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CROSS-CULTURAL INTER-PERSONAL SPACE  
IN ASSUMED COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH SAME AND OPPOSITE SEX PAIRS,  
AND COUNSELLORS' PERSPECTIVES  
ON PROXEMICS

**Betty Rudd**

**Volume 1**

# Volume 1



**1 of 2 volumes**

***Cross-cultural inter-personal space in  
assumed counselling relationships with  
same and opposite sex pairs, and  
counsellors' perspectives on proxemics***

**Submitted to fulfil the requirements for the degree of PhD**

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***November 2000***

**PAGE  
NUMBERING  
AS ORIGINAL**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**I thank with my heart, mind and soul, the individuals who helped me (whether wittingly or unwittingly) to put my vision of producing this project into action.**

**Thank you Professor Mary Watts for agreeing to be my supervisor with regard to this work, for accepting me on the doctorate programme, for your constructive criticism, for your insight into the notion of structure, for your approachability, for your understanding and positive attitude towards this work even when it was still only a vague idea in my mind.**

**Thank you Dr. Don Rawson for your warm approachability, the suggestions concerning the qualitative pilot study and views on practising the skill of in-depth interviewing.**

**Thank you Dr. Charles Legg for your ideas concerning the quantitative pilot study and your very encouraging remarks concerning the importance of this work.**

**Thank you John Fildes for your SPSS workshop and for explaining the SPSS so clearly to me.**

**Thank you Liz Noyes, my MSc dissertation supervisor, for telling me, before you left academia, that you believed I was capable of going on to do doctorate work.**

Thank you, Open University, for having offered me a full scholarship for my studies, without which it would not have been possible for me to embark on my bona fide studies in psychology.

Thank you Jason, my eldest son, for your many patient hours in retrieving my doctorate work from the computer which I crashed, for teaching me how to copy the work for safe keeping, for responding so willingly and with a happy heart to my requests for help with using a computer, for finding such a satisfactory lap-top for me to do this work on, for your generous offer of help, for your altruistic offer of time - even when it meant staying up all hours of the night to work so that I could understand a technical concept and for the times you played with the little ones while I got on with this work.

Thank you Ben, my youngest son, for your supportive prayers, understanding attitude towards my work, those positive telephone conversations, the e-mails which keep us in touch across the distance of hundreds of miles, the practical help you do when you visit, for the times you took care of the little ones while I did this project and your constructive outlook.

Thank you Maria, my eldest daughter, for your fun, your creativity, sharing your home-work with me, for being so clear about what you want, for helping me to understand the youths who are your friends, for feeling so free about using your flexible voice and helping me keep my feet firmly on the ground.



Thank you Sophie, my youngest daughter, for your laugh, for your spontaneity, for demanding my attention, for helping me to understand the children who are your friends, for stating what you want so clearly with the whole of your being, for helping to bring some balance into my life, for the gift of your transparency.

Thank you Mary, my sister, for your positive attitude towards my work, your encouraging remarks, your constant love, letting me use your place as my place, your help with the children, your availability in times of need and the telephone calls which keep us in touch with one another.

Thank you Steve, my doctor, my partner, my sounding board, my shoulder to cry on, my playmate, my husband, my love, for being there for me.

Thank you Ben Benison, for Theatre Machine and your uplifting trust in my ability to communicate within the field of physical theatre, which lay much of the foundation towards my thinking about doing research into NVC.

Thank you, Lindsay Kemp, my dynamic teacher and role model for communicating with inspiration from a firm knowledge-base.

Thank you Desmond Jones, for the intensively disciplined and stretching physical and vocal training you gave me regarding human non-verbal behaviour and having the trust in me to provide me with the opportunity of being a member of your professional troupe.

Thank you to the chartered occupational psychologists and the chartered counselling psychologists for the time you spent finding themes in the interviews, as a way of enriching the interpretation of the depth interviews.

Thank you Anne Barley-Isaac, my friend and colleague, for the generous hours you spent gleaning themes you discovered in the interviews and talking succinctly about them with me.

Thank you Joan Moore, chartered counselling psychologist, for marrying the themes which the other chartered psychologists found, to the ones I extrapolated.

Thank you, all the anonymous participants of this research (you know who you are), for sharing your time, your thoughts, your emotions and your actions with me; without you, this work would not have been possible.



## **PROLOGUE**

Regarding the main title of this project, the term “inter-personal” refers to the inter-active relationship between people, as in: a psychotherapeutic counselling encounter.

Deliberations with relatives, friends and colleagues who disclosed that they had been through similar situations as my own concerning inter-personal experiences with regard to proxemics, fired my aspiration to bring into relief the thread of proximity when relating inter-personally. It also fuelled my wondering about which factors led to healthy inter-personal relating, and whether proxemics played a role in this.

The dimension I therefore explore in the current research is the non-verbal one of distance. Within the scope of this project, human relating is investigated while focussing on proxemics. When we know what emotion we are experiencing at a moment in time, we relate with ourselves on an intra-personal level, which has various other dimensions. I have experienced this while listening to my own self. When we engage in a dialogue with another human being, we relate on an inter-personal level, which also has other dimensions. I have experienced this myself while communicating with another person. When we experience being an integral part of what we experience as our world, we transcend our immediate situation and sense a connection to a

greater whole; we relate on a transpersonal level. Personally, I have experienced this, for example: while walking with my family. I mention the three different types of relating here (intra, inter and trans-personal relating) in order to put this research project on inter-personal relating regarding proxemics, into a certain perspective.

In this work I have endeavoured to entwine three threads from my life: Firstly, the thread of my professional experiences with the second thread of my studies and the final thread of my teaching work, in the hope of offering a key to psychological therapists for facilitating the unlocking of some positive potential in their clients. I aspire to interface research with practical ways of putting theory into practice, without preaching a particular psychotherapeutic model.

I have yearned to produce a project like this for over a decade, and I am thrilled to be doing it. Many aspects of my life have facilitated the process of this work. Firstly, my cultural transplant from the Mediterranean to England when I was five years old. This experience gave me a sense of having a front row seat in the new culture and perhaps lay the foundation for my search concerning the understanding of cultural influences.

Also, when I entered junior school after my seventh birthday, a teacher read to my class for ten minutes near the end of each school day, and this sparked my enthusiasm for reading. Before the age of twelve I went to what was purported to be the first comprehensive school built in London. That school's

library seemed well-stocked and I read every book on psychology that I could find, during my teen years. This is how my love for psychology was born.

When I left school, I trained to act professionally, later I qualified to be a teacher and later still I studied to be a mime artist. A passion for understanding the meaning of non-verbal communication has thrived within me for thirty years. After acting professionally for some years I ran a theatre school in London. It was there that my practical therapeutic work unwittingly started, initially with children, when the local Social Services department paid for the “difficult” children in their care, to attend my drama school. I remember with warmth, not only the dedicated hard work which thrived there, but also the fun which my students and I had. Yet my heart and mind yearned towards training to be a psychologist. So I did, when the opportunity came, taking my first psychology degree as a mature student with the Open University.

The eventual combination of post-graduate studies, clinical work, experience within the performing arts, teaching and the passion within me, provided me with the necessary equipment for the present project. Now that I have gleaned a certain amount of knowledge for interfacing my learning of psychology, dramatic art and teaching, I have undertaken to produce this work.

The text that follows is a research project investigating distance within counselling relationships. It is not only an empirical exploration of factors within purported counselling relationships which may influence proxemics



between counsellors and their clients, but also a qualitative exploration. The chief aims of the research are seven-fold:

Firstly, to offer a ground-work of data on proxemics regarding counselling relationships with English speaking adult natives from England, Gibraltar and the USA, from which further research may grow from. Secondly, to add to the area of understanding non-verbal communication (NVC) between individuals who make up the members of counselling dyads. Thirdly, to add to the field of literature on NVC, the specific dimension of proxemics, an aspect which has been under represented. Fourthly, to develop ideas on facilitating awareness in NVC, especially proxemics for people involved with counselling. Fifthly, to ascertain areas of awareness concerning NVC with regard to at least proxemics, in psychological counselling practitioners. Sixthly, to offer a few new ideas to not only psychological counsellors but also perhaps individuals that teach who may need to use counselling skills in order to support their work. These new ideas take the form of balancing proximity with the factors of culture, familiarity and gender (see study 1 in the main body of the text); and whatever themes emerge (see study 2 in the main body of the text). Finally, I aspire to bring more fun and heart to join the head of the body of my profession. Indeed, during the first international conference on counselling psychology in 1997, the chair of the division, Professor Mary Watts, during her closing address, said that what the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Counselling Psychology needed was more fun and heart to join the head. It is important to note that although this research spotlights proxemics, the investigation initially deliberates on the wider aspect of non-

verbal communication, due to not only the fact that proxemics is part of NVC, but also because of the meagre amount of investigations found which mainly focus on proxemics. This research involved visiting three English speaking countries and using a tape measure to see how far away purported clients chose to sit from me, the assumed counsellor; as well as interviewing individuals who practise counselling in order to ascertain their awareness regarding proxemics. In this way, the research focuses on proxemics.

Within this work, the term “it” or “one” is used when referring to an objective reality, such as external criteria used as a yardstick. For instance, the measurement in inches (which would be constant, who-ever measures the same place). The term “we” or “our” is used when there is a shared understanding between people, such as the language used between members of a counselling dyad (unless an interpreter is used). And the term “I” or “my” is used when I deliberate on my personal experience. Wilber (1998) has a similar usage of the terms “it”, “we” and “I”.

My experience with working on this project is multi-faceted. It has been both very challenging and extremely rewarding. At times I have cried over this project: for instance when my computer crashed so my doctorate work in it, vanished. At other times I have had fun and laughter: for instance while sitting and deliberating on the research, during a meal, with my counselling psychologist friend Anne. It is not the intention of this work to investigate the meanings behind the words “counsellor”, “psycho-therapist”, “psychological practitioner”, “counselling psychologist” and “psychological counsellor”;

although these words are used interchangeably throughout the text. The past, present and future tenses are used to illustrate: a situation that has happened in the past such as a clinical experience (past tense); a situation which is current such as a piece of literature (present tense) or a situation which may be possible (future tense).

## RESEARCH

**CROSS-CULTURAL INTER-PERSONAL SPACE IN**  
**ASSUMED COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIPS WITH**  
**SAME AND OPPOSITE SEX PAIRS, AND**  
**COUNSELLORS' PERSPECTIVES ON PROXEMICS**



## CONTENTS

Section	Title Volume 1	Page
	List of tables	21
	List of figures	22
	Abbreviations used	23
	Abstract	27
	<b><i>Chapter 1</i></b>	28
1	Introduction	29
1.1	Non-verbal communication	34
1.1.1	NVC overview	34
1.2	Older literature on NVC	39
1.3	Newer literature on NVC	57
1.4	Trends in the growth of the field of language	60
1.5	Philosophy of using two methodologies	66
1.6	Chapter 1 discussion	69
1.7	Chapter 1 summary	75
	<b><i>Chapter 2</i></b>	77
2	Affect and health	78
2.1	Stress	80
2.2	Affect	83
2.3	Emotional attitude	86
2.4	Health	88
2.5	Improving health	91
2.6	School-aged individuals	93
2.7	Teachers	94
2.8	Psychological therapists	95
2.9	Facilitating emotional literacy	96
2.10	Chapter 2 discussion	98
2.11	Chapter 2 summary	101
	<b><i>Chapter 3</i></b>	102
3	Power and discursive overview of introductory chapters	103
3.1	The human body as messenger	104
3.2	Inter-personal power dynamics	107
3.3	Empowering the client	109
3.4	Community and flocking	110
3.5	Confidence and energy	111
3.6	Society	112
3.7	Presenting study	112
3.8	Discursive overview of introduction	114
3.9	Summary of first three chapters	119
3.10	Chapter 3 summary	121
	<b><i>Chapter 4</i></b>	123
4	Method	124

4.1	Ethical issues	124
4.2	Design	125
4.2.1	Pilot study 1	126
4.3	Study 1 (quantitative method)	128
4.4	Study 1 contexts dates and times of data collection	132
4.5	Study 1 respondents	133
4.6	Study 1 design	134
4.7	Study 1 apparatus	134
4.8	Study 1 procedure	135
4.9	Study 2 outline plan	136
4.10	Study 2 rationale for the use of in depth interviews	137
4.11	Study 2 equipment	139
4.12	Study 2 participants	139
4.13	Study 2 strategy	140
4.14	Study 2 context dates and times of data collection	141
4.15	Interviewing for the research	145
4.16	Interviewing problems	146
4.17	Study 2 data analysis	148
4.18	Chapter 4 discussion	150
4.19	Chapter 4 summary	151
	<b>Chapter 5</b>	153
5	Results of study 1	155
5.1	Study 1 results	156
5.2	Summarising information	157
5.2.1	Study 1 central tendency	157
5.2.2	Study 1 spread	161
5.2.3	Study 1 normal distribution	162
5.3	Study 1 correlation	164
5.3.1	Study 1 strength and direction of relationship	164
5.4	Study 1 samples and population	165
5.5	Study 1 reliability and validity	165
5.5.1	Study 1 overall distances	166
5.5.2	Study 1 specific distances	169
5.6	Post hoc tests	174
5.7	Study 1 overview	182
5.7.1	Discussion	186
5.8	Chapter 5 summary	186
	<b>Chapter 6</b>	188
6	Study 2 outcome	189
6.1	Study 2 themes	194
6.2	How peers themed study 2	194
6.3	Other themes in study 2	195
6.4	Gender in study 2	197
6.5	Power in study 2	199
6.6	Culture in study 2	200
6.7	Affect in study 2	203
6.8	Orientation in study 2	205
6.9	Study 2 constructs	209



6.10	Process diary for study 2	215
6.11	Discussion	219
6.12	Chapter 6 summary	220
	<b><u>Chapter 7</u></b>	221
7	Discussion	223
7.1	Methodological issues	224
7.2	Study 1	226
7.2.1	Study 1 familiarity	227
7.2.2	Study 1 gender	230
7.2.3	Study 1 culture	232
7.3	Study 2 themes	234
7.3.1	Study 2 gender	236
7.3.2	Study 2 power	237
7.3.3	Study 2 culture	243
7.3.4	Study 2 affect	245
7.3.5	Study 2 orientation	246
7.3.6	Study 2 proxemics	250
7.3.7	Study 2 emergent themes	251
7.4	Combined findings in light of literature cited	252
7.5	Possible reason for non-significance	261
7.6	Communication	262
7.7	Kinesics	263
7.8	Inequality	265
7.9	Proxemics	267
7.10	Ethical control	268
7.11	Economics and politics	270
7.12	Local and global	271
7.13	Public and private	274
7.14	Representation and reality	275
7.15	Intra-personal relating	277
7.16	Inter-personal relating	279
7.17	Trans-personal relating	279
7.18	Individually tailored proximity	281
7.19	Education	283
7.20	Empowering the counselling psychologist	285
7.21	Confidence	286
7.22	Power	286
7.23	Status	288
7.24	Counselling practitioners	289
7.25	Risk and advantage	290
7.26	Vision	290
7.27	Philosophical roots	293
7.28	Conclusion	293
7.29	Implications	304
7.30	Future studies	304
7.31	Summary	306
	Epilogue	309

