

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND GROUP PROCESSES

Influence of Culture, Language, and Sex on Conversational Distance

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Proxemic theory emphasizes cultural uses of interpersonal distance to regulate intimacy via sensory exposure. However, research has confounded cultural differences in conversational distance with sex, language, and topic. This study assessed interpersonal distance between seated conversants from each of three cultures varying in purported contact norms. Thirty-five Japanese, 31 Venezuelan foreign students (assigned to speak either their native language or English), and 39 Americans had a 5-minute conversation on a common topic with a same-sex, same-nationality confederate. Three hypotheses were tested: (a) When speaking their native languages, Japanese will sit farther apart than Venezuelans, with Americans at an intermediate distance; (b) females will sit closer than males; and (c) foreign subjects, when speaking English, will more closely approximate American conversational distance than when speaking their native languages. The hypotheses were generally confirmed.

According to proxemic theory (Hall, 1966), interpersonal distance helps to regulate intimacy by controlling sensory exposure. The possibility of visual, tactile, auditory, and olfactory stimulation is enhanced at closer distances. Differences in distancing within dyads are likely to be affected by a variety of sources of preferences for intimacy, including individual history of social deprivation and reinforcement, acquaint-

tance level of the dyad, sex role socialization, and cultural norms. Regarding the last variable, Hall distinguished between cultures by their location on a dimension of high-to-low contact norms concerning public behavior. Intimacy by sensory exposure is reputed to be high among South Americans, Southern and Eastern Europeans, and Arabs, and low among Asians, Northern Europeans, and North Americans. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that intercultural communication can be unsatisfactory to participants due to cultural differences in the use of nonverbal behaviors that are associated with the contact dimension and thus there has been an increasing interest in the development of remedial training programs. Efforts to deal with proxemic conflicts between cultures should be enhanced by the provision of more solid evidence of cultural variations in proxemic behaviors.

Cross-cultural investigations of the relationship between purported public intimacy norms and proxemic behavior have produced inconsistent results. In line with Hall's position, research by Watson (1970) indicated that Latin Americans interact at closer dis-

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tances than do North Americans, but in research by Forston and Larson (1968), Latin Americans had larger interpersonal distances than North Americans. One apparent difference between these two studies is the language spoken by the participants. Watson reported that his subjects spoke their native languages, whereas Forston and Larson reported that their subjects were permitted to speak any language or mixture of languages. In referring to the latter study, other authors (Mayo & LaFrance, 1977) have stated that English was in fact the dominant language spoken. Thus, an additional possible explanation of proxemic differences is language spoken, a variable that has not been systematically explored.

Although we are unaware of research reporting the effects of language changes on conversational distance, there is evidence that the language spoken may influence other behaviors that can contribute to communicative intimacy. Language switching by bilinguals has been found to affect the content of their verbal behavior. Conversations among Japanese wives of Americans in the United States contained more assertive content when they were induced to speak English rather than Japanese (Ervin-Tripp, 1964). Nonlinguistic vocal features of speech, such as accent, in intercultural conversations have also been shown to accommodate to the norms of the host culture (Giles & Powesland, 1975).

Cultures also tend to differ substantially in body motions that accompany speech, including those that serve emblematic, illustrative, and regulatory functions (Efron, 1941/1972; Ekman, 1976; Morris, Collett, Marsh, & O'Shaughnessy, 1979; Rosenfeld, 1978). Day (1970) found that American subjects were able to determine from silent videotapes whether conversants were speaking English or another language. Consistent with the perspective that language shifts may influence proxemic behavior, Efron (1941/1972) found that differences in the fluidity and other features of gestural movements between conversants from Sicilian Italian immigrant groups versus East European Jewish immigrant groups in New York City diminished with degree of expo-

sure to American culture. Thus it is likely that the communicative competence of persons entering a foreign culture is evaluated in terms of acquisition of a total multichannel behavioral package.

On the basis of these considerations, we anticipated that cultural differences in proximity would be most prominent when bilingual conversants used their native language. Furthermore, we expected that second language usage in conversation would include the adoption of distancing characteristic of the native speakers of the second language, particularly in cultural settings of the latter group.

