



Psicologia dei Gruppi e delle Relazioni Sociali

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- ***Spaces: The Ecology of Groups***
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- ***Locations: Group Territoriality***
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Just as individuals are embedded in groups, so groups are embedded in physical and social environments. Groups alter their environments substantially, but in many cases, it's the place that shapes the group. As Kurt Lewin's (1951) formula, $B = f(P, E)$, states, group behavior (B) is a function of the persons (P) who are in the group and the environment (E) where the group is located.



Group In Context

Groups exist in any number of distinct physical locations: from classrooms, museums, factories, and boardrooms to coal mines, battlefields, and even space capsules. Each group slept, worked, played, interacted, argued, and fought in a specific environmental context, and these places substantially influenced their dynamics, depending on the nature of this environment–group relationship, focusing on places, spaces, and territorial locations.



Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Groups can be found in both natural and built environments.

- Many disciplines, including sociology, environmental psychology, ethology, human ecology, demography, and ecological psychology, affirm the **important impact of environmental variables on human behavior** (Bell et al., 2001; Gieryn, 2000; Sundstrom, et al., 1996; Werner, Brown, & Altman, 2002).

All share a concern for the setting or context in which behavior occurs. Just as a **group-level orientation assumes that individuals' actions are shaped by the groups to which they belong**, an **environmental orientation assumes that groups are shaped by their environments**.

As Figure suggests, a multilevel analysis of human behavior recognizes that **individuals are nested in a hierarchy of increasingly inclusive social aggregates**, such as groups, organizations, and communities. But individuals and their groups also exist in a physical setting located in a particular geographic locality in a specific region of the world, and that place will eventually influence the group's dynamics and outcomes.

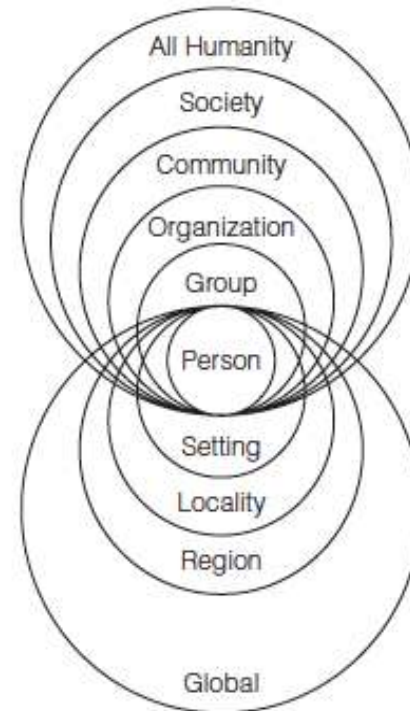


FIGURE 15.1 A multi-level model of the embeddedness of individuals in both social aggregates (e.g., groups, organizations, communities) and in geographic domains (e.g., settings, localities, regions).

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Comfort in Contexts

Sometimes groups and the setting fit comfortably together. The place suits the group, leaving members free to focus on interpersonal and task dynamics. Other environments, in contrast, are less comfortable ones for the occupants.

Humans' comfort zone is a relatively narrow one, and when groups must live and work on the edges of that zone changes in their dynamics are inevitable.

- Physical settings are often said to have ***ambience***, or ***atmosphere***, for they can create a distinctive cognitive and emotional reaction in people who occupy these spaces (Schroeder, 2007).
- We have ***strong feelings in and about places***. Some places make us feel good, other places make us feel bad: uncomfortable, insignificant, unhappy, out of place. We avoid these places and suffer if we have to be in them (Farbstein & Kantrowitz, 1978, p. 14)

Although people's evaluations of places vary depending on their culture, experiences, and personal preferences, most are based on two dimensions: how pleasant is the place (positive versus negative), and how intense is the place (arousing versus relaxing)

Ambience

The psychological reaction (mood, feelings, emotions) evoked by a setting.



Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Comfort in Contexts

How pleasant is the place (positive versus negative), and how intense is the place (arousing versus relaxing)?

- First, a **group environment that is orderly, tastefully decorated, clean, and spacious usually prompts a more favorable reaction** than one that is poorly designed, shabby, unkempt, and odorous (Forsyth, 2014).
- Second, whereas some places are restful, others **are so stimulating that they arouse their occupants rather than relax them** (Russell, 2003; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987).
- **Groups generally respond best, in terms of performance and satisfaction, in affectively pleasant situations.** Studies of manufacturing teams in factories, students in classrooms, and workers in offices, for example, have found that they respond better when working in attractive spaces that are visually interesting rather than drab (Sundstrom et al., 1996).
- **Physical features that stimulate or provoke positive emotions—including music, furnishings, art, decor, decorations, color, and lighting—tend to be associated with a range of positive group dynamics,** including increased **cohesion**, improved **communication**, **productivity**, and reduced **absenteeism** (Brief & Weiss, 2002).
- An attractive environment is not, however, a requirement for group effectiveness. Many successful groups work, without problems, in relatively shabby settings. **A too-pleasant environment may distract the group from the task at hand, providing counterproductive levels of comfort.** Highly effective groups may also be so focused on the task that they can work anywhere, since what matters is the quality of their tools and their personnel rather than the setting (Bennis & Biederman, 1997).

