folk temples, coupled with the institution of worship through a language (Sanskrit) not comprehended by most devotees, is yet another device of creating distance between the deity and the devotee, which is again closed by ascribing some function to native language in worship.

The temple sculpture is another cultural artifact in which distance is deliberately created and closed. Concretization of gods and goddesses

in the form of idols is a process of distance between
the concept and representation, between humans
and the deities.   The idols are given the form
of humans and this is also a major step towards
bridging the distance between the gods and humans.
There is also the creation of a society of gods
and goddesses and this society is governed generally
by the social norms of humans. However, in order
to maintain the distance between the gods and
humans, certain special features are also introduced
in the society of gods and goddesses. For example,
the gods and goddesses can take different forms
and can appear in different places simultaneously, .
can fly in the air on their own, and can walk
on water, and on the land without their feet touch-
ing the land.   The gods and goddesses are also
governed through human kinship.   This is another
device to bridge the gap between the humans
and gods.   Each god or goddess is also assigned
his/her own vehicle, personal transportation, and
the gods and goddesses have many limbs and heads.
While the distance between the gods and goddesses
on the one hand and humans on the other is narrowed
by adopting human social forms, the distance
between the two is created by the special features
listed above.   Here the distance is meant for
creating identities and distinctions.   In addition
to these physical features of idols, there are also
other devices by which distance between the devotee
and the gods is created as well as bridged.   For
example, the devotees themselves are elevated,
to the status of deities and given a place of worship
within the temple complex.   Another feature
is that some of the devotees in bronzes become
a regular feature of attachment to the major
deity.   For example, the idol of Patanjali always
has a place along with Nataraja.   Likewise some
Tamil Saivite human saints in their bronzes are
attached to the major deity.   This phenomenon
is a process of bridging the distance between

the humans and the gods. However, none of these humans would be depicted with divine features attached to the idols of àctual gods and goddesses. This· characteristic of idols depicting humans creates and maintains the distance between the gods and the humans elevated to the status of deities. Also, there is a compression of events portrayed in a sculpture panel. For example, on the panel of Māmallapuram, one finds a combination of several features, some from the animal kingdom, some from humans, some from deities and some from natural phenomena, in a compressed form, giving a totality of the event taking place all at a time. Once this portrayal is attempted there is always compression taking place and as a result the distance between the levels gets deliberately obscured.

Another cultural artifact that creates distance as well as closeness, is the naming processes of places. For example, consider the case of Uttara Kasi and *Southern Benares*. The original Kasi is replicated in a town in Tamilnadu, called Tenkasi, meaning Southern Benares. This is an· attempt to bring the sanctity of the original Benares closer home. The cultural artifact is a very common feature in India. This phenomenon acts as a unifying force. Another cultural institution relates to construction and maintenance of latrines only outside the house. The older houses with huge compounds even today have the latrines built away from the main places of residence, since keeping this facility within a residential part is considered an impure act. It is so much so that the student hostels of Annamalai University built in early 1930s did not have latrines in their main building. The toilets and the bath rooms were built away from the hostel.

Another cultural artifact is the use of distance

for purificatory processes at the time of menstrual period of women in some Tamil communities (applicable to many other Indian communities as well). The women during their menstrual period are expected to sit outside the main place of residence in traditional Brahmin households. The compound of a Brahmin household has specific space/facilities for such purposes. In case such facilities are lacking the women are asked to sit inside the house in one corner and are not allowed to do household work. In non-Brahmin Tamil homes of some communities, when the households do not have much rooming facility the women are asked to sit in a corner of the same room with a husking stick between her and the rest. The husking stick thus creates distance between her and others where there is practically no distance involved. Yet another process of creation of distance where there is no distance in reality is the institution of wearing a veil/covering the face with the palleu of the saree. Another cultural artifact is the distance kept between various cremation grounds of different communities reflecting the social distances/distinctions among the communities involved.

2.5. Social Group and Proxemic Communication

Proxemic communication governed by social group identities is demonstrated in the influence of caste in proxemic communication. Distance and touching play a crucial role in the proxemic communication influenced by caste. While caste can be viewed as a cultural artifact as well, there is a difference between cultural artifacts of the class, consisting of items, such as dance, music, etc., and the social institution of caste. Caste manifests in behaviour and permeates all behaviour. Whereas cultural artifacts have concrete existence outside humans, caste has its existence within

humans and regulates all their behaviour.