	References	311
	Volume 2	334
	Appendices	341
Floppy disc	Transcribed interviews	Back cover of Vol.2
Appendices		
1	My process diary	342
2	Ethical considerations	359
3	Letter verifying that I am undertaking research	361
4	Types of questions I asked participants in study 2	363
5	Informal information for study 1 respondents	367
6	Formal instructions for study 1 respondents	369
7	Measurements of study 1's raw data	370
8	Study 1 correlated data	377
9	Copies of photographs	379
10	Letter of thanks to each institute	383
11	Sample of colour coded themes on transcripts	384
12	A sample of themes which colleagues found	386
13	Sample of a theme cut and stuck together	388
14	Sample of an uncommon theme	390
15	Sample of my themed diary	392
16	Sample of transcribed interview	394
17	Sample of SPSS computer print-out	412
18	Questions arising from the research	415
19	Approximate order of events	424

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table no.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Mean distance and SD in inches of males, females and overall	159
2	Distance and SD in inches of participants in England, USA and Gibraltar	160
3	Mean distance and SD in inches for Strangers, Recognise and Acknowledge groups	160
4	Distance in inches	167
5	Descriptive statistics showing specific distances	170
6	Levels of significance regarding DV relating to IV's	173
7	Multiple comparisons	175
8	Male and female participants	182
9	Familiarity groups	183
10	Culture groups	183

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure no.	Title	Page
1	Bell shaped curve	163
2	Profile plot at culture = England	177
3	Profile plot at culture = USA	179
4	Profile plot at culture = Gibraltar	181
5	Gender and culture	185
6	A proxemics model	302



## **ABBREVIATIONS USED**

<b>Ack</b>	<b>Acknowledge</b>
<b>ANOVA</b>	<b>Analysis of Variance</b>
<b>Bet.</b>	<b>Between</b>
<b>BPS</b>	<b>British Psychological Society</b>
<b>CBT</b>	<b>Cognitive Behaviour Therapy</b>
<b>Cm</b>	<b>centimetres</b>
<b>Conds.</b>	<b>Conditions</b>
<b>CPD</b>	<b>Continuing Professional Development</b>
<b>Dev.</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
<b>df</b>	<b>Degrees of freedom</b>
<b>Dr.</b>	<b>Doctor</b>

DV	Dependent variable
E.g.	For example
Eng.	England
et al	and all
F.	Female
Gib.	Gibraltar
HSD	Honestly significant difference
I.e.	That is
IV	Independent variable
KIC	Kinesic inter-personal cog
M.	Male
No.	Number
N	Total no. of scores



n	No. of scores per condition
NLP	Neuro-linguistic programming
NVC	Non-verbal communication
p	Probability
R	Reliability
r	validity coefficient
Rec	Recognition
SD	Standard deviation
SEmean	Standard error of mean
Sig.	Significance
Std.	standard
Str	Strangers

TA

Transactional analysis

USA

United States of America

## **ABSTRACT**

This research is double layered because it involves two studies. Each layer or study has various dimensions. One layer's dimensions (study 1) investigated proxemics in relation to culture, gender and familiarity between individuals within a purported counselling dyad, from the assumed client's point of view. In three different countries, the experimenter asked a total of 72 male and 72 female participants whom she did not know, to assume that they were coming to her for a counselling session and to place their chairs then sit in them as if they were at a counselling session. This was to ascertain whether there was a relationship between the physical distance of individuals who were members of participant-experimenter pairs, the culture which each participant was embedded in, and if elements of familiarity between the members of the purported counselling dyads had an effect on distance, and to measure any difference there might be between the females versus males distances. It was hypothesised that individuals would sit at a significantly different distance, depending on culture, familiarity and gender. The following three questions were asked concerning the quantitative layer of this research. Question 1: Does the measurable distance between the individuals who make up the members of a counselling dyad vary depending on the level of familiarity between the purported client and counsellor? Question 2: Would men sit at a different distance to the assumed counsellor than women purported clients? Question 3: Do distances from the assumed counsellor, which purported clients choose to sit at, vary depending on their cultural environment? Results revealed that there were significant differences regarding familiarity [ $F(2, 141) = 40.973, p < 0.001$ ], significant distances concerning gender [ $F(1, 142) = 10.924, p < 0.001$ ] and significant differences in distance between participants from different cultures [ $F(2, 141) = 66.445, p < 0.001$ ]. The other layer of this work (study 2) investigated a sample of student and professional individuals' perceptions (who practise counselling), using in-depth interviews, to ascertain their awareness of proxemics and to identify other dimensions linked with proximity. These interviews were audio taped to transcribe later, and the researcher kept a diary of the process she went through concerning each interview. Findings showed that there was a certain amount of awareness, the extent of which varied amongst the individuals. Findings from study 2 also showed that proxemics was linked with aspects of culture, counselling orientation, affect, the balance of power and gender within a counselling relationship. Insights from the results of both layers (studies one and two) of this research are utilised for suggested improvements to the counsellor-client relationship. Implications of the findings are discussed, before spotlighting new paths for further research.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1     *Introduction***

#### **1.1   *Non-verbal communication***

##### **1.1.1 *NVC Overview***

#### **1.2   *Older literature on NVC***

#### **1.3   *Newer literature on NVC***

#### **1.4   *Trends in the growth of the field of language***

#### **1.5   *Philosophy of using two methodologies***

#### **1.6   *Chapter 1 discussion***

#### **1.7   *Chapter 1 summary***

## Chapter 1

### 1 INTRODUCTION

*Some thirty inches from my nose  
The frontier of my person goes,  
And all the untilled air between  
Is private pagus or demesne.  
Stranger, unless with bedroom eyes  
I beckon you to fraternize,  
Beware of rudely crossing it.  
I have no gun, but I can spit.*

W.H. Auden.

This poem depicts an awareness of the non-verbal communication which people create between themselves; specifically, the physical space between two people. A great deal has been written in both articles and books about what is popularly called “body language”, including proxemics, that is, a study of the way space is used between creatures, either animal with regard to territorial space; or human with regard to inter-personal space (Adler and Towne, 1990; Shotter, 1975; Koch, 1963; Popper, 1968; Stevens, 1983).

However, there is a large deficit within the literature concerning physical proximity with regard to counselling work. Since much counselling work takes



place when two people, a client and counsellor, sit in the same room, then it is not irrational to assume that proximity is central to counselling work. For instance, it seems obvious to state that counselling would not occur while a client sat in one room and a counsellor in another (assuming that there was no electronic link between the two), so that there was a relatively large distance between them.

Indeed, from clinical, personal and teaching experience, I have found that proximity is crucial within a relationship. For example, within clinical experience: a client sat as far away from me as she physically could the first time she came for a counselling session, and seemed emotionally frozen. As her emotions started to thaw, over a period of several sessions, she gradually moved her physical distance in relation to where I was sitting. From the initial twelve feet of space between us, she chose to sit as close as about six inches away from me, then seemed to settle at a distance of approximately eighteen inches between her and myself, by the end of the counselling contract. Based on personal observation within the context of at least clinical practice, it became clear that when clients felt free and safe enough to choose where they sat, the proximity between them and myself would often change, over time.

Hence, I decided to look into the available research regarding proximity within a counselling relationship, which is how I identified huge gaps within the literature, which then led me onto doing this specific study. Consequently, in this work, gaps in the literature are spotlighted before describing how this

research was performed. Due to the gap between research and application, the following questions emerged: 1) Are there individual differences with clients as to where they expect seating (if seating is used) to be? 2) Do counselling clients have preferences regarding how seating is arranged within a counselling session ? 3) If the answer to the previous question is “yes”, then are these preferences influenced by cultural, gender and familiarity factors? 4) And how aware of proxemics are individuals who practise counselling? The other questions which emerged but have not been researched here, have been put in appendix 18.

The concept which underpins this research therefore is that if clients choose different physical distances to a counsellor during one-to-one sessions which involves sitting on a chair, then they perhaps have preferences regarding those differences, based on various factors. Hence, the literature within counselling psychology was searched in order to find how it addressed interpersonal physical proximity between client and counsellor. The resource of literature within counselling psychology was sought, because this research addresses proximity between client and counsellor. However, due to the paucity of literature found within counselling psychology on proxemics, literature within other disciplines (which utilise NVC incorporating proxemics) was looked at; for example: Drama, business and teaching. This is because these fields are not only areas which utilise NVC, but also areas within which I have practical experience and training regarding NVC which encompasses proxemics. Hence, the literature referenced that circumscribes this research

which is found within the ensuing chapters, is not only cited from the discipline of psychology, but also from other fields, as explained above.

The first three chapters form the Introduction to this research project: This first chapter offers an overview of non-verbal communication (NVC), before focussing on proxemics. Older as well as newer literature on NVC is drawn upon, to help put proxemics and this research project into perspective. Chapter two draws on works which either explicitly or implicitly link proxemics with health and affect. Relevant literature is gleaned from the field of psychology, as well as other fields, as explained above. Works from these different areas are inter-faced by the facet of proxemics. In chapter three, the concept of power is drawn upon, regarding inter-personal proxemics, before discussing the Introduction, based on the literature cited. Fortunately, I was taught to interlink the dimensions of power and proxemics, in a practical way, on a full-time acting performer's course in the 1960's. Consequently, I have brought some of my learning from the field of dramatic art, to that of counselling psychology. Therefore, in the same chapter (3), there is an argument for learning from other disciplines, before ending with a discussion and summary of the first three chapters. Chapter 4 describes the methods used in conducting this research, including the rationale for using two methodologies. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the results and outcome of the data collection analysis and chapter 7 discusses the research in the light of literature cited and offers a few conclusions. Each chapter ends with a chapter summary.



Works from other fields are drawn upon (e.g. teaching) to also add depth, texture and a fuller perspective to this work on proxemics. This work identifies a gap in the relevant literature and takes a step towards remedying part of that gap. I have drawn upon literature from within the field of teaching because of my links with teaching, such as having experience of utilising proxemics while teaching in order to aid participants in moving towards a desired goal. Indeed, my background within the theatre profession, the fields of teaching, business and counselling psychology, has helped in preparing me to undertake this work. By performing this research, I aspire to not only make a scholarly contribution for my profession, but also to help in empowering my practitioner colleagues with a few more tools to positively use with their clients and themselves.

When I initially started my investigations for this study, although feeling enthused about the project, I faced problems with how to structure it. The area within non-verbals, which proxemics is a part of, is vast and I grappled with choosing what to cover. Indeed, the study of what is popularly known as “body language” is still a developing field so although I offer an overview of the area, it is incomplete, yet I hope that my contribution will go a small way towards covering the vast virgin territory which is left. Another problem I faced was my blinkered perspective: How much of the evaluation concerning past relevant literature is filtered by my own unwitting present day mistakes?

Consequently, I have attempted to communicate information concerning this field, by highlighting difficulties, which have emerged. Simultaneously,

however, perspectives and arguments within the field are also offered which are intended to be neither right nor definitive, but are offered as challenges. In this way, it is hoped that readers develop a positively critical perspective of the field of non-verbal communication, focussing on proxemics, which may be different to the one presented.

## **1.1 Non-verbal communication**

The importance of non-verbal communication, which envelops proxemics, has been investigated in much literature. A great deal of the material on this topic is written for professional actors, as in the books “Improvisation in Drama” (Frost, 1990) and “Improvisation and the Theatre” (Johnstone, 1981) and the business world, as in the books “Speak for Yourself” (Campbell, 1997) and “Leading Your Team” (Leigh and Maynard, 1997); not surprisingly, Leigh and Maynard both trained in acting skills. What is surprising, is that the field of counselling psychology (where it is unusual to find literature where the main thesis deals with one specific facet of non-verbal communication in depth), juxtaposes this situation. An overview of non-verbals follows in order to ascertain how proxemics fits into it.

### **1.1.1 NVC overview**

An overview of aspects which contribute to NVC is shown below, for the purposes of putting the facet of proxemics (within the overall picture of non-verbals) into perspective before holding a magnifying glass over proxemics

for further insight into this non-verbal aspect. Veritably, inter-personal space is part of one's non-verbal repertoire. This repertoire is often called non-verbal communication and is popularly known as body language. Yet the popular term of body language may be a misnomer because the overall facets which make up one's non-verbal repertoire which one can communicate with incorporate not only the physical body but also the vocal qualities one possesses. However, there are more facets to non-verbal exchange than these, as detailed below.

Although one may assume that NVC only involves the physical body for example its level of tension or relaxation and how the other person perceives that (thus colouring it with meaning), and vocal qualities for example the amount of projection and resonance in one's voice; upon further examination, it also incorporates the stage (the term STAGE is used here and throughout this work to mean the AREA ONE IS SITUATED IN). For instance, if a practising counsellor has a bunch of dangling multi-coloured, blown-up balloons stuck on her or his door, then a client may wonder whether there is a party going on. Further, if the consulting room was painted black and had no window for natural light, the atmosphere which that exuded would be different than if, for instance, the session room had natural light flowing in from a window and the walls were painted a magnolia colour.

Other dimensions of one's non-verbal repertoire for NVC incorporate:

- a. Body posture: e.g. the limbs may be crossed, open, or a combination of both, while counselling (Rudd, 1996)



- b. One's personal smell: e.g. halitosis may be apparent while counselling
- c. The aroma that the stage exudes: e.g. a vase of sweet peas exuding a delicate scent in the counselling session
- d. Eye gaze: e.g. looking elsewhere while talking to another person, or looking at the other person in a way which makes that person feel insecure, or looking up at or down at or sideways at or staring at or glancing at, or any other way of eye gaze in relation to another person such as a client
- e. Head tilt: e.g. the head may be inclined to one side or tilted backwards or forwards or it might be balancing centrally on top of the spine
- f. Facial expression: e.g. an individual such as a client or a counselling practitioner may frown while smiling at another person
- g. Movement: e.g. a counselling practitioner may move jerkily and relatively quickly which communicates something different to moving comparatively slowly and fluidly
- h. Space taken: e.g. a client may take up a very small amount of physical space by keeping her or his arms and legs as close to her or his body as possible and by simultaneously hunching up, which communicates something different to spreading out physically thus taking up more space, perhaps more space than the counselling practitioner, both laterally and horizontally
- i. Gesture: e.g. a person might gesticulate either with or without verbalising
- j. Vocalisation: e.g. the vocalising, irrespective of any verbalisations, may be at a high pitch, for instance, and at a rapid rate, thus communicating something different to a low and slow vocalisation.

- k. Properties: e.g. properties used, such as tissues, a handkerchief, notebook and or a mobile telephone
- l. Spinal alignment: e.g. the spinal curve may be concave or convex for instance, or not balancing on the “sitting bones”, therefore causing either slouching or extra tension
- m. Costume: e.g. an individual may wear, for instance, an office-type suit or beachwear such as shorts and T-shirt
- n. Colour: as already explained
- o. Proxemics: this is the physical space between individuals, (and what this research is about.)

It is not assumed that the above overview is complete; for instance, positive inspiration has not been included but that does not mean it is non-existent (Lesham and Margenau, 1983). It is hoped that the list will be added to by other investigators. Further, it puts proxemics into perspective by placing it on the map of non-verbal territory which one communicates with. The above facets of NVC, have been taken from aspects which classically trained acting students are taught at an English drama school, from a London mime school which combines traditional training with a contemporary slant, and an international institute which provides continuing professional development for actors.

It has not been possible to glean such an overview of NVC from the literature pertaining to psychology, although much has been written about NVC.