It has been argued that the use of a less familiar language should lead conversants to relate at closer distances to reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding (Forston & Larson, 1968). But it also could be argued that when speaking a foreign language, conversants would sit farther apart due to discomfort. Thus, in the present study, members of two cultural groups were selected who, when speaking their native language, were expected to sit at normative distances that were on opposite sides of American norms. According to our hypothesis, when these groups spoke English, one group should adopt a closer distance and the other a farther distance compared to when they spoke their native languages.

Shuter (1976) has shown that contact norms can vary widely across countries within the same continent even though they have many other cultural similarities. In the present study, subjects were selected from two foreign countries that were among the largest foreign student groups at the American university at which the research was conducted—Venezuela, a purported contact culture, and Japan, a purported noncontact culture. In research by Watson (1970), members of these two groups were included in samples of students from contact and noncontact cultures, respectively, but too few subjects from each country were available to permit statistical comparisons by country. In another study, using a projective technique for assessing distance, Japanese placed themselves farther apart than did Americans (Engelbreton & Fullmer, 1970). In the pres-

ent study, American subjects were included on the assumption that their contact norms fell between those of the two foreign groups.

Studies of the relationship of culture to interpersonal distance have suffered from methodological problems other than uncontrolled language usage and mixture of countries. One such problem concerns the measurement of interpersonal distance. Engebretson and Fullmer (1970) used the symbolic or projective method of doll placement to assess interpersonal spacing. The validity of such instruments is questionable (Hayduk, 1978) and, in fact, Tennis and Dabbs (1975) found a low correlation between projective measures and direct measures of interpersonal distance in the same study. Thus, assessment of actual physical distance between conversing subjects should provide more valid data.

Another deficiency has been the lack of control for conversational topic, a variable that has been found to influence interpersonal distance (Hall, 1966), particularly due to discomfort (Breck & Rosenfeld, Note 1). Neither the Watson (1970) nor the Shuter (1976) studies controlled for this factor. Thus, for the present study a topic was sought that would be minimally discomforting for all subject groups.

Finally, the present study provides an opportunity for replicating and extending previous findings concerning the relationship between gender and distancing. Several studies conducted with American subjects have found that female-female dyads interact at closer distances than do other sex-pairings, particularly male-male dyads (e.g., Aiello & Jones, 1971; Pedersen & Heaston, 1972; Willis, 1966). This result also has been found among subjects from several Latin American countries (Shuter, 1976). Although genetically based inferences about the generality of sex-related behavioral differences have been called into question (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), cross-cultural studies have indicated that there is substantial similarity in sex role socialization (Barry, Bacon, & Child, 1957; Whiting & Edwards, 1973). In the present study it was predicted that female-female dyads would sit closer than male-male dyads in the American, Venezuelan, and Japanese cultures.

In summary, we sought to select cultures

that were different from each other in norms about physical intimacy in public, to provide a conversational topic that was comfortable across cultures, and to explore the effects of culture, sex, and language spoken among bilingual members of these groups upon conversational distance. Three hypotheses were proposed: (a) When speaking their native languages, Japanese subjects will sit farther apart than will Venezuelans, with Americans at an intermediate distance; (b) Female-female dyads will sit closer than male-male dyads in each culture; and (c) The foreign subjects, when speaking English, will more closely approximate American conversational distance than when they are speaking their native languages. That is, assuming the validity of the first hypothesis, Japanese subjects will sit closer together when speaking English than when speaking Japanese, and Venezuelan subjects will sit farther apart when speaking English than when speaking Spanish.

Method

Overview of Design

The research design was a partially-crossed $2 \times 2 \times 3$ factorial. The independent factors were (a) nationality of subject (Japanese, American, Venezuelan), (b) sex of dyad (male or female), and (c) language spoken in the experiment (native language or English). The dependent measure was the interaction distance between the subject and the confederate.

Subjects

The subjects were 105 students at a large Midwestern university. Thirty-nine were American students (19 males and 20 females) who participated in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their introductory psychology course. The other subjects were 35 bilingual Japanese (18 males and 16 females) and 31 bilingual Venezuelan (16 males and 15 females) foreign student volunteers who were enrolled at the same university. The foreign groups did not differ significantly in self-reported age (combined mean of 24 years), prior time in the United States (22 months), or prior interactions with Americans (17 on a scale ranging from 1 = never to 25 = frequently). In the recruitment of subjects, they were informed that the investigators were social scientists interested in the study of conversations.