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Comfort in Contexts

How pleasant is the place (positive versus negative), and how intense is the place (arousing versus relaxing)?

- Groups also thrive in stimulating, but not in excessively stimulating, spaces. ***Studies of groups living in harsh circumstances, such as teams stationed in Antarctica and explorers living for months on end in a confined space, complain more about the monotony of the environment than about the danger, discomfort, or isolation*** (Stuster, 1996).
- ***Many groups strive to make their environments more interesting***, often by decorating common areas extensively. But too much stimulation can contribute to overload when complex, stimulating environments overwhelm group members (Greenberg & Firestone, 1977).
- In everyday situations, ***people cope with overload by reducing their contact with others, limiting the amount of information they notice and process, or ignoring aspects of the situation***. These coping strategies are often effective. ***Individuals living in high-density settings who used screening strategies to limit their contact with other people, for example, tended to be better adjusted than those who did not*** (Baum et al., 1982; Evans, Lepore, & Allen, 2000).
- In other cases these strategies did not reduce members' stress. ***Men who coped with environmental stress by withdrawing from the very people who could have helped them cope with the situation*** (friends and loved ones), for example, were more maladjusted than men who did not withdraw (Evans et al., 1989; Lepore, Evans, & Schneider, 1991).

Overload

A psychological reaction to situations and experiences that are so cognitively, perceptually, or emotionally stimulating that they tax or even exceed the individual's capacity to process incoming information.

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Comfort in Contexts

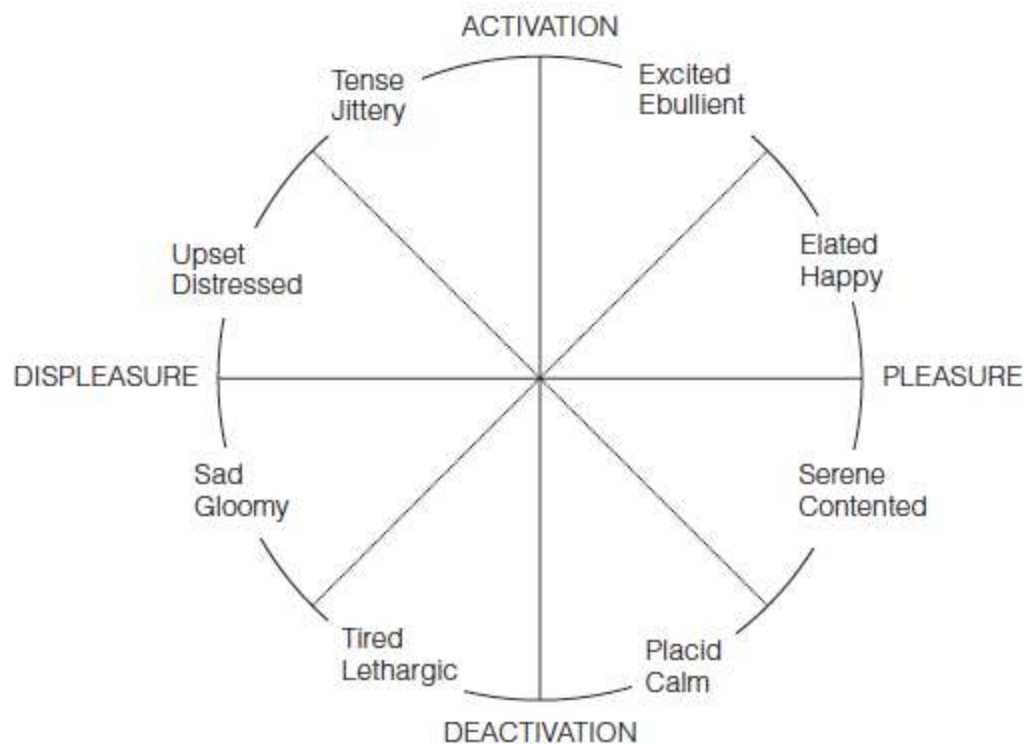


FIGURE 15.2 Core affect experienced by people in various types of group environments.

SOURCE: Russell, J. A. 2003. "Core affect and the psychological construction of emotion." *Psychological Review*, 110, 145-172. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.110.1.145.



Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Stressful Group Settings

- People often report feeling rejuvenated and energized by the places that their groups occupy. They feel more at ease and content when they can spend time in places they feel attached to, including their homes, their rooms, or even cubicles in an office (Altman & Churchman, 1994; Carlopio, 1996).

However, some aspects of the environment can be sources of stress—strain caused by environmental circumstances that threaten one’s sense of wellbeing and safety. Groups do not exist in neutral, passive voids, but in fluctuating environments that are sometimes too hot, too cold, too impersonal, too intimate, too big, too little, too noisy, too quiet, too restrictive, or too open—but rarely just right (Evans & Stecker, 2004; Veitch et al., 2007).

Stress

Negative physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to circumstances that threaten—or are thought to threaten—one’s sense of well-being and safety.

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Stressful Group Settings: Temperature

One of the minor miseries of life occurs when people must work in a room that is either too hot or too cold.

- Although **people generally rate temperatures from the mid-60s to the mid-80s Fahrenheit as “comfortable,”** temperatures that fall outside this range cause **discomfort, irritability, and reduced productivity** (Bell, 1992).
- When groups were assigned to work either in a room at normal temperature (72.4° F) or in a hot room (93.5° F), the **overheated group members reported feelings of fatigue, sadness, and discomfort, whereas participants in the normal-temperature room reported feeling more elated, vigorous, and comfortable** (Griffitt & Veitch, 1971).
- Studies have also suggested that **extremes in temperature can reduce interpersonal attraction** (Griffitt, 1970) and **interfere with successful task performance** (Parsons, 1976).
- One of the concomitants of **high temperatures in groups is exposure to others’ body odors**—a sensation that most people find objectionable (McBurney, Levine, & Cavanaugh, 1977).
- **Groups tend to be more aggressive when they are hot**, as colloquialisms like “hot under the collar” and “flaring tempers” suggest. **Collective violence is seasonal**, with more riots occurring in the summer than the winter (Anderson & Bushman, 1997; Rotton & Cohn, 2002).
- **Groups may also disband when the environment they occupy becomes unpleasantly hot** (Baron & Bell, 1975, 1976; Bell, 1992).
- **Extreme temperatures are also physically harmful** (Folk, 1974).
- When temperatures are high, **people are more likely to suffer from exhaustion, stroke, and heart attacks**. Extreme cold can lead to hypothermia and death. (quoted in Godwin, 2000, p. 109).



Group In Context

Stressful Group Settings: Noise

Noise is any sound that is unwanted.

Places: Group Settings

- **Sounds in the range of 0 to 50 decibels (dB) are very soft and generally produce little irritation for the listener.** Sounds of **more than 80 dB, in contrast, may be bothersome enough to be called noise.** In general, the louder the noise, the more likely it will produce distraction, irritation, and psychological stress (Cohen & Weinstein, 1981).
- Groups in noisy places—people **who work in noisy offices, families living in homes near airports, and children on playgrounds located near major highways—generally find that the noise has a disruptive impact on their social behaviors.** People are **less likely to interact with other people in noisy places, and they also tend to be less helpful** (Edelstein, 2002; Mathews, Canon, & Alexander, 1974; Veitch, 1990).
- **Neurological evidence indicates that even when people strive to deliberately ignore speech by refocusing attention on the task at hand some of their cognitive resources are being used to monitor the overheard conversation** (Campbell, 2005).
- **People can cope with noise for short periods of time.** When researchers bombarded people working on both simple and complex tasks with taperecorded noise, the participants became so inured to the stimulus that it had no effect on their performance (Glass, Singer, & Pennebaker, 1977).
- **Groups cannot, however, cope for long periods of time with noise.** As “individuals expend ‘psychic energy’ in the course of the adaptive process,” they become “less able to cope with subsequent environmental demands and frustrations” (Glass et al., 1977, p. 134).
- Over time, **exposure to loud noise is associated with substantial threats to health, including physical illnesses** (headaches, heart disease, allergies, and digestive disorders), **infant and adult mortality rates, mental illness, interpersonal conflict, and even impotence** (Bronzaft, 2002; Wallenius, 2004).



Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Stressful Group Settings: Dangerous Places

Groups sometimes live and work in places filled with dangers, both recognized and unknown. Some natural calamity, such as a flood, earthquake, or blizzard, may overtake a group. Some groups, too, work at jobs that are riskier than most: Miners, ship crews, police officers, and military units often live and work in circumstances that can be life threatening. The group, too, may occupy an inhospitable environment. Some people live in neighborhoods where violence and aggression are so commonplace that their lives are often at risk (Herzog & Chernick, 2000).