Caste regulates the proxemic patterns between members of different castes and among members of the same caste. It also regulates proxemic patterns for various kinds of pursuits and contexts. Caste regulates proxemic patterns of geographic settlement as well. In a typical Tamil village, caste distribution and ranking is reflected also in the geographical contiguity of the habitats of individual castes. While there is a settlement called *agrahāram* for Brahmins, generally located closer to a water source, such as a river, away from the *terukkal* 'streets' in which the non-Brahmin, the so-called touchable Hindu castes live, and the members of the so-called *untouchable* c a s t e s l i v e further away from the 'streets' in another direction. Thus, a geographic distance is maintained between Brahmins, non-Brahmin touchable caste Hindus, and the so-called untouchables. As already pointed out in an earlier section, caste ranking is closely linked with geographical distribution of the castes within a village, or a small town. The ranking of a caste in terms of other castes may be judged based on the geographical distance the caste occupies from the elitist temple in the village or town. It can also be judged in terms of its distance from the water source, in particular from the river bed. Closer the caste settlement to the water source and elitist temple, higher is its ranking in the caste hierarchy.

Each individual carries his caste within him, although many may deny it. The socialization processes an individual undergoes in the Tamil society are caste-based, even though the schooling processes may regulate the exhibition of such influences. These caste-based socialization processes also inculcate in the nonschooled certain processes of adjustment and behavioural norms in interpersonal

communication, among members of different castes. These processes include both linguistic and nonverbal patterns. We argue that caste is omnipresent in all social behaviour and suggest *caste memory* as a factor guiding interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship. This caste memory is acquired through interpersonal contacts and experience. Caste memory has several consequences for the choice and partaking of food, participation in public activities, and for interpersonal interaction both at verbal and nonverbal behavioural levels.

Touch and distance play a crucial role in caste organization among Tamils. We find that a three-tier caste organization is prevalent based on distance; the habitats are organized employing distance as a deciding/manifest variable. Touch and distance also play a crucial role in regulating the behaviour of members of a caste among themselves as well as between members of different castes. While untouchability is a crime as per law, it is still practised in many parts of India. Members of the so-called touchable caste Hindu communities in many parts of India have a great aversion towards sitting and eating together with members of the so-called untouchable castes. That they have an aversion is revealed in the efforts of official agencies that aim at promoting functions in which members of different communities including the so-called untouchable communities would sit together and eat. Touching in social level does not include only direct bodily contact but also use of the same object, such as vessels used by members of both touchable and untouchable castes. Direct bodily contact as well as use of the same space and objects are prohibited. Also proximity is to be avoided; always a distance should be maintained between members of the so-called touchable and untouchable castes. The touchability/untouchability phenomenon has its

own history in Tamil society. Communities were divided as right-handed and left-handed and certain proximity and touchability codes were prescribed centuries ago. Proximity and touchability codes are also found within the interpersonal plane. Wife is to walk behind her husband; the spouses are not expected to be seen together, to be holding hands or have any physical contact in public, or in the presence of others in the family. While Brahmin castes practise untouchability towards all non-Brahmin castes, the non-Brahmin castes practise untouchability as a social phenomenon towards members of the so-called untouchable or lower castes. Again, members of the non-Brahmin castes including the so-called untouchable castes refrain from touching the members of Brahmin castes, even when necessity demands it.

Touchability is closely associated with the phenomenon of pollution. If the members of untouchable castes entered temples, pollution was assumed to have been caused. Touchability as a social institution functioned to create distance between various social groups. While untouchability as a social act is prohibited by law, creating distance between members of different castes through the phenomenon of untouchability still continues in novel ways. The phenomenon of silver cups or china is an illustration of the practice of untouchability. When guests belonging to non-Brahmin communities visit a very orthodox Brahmin household, an entirely different set of vessels in silver or china may be used to serve food or drinks. While some households may serve food or drink in the same set of vessels to both the members of their own family and the guests, some households may retain their regular vessels for their members and use a different set for the guests. In both cases, however, while the distance is bridged at one level by eating/drinking together using

similar vessels on the occasion, distance is maintained at another level in the sense that when the family members eat and drink within the family, another set of vessels is used: touchability at one level and untouchability or retention of one's way of life at another level. The use of dialects in Tamil is another clear case of creating and closing distances between social groups. There is a clear distinction between the Brahmin dialect of Tamil and the non-Brahmin dialects of Tamil. A Tamil Brahmin is capable, generally, of using both his own dialect of Tamil as well as the non-Brahmin dialect of Tamil. In his use of the non-Brahmin dialect of Tamil he closes the distance between him and the non-Brahmin, whereas the use of his own dialect enables him to maintain the distance between him and the non-Brahmin. Certain vocabulary items, phonological variables, and syntactic and semantic nuances are exploited in maintaining the distance between the two. This is almost like the silver cup phenomenon described above.

