

matter of how easily they can enter a sensory interlock.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Three conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, it appears that the whole issue of situational and ecological effects on the way people perceive and manage their states of co-presence and on the way they make use of and define the space surrounding them has not yet received sufficient experimental attention. The majority of existing studies on personal space size and such a space's invasion/defense sequences have been conducted so far in terms of the identity and other characteristics of participants (Sommer, 1969; Evans and Howard, 1973; Hayduk, 1978). It seems that the effects of situation definition and of the physical layout of the setting need to be more fully considered.

Secondly, our study casts a new light on the phenomenon of such a personal space as well as on the phenomenon of the spatial configuration in social encounters. Thus, it needs to be noted that the observed minor differences in the physical size of the personal space bubbles and ellipses displayed by various groups of subjects under experimental conditions (cf. Horowitz et al, 1964; Pedersen and Heaston, 1972; Newman and Pollack, 1973) may be more important than previously considered. From the results of this exploratory study, the shift in the objective space by a couple of inches or centimeters towards or away from a given person is found to be exponentially amplified in terms of the perception of the established space by such a shift degree of interpersonal proximity.

Thirdly, it seems that the whole notion of personal space which is conceived presently as a digital or an "all-or-none" phenomenon should be revised. We would be tempted to suggest that all spatial fields in which people perceive other human beings as being proximate at at least 1% level should be treated as subject's large personal space field within which subsequent distinctions between personal space levels or zones equal to 10, 20, 30 and so forth degrees of proximity could be made. The present-day notion of the personal space bubble would, in such a model, represent the innermost nucleus of the onion-like structured spatial personal space field which, if entered, causes the inevitable withdrawal and defensive reactions of the person who set it up. How such a revised model would fit into a larger picture of human spatial, communicational and territorial behaviour is an important problem which clearly deserves an exhaustive and obviously separate treatment.

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