- **Groups generally cope with danger by taking precautions designed to make the situation safer.** Astronauts, military combat squads, and explorers all minimize the possibility of exposure to danger by training, stressing cooperation among members, and monitoring each individual's connection to the group (Harrison & Connors, 1984; Suedfeld, 1987).
- In consequence, **dangerous circumstances often promote an increased level of teamwork.** During routine flights, astronauts and the mission specialists on the ground tend to adopt an “us versus them” orientation against each other (Bechtel, 2002).

Groups that face dangerous circumstances but do not manage to work as a team to overcome their problems place themselves at risk.

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings

A behavior setting is a physical location where people's actions are prescribed by the features and functions of the situation.

The counter at a fast food restaurant, the waiting area in a doctor's office, a computer lab on a college campus, a conference room in a business office, and a bench in a park are all behavior settings, for once people enter these spaces, their behavior is shaped more by the space than by their personal characteristics.

Most settings also include both people (group members) and things (equipment, chairs, etc.); Barker called them both components of the setting.

- They may, for example, make use of the settings' objects in very predictable, routine ways, as when people who enter a room with chairs in it tend to sit on them (Barker, 1968, 1987, 1990; Barker et al., 1978).

Behavior Setting

As defined by Roger Barker in his theory of ecological psychology, a physically and temporally bounded social situation that determines the actions of the individuals in the setting.

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings

Not every physical setting is a behavior setting. Some situations are novel ones, which group members have never before encountered, so they have no expectations about how they should act. Some individuals, too, may enter a behavior setting, but they are not aware of the norms of the situation, or they simply do not accept them as guides for their own action.

But in most cases, group members act in predictable, routine ways in such situations.

These normative expectations guide behavior directly, and in many cases, group members are not even aware of how the situation automatically channels their actions.

- To ***demonstrate this automatic, unconscious impact of place on people***, researchers first showed people a picture of either a library or a railroad station. Later, their reaction times to various words, including words relevant to libraries (e.g., quiet, still, whisper), were measured. As expected, people recognized library-related words more quickly after seeing the picture of a library, suggesting that the picture activated norms pertaining to the situation (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003).



Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings: Synomorphy

Researchers noted that in some behavior settings, people are seamlessly embedded in the place itself.

The cockpit of the Apollo 13, for example, was designed so that the astronauts could monitor all their instruments and reach all their controls. A fast food restaurant may use a system of guide chains and multiple cash registers to handle large numbers of customers efficiently. A classroom may contain areas where students can work on individual projects, a reading circle where the teacher can lead small groups, and an art area where students can easily access the supplies they need.

In other behavior settings, however, the people do not fit the place.

Barker used the word synomorphy to describe the degree of fit between the setting and its human occupants.

Synomorphy

In ecological psychology, the quality of the fit between the human occupants and the physical situation.

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings: Staffing

- In another study, the **increased workload brought on by understaffing increased professionals' and long-term employees' involvement in their work, but understaffing also led to decreased commitment among new employees and blue-collar workers**. Understaffing was also associated with more negative attitudes toward the group (Wicker & August, 1995).

Staffing theory also explains why individuals who are part of smaller groups and organizations get more involved in their groups;

- Even though a **large school offers more opportunities for involvement in smallgroup activities, the proportion of students who join school-based groups is higher in smaller schools** (Gump, 1990).

How do groups cope with staffing problems?

- When researchers asked leaders of student groups this question, **nearly 75% recommended recruiting more members or reorganizing the group as the best ways to deal with understaffing**. Other solutions included working with other groups and adopting more modest group goals (Barker, 1968).
 - **These leaders offered a wider range of solutions for overstaffing**, including encouraging members to remain active in the group (often by assigning them specific duties), enforcing rules about participation, dividing the group, taking in fewer members, changing the group's structure to include more positions, and adopting more ambitious goals (Cini, Moreland, & Levine, 1993).
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Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings: Staffing

TABLE 15.1 Group Members' Reactions to Understaffed and Overstaffed Work Settings

Reaction	Understaffed groups	Overstaffed groups
Task performance	Members engage in diligent, consistent, goal-related actions	Members are perfunctory, inconsistent, and sloppy
Performance monitoring	Members provide one another with corrective, critical feedback as needed	Members exhibit little concern for the quality of the group's performance
Perceptions	Members are viewed in terms of the jobs they do rather than their individual qualities	Members focus on the personalities and uniqueness of members rather than on the group
Self-perceptions	Members feel important, responsible, and capable	Members feel lowered self-esteem, with little sense of competence
Attitude toward the group	Members express concern over the continuation of the group	Members are cynical about the group and its functions
Supportiveness	Members are reluctant to reject those who are performing poorly	Members are less willing to help other members of the group

SOURCE: Adapted from Barker, 1968; Wicker, 1979.