However, the term is often used in such a way as to assume that the reader



knows what it means. Within such an assumption, dimensions are looked at, such as movement. E.g. how the way one relates to another person by moving in a corporeal way shows who is the most powerful member of an interacting dyad; and also how there is movement when interacting with a person where the balance of power is equal (Bateson, 1936). Bateson's (1936) was the only study found, an intriguing anthropological study, on the dimension of movement in NVC. It logically follows that moving is linked to proximity since movement can change the distance between one individual and another. Never the less, such a perspective was not found (at the time of writing) in an overt way within the field of psychological counselling literature; that is why perspectives were looked for which included other fields. One of the difficulties of offering a variety of perspectives on proxemics, is that very few perspectives have been discovered. This work aspires to bridge part of the gap between research and application.

It is argued that by studying the relevant literature such as that deliberated on above and below (e.g. Bateson, 1936 and Hall, 1966), even though Bateson's (1936) and Hall's (1966) are anthropological studies, counselling psychologists can glean certain information which may be relevant to their practice. For instance, if the practitioner's reality is that they are feeling empowered, then the practitioner may take the initiative in deciding who sits where, even if this is done not in awareness. Simultaneously, if the client's reality is that she or he is feeling disempowered, then the client may not have the courage to decide for her or himself where to sit in the consulting room,



but may let the practitioner make that decision for her or him, thus complimenting the perceived higher status of the practitioner.

If Bateson's (1936) theory were to be transposed to a practical situation (e.g. the relationship between a client and counselling psychologist) then it would seem that the client may act in a way which kept her or his status low while keeping the counselling psychologist's status high, and the counselling psychologist may behave in such a way as to keep her or his status high and the client's status low, as explained above. Such an unfortunate situation could be repeated many times, unwittingly, due to non-verbal communication within the counselling relationship. This scenario may be possible since Bateson (1936) concluded that interactions complimented the status of those involved. Putting such theoretical knowledge into application might behave a counselling practitioner. However, it seems that the shift from research to practice is a difficult one, since, for instance, Bateson's (1936) theory does not seem to have been taken on board. This awareness of the difficulty of bridging the gap between application and research, led me to also examine the possible application of Hall's (1966) theory (which is explained later in sub-section 1.2) within a counselling relationship.

## **1.2 Older literature on NVC**

Veritably, the idea of using space between individuals to illustrate what kind of relationship there is between them (see Bateson, 1936), has been known within the field of the performing arts for centuries, specifically: in European

theatre, going back to at least the tradition of the Commedia dell 'Arte (a group of travelling actors who produced improvised performances) from the 1550's (Wilms, 1987). Yet it was only during the twentieth century that one of the earliest theoretical formations concerning behavioural human interaction was undertaken. Bateson (1936/1958) performed this with his work on anthropological studies, as deliberated on earlier, referring to different cultures' ways of interacting. Bateson (1936) stated that there were symmetrical interactions when status was equal between people and complementary interactions when status was not equal. It is therefore argued that without training in the non-verbal dimension of proxemics, this situation, as Bateson (1936) has theorised, may be practised within a counselling relationship, as explained above (i.e. the initial perceived status or power of the professional by the client may stay as it is without the informed choice of change).

Like Bateson's (1936) investigations, the current project also works on a cross-cultural dimension (as detailed later), relating to human interactions. Unremarkably, the combination of the experimenter's/my personal and professional experience, is in line with Bateson's (1936) findings. What is remarkable is the meagre amount of research mainly focussing on proxemics within a counselling dyad. However, by performing this work, the balance has started to be re-dressed concerning the amount of literature whose main focus is proxemics within a counselling relationship.

Usefully, Bateson's (1936) work underpinned Sullivan (1953) and Leary's (1957) investigations, helping them to formulate communications models between people, which paved the way for Hall's (1966) major contribution regarding the topic of proxemics. However, Leary (1957) and Sullivan (1953) seem to re-iterate Bateson's (1936) findings, therefore Sullivan (1953) and Leary's (1957) works are not discussed further here. Importantly, it was Hall (1966) who proposed what is the most famous non-verbal interpersonal model. He stated the following characteristics of four distance zones (zones of proximity) between human beings:

- 1) 0 to 46 centimetres: the intimate zone of proximity (e.g. for telling secrets)
- 2) 46 centimetres to 122 centimetres: the personal zone of proximity (e.g. for talking about one's life)
- 3) 122 centimetres to 366 centimetres: the social zone of proximity (e.g. at a party)
- 4) over 366 centimetres: the public zone of proximity (e.g. at the theatre).

Indeed, it was Hall (1966) who first coined the term proxemics.

Bearing in mind Bateson's (1936) work, it brings into relief that one changes position depending on whether one perceives the status of the other person as being higher, lower or equal to one's own; although neither gender nor familiarity factors seem to have been taken into account by him. Further, Hall's (1966) work spotlighted how individuals tended to have closer proximity, depending on what they were deliberating on, although like Bateson (1936), he did not include gender as a factor. By examining Hall's (1966) work, it seems that the more intimate or familiar the focus is between



members of a dyad, the closer their proximity can become. This information, coupled with what has been gleaned from Bateson's (1936) study, is important.

Hence, taking Hall's (1966) theory into account with regard to a counselling relationship: if the counselling psychologist is familiar with the client's issues, while the client is not familiar with the counselling psychologist's issues, then the client may want to keep a certain physical distance away from the practitioner, while the counselling psychologist may feel inclined to move closer to the client. (Indeed, a few counselling psychologists have disclosed such a situation to me and I have experienced it in my own practice). This experience which stems from practice seems to mirror Hall's (1966) theory because Hall (1966) concluded that the more intimate (or familiar) one was with another person, the closer (physically) one tended to be with the other person. Therefore, it is important not to ignore older literature (e.g. Bateson, 1936 and Hall, 1966) on NVC from which some knowledge of proxemics may be understood. Hence, Hall's (1966) perspective also has been taken into account in this work, therefore the inclusion of a familiarity factor (between members who make up a purported counselling dyad) has been used in my research.

Bowlby (1969) offered a theory of meaning concerning proxemics which is different to Hall's (1966), yet not juxtaposed to it. Indeed, Bowlby's (1969) theory adds another perspective from which the issue of proxemics can be investigated in relief: He purported that there are automatic functions

activated in human beings, such as crying and smiling, for promoting proximity and interaction with caregivers who share the same functions, making up a behavioural system. Furthermore, Bowlby (1969) argued that seeking the proximity of others is advantageous to survival. His developmental theory postulated that NVC was central to how an individual attached her or himself to an important other person. Some of the dimensions which he spotlighted under the umbrella term of NVC were: the visual, corporeal, affect and auditory human systems. Bowlby (1969) stated that how the interactions between these systems (regarding the child-carer dyad) were initially assimilated by the child, related to the eventual quality of inter-personal relationships with others on an adult to adult basis (Brazelton and Cramer, 1989 and Holmes, 1993). Bowlby's (1969) theory seems to imply that humans have an innate need to seek proximity: For example, the large eyes of a baby look at the mother (or care giver/important other) so that the mother (or care giver/important other) will pick the baby up, thus the baby and mother (or care giver/important other) achieve closer proximity. This theory, if transposed into a counselling relationship, may explain what I have sometimes noticed within my practice: that some clients hardly make any eye contact and sit further away, where other clients make more eye contact and sit closer to me (the counselling psychologist).

Following the same view as Bowlby (1969), Ainsworth et al (1974) state that part of one's biological inheritance is to seek proximity with others. The argument that humans tend towards proximity which Bowlby (1969) and his followers (e.g. Ainsworth et al, 1974) offer, is a strongly rational one. These



developmental perspectives which incorporate proxemics, theorise that proxemics is linked with the survival of humankind, and have evolutionary implications. Bowlby (1969) declared that children who were separated from their parents (and therefore did not have close proximity with them) and were living in institutions (with consequent little close proximity from care givers) were more susceptible to being underweight, having a disease and not able to make a healthy relationship with another person. However, Bowlby's (1969) findings need to be considered in the light of who he focused on. It was the behaviour of infants that he referred to therefore it is difficult if not impossible to generalise from infants' attempts at seeking proximity and being curious during times away from their mothers, to adults in a counselling relationship.

Nevertheless, there is a belief that what happens to one as a child has repercussions for one as an adult. Bowlby's (1952) theory of attachment, which describes how the young who are appropriately connected to their mothers grow up to be well adjusted, adds fuel to this belief. The perspective which Bowlby (1952) expanded, that early human experience determines adult behaviour, stems from ethological studies. The idea is that there are developmental critical periods. Bowlby (1960, 1969 and 1988) was unsure of the exact nature of these periods, but he placed emphasis on the first three years of life when the baby and small infant are particularly sensitive to environmental influences and the early relationship. It is now known that the first year is crucial for the developing infant. He was influenced by early ethological studies that illustrated young poultry forming permanent



attachment to the first moving thing they saw. For example, a young animal may follow a ping pong ball if it is the first moving thing it sees, believing it to be its mother; thus becoming psychologically attached to it and seeking proximity with it. Since the publication of Bowlby's (1952) theory however, ethnologists have changed their minds. One of these ethnologists was Hinde (1963) who believed that during times of learning there were periods of maximum probability towards being susceptible, surrounded by periods of minimum probability; this influenced Bowlby's (1969 and 1988) view regarding developmental critical periods in very young humans. It is tempting to speculate on whether the idea of attachment is useful in a counselling relationship.

If it is useful, it is also tempting to speculate on whether one has to have a period of attachment to one's counsellor for therapy to take place. Such a concept is of interest here because Bowlby (1952) states that attachment is spatial, and this work focuses on proxemics. If, as Bowlby (1952) says, one's early experiences have an effect on one's adult relationships then there is a link between the relationships of the very young and relationships which are formed in adult life. It therefore seems to logically follow that the link is attachment, which is manifested spatially, as previously explained. Hence, it is argued that it is possible for this to be transposed onto the one to one counselling relationship.

There may be a need to recognise, however, that experiencing a psychological distance or closeness with another, may not correlate with the

physical space between the two people involved. Yet this thesis endeavours to spotlight any correlation between intimacy or familiarity, and physical space and vice versa. Hence, the factor of familiarity is used . More recently, Holmes (1992) wrote an overview of Bowlby's (1952) attachment theory; stating that Bowlby (1952) explains various types of attachments, resulting in different responses concerning intimacy. For instance, if a child can venture off from a secure base of mother and return, that child is appropriately attached to her so will end up a normal adult. It seems therefore, that Bowlby disagreed with the Freudian notion that a baby's anxiety is reduced by a love which satisfies a physiological need, arguing that attachment between mother and baby was psychological. He criticised the Freudian view of highlighting internal feelings, focussing on external danger, stating that: Attachment behaviour can be expressed in spatial ways, for example an anxiously attached insecure infant can be 'clingy' (Bowlby, 1952). Further, he explained that on the one hand, children feel smothered by mothers if their exploring behaviours are inhibited; and on the other hand, feel abandoned by a neglectful mother who does not provide a secure base. He states that a child can think of being at a relative distance because of not being able to see or hear mother, or of being at a relative closeness in case mother gets in the way. Thus, a relationship develops. Bowlby (1952) also explains the importance of reciprocity such as eye contact and mirroring. In these ways, the child builds an internal model of what the world is assumed to be like, based on the experience of interaction with others. For a securely attached child the world is positive and for an insecurely attached child the world is negative. Hence, a blueprint of the world can develop where a person has low

self esteem from avoidant or ambivalent behaviour. Indeed, Bowlby (1952) purported that there was a link between adult disorders and problems with childhood attachment. For healthy attachment, responsiveness and attunement are fundamental (Holmes, 1992).

Although this may be true of the carer-baby relationship, research has shown that also within a counselling relationship, responsiveness and attunement (which can be communicated non-verbally via, for instance, mirroring the client so that the client experiences the counsellor as empathic, genuine and accepting) are key within the adult client-counsellor face-to-face one-to-one relationship (Rudd, 1996). Similarly, if a spatial relationship between infant and carer is a psychological expression of those involved, then it may also be a psychological expression of those involved within the counselling relationship. Bowlby (1952) spotlighted the important role which proximity played in the psychological development of an individual. This concept is developed further, below.

It is argued that, if, for example, a baby is not given the physical closeness it needs, then as a child does not form a secure attachment and for fear of rejection does not seek close proximity with an important other such as the mother, then that child may grow up with the schema of feeling unlovable. This schema may be activated each time the person seeks close proximity with another and is rejected, thus making it stronger and keeping it in the foreground. Perhaps by the therapeutic use of proximity (for instance, if the client moves a little closer to the counsellor, then the counsellor may mirror



this) there may be a possible consequence of activating an “I am lovable” schema and bringing it to the foreground, during the counselling session. Hence, it is argued that spatial strategies are adaptive and can be used in a positive way.

Following this conceptual argument, leads to the assumption that the same schemas seem to be used all the time by certain clients, because the same strategy seems to be used all the time; therefore it may not always serve them well. However, to change this schema, one presumably needs a strategy which fits into the schema. Bearing this concept in mind, one may either add to the existing repertoire of schemas, as opposed to trying to eradicate an existing schema; or one may build onto an existing schema which has been too weak to come to the fore. So rather than the counsellor trying to eliminate a certain way of psychologically relating which is manifested by the client in a spatial way, the counsellor may add to the existing repertoire which the client has in order to facilitate a little more flexibility within the client. This is a compassionate conceptualisation, endeavouring to support the client to develop compassion for the self.

Although Bowlby (1952) initially focused on the mother and her child, the gender of those involved in a counselling relationship may be a confounding variable with regard to interpersonal proximity, hence in this research, sex of the assumed client was chosen as a factor. Bowlby’s paper on attachment was a radical change from the Freudian perspective. Importantly, during the second world war women were encouraged to work. Further, the state offered

supervision to their children. There is a viewpoint that certain feminists argued which is as follows. At a time when these women were experiencing support with parenting and being financially independent, the social implications of attachment were great: Bowlby's (1952) original theory implicitly blames mothers for their children's problems. As a result, mothers bringing up children may feel guilty when their children are not perceived as good, or if they experience their lives as unfulfilled. Yet it is neither unusual nor abnormal for others too, such as fathers, brothers, foster parents, sisters, grandparents and child-minders to bring up children. Similarly, it is argued that a counsellor may feel guilty when a client does not move in a desired direction. However, the gender of those involved may influence a counselling situation. Hence, bearing in mind that gender may be a confounding variable (as well as social class and age) sex of the assumed client was chosen as a factor.

These factors of sex, class and age have social implications. For example, an English male aristocrat may command more personal space than a female domestic cleaner and an older person may require more personal space (particularly if they are not used to being touched), than a young child who is, for instance, used to being cuddled). However, variables of class and age, which may be confounding, were not incorporated within this work because such inclusion would have made the list of variables and the thesis too long, bearing in mind that amount of time and word limit are two boundaries of the framework in this investigation.



Yet social implications are not ignored. Just as popular baby books might be based on the opinions of authors who have been moulded by the society they are embedded in, so too Bowlby's views were perhaps shaped by the society he was enmeshed in. At that time, there was high unemployment amongst the men returning home after the war. In contrast the percentage of women working had significantly increased throughout the war period. The World Health Organisation therefore stopped the child facilities which had enabled the women to be employed, published Bowlby's work, and widely spread propaganda that man must work while woman should be at home caring for the family. This view was apparently assimilated by the nation and consequently adhered to. Hence, social implications of the current research are taken into account.