Attire, odour of perspiration and caste marks are some of the other nonverbal communication variables exploited in the social level. Whereas caste memory regulates the proxemic behaviour directly through conceptual processes, attire, odour and caste marks go to the aid of caste memory in its operation. Odour of perspiration is not a product of caste organization but is a direct consequence of incessant labour which even the members of the upper castes would acquire if they are also subjected to hard manual labour all through. Odour of perspiration generally ascribed to the so-called lower castes is accentuated also by the settlements of these lower castes being further away from the water source. Even attempts at having regular baths by them are sneered at and discouraged. Caste marks such as the Vaishna-

vite forehead marks, Brahmin's sacred thread, sacred thread worn by members of other castes all act as communicating symbols for others to regulate their behaviour towards those who wear and exhibit such marks. Attire is a clear, distinct mark of identity which also regulates the behaviour of others. The manner in which the saree is worn by a Brahmin woman in her household, and in the river while having a bath, is different from the manner in which it is worn by non-Brahmin women, in the same contexts. In several cases, however, attire and caste marks have been reduced to the function only of identity, whereas odour has a consequence directly for proxemic behaviour. Attire and caste marks when worn on certain occasions do also become a reason for proxemic behaviour. While returning from the bath in the river, Brahmin men and women generally adopt a course of distance from others so that no pollution is caused. Also for religious ceremonies as well as for morning worship inside the house, distance is maintained even between the members of the same household. In essence, proxemic behaviour on the social plane has the function of maintaining the caste organization and hierarchy. It helps the maintenance of identity as well. A proxemic behaviour at the social level of a caste is applicable not only in its transaction with members of another caste, but it may also be applicable to members of the same caste and household on certain occasions. Again, the mode of treatment by proxemic behaviour meted out by members of a particular caste towards members of another caste may be applied to it by another set of castes and/or certain classes of people, as in the case of proxemic behaviour towards recognized Acharyas. The proxemic behaviour prescribed for interactions between members of Brahmin and non-Brahmin castes is practised between the members of Brahmin castes on the one hand and the Acharyas on the

other. Note also that where prescribed proxemic behaviour has come to be questioned at the secular as well as religious levels, adherents to tradition may find an opening to retain the proxemic behaviour at some not so manifest level while adopting methods of closing the distance at other manifest levels.

2.6. Proxemic Communication in Interpersonal Contexts

The difference between proxemic behaviour at the social level and the proxemic behaviour at the purely interpersonal level is the potential the proxemic behaviour at the interpersonal level has for relaxation of what is prescribed as the right proxemic behaviour at the social level. Only to provide for this potential and need, perhaps the Hindu ritual codes prescribe **prāyaścittam.** Individual compulsions in interpersonal transactions have always been a source of modification in social codes prescribed by caste institutions. Caste memory does regulate nonverbal behaviour, but, as stated, compulsions of the context along with compulsions of schooling could relax what is dictated by caste memory. At the interpersonal level, proxemic behaviour is guided mostly by perceptual features including manner of speech.

Olfaction is an important guide for the use of space between individuals. It is an important means by which communication of the intended message is carried out. It is also used to signal status and power. It is exploited to identify the ranking of the individual encountered and to regulate one's own behaviour towards that individual. Three variables seem to influence the operation of olfaction in interpersonal communication. The quality of olfaction is decided upon by the distance between the individuals, strength of olfaction and the medium

by which olfaction is carried out. When individuals encounter one another they are either repelled from one another and they (or at least one of them) try to be as far away as possible from one another, or they maintain the distance they are in. If bad odour is smelt, attempts to be away from one another are instantaneous. Strength of the scent used or the strength of the scented hair oil used also indicates the finesse of the individual using the scent. Rural (and lower class?) people prefer strong scents, whereas the upper class and the educated prefer soft smelling scents, hair oil and soaps.