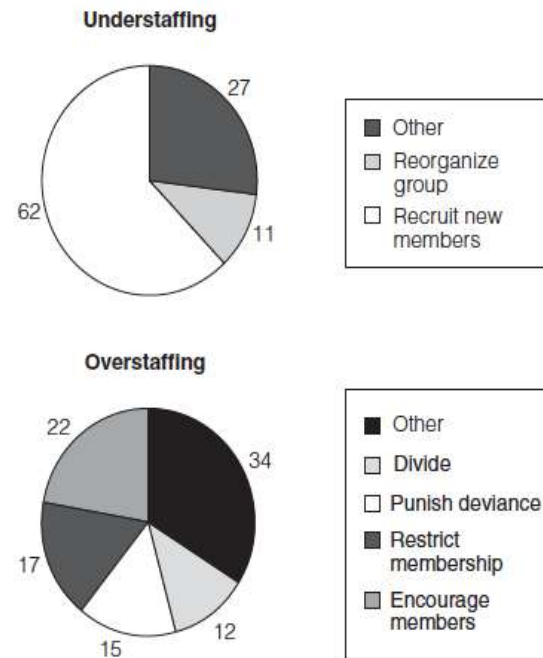


FIGURE 15.3 Leaders' recommendations for dealing with understaffed groups and overstaffed groups.

SOURCE: "Group Staffing Levels and Responses to Prospective and New Group Members" by M. A. Cini, R. L. Moreland, & J. M. Levine, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65. 1993 American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission.



Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings: Designing Group Spaces

In many cases, people fail to recognize the close connection between individuals, groups, and their environment.

- They may realize that they are part of nature, but they do not as easily recognize their connection to an artificial, built environment (Mowday & Sutton, 1993; Schultz et al., 2004).

Studies of all types of behavior settings—classrooms, factories, offices, playgrounds, highways, theaters, and so on—frequently find that ***these areas need to be redesigned to maximize the fit between the people and the place.***

- ❖ ***Groups in workplace settings, for example, will increase their productivity if their work areas promote interaction, communication, task completion, and adaptation.***
- ❖ ***The group members should have access to common spaces, where members can interact on a regular basis without interruption and interference.***
- ❖ ***This shared group space should encourage the development of a group identity through decorative styles, boundaries, the use of signs and labels, and so on.***
- ❖ ***The setting should also encourage communication among members.*** In many cases, buildings are designed around formally recognized locations for communication—such as conference rooms— but groups also meet informally and spontaneously, and these locations should be incorporated into the building's design.
- ❖ ***Many high-performance organizations go so far as to integrate work areas with other areas to promote additional interaction among group members, as when shared eating facilities and fitness facilities are included in the building's design.***

Group In Context

Places: Group Settings

Behaviour Settings: Designing Group Spaces

The setting should, however, promote rather than inhibit task performance. A group that is working on tasks that require high levels of collaboration and interaction among members will need a very different space than a group working on divisible tasks that are best solved by individuals who can concentrate on them for long periods of time without interruption.

- Francis Duffy (1997), by examining a number of groups working in large corporations, identified four types of groups that needed four types of spaces—***hives***, ***cells***, ***dens***, and ***clubs***.

Hives. Members who function as “worker bees” by performing divisible, highly structured tasks require little interaction with other group members. Such groups function well in open, cubicle-type offices where each individual has a defined, relatively small workspace.

Cells. Members working on complex, longterm, relatively individualized projects need private spaces to carry out their work. They may also be able to work by telecommuting from a home office.

Dens. When members who are similar in terms of skills and responsibilities work together on collective tasks and projects, they need an open space that all members share. So long as the task is highly structured and is facilitated by a high rate of collaboration and interaction, such groups do not need individualized areas.

Clubs. Members who are talented, well trained, or possess very specialized skills often work on diverse tasks and projects that vary greatly in their collaborative demands. Their work space must be flexible, permitting them to collaborate as needed but also to secure privacy.

Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Ecology is the science of the interrelationship of organisms and their habitats (Lawrence, 2002).

Ecologists examine how organisms—whether they are plant, animal, or microbe—interact with and adapt to other organisms in their environment and to the environment itself. Similarly, those who study the ecology of small groups explore how individuals interact with and adapt to the group habitat. Just as frogs issue their croaks from their favorite places in the stream, and birds neatly space themselves along a telephone wire, so humans display consistent patterns of spacing and seating when immersed in a group habitat.





Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Personal Space

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1966) argued that much of our behavior is shaped by a “hidden dimension.”

What is this hidden dimension? Space.

People prefer to keep some space between themselves and others. This personal space provides a boundary that limits the amount of physical contact between people. This boundary extends farther in the front of the person than behind, but the individual is always near the center of this invisible buffer zone.

