The Hispanic Personal Space Myth
Introduction

• Theme:
  • Twilight Zone: Fish People and Cultural Misunderstanding

• Compare…
  http://studyspanish.ning.com/video
Introduction

• Key Statements:

1. “Hispanics Lack of Personal Space” – a Widely Held Idea…
   • Lumped together as “Southern” or “Contact Cultures”
   • Individuals Maintain “Little or No Personal Space”
2. Protective Sphere (Bubble) – 1937, 1950
   • Starlings on a Wire
3. Blind Acceptance of Myth…
   • Ignores Personal and Cultural Distinctions
   • Generalizes and Ignores Nuances
   • Stereotypes Hispanics
Introduction

• Goals:
  1. Explore the “Personal Space” Concept
  2. Discover and Examine “Personal Space” Ideas
     • Develop Operational Definitions?
  3. Compare your Personal Experience with…
     • Cultural Awareness
     • Stereotypes
     • Research
Introduction

• To Study a Language…
  You Must Understand Culture

• Culture?
  • Observable (Art, Dance, Literature, Music)
  • Behavior (Acting, Doing, Customs)
  • Beliefs (Assumptions, Ideals, Religion)
  • Emotions (Feelings, Sensations)
  • Social Conditions (Politics, Status)
  • Unconscious Reactions (Non-Verbal, Unspoken)
Overview

• What is Personal Space?
• Hispanics “Zero-Personal Space” Myth
• Exploring What Might be Hispanic Personal Spaces”
Experiencing

• What is Personal Space?
• Three Types of Space…
  • Public Space
  • Home Space
  • Body Space (Zones)
    • Public Distance (Teacher- Maintain Authority)
    • Social/ Business Distance – 4’ to 7 ‘
    • Personal Distance – 18” – 30 “
    • Intimate Distance – 0” to 18”

Stewart (1992)
Experiencing

• Personal Space Concept…
  • Personal Space Defined – Hayduk 1978
  • Based on Animal Studies – 1937 – 1950
    • Protective Sphere
  • Factors make Personal Space Flexible, Fluid…
Experiencing

• Personal Factors:
  • Age
  • Gender
  • Personal Traits
  • Status
  • Attitudes
  • Psychological Disorders

• Environmental Factors
  • Private
  • Being Observed
  • Room Size
  • Ceiling Height
  • Lighting
  • Direction of Contact
  • Attractiveness of Person

Adams & Zuckerman (1991)
Experiencing
Experiencing

Personal Space Environmental Variables

- Direction of Contact
- Ceiling Height
- Lighting
- Attractiveness of Person
- Public/ Private Venue
- Being Observed?
- Room Size
Experiencing

Cultural Analysis Difficult... Multiple Factors Confound Analysis

- Language
- Aesthetics
- Time-Orientation
- Social Institutions
- Religion
- Personal Achievement
- Personal Space
- Social Behaviors
- Inter-Cultural Socialization

Bonvillian & Nowlin (1994)
Experiencing

Cultural Analysis Variables

- Inter-Cultural Socialization
  - Status
  - Religion
- Social Institutions
- Personal Achievement
- Language
  - Social Behaviors
  - Aesthetics
  - Time-Orientation
  - Economic Background
Experiencing

• Other Cultural Factors…

• Interview Space – How persons Stands – Distance and Orientation - Beaulieu (2004)

• Topic Intimacy — Gibson et al ((1993)

• North Americans may Touch More than Believed – Bellinkopf (1999)

• Whether Person occupies Territory, or if Territory is Occupied by Someone Else — Høgh-Olesen (2008)
Experiencing

• Other Cultural Factors…
• Personal Space may “Rub Off” on a Person’s Belongings – Høgh-Olson (2008)
• Lack of Cross-Cultural Training – Bonvillian (1994)
• Hispanics belong to Collectivist Cultures
• Extended Family may include “Compadrazco” - Godparents
Experiencing

• Language and Culture…
• Culture determines how we perceive right and wrong
  • English and Italian – The child is “Bad”
  • French – The child is “Imprudent, Silly”
  • Scandinavian & Jewish – “Unfriendly”
  • German – “Out of Step”
  • Hopi – “Not following the Hopi way”
  • Spanish – “Not showing good manners, not behaving appropriately”
Experience

- Language and Culture…
- Culture determines how we perceive time
  - American – “Time is money, not enough time, time is a gift”
  - English – “My watch runs”
  - Japanese – “My watch works”
  - German – “My watch marches”
  - Spanish – “My watch walks”
Experiencing

• Language and Culture…
• Culture Determines how we Perceive “Silence”
  • Silence can mean…
  • Consent
  • Anger
  • Ignorance of the issue
  • Disinterest
  • Fear of speaking

Too many variables are at play to build a believable theory.
Exploring

- Labeling Hispanics Confounds Analysis…
- Who are Hispanics?