Sermat (1967) took a slightly different perspective from Bowlby (1969). He attempted to show a relationship between interpersonal space and sex of person. Although this was unsuccessful, since he concluded that the space between people varies irrespective of gender, Sermat's (1967) work is not examined in-depth because he did not seem to take other factors into account, particularly familiarity and culture, and he did not seem to use participants other than university students. Kahn et al's (1971) research however, illustrated that interpersonal distance was influenced by the attractiveness of the other person, although they, too, seem to have used university students as their respondents. The present study, like Sermat's (1967), includes gender as one of its dimensions within the subject of proxemics, and is one of three factors (gender, culture and familiarity); but

unlike Sermat's (1967) investigation, university students are not used. Gender is included as a factor in this study, at least because Rubin and Brown's (1975) review on non-verbal communication, as explained below, show contradictory findings concerning gender. In this work, there is an attempt to commence reconciling such conflicting findings within the literature.

With such a growth in psychological literature within the last half century concerning non-verbal behaviour which interpersonal space is part of, Rubin and Brown (1975) attempted to review and integrate approximately 1,000 studies on the topic. About 200 of these were to some extent concerned with individual differences such as: race, age, religion, background, status and sex. Their review showed contradictory findings: e.g. 21 papers reported males being more co-operative than females, and 27 papers reported the opposite. A further 20 studies reported no difference between the sexes. Hence, the evidence gathered by Rubin and Brown (1975) seems inconclusive. The presenting project attempts to make some sense of such bewildering findings by focussing on perspectives concerning the area of proxemics within non-verbal behaviour related to counselling relationships.

Seven years after the publication of Rubin and Brown's (1975) work, Argyle (1982) spotlighted proxemics within the field of non-verbal communication, but did not incorporate gender as a factor. He did however, re-iterated Hall's (1966) and Kahn et al's (1971) positions, stating that interpersonal distance depended on physical surroundings, culture and how friendly one is with the other person (e.g. the closer the distance between individuals the more

intimate or familiar they are with each other). In addition, Argyle (1982) wrote that whilst Scots and Swedes are more distant, Arabs and Americans are used to being very close. This stance had also been taken by Lett et al (1969). Indeed, Argyle's (1982) conclusions mirror Lett et al's (1969). According to Argyle (1972 and 1982) and Lett et al (1969), humans choose to be physically close to those they like, yet humans also like to keep the space around their bodies free, displaying territorial behaviour. The present research project takes Hall's (1966) statement which relates proximity to how familiar one is with another person, Argyle's (1972 and 1982) and Kahn et al's (1971) findings that proxemics is related to culture and transposes the factors of not only culture, familiarity but also gender, to purported clients and counsellor and investigates whether this relates to proximity. E.g. the more familiarity between individuals, which implies less dislike between them, then the closer the distance may be between them compared to if they were not so familiar within a relationship (as in Argyle, 1982 and Lett et al 1969), irrespective of culture.

Argyle (1982) also posits that pairs and groups like to occupy space separate from others (unless in something like a lift or bus). Indeed, others will walk around such groups e.g. on the pavement, if there is a group, a passer-by will not generally break up the group but pass by the side of it. This view is backed up by social psychologists Bourne et al (1985) who spotlight that humans have personal space. They also highlighted that a study (which used the basic technique of having a person in a relatively empty space and another individual approach them, the target human being having been



instructed to say "Stop" when the approaching human got too close for comfort) with individuals who had a history of violent behaviour, showed that they had significantly larger personal space than those with non-violent behaviour. The implication here being that those who seemed to be uncaring about others had a longer interpersonal distance than those who did seem to care about others.

Swap et al's (1983) work backed up this implication. Further, Swap et al (1983) declared that individuals interested in interacting with others, regardless of gender, were interested in those around them; stating that those who were very keen on interacting with others had closer proximity compared to those who were not keen on interacting with others. It seems that these studies which were executed in the 1980's (e.g. Swap et al, 1983 and Bourne et al, 1985), started an attempt to make sense of the conflicting earlier findings (e.g. Rubin and Brown, 1975). However, although I have used a method in my research which was inspired by the method which Bourne et al (1985) and Swap et al (1983) used, i.e. a tape measure to measure the distance between individuals, unlike Swap et al (1983), I did not use university students (the participants for my research were strangers to me, taken "from the pavement" of each country or culture which I was collecting data from).

Veritably, an individual is partly the product of her or his culture from which the socialisation and role training of that individual may stem. Ruddock (1972) stated that there are various role-relations ranging from identity being very

important, to being of minimal importance. The type of analysis Ruddock (1972) adhered to, was underpinned by Bales' (1958) analysis of different types of communication, who suggested twelve main communication categories, ranging from social responses to negative aggressive behaviour. These classes of responses are shown below:

## 12 COMMUNICATION CATEGORIES

### A

*socio-emotional area: positive*

- 1 Shows solidarity, raises other's status, gives help, reward
- 2 Shows tension release, jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction
- 3 Agrees, shows passive acceptance, understands, concurs, complies

### B

*attempt: positive*

- 4 Gives suggestion, direction, implying autonomy for others
- 5 Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling, wish
- 6 Gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms

### C

*Task area: neutral*

- 7 Asks for orientation, information, repetition, confirmation
- 8 Asks for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling
- 9 Asks for suggestion, direction, possible ways of action

### D

*socio-emotional area: negative*



10 Disagrees, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help

11 Shows tension, asks for help, withdraws out of field

12 Shows antagonism, deflates other's status, defends or asserts self

**Key: A Positive reactions B Attempted answers C Questions D**

**Negative reactions (Bales, 1958)**

Clearly, Bales (1958) incorporated NVC (and implicitly, proxemics) into his twelve categories of human communication e.g. see category 11 “withdraws from field”. However, Bales (1958) does not explicitly specify proxemics so his theory is not discussed further. In a similar vein to Bales’ (1958) theory however, two decades later, Harper et al (1978) stressed the dynamics of interpersonal moment-to-moment interaction, organising five topic areas, the last, but not least with regard to how important it is, being proxemics. See below for these five classes of response:

#### FIVE CLASSES OF RESPONSE

1) Paralinguistic phenomena which include non language sounds (Moans, yells, etc.) and non words such as “uh-huh” and such variables as pitch, tempo, intensity and range;

2) facial expression;

3) kinesics...all discriminable bodily movements, excluding facial expression and eye movements;

4) visual behaviour and

5) proxemics or how we structure, use, and are affected by space in our interactions with others.

(Harper et al., 1978.)

Hence, unlike Bales (1953), Harper et al (1978) viewed proxemics as a central tenet of human response. Although Harper et al's (1978) theory regarding human response may appear simplistic, it does not mean that it is invalid. Indeed, Harper et al's (1978) statement that proxemics is a major part of human response cannot be dismissed due to not only the investigations performed previously to 1978 but also due to what has emerged since 1978: What has emerged from past investigations is that the balance of power between individuals in a relationship may influence the amount of space there is between them (Bateson, 1936); the context in which communication takes place, is important (Egan, 1977 and 1994); the amount which people (who are inter-acting) like each other may have an effect on the physical distance between them (Lett et al 1969); we can affect others without saying a word (Burley-Allen, 1983 and Birdwhistle, 1971)); there is greater proximity or closeness between individuals who like each other (Argyle, 1982); and a need for human proximity may be innate (Bowlby, 1969 and Ainsworth et al, 1974). The aspects which the literature cited above bring into relief in relation to proxemics, is an indication of how it is very difficult if not impossible to examine proxemics in isolation, since other factors influence the proximity between one person and another. It therefore logically follows that certain

factors (e.g. context and familiarity) within a counselling relationship may influence how physically close or distant a client and a counsellor are.

Hence, it is argued that there are factors such as gender (Rubin and Brown, 1975), familiarity (Lett et al, 1969) and culture (Argyle, 1982) which could influence proxemics within a counselling relationship, therefore this research includes the factors of gender, familiarity and culture. Proxemics therefore is not viewed in isolation. According to Honey (1990), if one thing is done in isolation it would not be as effective as communicating a combination of the following: expression, gesture and body (which includes proxemics).

However, Honey (1990) does not explain how he arrives at his conclusions, and although he speculates on NVC he does not define NVC; and with regard to proxemics, it is difficult if not impossible to think of a situation when it is done in isolation, since within a counselling relationship other factors are involved (e.g. context and gender) so Honey's (1990) work is not deliberated on further. Veritably, all this is a tremendous wealth of literature on the human facet of non-verbals (e.g. Wilms, 1987; Bateson, 1936; Honey, 1990; Bowlby, 1969 and Hall, 1969). Over the past quarter century, the most extensive projects on movement behaviour seem to have been in the field of non-verbal communication, of which proxemics is a part.

### **1.3 Newer literature on NVC**

The more recent proliferation of literature concerning the non-verbal aspects between people (Deaux and Lafrance, 1998; Lukes, 1986; Clegg, 1993;



Zake, 1993; Hughes, 1990; Taskar, 1995 and Cowie, 1997) is rooted in the older studies, as cited above (e.g. Bateson, 1936; Hall, 1966 and Kahn et al, 1971). Deaux and Lafrance (1998) performed a multi level investigation of gender. The gender aspect of the present research stems partly from this. They regarded gender dynamically: In theoretical terms, they viewed the individual as an interactional being surrounded by culture. Hence, Deaux and Lafrance (1998) considered gender within a specific situation (culture), and this research follows that theoretical line as drawn by Deaux and Lafrance (1998) with regard to gender; i.e. that an individual is interactional and surrounded by culture. A systemic counselling orientation seems to be sympathetic with their work (as in Bor et al, 1993). The framework which Deaux and Lafrance (1998) worked in, was context dependent and the phenomenon being highlighted was dyadic interaction, just as this research highlights interaction between two people and is context dependent. For instance, two people in this research are a purported counsellor and client, and the context is an assumed counselling relationship. Deaux and Lafrance (1998) brought issues of not only gender, but also culture, social roles, and status or power into the limelight, and this project also brings these issues into the foreground. They theorise that a relationship between members of a dyad is influenced by these issues while simultaneously being dynamic.

Indeed, this project partly stems from Deaux and Lafrance's (1998) work in that it too, considers gender; hence gender belief may be encompassed by the factor of gender which could incorporate stereotypes and attitudes to gender role and gender identity. For instance, if there is a belief that one is to



relate differently to a woman than to a man, then within the same situation, there may be a difference in proxemics depending on the gender of the individuals involved. The belief may be apparently fixed in a stereotypical attitude regarding gender and if there is a stereotypical attitude then this may influence gender identify with possible effects on proximity between individuals who are members of a counselling dyad. The social roles within the counselling dyad are client and counsellor, the context being the counselling relationship.

Deaux and Lafrance's (1998) work and this investigation, offer a consideration of the role of gender in social interaction. The differences are that Deaux and Lafrance (1998) not only deliberate on the non-verbal, but also on the verbal and on group processes; whereas this work focuses specifically on the counselling relationship on a one to one basis with reference to proxemics. Their essay also differs from this work in that it offers a general theory based on convincing argument, whereas this research considers the role of gender, cultural influence, and social interaction within individuals who are members of assumed counselling dyads regarding proxemics, not only based on an argument, but also based on qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The interplay between the language (whether in the verbal or non-verbal domain) of individuals and structural factors such as the context of person to person interactions necessitates this form of multi-level analysis. Also, this work does not look at social interaction in general, but looks specifically at an aspect of body language, i.e. proxemics, within the counselling relationship; and investigates awareness of

proxemics within individuals who practise counselling. Apparently, when the term “language” is used it is not understood by some people to mean that non-verbal aspects are embraced with the verbal, therefore the sub-section that follows deliberates on this.

#### **1.4 Trends in the growth of the field of language**

It seems logical to assume that if there is no physical body there is no human being. Yet within counselling psychology, viewing a person on terms of: cognition, affect, behaviour and or meaning, while focussing mainly on spoken language, may be favoured; even though without the living body, it is impossible for counselling psychology to take place. Hence, although the main focus of counselling psychology is in the mind, to ignore the body would be to ignore the matter which constitutes a human being. Bearing this in mind, it is not unreasonable that some counselling models consider the body, and attempt to identify what it communicates .

For instance, NVC incorporating proxemics has been focussed on for many years within family therapy (Kavanagh, 1998) and drama therapy (Holmes, 1993). Veritably, without the living human body, it is impossible for counselling psychology to take place; in this respect one may logically assume that there is a language of the body which is non-verbal and perhaps universal. Nevertheless, scholarly works for psychological counsellors tend to



ignore non-verbal aspects of communication (e.g. Dryden, 1990 and Palmer, 2000). Although there are exceptions (e.g. Smith, 1998 and Clarkson, 1989).

There is however, a movement within counselling, which may be considered as, “fringe” counselling, where what the body communicates, as well as the verbals, is focused on e.g. Focusing (see Gendling, 1996). However, this movement, which seems to be thriving in the USA is not flourishing in England. Within my own practice, I have noticed an integration of body and mind as opposed to a separation between the two.

The following is a case example: A client came for counselling, smiling and smartly dressed, holding herself by having her arms and legs crossed. This outer image was then discarded as she told me of the suffering and traumas she had endured. Meanwhile, her muscles had tensed and convulsed in anger followed by deep sobbing. Then there were times of stillness and silence as she inwardly processed, eventually arriving at a state of calmness where her voice had dropped several notes, her face had relaxed and her posture had become more open. Hence, not only spoken words but also non-verbal understandings are communicated.

Traditionally however, the area of language deals with humans verbalising, as opposed to the corporeal aspect of humankind. It is also associated with child development, as opposed to merely looking at grammar within either spoken or written words (Lock, 1982). Historically, interest in language seems to have

started with concern about its origin within our species (Stam,1976). Concern with the species rather than the child, stems from Darwin (1872). Hence, humankind was viewed in a general sense, as opposed to looking at individuals in a specific situation, as this research does.

It appears that in those older studies, assumptions were made about the nature of the human condition, such as a person being born with a mind like a blank slate, and rules were made which the person was moulded against. Apparently, opportunities to gather data relevant to the field from which questions might emerge, had been overlooked, and much of the area of psychology seems to have been fitted with a theory-driven mould. It was assumed that the mould could be universally applied. This was exemplified by rewarding animals after obeying a rule; or by reinforcement, as explained by Skinner (1957). With hindsight, Skinner's (1957) important work may be built upon, because an aspect of his theory highlights the importance of behaviour, as opposed to verbalisation, therefore his ideas are not dismissed. However, language was viewed through the narrow lens of verbalisation, as opposed to a wider lens which incorporates the non-verbal communication wherein proxemics has a role.

Chomsky (1959), however, dismissed Skinner's (1957) behaviourism, theorising that language is a knowledge of a linguistic system; but Chomsky (1959) seemed to have been more interested in language from a linguistic perspective than in human individuals communicating in a corporeal way, which includes proxemics. Chomsky (1959) and Skinner (1957) claimed their



theories as valid with regard to having a universal application. A benefit from these theories is that they provided fundamental stepping stones for more investigations into the field of language. Further, as explained below, post 1950's stepping stones were provided leading eventually to the view that language can be non-verbal as well as verbal, and this research positions proxemics within non-verbals.

