

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

We will discuss **two forms of communication beyond speech**. The first includes facial expression, personal space, eye contact, use of time and conversational silence.

A second aspect includes the **cultural spaces** that we occupy and negotiate.

Cultural spaces are the social and cultural contexts that form our identity – where we grow and where we live (not necessarily the physical homes and neighborhood, but the cultural meanings created in these places).

Nonverbal behaviors can reinforce, substitute for, or contradict verbal behaviors.

Nonverbal Codes

Proxemics is the study of how people use personal space or the “bubble” that is around us that marks the territory between ourselves and others. Edward Hall distinguished **contact from noncontact cultures.**

Eye Contact often is included in **proxemics** because it regulates **interpersonal distance**. **Facial Expression.** Psychologists Ekman and Friesen (1987) conducted extensive systematic work in nonverbal communication. They first took pictures of US American's facial expressions reflecting six emotions thought to be universal.

Chronemics concerns concepts of time and the rules that govern its use. Edward Hall distinguished between **monochronic and polychronic** time orientation. People who have a **monochronic** concept of time regard it as a commodity: Time can be gained, lost, spent, wasted or saved. Time is **linear**, with one event happening at a time. A **polychronic** orientation conceptualizes time as more holistic, perhaps more circular: Many events can happen at once.

Silence can be as meaningful as language. According to scholar **William B. Gudykunst's uncertainty reduction theory**, the major reason for communicating verbally in initial interactions with people is to reduce uncertainty. In American contexts, people employ active uncertainty reduction strategies, such as asking questions. In many other cultural contexts, people reduce uncertainty by more passive strategies, by being silent, observing, perhaps asking a third party about someone's behavior.

Cultural Space

Our individual histories are important in understanding **our identity**.

Home. Cultural spaces influence how we think about ourselves and others. Fussel highlights the semiotic system of social class in the American home – from the way the lawn is maintained to the kind of furniture within the home or the way the television is situated. Even if our home does not reflect the social class to which we aspire, it is often a place of identification.

Neighborhood exemplifies how power influences intercultural contacts

The relationships among identity, power and cultural space are **quite complex**. The key to understanding the relationships is **to think dialectically** about these issues. We often change cultural spaces when we **travel or relocate**.