Olfaction is suppressed in the upper classes as well as among the educated, whereas olfaction is ignored in others. Using scents in the lower classes is not for the suppression of body odour, but is treated as yet another ornament meant for the occasion. There are scents prescribed as part of worship. For example, an essential item used in prayer/puja is frankincense and/or scented stick, which is invariably used both in marriage and death ceremonies, and in worship of deities. Note also that odour is communicative of one's own identity of professions, etc., and that there is practically no attempt at suppressing information on this count. Farmers, fishermen, domestic servants, scavengers, all have their own specific odour derived from their avocation and this odour communicates their identity and regulates the behaviour of those who encounter them, many a time creating a distance between individuals. Many a time the same odour also acts as a unifying force among members practising the same profession, thus closing the distance between members of the same group. Suppression, reduction or elimination of odour is not, however, absent. Suppression is resorted to as part of purificatory processes for an auspicious occasion, through baths, wearing

fresh washed or new clothes, etc. But using a scent is not generally visualized as a mechanism for suppression.

As investigators of olfaction as a means of nonverbal communication, we have to look for 'boundaries and whether they have been crossed or not. Everyone is surrounded by a small cloud or haze of smell, varying in size according to physical setting, emotional state, and culturally prescribed norms. The investigator must determine at what point the smell is unmistakable and whether this fits into the total proxemic posture. Usually there is little ambiguity. Most transactions occur either inside or outside these boundaries' (Hall, 1969).

Voice loudness is another interpersonal nonverbal communication variable. Voice loudness is controlled by distance, relationship between the parties involved and the situation or subject being discussed. With voice level we judge distance. We will whisper in close quarters and shout when the addressee is not at a distance. The manipulation of voice loudness is also a socially prescribed code for women, servants and inferiors. Socialization processes control the way we view voice loudness in different situations and for different purposes. Children are taught how to modulate voice loudness.

That voice loudness clearly reveals the distance involved is obvious in many cultures. That voice loudness is also perceived as a cultural trait is seen in most Indian communities. Speakers of most Indian languages have a tendency to term speakers of a language other than their own as noisy people, speaking in great volume which also includes harshness. Some language communities pride themselves in being given to the habit of speaking with voice loudness; here such loudness is related to some virtue, such as being always

happy, open and frank, etc. Within a single language community also, members of one caste may call members of another caste as noisy people. Within and across language groups, there are always occasions wherein loudness is not only allowed but also demanded. Thus, voice loudness, which is a sure variable to reveal distance involved between individuals engaged in communication with one another, is also an important nonverbal variable to communicate the mood of the speaker. While in natural contexts voice loudness is resorted to in distance, in conditions of closeness where distance is to be created between individuals, one of the individuals may resort to voice loudness. Where voice loudness is demanded in natural circumstances, distance may be closed by resorting to soft voice (or distance may be pretended to be not in existence and soft voice may be resorted to). Slow and soft voice is always related to dignity in behaviour. Also note that reduction in loudness of voice coupled with a rigidly formal disposition, sometimes reduced to mumbling, can create distance between individuals when there is no real physical distance involved. In essence, loudness in voice creates distance and softness in voice closes distance; the reversal of this phenomenon is resorted to, to create distance where there is no physical distance involved and to close distance where there is physical distance involved. At another level, combination of softness with other variables, such as a formal disposition does create distance where there is in reality no distance involved.

Use of language style also is resorted to in creating and closing distances. This is different from the voice loudness. Here use of language style means the use of certain styles in which the actual content of the message may not directly influence the creation and closing down of distances,

but the manner of speaking may reveal the distance
or closeness between individuals engaged in communi-
cation. What one talks about and the manner
of talking are linked with distance and situation.
Joos (1962) lists five styles, each used for a diffe-
rent situation. They are: intimate, casual, consul-
tative, formal and frozen. Intimate style is generally
adopted when distance is closed, whereas the
formal and frozen styles are resorted to, to create
distance even where there is no distance in reality
involved. The formal and frozen styles can be
adopted even when there is actual distance involved
so that further distance can be created. In Tamil,
there is a clear distinction between written and
colloquial Tamil. To what extent the use of one
or the other decides/influences proxemic behaviour
is not clear in face to face communication. However
in written communication where the parties engaged
in communication are not physically present simul-
taneously in the same place, use of the colloquial
style communicates several types of information:
the background of the correspondents as regards
education, status of the correspondents, and the
level of intimacy between the correspondents.
In the last case, there is some consequence for
proxemic behaviour. The distance in reality is
closed between the correspondents by a resort
to colloquial style in the last case. Likewise
adopting a very formal and frozen style of present-
ing matter in writing creates distance between
the correspondents.