It seems that the history of the investigations undertaken by both Chomsky (1959) and his opponents, is one where the individual may have been overlooked in favour of universal theories. Possibly this apparent favour towards primarily working within a universal theoretical model is still popular today. This research therefore offers important work within the field because I hope to contribute towards re-dressing the balance a little by primarily scrutinising data from both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (in an attempt to not favour one over the other), before eventually discerning what theoretical model seems to emerge.

Excitingly, a different perspective to that of the Chomskian school emerged in the 1970's. Greenfield and Smith (1976) challenged the argument for the innateness of verbal language and purported that the fundamental base structure for language was perceptual and cognitive, as opposed to being innately linguistic. This, as far as the present work is concerned (in the light of literature cited so far), is posited as a step away from language only being concerned with verbalising in order to communicate. Indeed, Lock (1976) argued that one must look at pre-linguistic ways of communicating, such as

vocalising (making sounds without words), and gesturing within a social system as a way of communicating. It therefore logically follows that the idea of the physical body being a vehicle for communicating a type of language which is different from the verbal type, is a legitimate one. It has been difficult to find literature which puts forward an argument that non-verbal behaviour in humans can be called a language. It seems that the terms body language and NVC have tended to be used in previous literature, without adequate definition (e.g. Egan, 1977 and 1994). It also seems that some previous research concerning NVC, with regard to proxemics, is flawed because many researchers have only used university students as participants, then generalised their findings to a universal level (e.g. Long 1984; Cochran et al, 1984 and Swap and Rubin, 1983). Due to this, the current research project does not use university students as participants; (strangers "from the street" were the participants).

However, the previous investigations that spotlight NVC are the boards that the present study treads on. Two main studies which form the backdrop to the present work are that of Cochran et al (1984) and Long (1984). Long's (1984) argument was that those with more tension than others prefer greater personal space. His result supported the argument that those with more tension chose greater inter-personal space, and interestingly, showed that women chose greater interpersonal space than men. It is partly due to this finding, that the present study incorporated gender as one of its factors.



Intriguingly, Cochran et al's (1984) research did not reveal a relationship between gender and personal space, although results showed that the outdoor interpersonal space was less than the indoor one. Whilst Rothschild's (1997) work is waiting in the wings for its possible professional impact, with reference to inter-personal proxemics being intrinsically linked with shock and trauma (which she focuses on under the umbrella term of STRESS); the current paper focuses on the interpersonal level and attempts to detail a record depicting whether members who made up same sex or opposite sex purported counselling pairs in three different countries with a selection of three different groups of people per country, preferred more or less interpersonal space in an assumed counselling relationship, from the assumed clients' points of view.

Further, in-depth interviews were conducted with male and female professional psychological therapists (describing themselves either as "a counsellor", a psycho-therapist", "a chartered counselling psychologist", "a counselling psychologist" or "a psychological counsellor") and counselling students, in order to discern how they deal with the practicalities of proxemics within a counselling encounter and to discover their views and awareness on this topic of proxemics. The transcriptions of these interviews are in the floppy disc attached to the inside back cover of this whole work (see volume 2). My thinking behind using the two methodologies for this research, is offered in the philosophy section (1.5) immediately below.

## **1.5 Philosophy of using two methodologies**

There are ranges of ways to glean knowledge from within a field (see Dove, 1986 and Peters, 1996), such as a strict method of enquiry in order to gain empirical knowledge, which may have generic use within the field of psychological counselling. Bearing this in mind, one of the two methodologies used, was a quantitative one. However, this research not only looks at the physical distances between a purported counsellor and assumed individual clients, as chosen by each volunteer client, within various contexts; it also investigates the perspectives of counselling practitioners. A thread which has been steadily emerging within the field of psychology since at least the 1970's is to look into the world of the experiencer by describing a subjective experience (Greenberg, 1986, Sanders, 1982 and Stevens, 1996). This thread relates to humanistic psychology, and specifically to the Rogerian school which was founded by Rogers (1942) who is considered to be the father of counselling. Phenomenological elements were therefore also used in this research, to remain faithful to the father of counselling and consequently, to the humanistic approach (Seeman, 1949 and 1954).

Various scholars confirm the phenomenological or qualitative research methodology (e.g. Keen, 1975; Kuiken et al, 1989; Sanders, 1982).

Furthermore, since an important issue is: which methodology to use for conducting research, it is important to marry research methodology with counselling orientation (Clarkson, 1998). Indeed, Bor and Watts (1993)



declare that researchers must use a methodology which is congruent to their counselling approach.

Following on from this argument, it logically emerged that a relevant methodology to use for the current work was not only phenomenological, but also quantitative, since no particular psychotherapeutic model is intended to upstage any other. In this research therefore, those participants who were involved with practising psychological counselling explored their own subjective views concerning their perspectives on proxemics and related issues, facilitated by one-to-one in-depth interviews. In this way, these participants and I, the interviewer, were co-researchers (Keen, 1975). In addition, with regard to the quantitative method used, the space between individuals who made up purported counselling dyads, was measured in inches.

The way I think of the issues, methodologically, is as follows: In this work, I challenged myself to integrate truth with meaning. That is, as noted above, I used a traditional science methodology to measure in inches, the distance between individuals making up apparent counselling dyads, to find the true distance between them. By this I mean an objective truth, for instance, there was an external yardstick of a tape measure to inform me of the physical distance, which would have measured the same, almost irrespective of whom did the measuring. Yet distance alone is meaningless, it needs interpretation. Also, distance in inches in isolation is valueless, neither good nor bad,

humans give value to distance through the meaning they colour the interpretation of distance with.

Hence, I needed to find meaning behind various distances used by interacting individuals. An acceptable way to discover meaning was to conduct (in-depth) interviews (see Bradburn and Seymour, 1979), which funnelled down to deliberating on the distance between individuals within a counselling dyad. In this way, subjective meanings were found, because each participant concerned reflected upon her or his own meaning which related to the distance between individuals making up a psychological counselling dyad. In the same vein, I kept a diary of my thoughts and feelings after performing each interview, in order to keep a record of my own inner process and perception, as suggested by Smith (1995) and Rawson (1998). This diary can be found in appendix 1.

Perception is experienced "through the prism of one's theoretical framework, beliefs and attitudes ... it is important to enable a wide range of meaning and dimensions of the perceptions" (Clarkson, 1995, p.65) of proxemics. This meaning was obtained not only by empirical means, but also by in-depth interviews. The empirical evidence showing the physical distances, measured in inches, forms the skeleton of this research project, and the interviews which provide meaning with regard to at least proxemics, provide that skeleton with flesh.

By combining the two methodologies, it is possible to contribute texture and depth to the presenting study. In this way, I have endeavoured to bring the apparent schism between the two methodologies, closer. There is a reminder of these methodological issues in the Method section. I chose to work in this way: First gathering data, then putting a theory to that data after analysing it, as Babette Rothschild (1997) did with her work on stress.

## **1.6 Chapter 1 discussion**

Within the practice of counselling psychology, as in daily living, one sends non-verbal messages, whether wittingly or unwittingly, and these non-verbal communications may be either understood or misunderstood by the receiver (the receiver may be either a counselling practitioner or a client). It is therefore important for a work, such as this, to look at an aspect of NVC and this work focuses on proximity. It is important to note that the space between people is a small part of the overall picture of NVC. NVC has been called body language, even though non-verbals are greater than the domain of the physical body. The term “language” is often associated with speech, and communicating via speech.

It is assumed, as Campbell (1997) declares, that most people are generally experienced at communicating through speech. Indeed, speech is used within a counselling relationship. This is not to be forgotten while focussing on this research which brings the non-verbal aspect of proxemics into relief within the counselling relationship. Within my own counselling practice I have noticed



that clients do not always sit at the same distance from me. Which led me to look at the literature on the subject of proxemics and to undertake this research, as explained earlier.

Proxemics has been mentioned when discussing body language (Fast, 1971). However, there is a need to discuss the term “body language”, as opposed to the use of the term “non-verbal(s)”. Non-verbals includes facets such as scent, properties, colour and other aspects which also include the physical body but the term “non-verbals” does not exclude the stage, as previously explained. Body language implies a form of non-verbal communication that relates to the body only, such as posture, movement, gesture and expression. It has been difficult to find arguments within the relevant literature which propose that the body has a language of its own with which it can communicate to another person, although this seems to have been assumed when it has been mentioned in some literature (e.g. Schefflen, 1964; Melucci, 1996 and Beasley, 1999).

There seems to be a gap in the literature regarding investigations into the notion that the body can communicate via a body language, to a receiver who will understand that communication. Perhaps it is controversial to assume that humans communicate a type of symbolic language, which can be universally understood. Indeed, this does not seem to be the case, since British Sign Language is a symbolic way of communicating via the body, using hands and expression, yet it is not universally understood. Indeed, it



has to be studied in order to be understood. Perhaps one way into understanding human so-called body language, is to look at animals.

When I bought a puppy I trained him in approximately one week. Within that week he understood certain verbal commands which I simultaneously linked with a vocal quality (such as a firm tone of voice) and physical movement from my body (such as my arm). In this way, the puppy learned to obey my commands even at a distance, just by looking at my body language.

However, this type of body language is still symbolic. He needed to go to puppy classes to learn the body language of other dogs, so he could socialise with them. Tinbergen (1958) states that older dogs teach young pups.

Perhaps, there is a universal dog-body-language. Similarly, in humans, perhaps there is a universal body language which is totally different from symbolic body language (e.g. a policeman standing in the middle of the road directing the traffic with his arms, is considered to be symbolic). This may mean that a smile in one culture communicates the same thing as a smile in another culture (a smile is not considered to be symbolic). If this were so, then there may be a way of communicating on a non-verbal level between human beings, irrespective of culture.

Some movements, such as a smile, are in response to an emotion, such as pleasure (although this is not always the case). Other movements, such as holding an aching back, are in response to one's current state of health (although this is not always the case). Hence, the chapter immediately after this one focuses on proxemics while linking it to affect and health.

Bowlby (1969) has theorised that certain non-verbal aspects of our communication repertoire, such as proxemics, are inherited. If this is so, then certain aspects of our NVC repertoire are not learnt. Darwin (1872), too, believed that certain aspects of non-verbals were inherited, such as expressing emotion. Further, certain researchers (Ekman et al, 1969) argue against a theory that was proposed by Bruner and Taguiri (1954), that the expression of emotion is socially learned. The literature is therefore inconclusive regarding whether NVC is socially learned or biologically inherited.

An important finding within the literature however, which did not examine the nature/nurture argument, was the aspect of intimacy or familiarity relating to the physical distance between individuals (Hall, 1966). Hall (1966) proposed that we operate using four zones of proximity: the intimate zone (up to eighteen inches) for close friendships, the personal zone (from eighteen inches to two and a half feet) for talking about yourself, the social zone (from two and a half feet to twelve feet) for impersonal business transactions, and the public zone (over twelve feet) for gatherings such as a tutor lecturing university students in a lecture theatre.

Bearing Hall's (1966) research in mind, if we move closer to a person as we become more familiar with that person then it seems logical to assume that a client would move closer to her or his counsellor as the relationship between the two becomes less psychologically distant and therefore more familiar.



Following on from this line of argument, it also seems rational to assume that when a client decides to not have any more counselling sessions, then the client might move physically further away from her or his counsellor in the session, as the relationship is about to end. Indeed, I have experienced such a phenomenon within my own counselling practice. For instance, a case example is when a woman initially sat as far away from me as possible. At another session, as she disclosed more intimately, she moved relatively much closer. At the final session she sat at a relatively middling distance. Another case example, this time of a male, follows: When he had the first session he sat twelve feet away from me. At a later session he sat about one foot away from me and at the last session he sat at approximately three feet away from me. Further, the distance away from a counsellor that is chosen by a client may be affected by the culture of the client and the gender of the counsellor; Deaux and Lafrance's (1998) work is relevant here, as explained earlier.

Previously to this research, as explained earlier, familiarity, culture and gender have been investigated in relation to proxemics, but not within a counselling relationship enveloped by one study, which is what makes this research unique. In addition, the understanding from previous investigations, as cited above, regarding these factors, have been gleaned and brought together within this research, to see if any one factor (i.e. gender, familiarity and culture) influences another, regarding proximity, within purported counselling relationships.



Certain research shows a perspective that individuals interact in such a way as to maintain the status quo with each other, irrespective of culture, and this incorporates communicating non-verbally, wherein proxemics plays a part (Bateson, 1936 and Wilms, 1987). Hall (1966), concluded from his research that individuals had certain zones of proximity which they interacted within, depending on whether the interaction was intimate, personal, social or public. A further perspective was forwarded by Bowlby (1969) regarding proxemics, stating that seeking proximity was part of human nature. However, bearing in mind the literature cited thus far, there are certain gaps within that literature.

The gaps are that there does not seem to be any published research that focuses on one particular aspect of non-verbals in depth within a counselling relationship. Hence, proxemics within a counselling relationship does not appear to have been researched. Due to this lack of work on proximity in the counselling psychology literature, work outside the academic literature is drawn on, which may contain speculative and anecdotal information, rather than research based data (e.g. Baker, 1974; Sharon, 1998; Steiner, 1980; Rothschild, 1997; and DuBrin, 1997). Hence, there is much speculation with reference to body language or non-verbal communication (of which proxemics is one of its facets), which is not apparently based on research findings (e.g. Pease, 1988 and Fast, 1971).

Hence, this study is apt, which looks at one particular aspect of non-verbals in depth with regard to a counselling relationship. That aspect is proxemics and certain research questions emerged from my clinical practice which the

literature has not answered. The questions are: Do clients have preferences regarding where they sit? If so, do these preferences depend on gender, familiarity and cultural factors? And how aware of proxemics are individuals who practise counselling? By working on these questions, it is hoped that some of the deficit within the literature that has been identified, may be decreased. Chapter one has offered a thumbnail sketch of NVC while deliberating on both old and newer literature regarding proxemics. Chapter two links proxemics to health and affect before chapter three that focuses on proxemics in relation to power.

### **1.7 Chapter 1 summary**

- While NVC which incorporates proxemics has been utilised by actors at least since the Commedia Dell 'Arte commencing in the 1550's (see Wilms, 1987), only a small amount of literature spotlights proxemics within counselling.
- Some investigators have theorised on a universal level, concerning human proxemics, e.g: Bowlby (1969) offered a theory that proxemics was linked with human survival; i.e: a young child smiles so that an adult can come physically close to the child and then take care of that child.

- Older literature tended to view the concept of language through the narrow lens of verbalisation (e.g. Chomsky, 1959), excluding the notion of body language where proxemics has a role.
- The narrow, verbalisation only, view of language was challenged by Lock (1976) who argued that there were non-verbal ways of communicating, thus including the idea of body language, which encompasses proxemics.
- This research honours Lock's (1976) argument, regarding the perspective that there are non-verbal ways of communicating, however, this work focuses on proxemics in the arena of psychological counselling (while incorporating gender, familiarity, cross-cultural factors; and counsellors' awareness of proxemics), as opposed to focussing on proxemics within a universal arena; which is what makes this work unique.
- In this investigation, one type of psychotherapeutic model is not upstaged by another, hence, more than one research methodology is used to investigate proxemics.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

- 2     Affect and health**
- 2.1   Stress**
- 2.2   Affect**
- 2.3   Emotional attitude**
- 2.4   Health**
- 2.5   Improving health**
- 2.6   School-aged individuals**
- 2.7   Teachers**
- 2.8   Psychological therapists**
- 2.9   Facilitating emotional literacy**
- 2.10   Chapter 2 discussion**
- 2.11   Chapter 2 summary**

## Chapter 2.

### 2. AFFECT AND HEALTH

*"Imagine if you could talk to a baby in the womb and explain its unity with its mother. How this cord of belonging gives it life"*

O'Donohue, 1998, 269.