Conversational Topic

All subjects discussed the same topic. Twenty topics were pretested with members of all three cultures. Only a few subjects from the foreign populations were used

in the pretest so as not to deplete the subject pool needed for the main study. The topic selected, which was rated as the most comfortable topic, was the discussion of one's favorite sports, hobbies, or both. On an 11-point scale, with 1 = least comfortable and 10 = most comfortable, the mean ratings were 8.8 for Japanese, 9.4 for Americans, and 9.6 for Venezuelans. These ratings were not significantly different. Comfort and intimacy ratings on the selected topic also were assessed among the actual conversants in a postexperimental questionnaire.

Confederate

Due to the limited number of available foreign subjects it was not considered feasible to have two naive subjects interacting in each dyad. To permit a sufficiently large number of subjects for statistical analysis, a same-sex, same-nationality confederate served as one member of each dyad. Thus there were six confederates, two Americans, two Japanese, and two Venezuelans—a male and a female from each country. Each confederate was assigned to all subjects of the same sex and nationality. The decision to use confederates resulted in an emphasis on size of sample of subjects at the expense of size of sample of confederates. Also the pairing of same-sex members did not permit analysis of effects of sex of subject independently of sex of dyad.

Confederates were selected who appeared to be typical of their culture and sex. They were instructed to behave in relatively standardized ways. They were trained to play the role of a subject—to ask the experimenter questions and to talk minimally to the real subject in the hallway prior to the conversations, to be equal participants in the conversations, and in general to be friendly and polite. The confederates always sat at a predetermined location in the conversational room. However, the substance of their conversational content was allowed to vary naturally.

Dependent Measure

The primary dependent measure was the distance (to the nearest inch or 2.54 cm) that the subjects placed their chairs relative to the seated confederates. The actual measurement was between the closest chair legs of the subject's and the confederate's chairs.

Prior to the actual administration of the study, a semicircular grid was made on the floor of the conversational room by taping lines every two inches from the confederate's chair. The chair remained stationary during the experiment. A television camera located behind a one-way mirror at the rear of the conversational room recorded the grid. A clear plastic transparency was placed on the face of the video monitor and the distancing grid was traced onto the transparent sheet. This copy of the grid remained on the monitor throughout the research period. The grid was then removed from the floor of the conversational room.

All subjects' interactions were videotaped in their entirety through the one-way mirror. Actual distance measurements were made by viewing the videotapes of the subject-confederate dyads on the video monitor with the grid overlay. These two images were superimposed and it was easy to count the lines between the subject's chair

and confederate's chair. Distance measurements were taken at 1 minute and 2 minutes into the 5-minute conversations. As there was very little movement of the chairs after the subjects were seated, the 1-minute measurements are the ones discussed in this paper.

An observer naive to the hypotheses served as a reliability check for the experimenter (author NMS). Thirty-four of the dyads were randomly sampled and were scored by the observer and the experimenter. Interobserver reliability was high; $r(34) = .99$. Means and standard deviations also had high agreement: observer $M = 36.32$ in. (92.25 cm), $SD = 10.05$ in. (25.53 cm); experimenter $M = 36.23$ in. (92.02 cm), $SD = 9.8$ in. (24.89 cm).

Experimental Setting

Subjects conversed for 5 minutes in an 11 ft. \times 15 ft. (3.35 m \times 4.57 m) carpeted and sound-insulated room. A one-way mirror, located on the wall across from the room entrance, was partially covered by an opaque curtain. A small part of the mirror was left uncovered for videotaping.

The confederate's chair was located 49 in. (122.5 cm) from the mirror and 10 in. (25 cm) from the left side wall, from the perspective of the observer. The chair was placed so that the confederate would be filmed in profile. There also were two small tables in the room. One was placed near the entrance in the far left corner of the room; subjects placed their books, purses, and other belongings on this table. In the far right corner was another small table, with a second chair placed next to it, facing the table. Several pencils were on the table to give the impression that someone had been working at it. The second chair was the one the subject was asked to use for the conversation. In its initial position it was approximately 9 ft. (2.7 m) from the confederate's chair. The subject thus had over 9 ft. (2.7 m) in front and 3 ft. (.9 m) on either side of the confederate in which to place the chair.