We deal with eye and its use in nonverbal
communication in a separate chapter. We shall
see briefly here only those salient features of
vision that have a direct bearing on proxemic
behaviour between individuals. Vision is a primary
means of judging distance in interpersonal communi-
cation. 'How the eye is used is a function of
one's culture. The culture specifies at what,

at whom and how one looks as well as the amount of communication that takes place via the eye'. There are at least three strategies adopted in creating and closing distance using the vision medium. Even when a person is close and is right before one's vision, one could pretend not to have seen the individual and carry on one's duties and/or proceed further away from that individual. This shutting up of one's eyes, revealed in not recognizing the individual encountered, is a deliberate act of creating distance. Likewise even when an individual is further away and is in a crowd, one may recognize the individual and manifestly exhibit this recognition of the individual. This is closing the distance gap where there is in reality physical distance involved. A politician or a *swamiji* or any public figure may see the people around with a survey look keeping his palms folded to greet the people to bridge the distance between him and the people. The distance between him and the people is due not because of real space but because of his inability to mingle with people for various reasons. Even when he is close to the people in physical distance, his status creates a distance between him and the people, and this distance is sought to be bridged by the survey look, and other accompanying devices. In the interpersonal communication, a proper blend of looking at the individual and looking away from the individual is demanded. Turning away for most of the time from the individual, who is before one, in face to communication, would mean creating distance between the individuals engaged in communication. There is yet another interesting phenomenon which clearly reveals the dynamics of vision in seeing things far away as close and in treating things which are close as things far away or nonexistent even. One recognizes an individual or object at a distance and rushes to the individual or object

recognized, in the process tripping over things or stepping on individuals in the way. What is perceived and recognized at a distance comes closer to the individual than what is actually close to the individual in reality -- the individual does not see the object he trips over or the individual he steps on, although the individual or the object may be in reality very much closer to him than the object/individual recognized further away.

Hall (1963) has included under thermal factors mainly heat gain and loss which influence the structuring of the close distances. While the sensing of heat from another body can result in a movement either towards or away from the source, the cultural factors in Indian societies do permit such closeness only in crowded places and transport vehicles. Both males and females always try to avoid such heat flow from one to another, if space could be created between those who are close to one another. Where no space could be created, there is always an attempt to adjust the position even while maintaining the same distance in space. Perspiration is another factor that is caused quite frequently in Indian contexts when individuals are close to one another in crowded places including transport vehicles. The behaviour noted above, namely, changing position/shifting position while retaining the same amount of space between the individuals is often resorted to. Hence, the communicative potential of thermal factors is limited in Indian contexts.

Touching as a proxemic behaviour in social groups is already discussed. In interpersonal communication, touching as a proxemic behaviour differs from sex to sex. Generally speaking, heterosexual touch is prohibited among strangers. And among those related and/or familiar with one another

also, heterosexual touching behaviour is admissible only among certain categories of kinship under certain age groups and across certain age groups. Even among members of the same sex, touching behaviour is governed by social status, attire, age, and familiarity. Touching is generally resorted to for calling the attention of the individual who is beckoned through touch. It is also resorted to as a form of worship and of begging the pardon when one steps on the other unawares. Touching is also employed for comforting, to show the closeness of relationship between individuals. One also pushes the other forcefully to make way for oneself. While bodily contact in the crowd is tolerated, the general tendency is towards avoidance of touching behaviour between both members of the same sex and across sexes.' Thus touching as a nonverbal mode of communication has certain limitations and is restricted to certain specified spheres only in the general Indian context.

At the interpersonal level, touching behaviour appears to have the following consequences: (i) Touching, in a positive and permissible sense, appears to be restricted to communication in family setting; (ii) Touching in the public setting among private citizens, not familiar with one another, is generally associated with offence, and is considered an act to be avoided; and (iii) Touching behaviour in the public is also considered in a positive view when the touching is committed by and/or oriented towards public figures, generally the venerable individuals of religious and/or secular pursuits, for whom both the private and public spheres of activity merge together.