The prose quoted above exemplifies a connection between an unborn baby and its mother, implying that without that encompassing closeness between the two, the baby would die. Rothschild's (1997) work illustrates how infants' emotions activate their behaviour in order to elicit close proximity from caregivers, which she states is conducive to healthy development. Indeed, Rothschild (1997) uses proximity within her psychotherapeutic work.

Rothschild (1997), is publishing in Dutch, a theory concerning emotion and proxemics which is worth adding here at least because she states that her work stems from clinical experience: Rothschild's (1997) theory offers the perspective that if an infant is consistently ignored, so that there is no reaction from another person concerning the infant's non-verbal cues for physical proximity (such as arm raising or crying), then that infant will, as she or he develops into an older human being, eventually give up sending cues for

physical proximity while also becoming emotionally distant (i.e. stop the arm raising and stop crying). Rothschild (1997) contends that an individual who feels more comfortable with a large inter-personal distance, will have an experience of being abused if that large distance were to be diminished by the other person. Hence, if her theory were to be transposed onto a counselling situation, a client might feel abused by the inter-personal distance a counsellor chooses, perhaps even before a word has been spoken. Consequently, this research on proxemics within a counselling relationship, is important.

This argument seems rational and indeed, possible. Having trained with Rothschild, I have had the privilege to witness the way she links stress and emotion with proxemics. From clinical practice, she theorises that people with the most unresolved negative stress prefer to have the most inter-personal space. In one of the workshops which I attended, she asked the participants to find a partner, so that all were in pairs. Then one person from each of the pairs was told to find and stand at the distance from their partners that they felt slightly uncomfortable at, then take a small step back to where they felt comfortable. Most, if not all, of the participants expressed astonishment at seeing the individual inter-personal variances in space between the members which made up the pairs. The variances were from under half a foot distance (between members of dyads) to over twelve feet distance. Rothschild (1997) related the variances in proxemics, to stress factors that impact on affect and health. Further, she explained that as one becomes psychologically healthier, the very large inter-personal distance starts to shrink so that the individuals



involved experience comfort at a closer inter-personal distance. She then theorised that these findings could be transposed onto a universal level. Although Rothchild skilfully integrates theory with practice as she works with the mind and the body, her work may be criticized for not having a research based foundation, being based mainly on experience, anecdotal information, and the research of others such as Seyle (1984). This research differs from Rothschild's work in that I do not intend to theorise on a universal level, since I focus through a narrower lens of psychological counselling. However, Rothschild's (1997) investigations (which show that individuals feel comfortable at different distance zones) point to the relevance of the questions this research investigates regarding whether counselling clients have different individual preferences about where they sit, and regarding awareness of proxemics within those who practise counselling. Bearing in mind Rothschild's (1997) findings, it seems that a client may be stressed due to the inter-personal distance with the client's psychotherapist, without the psychotherapist being aware of it. Hence, this research not only looks at inter-personal distance within a counselling relationship, but also investigates awareness of proxemics within individuals who practise counselling.

## **2.1 Stress**

More recent work on stress (Simon and Claridge, 1998 [1]) links with Rothschild's (1997) work on the same topic, concerning how this can manifest physically and emotionally, thus perhaps affecting inter-personal proxemics. Within a therapeutic relationship, certain cues (many of which are

non-verbal) can be spotted by a professional therapist, which may indicate signs of stress; according to Simon and Claridge, 1998 [2]), these are:

- a client becoming reclusive (hence creating an extremely large space between that person and another)
- performing physical actions quicker than under more normal circumstances
- interrupting when someone else is speaking
- not doing what needs to be done, (this might lead to depression and isolation therefore causing less proximity with another person)
- eating more or less, (which could affect health)
- taking more drugs which are socially acceptable, (maybe often becoming drunk therefore individuals stop inviting that person to their gatherings, hence, there is an effect on inter-personal proximity)
- not being rational (feeling over-sensitive)
- becoming fixated (in an unhealthy way)
- being restless (emotionally not feeling at ease)
- having a short temper (others might keep their distance because of this)
- bearing grudges
- uncharacteristically taking time off work (so proximity with others may be reduced)
- being unco-operative
- eliciting disapproval (hence others may stay away from that person)
- having a certain degree of dyspraxia
- being accident prone

- manifesting nervous habits (which could cause others to keep their distance)

(Simon and Claridge, 1998 [2]).

Indeed, Simon and Claridge (1998 [2]) declare that all these above points (which they said they gleaned by looking at various literature regarding stress) work towards keeping others at a distance. Simon and Claridge (1998 [2]) describe the above bulleted points as stressful behaviours which not only lead to unhealthy mental and physical states, but also elicit a distancing from other people in relation to the person displaying such behaviours. Further, Ridley (1998) states that the value of non-verbal cues is that affect is not shown with words, but with the body. Ridley's (1998) argument is similar to Simon and Claridge's (1998[2]) and Rothschild's (1997), i.e. that affect has an effect on behaviour, thus involving proxemics.

It therefore follows logically that affect is also under the umbrella term of non-verbals, within which proxemics plays a role. What is rapidly emerging, is that non-verbals are central to human communication (Simon and Claridge, 1998 [1]; Rothschild, 1997 and Ridley, 1998). For example, an infant lifts her or his arms up to her or his care-giver, to communicate that she or he wants to be picked up (to have very close physical proximity with the other person); simultaneously, crying may be the emotional expression of distress due to the infant not having the physical proximity yearned for. Simon and Claridge (1998 [1]) and Rothschild (1997) argue that practitioners need to be able to spot non-verbal cues so that they can become better equipped to support



their clients. It is argued that one step towards spotting non-verbal cues, is to understand proxemics; hence, this research is apt.

## **2.2 Affect**

As explained above under the sub-title *stress*, affect falls under the umbrella term of NVC and is connected to proxemics (see section 2.1). Further, the body and mind aspects of individuals have been linked by others such as Baker (1998) and Jenkins, Oatley and Stein (1998). Although Baker's (1998) work seem to be speculative as opposed to Jenkins et al's (1998) which is research based. For instance: some have argued that crying for a reason and laughing appropriately are healthy (e.g. Baker, 1998; Apter, 1997; Chopra, 1993 and Goleman, 1996), although Apter's work too, unlike Chopra (1993) and Goleman's (1996), seems to be speculative. Nevertheless, it seems that emotionally literate individuals have reduced susceptibility to ill health and are quicker to recover than those who are not so emotionally literate (e.g. Baker, 1998 and Chopra, 1993). Bearing this in mind, if affect is inter-linked with proxemics (see Rothschild, 1997 and Holmes, 1992), then it is important for those who practice counselling to know about proxemics, since some clients seek help for emotional disturbances. Veritably, it appears that a child who is able to acknowledge and label her or his emotions tends to be a confident child (e.g. Apter, 1997). Consequently, there appears to be an intra-personal communication between the physical and mental facets of a person. Following on from this, if a client is not inwardly suffering unduly due to a counselling practitioner behaving insensitively regarding

client/practitioner proximity, then as Rothschild (1997) describes, affect may become more appropriately enabled as the counselling dyad work towards a desired goal. If criticism were in order, it would be that Rothschild (1997) does not mention gender, culture or inter-personal familiarity factors, but extrapolates from her experience onto a universal level.

This information (including the gaps as pinpointed above) is relevant regarding the questions that the main body of this research focuses on: Do clients have preferences regarding where they sit? If so, do these preferences depend on gender, familiarity and cultural factors? And how aware of proxemics are individuals who practise counselling? There is an apparently crucial function which emotion has in humans, which seems to be related to proximity (Rothschild, 1997; Simon and Claridge, 1998 [2] and Ridley, 1998). It does not seem difficult to become unaware of one's inner needs. As Rothschild (1997) argues, if a child's need (e.g. for certain proximity) is constantly ignored, then that child will eventually grow up into an adult who not only possesses a paucity of intra-personal awareness, but also grows up into a person who lacks inter-personal skills, such as expressing emotion which could elicit a desired inter-personal proximity with another person.

Bearing in mind the link between affect and proxemics, there are connections regarding these two dimensions not only on an inter-personal level, but also on an intra-personal one (Chopra, 1993; Goleman, 1996; Rothschild, 1997; Simon and Claridge, 1998 [2] and Ridley, 1998). From my clinical experience,



it appears that there is also a connection on a trans-personal level. For example, while counselling a client who was dying of cancer, she put my hand on her cancerous growth; this action of bringing me physically very close to her, seemed to make communicating in words unnecessary. As if that action which brought her and I closer together not only physically, but also psychologically, somehow transcended words (that might have passed between us) for a few moments. With hindsight, that trans-personal experience was sparked because within the counselling relationship, my client felt free and safe enough to seek closer proximity towards me.

It is difficult writing about an experience which transcends words, since words are used to describe the experience. Similarly, since proxemics does not necessarily involve words, it seems easier to demonstrate the aspect than to write about the dimension of proxemics. However, a degree of insight may be obtained through the writing.

Interestingly, the point that the physical and mental dimensions of people are inter-twined has been exemplified by a study between Belgian and Dutch adults who were matched for type of work (see Baker, 1998). Results from the study showed that the Belgians suffered with more back pain than the Dutch participants who had a greater workload: The group in Holland had a more positive outlook towards work, and the Belgian group was more susceptible towards depression (Baker, 1998). Unfortunately, back pain seems to affect nearly everyone at some time. Certain research on back pain has identified that those who "watch" their pain and try to avoid anything



which they think may aggravate it, feel the most pain for a longer period of time while those who behave as normally as they can, knowing that the pain is temporary, get better quicker and feel less pain as stated not only by Baker (1997) but also by Sharon's anecdotal information (1998). The difference here too, is a positive mental attitude in the latter group (Sharon, 1998). Bearing this in mind it appears that those who are fixed with their inner mental attitudes in such a way that they fear moving in case they experience more pain, prolong their pain. Although this research finding may at first sight appear irrelevant here, upon further thought, it is sympathetic to Rothschild's (1997) statement. Rothschild (1997) declares that one's inner mental attitude can become fixed by believing that inter-personal closeness causes pain, therefore such a person's behaviour would not elicit proximity from another. Regarding a counselling relationship, I have noted that within my clinical work at a Natural Health Centre, many clients who complain of back pain also complain of lack of emotional support and physical intimacy in their lives. Indeed, an example of a complaint from such a client, Anna (pseudonym), was that she had not been physically touched for years and missed the intimate close proximity of another human being. This client is mentioned further, in sub-section 2.3 below.

### **2.3 Emotional attitude**

Anna herself linked her psychological well being and emotional difficulties with the quality of inter-personal proximity in her life. She said that she wanted to share her emotions with another person, but was too afraid of

being hurt so she would not let another person be close to her. Hence, she appeared fixed at a distant zone of proximity. This situation seemed to exacerbate her feeling of depression. Others link emotional attitude with health (e.g. Chopra, 1993; Goleman, 1996; Gottman, 1998). For instance, Chopra (1993) states that emotional attitude is connected to health related problems such as heart attacks. He declares that bottled-in anger, being depressed, stressed and emotionally reserved have all been associated with heart disease (Chopra, 1993). Indeed, Anna reported being depressed, stressed, emotionally reserved and having health problems. At our initial meeting, I was aware that she chose to sit as far away from me as possible (without leaving the counselling room). However, if a counsellor chooses where a client sits, either implicitly or explicitly, this does not seem to leave the client an option of choosing the physical distance which she or he would like to be at in relation to the counsellor. This issue does not appear to be addressed by the literature. Baker (1998) states that people without a social network of support, who feel anxious and unhappy, have been identified as being four times more likely to die significantly younger than those who have a social support network, a positive attitude and are emotionally literate. Bearing in mind Baker's (1998) statement concerning social support, in order to build a network of social support it is necessary to have the skills of relating to others and part of these skills include proxemics (see Bowlby, 1969 and Ainsworth et al, 1974).

So far, the implication is that if a person feels able to be close to individuals, then this can be healthy for that person. However, this depends on how that



proximity is expressed. For instance, being over-involved and expressing much negativity towards a person suffering from schizophrenia, has been shown to exacerbate the condition (Kavanagh, 1998). Following this line of perspective, if the person suffering from schizophrenia, experienced her or his family as uncomfortably close, due to the over-involvement of family, then it seems to logically follow that by teaching the family ways of allowing the person suffering from schizophrenia some physical and emotional space, then according to Kavanagh (1998), that person, would have an improved family experience. Hence, Kavanagh's (1998) work implies that perhaps proxemics could be used therapeutically.

In sum, expressing emotions appropriately can be beneficial, the expression of emotion is linked with proxemics (e.g. Rothschild, 1997); and being emotionally fluid can boost the immune system (e.g. Goleman, 1996). It is intriguing to note that some colloquialisms link emotion with proxemics, e.g: "frozen with fear", "breathing down my neck" and "don't crowd me".

## **2.4 Health**

What is emerging is a perspective linking affect with proxemics (e.g. Rothschild, 1997; Bowlby, 1969 and Kahn et al 1971) and a perspective linking proxemics with health (e.g. Chopra, 1993. Gottman, 1998 and Goleman, 1996); while professional actors have explicitly utilised proxemics to show certain dynamics of relationship, such as the balance of power, at least since the 1550's (Wilms, 1987). Surprisingly, there is little in the



literature regarding the dynamics of power within a counselling relationship. Not surprisingly, parents have power over their children. Steiner (1990) produced ten rules for raising psychologically healthy children. An audience for whom these rules are aimed is parents. The rules are succinctly listed below . It is important to acknowledge however, that Steiner's (1990) work is clearly based on experience, theory, practice, study and anecdotal information, as opposed to research based data.

Steiner's ten rules for raising psychologically healthy human beings

1. Do not have a child to whom you cannot extend an eighteen-year guarantee of nurturing and protection.
2. The principal aim of child rearing is for producing autonomous human beings therefore it is necessary to provide each child with freedom to fully exercise the faculties of intimacy, awareness and spontaneity.
3. Intimacy is defeated through the stroke economy (not giving enough love).
4. Awareness is defeated through discounts (belittling)
5. Do not lie to children, ever.
6. Spontaneity is defeated by arbitrary rules applied to the use of the body.

7. Do not rescue (do something which may be construed as helpful that you do not want to do) and then persecute (blame the other for your action of rescuing) any child.
8. Do not teach children competition.
9. Do not allow children to oppress you.
10. Trust human nature and believe in your child(ren).

Steiner, 1990.