Procedure

Upon arrival, the subject was seated in a waiting area where another apparent subject (actually the confederate) was already seated. After the subject arrived, the experimenter entered the area and gave both individuals instruction sheets that explained the nature of the study. The instructions were reiterated verbally after the subjects completed reading the paper. Subjects were told that the study dealt with similarities and differences in communication style and that they would be discussing an assigned topic (favorite sports and hobbies) for a 5-minute period. Foreign subjects were further informed that they were to converse either in English or in their native language according to a random selection made previous to the subject's arrival. (The number of foreign subjects assigned to the four Culture \times Language subgroups ranged from 15 to 18; when further subclassified by sex, the eight cells ranged from 7 to 9 subjects.) Additionally, subjects were informed that their interaction would be videotaped from behind a one-way mirror for reasons of preserving the total interaction for coding purposes. Although a few subjects seemed surprised, none of them refused permission. Subjects were

encouraged to ask for clarifications before the study proceeded any further. Finally, subjects were instructed to finish their conversations when they heard the experimenter knock on the mirror, after which the naive subject was to leave the room first, to reenter the waiting room, and to wait for the experimenter to bring a questionnaire. The confederate was told that he or she would be interviewed first and should therefore stay in the conversation room.

After both the subject and confederate indicated that the instructions were clear, they were led into the conversation room. The confederate always entered the room first and laid down his or her books first on the table in the right corner. Therefore, it appeared natural that she or he would sit, with the experimenter's prompting, in the target chair. The subject was then requested to "pull up the other chair" to have a conversation with the confederate. The experimenter repeated the instructions, left the room, and proceeded to the room on the other side of the mirror to videotape the 5-minute discussion. When the 5 minutes were up, the experimenter knocked on the mirror as a signal to the subjects and continued videotaping until the subject left the room. The experimenter then met the subject in the waiting area, administered the questionnaire, and reentered the conversation room ostensibly to interview the other "subject." The subject was given 4 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The experimenter then brought the confederate into the waiting room and informed the subject that it was his or her turn to be interviewed. After the experimenter and subject returned to the conversation room, a thorough debriefing was given.

Postexperimental Questionnaire

The postexperimental questionnaire included an 11-point scale measuring intimacy of the conversational topic (with end points labeled "very intimate" and "not intimate at all"). Since previous research had indicated that topical intimacy may affect proxemic behavior, this item served as a check on the equivalence of the topic across subject groups. Additional items in the questionnaire assessed other variables that have been implicated as possible influences on proxemic behavior. Included was a continuous rating of the relationship between the subject and confederate (with anchor points labeled "stranger," "casual acquaintance," "friend," and "good friend") and a rating of the perceived status of the confederate relative to the subject (with anchor points labeled "lower," "same," and "higher"). For heuristic purposes, subjects also rated their level of comfort in the conversation.

Results

Before conducting specific statistical tests of Hypotheses a and b, an analysis of variance of distance was performed on the native-language speakers. There was a significant main effect of both culture, $F(2, 67) = 3.32$, $p < .05$, and sex, $F(1, 67) = 14.95$, $p < .001$. The means in this analysis are plotted in Figure 1.

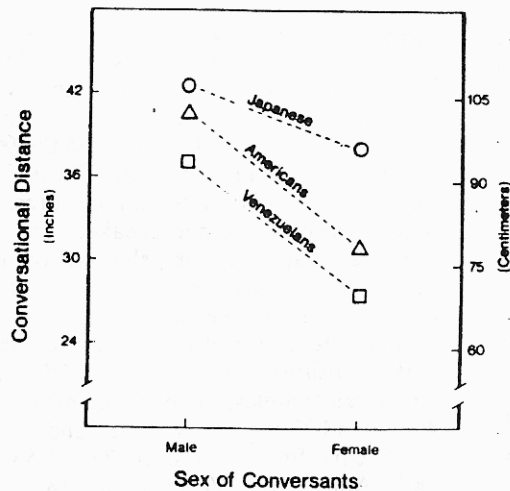


Figure 1. Mean distances between conversants varying in culture and sex. (Distance between closest chair legs of same-sex pairs of university students in United States, speaking their native languages.)