The communicational contexts, in Tamil society, may be broadly classified into two types, family and extended family setting, and public places (Thirumalai, 1983). While touching as a nonverbal

behaviour in public setting, as already pointed out, is to be generally avoided, and is tolerated because of necessities and compulsions, touching as a nonverbal communication behaviour is regulated in certain ways within the family and extended family setting. The regulation is generally based on the placement of the individual on the marital line, actual and potential, or on the non-marital line (Thirumalai, 1983). The kinship line from which the speaker (communicator), his own brothers and sisters have or can have or could have had their spouses is viewed as the marital line. The relatives or potential relatives with whom and/or with whose families exchange of brides and grooms is possible are viewed as belonging to the marital line. Note that marriage is permissible only within the caste and that marriage takes place generally between members of families already related to one another. Members of the same caste, but not related to one another, are placed on the marital or non-marital line through intermediary families. Touching as a nonverbal communicative behaviour is permissible across sexes of members of non-marital line only. This touching behaviour is also generally avoided among adults. Thus, touching as a communicative behaviour is allowed neither in public places setting nor in family setting, across sexes, generally speaking. As already referred to, normal touching by hand/finger while exchanging things, in talking, etc., is admissible between spouses, but touching behaviour, such as embrace, kissing, etc., are in the realm of taboo both in the family setting and public places setting where others are present. The communicative status of touching, thus, is to be explored in the purely intimate personal plane, both among the members of the same sex and across sexes. Touching, rather avoidance of it as a communicative behaviour, is to be seen at the plane of societally prescribed behaviour, more as behaviour guided and regulated

by caste institution.

A clear case of touching as a communicative behaviour in its ontogenetic base is seen in the use of the same by mothers in Tamil society. The alienation process between mother and off-spring as biological organisms commences with the progressive lessening and loss of physical contact between the two, with emergence of language playing a more important link in the social relationship between the two.

The just born child does not respond physically to the utterances of the mother in the initial stages. The physical contact between the two carries a greater load of communication between them. The utterances of the mother are more or less one way communication at least for a brief period. Soon, even at the babbling stage, mother's utterances come to have a communicative role and content. There is syncretic understanding of the content and paralinguistic features; verbal utterances come to communicate with children. The functions of mother's utterances are manifold, but in essence they appear to have a catalytic, instigating and supporting role for physical, mental, social and linguistic maturation. One of the important factors that not only influence the speed and manner of language acquisition but also the content and result of socialization processes is the linguistic and nonlinguistic (nonverbal) behaviour of mother. The influence is better understood by a study of mother's endearments and other utterances, not for their role in the emergence of linguistic structures but for their role in the nonlinguistic behaviour (including nonverbal behaviour) of child in current as well as latter day performance.

Mother's endearments and related utterances have to be studied under three periods: the first

period in which the child has no or very little language; the second period in which the child engages herself in the acquisition of language and a syncretic understanding of both linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviour; and the third behaviour in which the child has mastered language and has some explicit but not complete understanding of the environment. The first period is characterized by four elements on the part of the mother: (i) the frequent physical contact leading to caressing and fondling, (ii) along with caressing and fondling, utterance of single syllables and combination of syllables with no apparent relationship to words in language, and in repetitive succession, (iii) vocative utterances with no apparent vocative function, and (iv) sentences indicating/identifying the objects and the events around (most of these being hypo-cristics). All these utterances function as endear-ments and all these generally accompany or are accompanied by physical contact between mother and child. The second period is characterized by the processes which should be considered an extension of the fourth characteristic of the first period. Still vocative expressions with no apparent vocative function are employed. The third period marks the less or even the loss of physical content with mother and this comes to be regarded as the proper behaviour in later life -- in intense moments of agony and suffering only, one regains this tender touch and not otherwise. The all pervasive endearment function of physical contact in early childhood is slowly replaced by linguistic utterances, and physical contact takes on a specia-lized function in Tamil society. The alienation process between mother and offspring as biological organisms commences with the progressive lessening and loss of physical contact between the two, with language coming to play a more important link in the social relationship between the two.

Touch as a deliberate medium of communication is employed in certain commercial activities also. In these contexts, touch of fingers of individuals is used as a secret code of communication. For example, the brokers in the cattle fairs in Tamilnadu negotiate the prices of various heads of cattle using this secret code.