After perusing the above ten rules, it appears that Steiner (1990) believes that non-verbal behaviour is important between a parent and a child; and, as previously mentioned, proxemics forms part of non-verbal behaviour. For example, his first rule regarding nurturing and protection: Nurturing and protection are actions therefore they involve the physical body and it seems rational to assume that proximity, such as moving physically closer or more distant, to the one being cared for, is involved in these actions. Indeed, I have been fortunate in witnessing and experiencing how Steiner, during my training with him when he visited England in 1993, used proxemics in a therapeutic way. E.g: He started his workshop with all participants sitting in a circle. Next, he asked people to look within themselves (to have an intra-psychic communication with themselves), and if they felt confident, to sit as far away from him as they could in the circle, and he said that those who did not feel confident, were to sit as close to him as possible in the circle. Then most

participants changed where they were sitting to be either closer or more distant to where Steiner was sitting. And his work continued in the use of proxemics. In the same workshop, Steiner mentioned his children, stating the importance of working preventatively with children.

Fascinatingly, a few individuals who aspire to work preventatively with children and use proxemics as a tool, have recently published (e.g. Robinson and Maines, 1998; Bliss, 1998 and Rudd, 1998). These publications are intended to help adults in facilitating creative expression and further awareness in children, and proxemics is one of the implicit tools used to do this via the explicit vehicle of games (during circle-time perhaps, for instance playing co-operative games). Indeed, I have used exercises and co-operative games explicitly while implicitly utilising proxemics for facilitating movement in a desired direction, with various groups, such as adult students of counselling, school-children and therapy groups. However, such group work is not elaborated on because this research focuses on the one to one counselling relationship.

## **2.5 Improving health**

Although the inter-active aspect of proxemics is commonly used, its utility seems to be mainly implied, rather than made explicit (e.g. Robinson and Maines, 1998; Bliss, 1998 and Rudd, 1998). According to Gottman (1998) and Goleman (1996), the most effective way of being psychologically healthy and have less physical illness is to be more expressive and aware of oneself.



Indeed, Chopra (1998) links a relatively healthier mind with a relatively healthier body. This highlights an intra-personal dimension regarding proxemics. That is, one needs to be in contact with oneself to be self-aware, and one also needs to experience the connection to one's own process, to be able to express it. So, learning such self-awareness and appropriate expression may be facilitative of good health (e.g. Goleman, 1996 and Gottman, 1998). Steiner's workshop (on emotional literacy), as previously described, is an exemplar of becoming aware of one's own process and expressing it to a person of one's choice. It logically follows that one could practise emotional literacy in a space which offered the freedom and safety to do so, such as that which could be created within a counselling relationship. However, in order to experience freedom and safety, one may need to feel enabled to move, as opposed to being fixed at a certain zone of proximity.

Fascinatingly, Davidson (1998) shows an intra-personal link regarding health, affect and proximity: His work suggests that a negative dispositional mood not only lowers the immune system but also that the two cerebral hemispheres' proximity changes depending on their symmetry or asymmetry which he implies is related to emotions. However, it is unclear how he measures such a change, and concludes that more research on animals as well as humans is needed on this issue. Yet his paper does not say how such research could be undertaken. For these reasons, his paper is not deliberated on further.

## **2.6 School-aged individuals**

What seems to be emerging regarding proxemics, is a link between the trans-personal (see section 2.2), inter-personal (see section 2.1) and intra-personal (see section 2.3) levels. Certain research regarding school-aged children has highlighted that hopes (e.g. of reciprocal love and material security) and fears (e.g. of loneliness, illness, unemployment and homelessness) are common to the majority of young individuals in Britain (McGrellis et al. 1998, Swallow and Romick, 1998). These children need a sense of control about their future (Swallow and Romick, 1998.). Currently, they feel that their sense of uncertainty depends on forces beyond their control (Nilsen, 1998). Nilsen (1998) states that they feel insecure due to a sense of vulnerability and they feel insecure due to a sense of uncertainty. Bearing in mind certain literature regarding healthy psychological growth (e.g. Gottman, 1998; Goleman, 1996 and Steiner, 1990), perhaps within a counselling relationship, a child may become enabled to gain some sense of certainty and control. Proxemics could be used as it has been used by teachers, e.g. in circle time (see Bliss, 1998 and Robinson and Maines, 1998).

Indeed, while working with children, I have wondered if their fluidity regarding proxemics, in some way, parallels the changing nature of their relationships. Further, I have explicitly used proxemics (from working with pre-school-aged children to senior citizens) to help in providing insight concerning relationships. In a different way, the contemporary work of psychologists such as Makin and Ruitenbeck (1998) may help to provide new insights and value

concerning relationships and aid individuals to glean what value they can when undergoing change within relationships. These psychologists, like Goleman (1996) and Gottman (1998), advocate the importance of being aware of one's own psychological health and doing something about it. This begs the question: What can one do, to do "something about it?" Perhaps one needs to get close to the children and those involved with them, which brings in the dimension of proxemics, before making a decision. It is argued that this can happen within a counselling relationship.

## **2.7 Teachers**

Books incorporating proxemics (even if only implicitly) for working with children are sometimes aimed at teachers (e.g. Bliss, 1998; Robinson and Maines, 1998). It may be possible for the teaching profession to learn from the psychology profession. Simons (1998), a Dutch psychologist, has announced that teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin. He argues that the most important task which teachers have, is to teach their pupils how to learn. Practise is needed for learning something new, such as playing a musical instrument. Similarly, psychological counsellors need to practise a new skill, in order to use it within a counselling relationship. Hence, counsellors can practise utilising proxemics.

Interestingly, Simons (1998) has identified how, in Finland, paradoxical tensions have been pinpointed. In particular, he argues that either the way people work together or the culture is consequently preventing desired



outcomes. Perhaps the prevailing culture of believing in prioritising the spoken word within a counselling relationship as opposed to also prioritising NVC, has prevented counselling practitioners from learning more about non-verbals (incorporating proxemics). Deaux and Lafrance's (1998) investigations found that gender stereotype beliefs within a culture, interfered with gender role. The present work uses culture and gender as factors, with regard to proxemics.

## **2.8 Psychological therapists**

What is emerging is that proximity seems to act as a hinge-pin concerning both psychological and social life (e.g. Bowlby, 1969 and Rothschild, 1997). Various literature acknowledges that at least gender, affect, self-esteem, health, and culture are important components of non-verbals which encompass proxemics (e.g. Martin, 1998; Brown, 1998; Gottman, 1998; Goleman, 1996 and Apter, 1997). There seems to be a link between keeping away from others and being depressed (Brown, 1998); and a psychological approach encompassing NVC could encourage movement in a desired direction (James and Brownsword, 1998). Further, proxemics between carer and child has an impact on that relationship (Bowlby, 1969 and Steiner, 1990). Importantly, the relationship one has with another person, influences proxemics (Hall, 1966 and Jenkins et al, 1998). Hence, the counselling relationship can have an impact on the proxemics between psychological therapist and client.

## **2.9 Facilitating emotional literacy**

So far, it is clear that proxemics is not only linked with culture (e.g. Bateson, 1936) and health (e.g. Rothschild, 1997) but also entwined with relationships (e.g. Hall, 1966). According to Mortimer (1998) and Lindenfield (1998), emotional literacy straddles the verbal and non-verbal behaviours of humankind and may be facilitated by planning, implementing, assessing and record-keeping a programme incorporating certain concepts. Mortimer (1998) suggests that the following six basic concepts are covered:

- 1) confidence building,
- 2) teaching how to learn,
- 3) moving towards independence,
- 4) social development,
- 5) expressing emotion and
- 6) environmental awareness

Goleman (1996) has also previously stated these. Proxemics could be used to aid in facilitating some of the six aspects listed immediately above. For example, when facilitating some of my own workshops, I have specifically used proxemics to aid emotional expression (for instance by using “the three cornered exercise” which is sometimes utilised by actors).

This is an exercise where emotion is expressed so that it is communicated to another person safely (rather than impressed on the self) and proxemics is

used explicitly in the following way. Actors are asked to keep enough distance between themselves and other actors (and non-animate things such as walls) so that it is physically safe, i.e. the risk of physical damage is diminished by the explicit proxemics rule of being in a certain space for the duration of the exercise. This exercise is used after trust has been established (by communicating empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard) between actors and facilitator, so that participants feel safe enough to do it. However, the six basic concepts as stated above suggested by Mortimer (1998) for facilitating emotional literacy seem to be speculative ideas offered, as opposed to a theory stemming from research. This work is different in that it is research based and aspires to eventually offer a theory regarding an aspect of non-verbals (i.e. proxemics) which is not merely speculative.

Concerning a counselling relationship, there is cumulative research based and clinical evidence illustrating that what are often called the “core conditions” (e.g. empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard) are necessary for movement in a desired direction (e.g. Rogers 1951, Rogers 1961, Kirscherbaum and Henderson 1989, Howe 1993 and Bayne et al. 1994). It has been shown that it is possible to communicate these core conditions on a non-verbal level (Rudd, 1996) and proxemics is part of non-verbals. Proximity is part of inter-acting; therefore it is part of the one to one counselling relationship. Yet there is a large gap within the literature concerning proxemics in counselling. However, that gap is starting to be filled by this research.



Thus far, what has emerged is that within an individual, there seem to be (non-verbal) intra-personal communications linking affect (e.g. Rothschild, 1997) to self-esteem (e.g. Goleman, 1996; Lindenfield, 1998 and Mortimer, 1998) and health (e.g. Gottman, 1998). And the non-verbal aspect of proxemics, is not only connected to one's affect (e.g. Rothschild, 1997 and Goleman, 1996) and therefore linked to intra-personal communication, but is also connected to inter-personal communication (e.g. Hall, 1966).

## **2.10 Chapter 2 discussion**

According to Rothschild (1997), emotions, which are within individuals, activate behaviours that have an effect on inter- personal proximity. She states this as a generic theory (Rothschild, 1997). Although this may initially sound only speculative because she seems to base this perspective on her experience, others also offer a similar generic theory (e.g. Chopra and Simon, 1999). Hence, to go from the generic to the specific: within a counselling relationship, it is argued that knowledge about proxemics is important, especially if it is linked with health and affect.

There are parallels between the work of Rothschild (1997) and that of Simon and Claridge (1998 [2]). This is because Simon and Claridge (1998 [2]) assert that stress manifests in the emotions and physical levels with other non-verbal cues which have an effect on inter-personal proximity. Consequently, it is argued that it behoves a psychological counsellor to know about non-verbals, including proxemics. There is a large gap regarding a substantial

body of work based on research focussing on proxemics, as opposed to speculation. For instance, Rothschild's (1997) theory was apparently based on clinical experience and Simon and Claridge (1998[2]) speculate on stress and non-verbals, as opposed to offering a theory based on research. Indeed, no research was found, at the time of writing this, which had a main topic of the non-verbal aspect of proxemics within a counselling relationship. Hence, this research is timely because it is starting to fill that gap in the literature regarding proximity within a counselling relationship.

A connection between health and affect which influences behaviour is highlighted not only by Rothschild (1997) and Simon and Claridge (1982 [2]) but also in much other literature (e.g. Chopra, 1993; Ridley, 1998; Apter, 1997; Baker, 1998; Goleman, 1996 and Gottman, 1998). Further, Jenkins et al (1998) provide a list of references indicating that the body and mind are inter-linked. However, it continues to appear that most of the references are speculative, and not based on tight research. Nevertheless, the lack of such research is hoped to be bridged, to a certain extent, by this research which looks at proxemics (an aspect of behaviour) while incorporating the factors of gender, inter-personal familiarity and culture.

According to Simons (1998), culture is influential regarding individuals. Within Britain, results from research investigations showed that a significant number of children have a sense of powerlessness (McGrillis et al, 1998; Swallow and Romick, 1998 and Nilsen, 1998). An argument, therefore, that work needs to be undertaken preventatively with children, is an appropriate



one (Robinson and Maines, 1998 and Bliss, 1998). It seems that working towards a more positive mental attitude may have a knock-on effect regarding better health (e.g. Chopra, 1993 and Sharon, 1998). Steiner's (1990) ten rules therefore, for raising (psychologically) healthy children, are of much interest, although they appear to be speculative. Nevertheless, he has been practising as a psychotherapist for over 40 years and is in demand as a visiting tutor, on an inter-national level. Hence, his writings are given serious consideration. Further, Steiner (1990) uses the dimension of proxemics, explicitly, within his psychotherapeutic work, as part of an approach to encourage healthy psychological growth.

James and Brownsword (1998) too, argue that a psychological approach is needed to encourage healthy growth. Indeed, Brown (1998) declares that a great move is needed towards intervention with the minimum of effort, to help individuals become psychologically healthier. However, Brown (1998) neither specifies what a "great move" is nor how to implement such a great move. In contrast to Brown (1998), this investigation specifies a great gap in the literature regarding proxemics in relation to counselling, and aspires to create a theory from data gleaned, which may help counselling practitioners put the research findings into action via their practice. Since individuals are enmeshed within a culture, are embodied within their gender and have interpersonal relationships at differing levels of familiarity, this research on proxemics includes the factors of familiarity, gender and culture. Further, awareness of proxemics within individuals who practise counselling, is investigated.



## **2.11 Chapter 2 summary**

- Expressing affect is linked with health (e.g. Chopra, 1993; Goleman, 1996 and Gottman, 1998) and these are non-verbal qualities wherein proxemics plays a role.
- The importance of learning about the facilitation of good psychological health is highlighted; this incorporates the use of proxemics (e.g. Robinson and Maines, 1998 and Rudd, 1998).
- Inter-personal proximity is important with regard to health; e.g. individuals suffering from schizophrenia improved, when family members learnt to give the person suffering from schizophrenia more personal space (Kavanagh, 1998).
- Proxemics is utilised by teachers to use with school children ( e.g. Bliss, 1998).
- An individual may be physically distant from others due to unmanaged negative stress (e.g. Simon and Claridge, 1998 [2]).
- Rothschild (1997) draws a link between emotional and physical distance.

## **CHAPTER 3**

- 3. Power and discursive overview of introductory chapters**
- 3.1 The human body as messenger**
- 3.2 Inter-personal power dynamics**
- 3.3 Empowering the client**
- 3.4 Community and flocking**
- 3.5 Confidence and energy**
- 3.6 Society**
- 3.7 Presenting study**
- 3.8 Discursive overview of Introduction**
- 3.9 Summary of first three chapters**
- 3.10 Chapter 3 summary**

### **3 POWER AND DISCURSIVE OVERVIEW OF INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS**

*When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by;  
Let us (said he) poure on him all we can;  
Let the worlds riches, which dispersed lie,  
Contract into a span.*

George Herbert.

This stanza from George Herbert's poem *The Pulley*, written in the seventeenth century, indicates the power that he may have believed that a person had. Indeed, the concept of power has not only been written about by poets, as exemplified above, but it has also been deliberated on by psychologists such as Goleman (1996). Goleman (1996) implies that it is empowering to be skilled in emotional literacy (which involves NVC thus encompassing proxemics and therefore perhaps, movement between people or individuals in a relationship). After deliberating on the aspect of power, this chapter discusses the whole of the Introduction (chapters 1 to 3 inclusively), before summarising it.



### **3.1 The human body as messenger**

What seems to be emerging is that the study of body language with reference to inter-personal communication has yielded new facets on the interaction of person to person behaviour, as described earlier, at least over the last half century. Astonishingly however, kinesics, that is, the way people move (thus affecting the distance between them), does not appear to have been a popular area for psychologists to investigate. Yet, as professional actors seem to know, where the power lies within an inter-personal relationship may be gleaned by looking at kinesics and how distance is used between two people. Since kinesics is a relatively new science, there are few authorities on the subject, although the literature on it is vast. Interestingly, the word kinesics originates from the Greek word "kinesis" which literally means "movement". Indeed, there are a few therapy models, such as psycho-drama, which utilise kinesics as part of their orientation (see Farmer, 1995) while others seem to ignore kinesics (see Goldman, 1996 and Hjelle and Ziegler, 1976).

