



PROXEMICS is a term which was coined by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall to define the study of the ways in which humans perceive, structure, and use space in their environment, architecture, and interpersonal relations.

This book reviews the evidence of the importance of the structuring of space in both humans and animals, but concentrates primarily on proxemic behavior on the interpersonal level — the human use of microspace in face-to-face interactions.

The bulk of the book focuses on a study in which the proxemic behavior of males from various cultures, interacting in a controlled laboratory setting, was observed and recorded. The description and analysis of the data obtained from this study represents the first attempt at empirically investigating cross-cultural variation in proxemic behavior and provides a base for systematically expanding proxemic research.

# APPROACHES TO SEMIOTICS

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## PROXEMIC BEHAVIOR

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A CROSS-CULTURAL  
STUDY

*by*

O. MICHAEL WATSON

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*To Billy Shears*





## PREFACE

This book deals with that area of human behavior for which Edward T. Hall has coined the term **PROXEMICS**. The study of proxemic behavior is concerned with man's structuring and perception of space and includes a broad range of spatial behavior, from the structuring of small amounts of space in daily interaction to the layout of cities. Investigations of proxemic behavior have only recently been initiated and researchers in the area of proxemics have an enormous task ahead of them: the description and comparison of cross-cultural differences in the structuring and perception of space and the reasons for these differences.

The research reported in this book is an attempt at observation, description, and comparison of different, culturally specific systems of proxemic behavior under controlled conditions. Further, it deals with only a small segment of the total spectrum of behavior included within the definition of proxemics, proxemic behavior on the interpersonal level — the ways in which man relates physically to other men in structuring microspace in face-to-face interactions with other men, and the meanings attached to these relationships. It is hoped that this small step can serve as a foundation on which further empirical research can be built.

My principal acknowledgment is to Edward T. Hall, who was the first scientist to recognize and write systematically about proxemic behavior. The research reported herein is based on Dr. Hall's own work and was inspired and stimulated by his insights. Acknowledgment is also due to Drs. Theodore D. Graves, Gordon W. Hewes, Dorothea V. Kaschube, and Gottfried O. Lang, all of whom read the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions. I also wish to extend my gratitude to my wife, Mary Jo Watson, whose tolerance of my fretful behavior during the writing of this book was truly remarkable. Finally, although it seems clumsy to thank an institution, my thanks are nevertheless due to the United States Public Health Service which provided support for this research under grants 5-T1 MH-8150-02 and 5-T1 MH-8150-03.

O.M.W.



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