Yet another variable is the distance normally maintained and/or appropriate, for a transaction, between individuals. Hall (1963) identifies the following positions in this regard: (i) within body contact distance, (ii) just outside body contact distance, (iii) within easy touching distance with only forearm extended, (iv) just outside forearm distance (elbow room), within touching or grasping distance with arms fully extended, (v) just outside this distance, (vi) within reaching distance, and (vii) just outside reaching distance. In the Indian context, the distance maintained between two individuals in public places setting clearly reveals the status and extent of intimacy between the individuals. There is a clearcut difference in the use of postures and positions adopted by individuals belonging to rural and urban settings. While the last three positions are generally found and expected in the rural areas for public places setting in transactions between different sexes, positions just outside body contact distance, within easy touching distance with only forearm extended, and just outside forearm distance (elbow room), within touching or grasping distance with arms fully extended are all allowed, with varying communicative intent in the urban setting. Status and intimacy act in opposite directions as regards distance, generally speaking. This is valid both in rural and urban contexts, as regards public places setting. A position within body contact distance certainly reveals a greater intimacy between the individuals; the position just outside

body contact distance also reveals closer intimacy between individuals if such a position is not warranted by the task on hand, such as looking into a document or object closely; the position within easy touching distance with only forearm extended shows the familiarity that exists between individuals while at the same time showing the narrowing status difference between these individuals; the position just outside the forearm distance also reveals familiarity and closeness in work; the positions within reaching distance and just outside reaching distance indicate that the relationship involved is generally of a formal nature and that there is indeed much status difference between the individuals involved in the communicative act. Note that the distance maintained is a consequence of underlying relationships and purpose of transactions. Also it is influenced by seating arrangements, whether one person is sitting and another standing, and the environment (open space, games, office, etc.). In other words, while the distance maintained between two individuals in the communicative act may communicate on its own, certain values held between the individuals, the distance itself could be dictated by necessities which in their turn may obliterate the values.

Some of the other features of nonverbal communication through proxemic behaviour at the interpersonal level are as follows:

(1) Although the space is more sociofugal than sociopetal in Tamil and many other Indian societies, there are restraints imposed by caste institution. These restraints imposed by the caste institution are found, as situation and sex bound behaviour, not only in the transactions between members of different castes but also among the members of the same caste.

(2) 'In America, as soon as a person stops or is seated

in a public place, there balloons around him a small sphere of privacy which is considered inviolate. The size of the sphere varies with the degree of crowding, the age, sex and the importance of the person, as well as the general surroundings. For the Arab, there is no such thing as an intrusion in public. Public means public', (Hall, 1969). Likewise in India also, public means public, if this constraint is not modulated by (the known) influence/status one bears and is able to exhibit with im.punity and support. If there is no supporting structure behind the individual, the individual will have to put up with the "violation" of his space. In other words, public space means really public and is to be shared by all. There is also the phenomenon of no one taking the responsibility for the disorder (of various things) found in public; since it is a public place, it is for the institutions of governance to assume responsibility for removal of disorder/for the betterment of conditions. Public means that it does not belong to any one in particular and hence one could treat it the way one likes, so long as one is not caught red-handed.

(3) Females require less personal space than men, with members of their own sex. They deliberately create greater distance between them and members of the opposite sex purely as a social code of behavioural norms between sexes, in contrast to men who create deliberate distance between them and members of their own sex on grounds such as status and power.

(4) Personal space is expected to be increased by individuals as their age increases.

(5) There is a direct relationship between age and distance when we compare children, adolescents, and adults conversing in natural settings.

(6) Touching while conversing is generally frowned upon among adults of both the sexes.

(7) Perception of real, physical space, its patterns of use, consequences of failures to appreciate the dimensions

of space appropriately, assessment of space in terms of depth of distance between the physical position one occupies and the ground below or above and perception of the real spatial distance are matters of ontogeny. There appears to be a hierarchy in the acquisition of apperception processes of real space. The transfer of these perceptual processes from real space experience to its use in inter-personal, societal, and cultural artifacts levels of communi-cation is a slow process. It is through imitation of adult behaviour, instruction given by adults and by personal experience that the socialization processes instil in indi-viduals the appropriate proxemic behaviour.

(8) Touching behaviour is found among children more commonly if the children belong to lower economic classes.

(9) Touching behaviour is found among children more commonly if the children involved belong to same age group and profess familiarity and/or intimacy.

(10) Females have more physical contact on different areas of the body among themselves. Males do not touch one another as often as the females do.

(11) Touching behaviour could differ from one individual to another and thus could be related to personality factors.