- *Personal space is portable, but it is actively maintained and defended.* When someone violates our personal space, we tend to take steps to correct this problem (Aiello, 1987).
- The term *personal space is something of a misnomer, as the process actually refers to distances that people maintain between one another.* Hence, it is an interpersonal space (Patterson, 1975).

Some people seem to require more space than others. Spatial processes operate across a broad range of people and situations.

Personal Space

The area that individuals maintain around themselves into which others cannot intrude without arousing discomfort.



Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Interpersonal Zones

Different group activities require different amounts of personal space. Hall, in describing these variations, proposed four types of interpersonal zones.

The intimate zone is appropriate only for the most involving and personal behaviors, such as arm wrestling and whispering.

The personal zone, in contrast, is reserved for a wide range of small-group experiences, such as discussions with friends, interaction with acquaintances, and conversation.

The Social zone, is where more routine transactions are conducted in. Meetings held over large desks, formal dining, and professional presentations to small groups generally take place in this zone.

The public zone is reserved for even more formal meetings, such as stage presentations, lectures, or addresses.

The remote zone. Many groups now exist, in whole or in part, in a virtual environment. Instead of interacting face-to-face or even via voice communication, these groups use computer-based tools such as email, chat rooms, social networking sites, and other multi-user support interfaces. The members of these groups are not physically present with each other, making online groups considerably different— at least spatially—than face-to-face groups.



Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Interpersonal Zones

- ***Closer, smaller spaces are generally reserved for friendlier, more intimate interpersonal activities.*** As a result, ***cohesive groups tend to occupy smaller spaces than noncohesive gatherings*** (Evans & Howard, 1973);
- ***Extraverted people maintain smaller distances*** from others than do introverted ones (Patterson & Sechrest, 1970);
- ***People who wish to create a friendly, positive impression usually choose smaller distances than do less friendly people*** (Evans & Howard, 1973); and groups of friends tend to stand closer to one another than do groups of strangers (Edney & Grundmann, 1979).
- ***Physical distance has little impact on remote groups***, although individuals communicating via computer respond differently when their interface becomes informationally richer by including voice and video information (Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004).



Group In Context
Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Interpersonal Zones

TABLE 15.2 Types of Social Activities That Occur in Each Interpersonal Zone

Zone	Distance	Characteristics	Typical Activities
Intimate	Touching to 18 inches	Sensory information concerning the other is detailed and diverse; stimulus person dominates perceptual field	Sex, hugging, massage, comforting, jostling, handshakes, slow dancing
Personal	18 inches to 4 feet	Other person can be touched if desired; gaze can be directed away from the other person with ease	Conversations, discussion, car travel, viewing performances, watching television
Social	4 feet to 12 feet	Visual inputs begin to dominate other senses; voice levels are normal; appropriate distance for many informal social gatherings	Dining, meeting with business colleagues, interacting with a receptionist
Public	12 feet or more	All sensory inputs are beginning to become less effective; voices may require amplification; facial expressions unclear	Lectures, addresses, plays, dance recitals
Remote	Different locations	Primarily verbal inputs; facial and other behavioral and nonverbal cues unavailable	Electronic discussions, conference calls, telephone voice mail, e-mail, online gaming communities

SOURCE: Adapted from E. T. Hall, 1966.



Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Personal Distance

Why does distance influence so many group processes?

One explanation, based on an equilibrium model of communication, suggests that personal space, body orientation, and eye contact define the level of intimacy of any interaction.

- ***If group members feel that a low level of intimacy is appropriate, they may sit far apart, make little eye contact, and assume a relatively formal posture.*** If, in contrast, the ***members are relaxing and discussing personal topics, they may move close together, make more eye contact, and adopt more relaxed postures*** (Argyle & Dean, 1965; Patterson, 1996).
- By ***continually adjusting their nonverbal and verbal behavior, group members can keep the intimacy of their interactions at the level they desire*** (Giles Wadleigh, 1999).

Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

.... and after internet we have:

Online Group

A group whose members communicate with one another solely or primarily through computer-based information technologies that create a virtual group experience regardless of the members' geographic locations.

Offline group

A group whose members interact with one another in face-to-face, collocated settings.

Social Presence

The degree to which individuals feel that they are in the presence of another person.



Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Personal Distance: Status

- **The type of relationship linking group members plays a particularly significant role in determining personal space** (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005).
- A study of U.S. Naval personnel, for example, found that **subordinates needed more space when conversing with superiors than when conversing with peers** (Dean, Willis, & Hewitt, 1975).
- Furthermore, many studies suggest that **when people are with friends rather than with strangers or mere acquaintances, their personal space needs become relatively small**. This effect occurs in both same-sex and mixed-sex dyads, although the effect is more pronounced when women interact (Hayduk, 1983).