**Race?**

- Creole
- Mestizo
- Mulatto
- Latin negro
- Indigina
- White
- Black

Amaro & Zambana (2000)

**Status:**

- Immigrant
- Refuge
- Temporary Resident
- Citizen
- Native
- Second Generation
- Social Class
- Wealth
Exploring

- Labeling Hispanics Confounds Analysis…
- Who are Hispanics?
Exploring

• Labeling Hispanics Confounds Analysis…
• Who are Hispanics?
Exploring

- Changing Face of Hispanic Populations Confounds Analysis…

- Pluralistic Populations
  - Mexican Nationals and Mexican Americans
  - Puerto Ricans
  - Cubans – Political Refugees
  - Central Americans and South Americans
  - Central American Civil War Refugees
Exploring

• Changing Face of Hispanic Populations Confounds Analysis…

• Why Hispanic Populations are in the US
  • Born Here (Were Here First)
  • Are Citizens,
  • Political Refugees
  • Come to Study – Decide to Stay
  • Illegal Workers
Exploring

• Changing Face of Hispanic Populations Confounds Analysis…

• Hispanic Identities?
  • Self-Esteem of a Minority Identity
  • Group Self-Image and Personal Self-Image
  • Language Retention
  • Ethnic solidarity

“High Degree of Identification with the group, and positive evaluation of self as a member of the group”

Porter and Washington (1993)
Exploring

• Racism Confounds Analysis…
• Eurocentric and Male Dominated Research

Blea (1995)

• Ethnic Stereotypes
  • Social Class
  • Occupational Roles
  • Assumed Characteristics Theory Jones (1991)

“Generalization involves normal cognitive errors and is not necessarily due to motivational factors” Jones (1991)
Exploring

• Stereotyping process:
  • Faulty
  • Illogical
  • Incorrect

“Ethnic stereotypes stem from beliefs about general characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another. “ Jones (1991)
Personalizing

- Do you have personal boundaries?
- Where are your limits?
- How can you tell?
- Clues:
  - Anger
  - Anxiety
  - Irritation
- Subtle – Subliminal
  - Not “Just Plain Rude”
Personalizing

• Indices?
• Stress
  • Self-Report
  • Salivary Cortisol
  • Performance After Effects
  • Evans & Wener (2007)
  • Measured Adverse Reactions from Sitting Next to Other Passengers on a Commuter Train!
Personalizing

- Do your boundaries change based upon...
  - Location
  - Person
  - Situation
  - Other People Around
- Can you trust a Hispanic?
  - Eye contact because of politeness?
  - Giving directions to make you happy, (not wanting to disappoint you)
Personalizing

Which of These Statements do you Agree with?

Elevators are a place to joke, talk, meet friends, say “Hello” and “Good-bye” to strangers

In hospital waiting room, tell case histories, roll up pants legs, lift up shirt to show scars

Good friends take small courtesies for granted so it is unnecessary to say “Thank you” for every little favor.
Personalizing

Which of These Statements do you Agree with?

Long, penetrating eye contact shows that you are interested in what the other person is saying.

Sitting next to strangers on a crowded bus or train is a great way to meet people and enjoy stimulating conversation.

It is impolite to tell people what you really think because you might hurt their feelings.
Synthesizing

• Why is “Busting” this Myth Important?
• Business and Professional Success
• Need to Understand
  • Language
  • Gestures
  • Eye Contact
• Other Cultural Differences Bonvillian (1994)
Synthesizing

Professional Behaviors Appropriate in USA Might Seem...

- Arrogant
- Insensitive – Cold - Uncaring
- Over Confident
- Aggressive

Bonvillian (1994)

Racial Stereotypes picture Hispanics as...

- Aggressive
- Lazy
- Cruel
- Pugnacious
- Ignorant

Jones (1991)
Synthesizing

- Cultural Stereotypes Fraught with Problems…
- Misinterpreting the Behavior of Members of Other Cultures

- Being Misinterpreted by Members of Other Cultures
- Assuming that Members of Another Culture are “Like You”
- Assuming that Members of Another Culture are “Not Like You.”
- Assuming that all Members of a Cultural Group are Similar to Each Other
- Believing that Knowing Generalizations Leads to Communication Success
Evaluating

- Do “Hispanics have a “Personal Space” a Myth, or Not?
- Is the “Personal Space” Concept so…
  - “Fuzzy” and
  - Ill Defined,

  that we Have no way of Knowing if Hispanics Have one or Not?

How do you Keep from Making…

- Communication Mistakes?
- Unfounded Generalizations?
- Professional, Business and Personal Mistakes?
Summary

• We have Examined and Explored…
  1. The “Personal Space” Concept
  2. “Personal Space” Confusions
  3. A Lack of an Operational Definition
     • Testing so Many Variables Leads to Confusion
     • Lumping Diverse Populations under One Label
  4. Your Personal Experiences
     • With Hispanics
     • With Personal Space
Conclusion

• Hypothesis Proved or Disproved?

• You Tell Me…
Follow-Up

• Links to Additional Videos Online…

Gimme Some Kinda Sign Videos

Mind Map Albums

Links to YouTube Videos about Personal Space
Follow-Up

• Final Thought...

To the ladies, speak Italian
To the gentlemen, speak French
To the birds, only English
To the dogs, German
And, Spanish should be spoken, only to God.
Questions & Answers

• Do you have Any Questions or Comments?
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