(12) Several categories of touching are found in Tamil and several other Indian societies. (a) Use of touch on women by males is treated as an impersonal act in certain professional contexts as during a physician's exami-nation. The male bangle seller, salesmen of shoes and jeweller for certain ornaments also come under the same category. However, while the male physician is allowed to touch all parts of the female body, even an inadvertent touch of intimate parts of the female body by a male bangle seller or salesman of shoes is considered a violation of personal space. (b) Touches, such as handshakes, are modern social acts, (where physical contact may occur on a very restricted socially prescribed level between members of different sexes). Touching the feet and touching the forearms come under this category. Touching

is brief and is intended to communicate reverence, sub-mission, humility, in essence, the inferior status of the individual who touches the feet or forearm. Also the elders/priests/gurus are allowed to touch the head of the worshippers to signify their giving blessings. The touching behaviour in this category is a sure sign of status of individuals involved. (c) Beyond these two categories is the category of touching for calling the attention of the individual who is being addressed. This is generally resorted to among members of the same group and if there is wide disparity in age between members of different sexes. (d) Another category of touching has something to do with the personality of individuals. Some are given to touching behaviour when they engage themselves in conversation. This is generally frowned upon. The function of this touch is to keep the addressed attentive to what the speaker says. It also carries the value of familiarity and/or intimacy. Note that in all the above touching behaviour, touching is carried out by the fingers and palm, generally of the right hand. Touching by other parts of the body is not admissible. In extreme contempt or extreme intimacy, touching by toes is resorted to for all the above functions. (e) The touches for sexual arousal are many, varied, intense and somewhat idiosyncratic among partners. (f) Touch on cheek to show the affection one has for another. This is usually done between opposite sexes; also among the members of the female sex.

(13) Postural relaxation denotes status or power in a relationship.

(14) A person having a more positive attitude toward another does not assume a posture of relaxation while in conversation with another.

(15) Communication of respect and of positive attitude exhibits some similarity in the nonverbal cues of proxemic behaviour.

(16) Communication of liking is more by variations in immediacy, whereas the communication of respect is both by variations in immediacy and relaxation.

(17) Immediacy toward an addressee is greater when one is truthful than deceitful.

(18) Liking is inferred through immediacy, particularly when a communicator does not, or cannot, express his positive-negative emotions in the more readily recognized verbalizations or facial movements.

(19) Immediate postures and positions are associated with greater liking.

(20) Violation of distance limits elicits negative feelings. Violation of implicit norms regarding permissible physical closeness generally leads to subsequent avoidance of the communicator.

(21) A forward lean conveys greater liking whereas a backward lean or turning away shows a more negative attitude. For women, forward leaning towards other men is generally associated with intimacy between them.

(22) Arrogance, high status and slight dislike are associated with postures such as extending legs and hands, yawning and unresponsiveness to others.

(23) The body orientation of communicators with or without the distances between them, is an important variable for the communication of status. For example, the inferiors are expected to assume not an erect posture but one of bending the body before the superiors.

(24) People of equal status sit closer to one another than do people of unequal status.

(25) Since the Tamil culture does not have preference for physical closeness, a greater preference for more eye contact is not found between the superior and the inferior. However, availability of the individual in proximity to the communicator is always preferred -- just being around is demanded for status purposes. Only infrequent eye contact is maintained, since infrequent eye contact reveals the higher status of the communicator (and/or his arrogance).

(26) Body relaxation, such as the side ways lean or

reclining angle of a seated communicator, is a more prominent indicator of addressee status.

(27) Well defined movements (for example, the degree to which a person bows) may be an important var.able in communicating status differences. Some will not lift their hands, fold them and greet others while others lift their hands, fold them and greet. Some will raise their hand and keep their palms in a blessing posture when greeted with folded hands. Some will only nod recognition when greeted with folded hands. Some will even rush by without acknowledging the greeting -- all revealing status (and/or arrogance).

(28) Body orientation or the degree to which a communicator's shoulders and legs are turned in the direction of, rather away from, his addressee, can also serve as a measure of his status or of his liking of the addressee.

(29) Distance and forward lean cues when used for indicating status appear to be similar in significance. The furniture in a room or hall may be fixed but a person can still decrease or increase his distance from another by assuming either a reclining or a forward leaning position. Even when he has a choice about where to sit, a communicator can lean forward or recline to emphasize his desire to be closer or farther away from another. Thus, touching, distance, and forward lean are easily related conceptually as variations in the degree of physical proximity between communicator and addressee (Mehrabian, 1972).

(30) There are infrequent social situations involving threat or even bizarre invasions of privacy (that is, high degrees of immediacy with unfamiliar persons) in which the relationships are considerably more complex. Increasing immediacy in a threatening relationship tends to reverse the significance of proxemic conditions.

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