On the basis of Hypothesis a, it was predicted that the Japanese conversants would sit significantly farther apart than the Venezuelans, with the Americans sitting at an intermediate distance. In the significant effect of culture on distance the predicted order of means occurred: Japanese $M = 40.2$ in. (102.1 cm), American $M = 35.4$ in. (89.9 cm), and Venezuelan $M = 32.2$ in. (81.8 cm). Due to the consistency of the literature supporting the predicted order, one-tailed paired comparisons of means were performed. Comparisons were done by t tests, using pooled variance ($df = 70$) because of homogeneity of variance across cultures. The Japanese sat significantly farther apart than the Venezuelans, $t(70) = 2.33$, $p < .01$, and the Americans, $t(70) = 1.71$, $p < .05$, although the Americans and Venezuelans did not differ significantly, $t(70) = 1.05$, $.10 < p < .15$.

According to Hypothesis b, males would sit farther apart than females. Inasmuch as there was no basis for restricting Hypothesis b to native-language speakers, the effect of sex on distance was also tested with both native and English speakers included in the foreign samples. The difference between the sexes in the combined language analysis was similar to that reported above for the native-

language analysis, although the means were not identical to those in Figure 1. The sex effect in the combined language analysis was significant, $t(103) = 3.35$, $p < .001$; the male mean was 40.4 in. (102.6 cm) and the female mean was 33.5 in. (85.1 cm). Tests for ordered effects of sex within cultures, both among native-language speakers and combined language speakers, showed significant differences among the Americans and Venezuelans, but not the Japanese. For simplicity only the means of the combined subjects within cultures will be reported. Within the American samples, the distance means were 40.2 in. (102.1 cm) for males and 30.9 in. (77.5 cm) for females, $t(37) = 3.55$, $p < .001$. Among the Venezuelans, the means were 40.0 in. (101.6 cm) for males and 31.9 in. (81.0 cm) for females, $t(27) = 2.09$, $p < .05$. Although the Japanese showed no significant sex difference, $t(33) = 0.62$, $p = .53$, the male mean (40.6 in. or 103.1 cm) also was greater than the female mean (38.0 in. or 96.5 cm).

In accord with Hypothesis c, we predicted that when speaking English, Venezuelan subjects would sit farther apart than when speaking Spanish, and Japanese subjects would sit closer together than when speaking Japanese. Consequently the difference between Venezuelans and Japanese that was found in the native-language groups should be diminished in the English-language groups. A preliminary analysis of variance of the effects of culture and language spoken on distance revealed a nonsignificant interaction, $F(1, 62) = 2.62$, $p = .11$. The relevant means are plotted in Figure 2.

Considering the controversial nature of the third hypothesis, two-tailed tests were used in the planned comparisons. In accord with the hypothesis, Venezuelans sat significantly farther apart when speaking English ($M = 40.1$ in. or 101.9 cm) than when speaking Spanish ($M = 32.3$ in. or 82 cm); $t(29) = 2.0$, $p = .05$. The means for Japanese subjects, although in the predicted opposite direction, were not significantly different, English-speaking $M = 38.6$ in. or 98 cm and Japanese-speaking $M = 40.2$ in. or 102.1 cm, $t(33) = 0.38$, *ns*. Whereas the Venezuelans and Japanese distances were significantly different in the native-language condition,

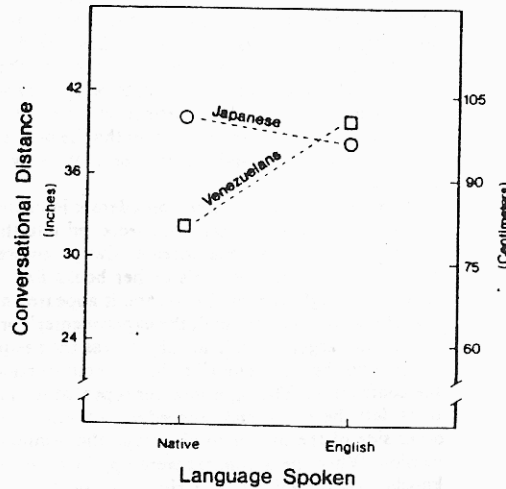


Figure 2. Mean distances between conversants assigned to speak either their native language or English.

$t(31) = 2.24$, $p = .03$, they did not differ significantly in the English-language condition, $t(30) = 0.32$.