Culture

Hall (1966) argued that cultures differ in their use of space.

- **People socialized in the contact cultures of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Latin America prefer strong sensory involvement with others, and so they seek direct social contact whenever possible. In contrast, residents in such noncontact cultures as the United States, England, and Germany try to limit their spatial openness with others** (Remland, Jones, & Brinkman, 1995).
- **Culture also influences how people interact in the remote zone**, for people with different cultural backgrounds vary in how much emotion, personal information, and responsiveness to others they express when communicating via the Internet (Reeder et al., 2004).



Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Reactions to Spatial Invasion

- **Density refers to a characteristic of the environment**—literally, the number of people per unit of space. **Crowding, in contrast, refers to a psychological, experiential state** that occurs when people feel that they do not have enough space (Stokols, 1972, 1978).
- **Although the density of a given situation, such as a party, a rock concert, or Apollo 13, may be very high, the interactants may not feel crowded at all.** Yet two people sitting in a large room may still report that they feel crowded if they expected to be alone, are engaged in some private activity, or dislike each other intensely (Evans & Wener, 2007).

Arousal and Stress

- **In many cases, they become aroused**—their heart rate and blood pressure increase, they breathe faster, and they sometimes perspire more (Evans, 1979).
- **This arousal is not always stressful, however. If the intruder is a close friend, a relative, or an extremely attractive stranger, closeness can be a plus** (Willis, 1966).
- Similarly, **if we believe that the other person needs help or is attempting to initiate a friendly relationship**, we tend to react positively rather than negatively (Murphy-Berman & Berman, 1978).

These findings suggest that the label that individuals use to interpret their arousal determines the consequences of crowding. If people attribute the arousal to others' standing too close, then they will conclude, "I feel crowded." If, in contrast, they explain the arousal in some other way—"I drank too much coffee," "I'm in love," "I'm afraid our ship will burn up in the atmosphere," and so on—they will not feel crowded.



Group In Context

Spaces: The Ecology of Groups

Intensity

Jonathan Freedman also argued that high-density situations are not always aversive situations.

- His *density-intensity hypothesis* suggested that *high density merely intensifies whatever is already occurring in the group situation* (Freedman, 1975, 1979).
- *If something in the situation makes the group interaction unpleasant, high density will make the situation seem even more unpleasant.* If the situation *is a very pleasant one, however, high density will make the good situation even better.*
- *People liked their group the most when they received positive feedback under high-density conditions, and they liked their group the least when they got negative feedback when crowded.* Furthermore, *Freedman found that these effects were clearest for all-female groups as opposed to all-male or mixed-sex groups* (see also Storms & Thomas, 1977).

Controllability

Crowded situations are unsettling because they undermine group members' control over their experiences.

Interference

Crowding is particularly troublesome when it interferes with the group's work.

- Studies that find *no ill effects of crowding generally study groups working on coaction problems that require little interaction.* *Studies that require the participants to complete interactive tasks, in contrast, tend to find negative effects of crowding* (e.g., Heller, Groff, & Solomon, 1977; Paulus et al., 1976).
- *The interference created in the high-interaction condition led to decrements in task performance—* provided that density was high (Heller et al., 1977).



Group In Context

Locations: Group Territoriality

Like so many animals—birds, wolves, lions, seals, geese, and even seahorses—human beings develop proprietary orientations toward certain geographical locations and defend these areas against intrusion by others.

A person's home, a preferred seat in a classroom, a clubhouse, a football field are all territories—specific areas that an individual or group claims, marks, and defends against intrusion by others

- When people establish a territory, they generally try to control who is permitted access. As Irwin Altman noted, however, the degree of control depends on the type of territory. ***Control is highest for primary territories***—areas that are maintained and “used exclusively by individuals or groups . . . on a relatively permanent basis” (Altman, 1975, p. 112).
- ***People develop strong place attachments to these areas***, for they feel safe, secure, and comfortable when in them (Hernández et al., 2007).
- ***Individuals maintain only a moderate amount of control over their secondary territories.*** These areas are not owned by the group members, but because the members use such an area regularly, they come to consider it “theirs.” College students, for example, often become very territorial about their seats in a class (Haber, 1980, 1982).



