New directions in research on well-being: psychological process in everyday contexts

Irene Petruccelli

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Closeness - Proxemics

- Study of how we use space and distance
- Includes seating arrangements, queuing and territoriality
- Ideas of ‘personal space’, ‘invasion of personal space’ and ‘comfort zones’
- Use of objects as ‘markers’ to indicate ownership of space
Proxemics

- Intimate**: (0.5m)
- Personal**: (1.2m)
- Social**: (3.0m)
• Personal space is the dynamic distance and orientation component of interpersonal relations (Gifford, 2007).

• It has been studied longer and more than almost any other aspect of environmental psychology (e.g., Sommer, 1959).

• Inferences about others are often drawn on the basis of the interpersonal distance they choose (e.g., Patterson & Sechrest, 1970).

• Many personal and situational influences interact with preferences for particular interpersonal distances. For example, males have larger personal spaces.

• Attraction and cooperation generally lead to smaller interpersonal distance, whereas less positive contexts such as stigma and unequal status lead to larger distances. When the physical setting is less spacious, larger interpersonal distances are selected.

• Cultural differences in interpersonal distance exist (e.g., Hall, 1966), but other factors often alter cultural preferences.
Touching - Haptics

- Physical contact such as holding, stroking, shaking hands, guiding
- Linked to proxemics
- Touch is very important in our early development (holding & handling, D. Winnicott)
- Many rules and taboos regulating physical contact
Eye Movement

• Eye movement, length and direction of gaze, changes in pupil size
• We are hypersensitive to information imparted by eyes
• Can be argued eyes reveal the truthfulness of what is being said
Smell

- Humans do not have a particularly well-developed sense of smell compared with other species.
- Perfumes and deodorants send powerful messages, as can the natural body odours we try to suppress.
- A rapidly growing industry has developed around the use of smells.
Complex Messages

• Rare for these non-verbal codes to operate in isolation from one another, or separately from language

• We create and perceive messages using signs from a range of verbal and non-verbal codes

• To make this even more complex, these signs and codes to not always pull in the same direction
A competent communicator will:
- Recognise and use different verbal and non-verbal styles as they are suited to different social situations
- Recognise the relation between verbal and non-verbal elements in communication
- Compensate for possible misinterpretations in communication with others
The Functions of NVC

- Communicating feelings, emotions and attitudes
- Replacing and regulating language
- Other Functions
Communicating Feelings, Emotions and Attitudes

- NVC has a particularly important role in establishing and maintaining relationships, otherwise known as an affective function.
- We rely more heavily on NVC in this area of personal communication.
- Looks, glances, changes in orientation allow others to know what sort of relationship we want to have.
- We use NVC to establish a mutually acceptable level of intimacy.
Replacing & Regulating Language

• The role of NVC in inflecting the meaning of a sentence can be explored by ‘performing’ the following sentence in different ways:

Well, I really enjoyed the party last night.
Replacing & Regulating Language

• Paralinguistic features, such as pitch, tone and emphasis
• Throw in other non-verbal cues such as eyebrow lifting or illustrators such as the use of the index and first finger of both hands to indicate inverted commas around a word
• Number of potential meanings rapidly increases
Excercise strengths and weaknesses
Self-Concept: 
Who Am I?

• A person’s answers to the question, “Who am I?”

• Take time to answer this question...

  • Are your answers more relational (collectivist) or about self (individualist)?