Analyses of variance of the postexperimental questionnaire items showed that subjects did not differ significantly either by culture or sex in their reported familiarity or status with regard to the confederate or in their ratings of comfort of the conversation. The average familiarity level was slightly less than "casual acquaintance"; the average status relationship was "equal"; and the average comfort level was 7.8 on an 11-point scale. However, the Japanese did rate the topic as more intimate ($M = 7.0$) than did the Americans ($M = 4.1$), $t(72) = 5.27$, $p < .01$, and Venezuelans ($M = 3.4$), $t(66) = 5.43$, $p < .01$. In addition, the Japanese rated the conversational topic more intimate after speaking Japanese ($M = 7.7$) than English ($M = 6.2$), $t(33) = 1.95$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The results of this study support Hall's (1966) distinction between cultures in terms of their proxemic manifestations of social contact norms. The evidence was particularly strong in the comparison of subjects from two cultures that are generally reputed

to represent opposite ends of the contact dimension. Venezuelans, representing the purportedly high-contact cultures of Latin America, adopted significantly closer conversational distances than did the Japanese, a presumed low-contact culture.

The further expectation that Americans, reputed to be a relatively low-contact society, would adopt conversational distances between those of the other two groups was supported. In agreement with the projective test (figure placement) results of Engebretson and Fullmer (1970), the Americans in this study sat significantly closer together than did the Japanese. However, although the Americans sat farther apart than did the Venezuelans, the difference was not statistically reliable.

The nonsignificant difference between the Americans and Venezuelans is not inconsistent with the literature, in which significant differences have been reported between these groups in both directions. Fortunately, a plausible explanation of the discrepancy in the literature is available in the present study due to the manipulation and control of additional variables relevant to conversational proxemics. Whereas the previous studies had failed to deal with the implications of the use of Spanish versus English language in their studies of Latin American samples, the present study systematically manipulated their usage.

Hypothesis c proposed that the Venezuelans should be more likely to manifest their reputed closeness when speaking the language of their native, higher contact culture than when speaking the language of the lower contact American culture. Indeed, the Venezuelans did sit significantly closer when speaking Spanish than English. When speaking Spanish their average distance was closer than that of the Americans, whereas when speaking English their average distance was greater than that of the Americans. Although neither of the last two differences themselves were statistically significant, they modeled the contradictory results obtained in the literature. The results for the native-speaking Venezuelans were similar to those obtained by Watson (1970) whose Latin American sample spoke Spanish. The results for the English-speaking

Venezuelans paralleled those of Forston and Larson (1968), whose Latin American subjects were permitted to speak English and presumably did so to a substantial degree.

The assumption underlying Hypothesis c was that the use of a foreign language evokes in the speaker a broader package of culturally appropriate behaviors. The confirmation of the predicted results among the Venezuelans is compatible with this assumption. Due to the fact that the present study was conducted only within an American setting, it is not known how much this result is likely to generalize to speakers of foreign languages within their native cultural settings. However, the present result does contradict the possibility raised by Forston and Larson (1968) that when speaking English, foreign subjects may tend to sit closer to communicate more clearly.

A potential alternative explanation is that the Venezuelans may have sat farther apart when speaking English than Spanish to compensate for discomfort over performing in a less familiar medium. However, the postexperimental ratings of the comfortableness of the conversation revealed no significant difference between the two Venezuelan subgroups. Of course, the postexperimental reactions may be considered soft data, and one could argue that by sitting farther apart, the English-speaking Venezuelans may have lessened their discomfort prior to filling out the questionnaire item.

The potential validity of the above generalization that greater conversational distance is the result of discomfort with English is more clearly ruled out by the results for the Japanese subjects. Like the Venezuelans, the native- and English-speaking Japanese subgroups did not differ significantly in their postexperimental ratings of conversational discomfort. But unlike the Venezuelans, those Japanese who conversed in English actually sat at a closer mean distance than did those who conversed in Japanese. To retain the discomfort explanation, it would be necessary to make the questionable inference that the Japanese, in contrast to the Venezuelans, compensated for discomfort by sitting closer. In fact, those Japanese who conversed in Japanese rated the topic in their postexperimental questionnaires as more in-

timate than did those Japanese who conversed in English. Furthermore, spontaneous comments by several subjects from both the Japanese and Venezuelan groups, at the time native languages were assigned, indicated that they considered the use of the English language to be more appropriate in the setting.