Group In Context
Locations: Group Territoriality

TABLE 15.3 Three Types of Territories Established and Protected by Individuals and Groups

Type	Degree of Control	Duration of Claim	Examples
Primary	<i>High:</i> Occupants control access and are very likely to actively defend this space.	<i>Long-term:</i> Individuals maintain control over the space on a relatively permanent basis; ownership is often involved.	A family's house, a bedroom, a clubhouse, a dorm room, a study
Secondary	<i>Moderate:</i> Individuals who habitually use a space come to consider it "theirs." Reaction to intrusions is milder.	<i>Temporary but recurrent:</i> Others may use the space, but must vacate the area if the usual occupant requests.	A table in a bar, a seat in a classroom, a regularly used parking space, the sidewalk in front of your home
Public	<i>Low:</i> Although the occupant may prevent intrusion while present, no expectation of future use exists.	<i>None:</i> The individual or group uses the space only on the most temporary basis and leaves behind no markers.	Elevator, beach, public telephone, playground, park, bathroom stall, restaurant counter

SOURCE: *The Environment and Social Behavior* by Irving Altman, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1976.



Group In Context

Locations: Group Territoriality

Group Territories

Territoriality is, in many cases, a group-level process. Instead of an individual claiming an area and defending it against other individuals, a group will lay claim to its turf and prevent other groups from using it.

Human groups have also been known to territorialize areas.

- Classic sociological analyses of gangs, for example, often highlighted the ***tendency for young men to join forces in defense of a few city blocks that they considered to be their turf*** (Thrasher, 1927; Whyte, 1943; Yablonsky, 1962).
- ***Human groups also maintain secondary and public territories.*** People at the beach, for example, generally stake out their claim by using beach towels, coolers, chairs, and other personal objects (Edney & Jordan-Edney, 1974).

These temporary territories tend to be circular, and larger groups command bigger territories than smaller groups. Just as individuals are protected from unwanted social contact by their invisible bubble of personal space, so groups seem to be surrounded by a sort of “shell” or “membrane” that forms an invisible boundary for group interaction.



Group In Context

Locations: Group Territoriality

Group Territories

- Various labels have been used to describe this public territory, including **group space** (Edney & Grundmann, 1979; Minami & Tanaka, 1995), **interactional territory** (Lyman & Scott, 1967), **temporary group territory** (Edney & Jordan-Edney, 1974), **jurisdiction** (Roos, 1968), and **group personal space** (Altman, 1975).
- No matter what this boundary is called, the **evidence indicates that it often effectively serves to repel intruders.**
- **People begin invading a group's public territory only if the distance between interactants becomes large** (Cheyne & Efran, 1972) **or if the group is perceived as a crowd** rather than as a single entity (Knowles & Bassett, 1976).
- Furthermore, **mixedsex groups whose members are conversing with one another seem to have stronger boundaries** (Cheyne & Efran, 1972), as do groups whose members are exhibiting strong emotions (Lindskold et al., 1976).



Group In Context

Locations: Group Territoriality

Benefits Territories

Benefits of Territories Studies of territoriality in prisons (Glaser, 1964), naval ships (Heffron, 1972; Roos, 1968), neighborhoods (Newman, 1972), and dormitories (Baum & Valins, 1977) have suggested that people feel far more comfortable when their groups can territorialize their living areas.

Territories and Intergroup Conflict

- **Territories tend to reduce conflict between groups**, since **they organize and regulate intergroup contact by isolating one group from another**. Even in the absence of open conflict between groups, members tend to remain within their group's territories and avoid trespassing into other areas (Clack, Dixon, & Tredoux, 2005).
- **All kinds of intergroup conflicts**—from disputes between neighbors, to drive-by gang shootings, to civil wars, to wars between nations—**are rooted in disputes over territories** (Ardry, 1970).
- **Such conflicts may be based on ancient group traditions**. Because most human cultures harvest the animals and plants from the land around them, they establish control over certain geographical areas (Altman & Chemers, 1980).
- **Territories also are defended for symbolic reasons**. A group's power is often defined by the quality and size of the space it controls, so groups protect their turf as a means of protecting their reputations. An urban gang, for example, must be ready to attack intruding gangs because “a gang cannot lay any legitimate claim to public areas otherwise” (Sanders, 1994, p. 18).

Group In Context

Locations: Group Territoriality

Territoriality within groups

- ***Territoriality also operates at the level of each individual in the group.*** Although members develop attachment to the group's space, they also develop spatial attachments to specific areas within the group space (Moser & Uzzell, 2003).
- ***Such individual territories***— a bedroom, a cubicle at work, a park bench no one else knows about, or one's car—can ***help group members maintain their privacy by providing them with a means of reducing contact with others*** (Fraine et al., 2007).
- As Altman (1975) noted, ***depending on the situation, people prefer a certain amount of contact with others***, and interaction in excess of this level produces feelings of crowding and invasion of privacy.
- ***Territories also work as organizers of group members' relationships*** (Edney, 1976). Once we know the location of others' territories, we can find or avoid them with greater success. Furthermore, because we often grow to like people we interact with on a regular basis, people with contiguous territories tend to like one another (Moreland, 1987).



... and many thanks for the attention!