An unanticipated (although nonsignificant) feature of the results pertaining to Hypothesis c was that the mean distances of the English-speaking Venezuelans overshoot the American norm. That is, the Venezuelans sat farther apart when speaking English (40.1 in. or 101.9 cm) than did the Americans (35.4 in. or 89.90 cm). If the present assumption that language usage evokes more general communication norms is valid, then it might be inferred that the non-American subjects were not sure of American distance norms. Perhaps they knew the proper direction to move, but not how far. Alternatively, the Venezuelans' prior observations of American proxemics may have emphasized more formal relationships than were typical of the American participants in the present study. Also, individual foreign students may have had different degrees of exposure to closer versus farther levels of closeness in interactions involving Americans. Consistent with this possibility, the non-Americans who conversed in English showed a nonsignificant tendency to be more variable in their distances when speaking English than their native languages (for the Venezuelans, $s^2 = 155.5$ and 77.9 , $F(14, 15) = 2$; $p < .10$; for the Japanese, $s^2 = 181.1$ and 134.3 , ns).

However, it is not clear why the differences in conversational distance between the native- and English-speaking subjects were not statistically significant within the Japanese sample. Comparison of mean scores showed that the Japanese men when speaking English sat closer than the Americans, consistent with the overcompensation interpretation, but that the Japanese women did not differ between the two language conditions. Although all of the foreign students in the samples showed evidence of at least minimal English proficiency—none required enrollment at the university's Intensive English Center—it is possible that the degree

of language-related seating differences was associated with English proficiency. Informal observations by the authors did suggest that the level of spoken English of the Japanese was below that of the Venezuelan subjects.

The Japanese subjects also did not show significant results in the test of Hypothesis b, which proposed that women would sit closer than men. The overall significant sex effect on distance was upheld in both the American and Venezuelan samples, but the Japanese trend in the same direction was not reliable. The present study offers no basis for determining whether the Japanese simply do not share the sex-related differences in distancing of the other two cultural groups or whether such tendencies may have been overridden in the present experimental situation. Considering the consistency of significant predicted results, along with predicted directional differences within the Japanese subjects, it would be more parsimonious to retain the cross-cultural generalization that women tend to communicate at closer distances than men. At this stage of research, it is also suggested that the Japanese, as a very low-contact culture, may have rigid standards for appropriate public distance that compete with sex-related and language-related tendencies.

Finally, it should be recalled that a major impetus for conducting research on cultural differences in proxemic behavior is its implication for problems in intercultural communication. The differences revealed in the present study support the likelihood that communication problems will result from interactions between Japanese and Venezuelans and to a lesser degree between each of them and Americans. One item of relevant, although informal, evidence was acquired in connection with the present study. At a postexperimental party for the confederates to express appreciation for their participation, the Japanese and Venezuelan confederates were observed to argue over what level of intimacy is characteristic of Americans. The Venezuelans argued that Americans are too withdrawn, whereas the Japanese argued that Americans are too intimate.

Reference Note

1. Breck, B. E., & Rosenfeld, H. M. *Effects of topical discomfort and participant gender on conversational distance*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, August 1977.

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Manuscripts Accepted for Publication in the Section
Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes

- Cooperative Choice Among Individuals Versus Groups in an N-Person Dilemma Situation. S. S. Komorita (Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, 603 East Daniel Street, Champaign, Illinois) and C. William Lapworth.
- Effects of Intervention Mode and Conflict of Interest on Dispute Resolution. Jean M. Hiltrop and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (Department of Psychology, Tufts University, Paige Hall, Medford, Massachusetts 02155).
- The Relation Between Verbal and Vocal Communication of Affect. William Apple (Department of Psychology, William Paterson State College, Wayne, New Jersey 07470) and Kenneth Hecht.
- Matching and Mismatching: The Effect of Own Limit, Other's Toughness, and Time Pressure on Concession Rate in Negotiation. D. Leasel Smith (Department of Psychology, State University of New York at Buffalo, 4230 Ridge Lea Road, Buffalo, New York 14226), Dean G. Pruitt, and Peter J. D. Carnevale.
- The Accuracy of Eyewitness Identifications in a Field Setting. John C. Brigham (Department of Psychology, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306), Anne Maass, Larry D. Snyder, and Kenneth Spaulding.