This movement or position of the body, as Fast (1971) speculates: "...can actually contradict verbal communications" (p.11). Fast (1971) continues: "A family sitting together, for example, can give a revealing picture of itself simply by the way its members move. If the mother crosses her legs first and the rest of the family then follows suit, she has set the lead for the family action, though she, as well as the rest of the family, may not be aware she is doing it. In fact, her words may deny her leadership as she asks her husband

or children for advice. But the unspoken, follow-the-leader clue in her action gives the family set-up away to someone knowledgeable in kinesics" (p.11).

Fast's (1971) statement above is in line with many of my professional observations for approximately the last quarter of a century, not only with regard to adults but also regarding children and adolescents. For instance, while facilitating group-work for young adult males with challenging behaviour, under the umbrella of Social Services in the south of England, an exercise of follow-the-leader was used to help balance out status inequalities within the group. Within minutes of commencing the follow-the-leader technique, those who were perceived as the "underdogs", as well as those who were perceived as the "top-dogs", and all the other participants in between, had achieved more of an equal and co-operative sharing of status within the group, in an apparently fun, non-threatening way, by each individual participating in the follow-the-leader exercise: Every person involved took turns in being "the leader". The use of this exercise which was performed in an enjoyable way was one of several non-verbal techniques incorporating proxemics that I used for facilitating group members to move towards goals of higher self-esteem, inter-personal co-operation and creative (as opposed to destructive) use of their energies.

Indeed, I have used the same techniques for facilitating similar goals, with a group of women recovering from substance abuse. Further, with this group of women, I utilised proxemics as a way of facilitating the harnessing of their energies, to help lift them from the lethargy that they seemed to be stuck in.

Indeed, the members of this group quickly showed their creativity in a fun and caring way (which was facilitated by my use of proximity as a technique).

Concerning proxemics, I have also noted that within my professional observations, those who take up most space, that is, physically spread themselves out, are perceived to have a higher status than those who take up the least space, or make themselves as small as possible. For instance, a ruler will sit on a high throne, while a servant will bow down low. Similarly, a head of department at a university may be allocated her or his own office, while perhaps more junior (in terms of hierarchy) staff may share an office. So within the counselling consulting room, on a metaphorical basis: Who is perceived as the top dog and who is perceived as the under-dog?

Kinesic messages are continually being sent, whether they are in or out of an individual's awareness. For instance, during a game of "scrabble", a player may have a good set of letters and this message may be communicated by that player's eye-pupils becoming larger, whether the player is aware of this or not. The player's opponent can receive this message. Hence the following question: If counsellors' bodies are vehicles of non-verbal messages, then what particular messages do counsellors communicate to clients, especially regarding the space between them? This question is deliberated on in the main Discussion section.

Intriguingly, advertisers use some knowledge of kinesics to promote their products, by pairing them with whatever elicits a pleasurable response in their



target audience. However, to understand body language it is crucial to bear circumstances and cultural influences in mind, otherwise non-verbal communication may be misunderstood. For these reasons, I undertook to execute this cross-cultural research, which also encompassed participants' gender, with regard to an assumed counselling situation; and awareness within those who practise counselling, regarding proxemics.

Although advertisers exploit their knowledge of non-verbal communication, in this study, care was taken not to exploit the participants, and for all concerned to come out of this situation with an experience of empowerment: Not only for the participants, but also for myself. Care was taken to inter-act with the participants involved in this research, in a way which communicated the core conditions noted earlier. My (the experimenter's) skills in communicating these conditions had been sharpened, due to having taught them to counselling students and counsellors.

### **3.2 Inter-personal power dynamics**

People in the business world are encouraged to sharpen their skills in order to have a more powerful professional impact, as declared in "Climb the Fallen Ladder" by Gordon and Harold (1997). Gordon's and Harold's (1997) perspective is that power is a positive concept. However, these two men are business people writing for business people. Hence, a psychological therapist may have a different perspective. One such person is Wyckoff (1980) who

worked collaboratively with Steiner (1980) and was influential regarding his views concerning power.

Wyckoff (1980) looks at the negative side of power. She shows how learning to go down a path of disempowerment can start early in life: For example, “a young student with a learning problem such as dyslexia may be told that she is stupid. It is likely that she will eventually internalise this message, and is thus not only being hurt from the outside, but also from within. The lie that worsens this situation is that we must compete in school and do well and that it's all up to us individually to succeed. As a result, our young friend is isolated from those who might be able to support her” (Wyckoff, 1980, p18).

In this way, the girl becomes disempowered and perhaps feels too ashamed to verbalise her problem.

There is politics in the language of the body (Henley, 1980). Henley (1980), like Wyckoff (1980) wrote one of the first ground breaking feminist analyses on non-verbal behaviour. She illustrates the way those in power often use non-verbal communication to keep the order of hierarchy; specifically, the way many men use power over women. Apparently, the psychological “game” of power is widespread amongst us. Yet, as Steiner (1980) points out: “By not using power plays ... we don't coerce others into doing what they would not otherwise do” (Steiner, 1980 p.29). Henley (1980) and Wyckoff (1980) both declare that one way men abuse women non-verbally, is for instance, to do with proxemics: For example, when a man is physically closer to a woman than she wants him to be. It therefore seems possible that within a

counselling situation, if the counsellor is male, he could unwittingly sit so close to a female client, as to make her feel abused by him. Hence, the consequences of this happening, may be detrimental to the client moving in her desired direction.

### **3.3 Empowering the client**

Clinical experience illustrates that often when a client enters the consulting room of a psychologist, the client may feel disempowered, imagining that the psychologist has a one-sided control over the session and power over the client. This one-sidedness can undermine movement in a therapeutic direction. So how can the client be empowered? Intriguingly, a similar question concerning one-sidedness can be found in "The Excuse Factory" (Olson, 1997). This book is advertised as a tool to help businesses become great, by empowering the clients of the businesses. Similarly, clients seeing a counselling psychologist sometimes need to be empowered. And occasionally, one feels empowered by listening to a great speaker. One facet of why great speakers (such as the leader Martin Luther King) came across to their target audience as inspired was because their non-verbal and verbal communications sent the same messages. Indeed, Toogood (1997) declared that non-verbal communication is no less important than verbalising, when it comes to communicating well, so it follows logically that it behoves practitioners to increase their skills to help their clients.



The above argument points towards the aptness of this research because if power is connected with proxemics, then researching proxemics is one way of understanding it further in order to empower clients. This work isolates and examines the proximity between client and counsellor in an assumed counselling relationship, as well as investigating psychological counsellors' awareness of proxemics and these aspects are what make this project unique. It is argued that knowing how individuals experience proxemics could increase practitioners' skills in supporting clients with their problems.

### **3.4 Community and flocking**

Thus, the importance of learning about proxemics continues to emerge. DeGeus (1997) states that learning is important, and equally important is sharing that learning. He continues that in order to learn, to develop a strong identity and to have mature relationships, one needs to : a) learn and adapt to the environment, b) build a strong identity, c) pay attention to relationships, d) be in charge of one's own growth and e) create a close-knit community (DeGeus, 1997). Although he does not cite research, his speculative work offers a strongly rational and convincing argument based on his experience. This is why it is mentioned here. Within the business world, this sharing of information is called flocking. It has been found, within corporations, that flocking is enhanced by bringing "together unlike individuals: people from different backgrounds..." (De Geus, 1997 p.6). Perhaps the idea of flocking can be transposed onto the counselling arena. Thus, what seems to be emerging from this is, that the field of counselling psychology may learn from

other fields. Indeed, the notion of investigating proxemics within this research, is rooted in my own background of dramatic art (which energised me and acted as a springboard in boosting my confidence).

### **3.5 Confidence and energy**

If one is to teach skills to counselling psychologists, especially with regard to NVC incorporating proxemics, then it seems to logically follow that one needs the confidence and energy to do so. Indeed, it is also important to have enough energy to last the day. Yet another question thus arises (though not a research question here): How can a practitioner have enough energy to last the day? DuBrin (1997) speculates that this can be achieved by following his rules. DuBrin's (1997) rules follow below:

1) have a positive mental attitude; 2) take adequate rest; 3) obtain enough exercise; 4) follow a healthy diet; 5) tick off items achieved on a to-do list; 6) get personal support from other people and 7) be pro-active (DuBrin, 1997).

However, the society one is enmeshed in may not reward adherence to the above rules. Thus far, it has been argued that many perspectives, such as self-care, power, learning, affect and language emerge as dimensions within the arena of NVC, which envelops the facet of proxemics. It has also been argued that the culture within a society one is influenced by, is important. Hence, it follows that it is important to ascertain awareness regarding proxemics in individuals who practise counselling.

### **3.6 Society**

To re-iterate the above: it is argued that the society one is enmeshed in, has an effect on one. For instance, a society may reward mental illness with sick pay and look down on rest by having long working hours. Exercise may have a low priority and time management may not be taught, while families perhaps break up and individuals might feel helpless. This hypothetical disturbing example of a society has implications on a micro and macro level. Hall (1997) is keenly aware of the interlinking aspects regarding economics and politics, local and global dimensions, the public and private areas, and facets concerning representation and reality; all entwined around the theme of power. This is deliberated on in more detail in the main Discussion section. However, to find where power lies, one needs to know how to look for it, and it is argued that one way to look for it might be to be skilled in the various dimensions of NVC including having knowledge concerning proxemics; which is the cue for the present study.

### **3.7 Presenting study**

This project follows threads from various works, as stipulated above. As noted earlier (e.g. sub-sections 3.6, 3.3 and 3.4), it is argued that power is rapidly emerging as being inextricably linked with the issues of gender, culture and proxemics (e.g. Steiner, 1980 and Wyckoff, 1980). Clegg (1993) looks at historical and contemporary frameworks of power and concludes in his essay that national integrity is linked with physical boundaries. The



implication is that to abuse those boundaries by changing them without the agreed consent of all the countries concerned, is an abuse of power.

However, Clegg's (1993)

paper was not studied in depth because it deals with countries, as opposed to individuals; and this research highlights proxemics between specific individuals.

The current work is unusual due to spotlighting proxemics between individuals while having a cross-cultural dimension and focussing specifically on the therapeutic counselling relationship, as opposed to generalising about the whole of humankind. It adds to the existing relevant body of research. In the light of the Rubin and Brown (1975) book, there is an endeavour to reconcile the relationship between gender and interpersonal space, while adding the cross-cultural and psychological aspects to the project.

The purpose of the present study was to test the prediction that not only gender, but also whether a person was a total stranger, was recognised without any acknowledgement, or acknowledged due to being previously recognised, had some influence on interpersonal space, which was also culturally influenced, in an assumed counselling relationship. However, instead of using the stop-distance technique\* (\*when an experimenter walks towards a participant and the participant is asked to say "Stop", at the time when the experimenter is experienced by the participant as being a little too close for the physical interpersonal distance to feel comfortable) used in previous research (e.g. Cochran et al, 1984), this undertaking was different in

that it was decided that a more realistic technique needed to be utilised so that the experience was a little more like a real client taking a seat in a counselling session, so volunteers physically moved their chairs and sat in them precisely where they wanted to be for a counselling session, once the counsellor had already sat in her chair.

It was hypothesised that the gender of individuals, how much if at all they recognised the counsellor, and cultural enmeshment, would have an effect on proxemics. Further, twelve individuals who practise psychological counselling were interviewed to ascertain their awareness of proxemics. How this research was conducted is explained in the Method section, after this chapter. A discussion of the first three chapters of this research follows below.

### **3.8 Discursive overview of Introduction**

Although the topic of proxemics is featured not only in daily inter-active life but also within a face to face counselling relationship, the attention that it has received from investigators, such as researchers, has been at an astonishingly meagre level. Hence, due to the paucity of material on NVC, especially proximity, within the counselling psychology and psychology literature, work outside the academic literature has been drawn upon due to its focus on NVC (e.g. Brook, 1968; Frost, 1990; Gordon and Harold, 1997; Olson, 1997 and DuBrin, 1997). It is surprising that proximity and its effects has not aroused much interest, because proxemics is not a new



phenomenon, since there have been varying distances between individuals as long as human-kind has existed. The proximity between one person and another, varies depending on where individuals physically move to, in relation to each other. The study of such movement is called kinesics. Hence, kinesics (from the Greek word "kinesis" which translates as "movement"), often called "body language", forms part of non-verbal communication, and proxemics is an aspect of kinesics. Clinical investigations reveal that body language can contradict the communication which is verbalised (Fast, 1971). However, to understand unspoken language, it is important at least to consider cultural differences. For a psychological therapist, it is not only crucial to deliver the unspoken message of one's body language respectfully, but also critical that one receives the intended communication from a client.

There is a vast amount of literature which concerns itself with NVC (e.g. Argyle, 1982; Fast, 1971; Clegg, 1983; Steiner, 1990 and Gottman, 1998). It is not unusual for such literature to be speculative, (e.g. Fast, 1971 and Steiner, 1990) as opposed to research based. However, the situation seems to be that only a meagre amount of that literature deals mainly with the aspect of proxemics with regard to a psychological counselling relationship in depth, if at all. Indeed, this seems to be the situation because no such literature was found (even though, within the field of dramatic art, actors have been using proxemics to show the dynamics of power between inter-acting characters, for centuries). Hence, with the current upsurge of interest in counselling psychology, this research is timely.



A further seven gaps were found during the literature search, which are spotlighted below:

1. No literature was found which was mainly concerned with the physical spaces between the individuals who are members of counselling dyads.
2. Astonishingly, there appeared to be a lack of arguments deliberating on whether the idea of non-verbal behaviour could be perceived as a language, as opposed to thinking of only verbalising as belonging to the field of language.
3. Remarkably, the many authors who have used the term NVC have assumed that non-verbal behaviour communicates in the way spoken language does, without offering a rationale for such an assumption (Fast, 1971); unremarkably, this work discusses such an assumption, such a discussion is now unremarkable because it seems over-due.
4. Many psychological studies during this century have been theory-driven and the assumption within the studies was that such a theory-driven mould could be universally applied. (Thus, this research is different in that it looks at data before putting a theory to that information.)
5. There does not seem to have been an adequate attempt at reconciling the conflicting conclusions arising from studies on NVC regarding gender (e.g. Long, 1984 and Cochran et al, 1984).

6. Surprisingly, much of the literature which uses the terms body-language and NVC does so in a generic sense, without discussing the perspective that, for instance, distances between individuals may vary depending on what people are deliberating together on.
7. Another blank space in the literature is that the main participants of research have been from university populations, as opposed to members from a different population to university students.

Hence the importance of the present study's deliberations on aiming to fill, to a certain extent, the above gaps regarding the literature. Due to the lack of various models focussing on proxemics, it is difficult to show an evaluation of theories about proximity. However, Hall's (1966) theory is that individuals prefer various distance zones. The criteria he uses to differentiate these zones of proximity are fourfold:

1. Intimate 0-8"/0-46cm
2. Personal 18"-2.5'/46-122cm
3. Social 2.5'-12'/122-366cm
4. Public over 12'/over 366cm

Yet Hall's (1966) overall theory, which he formulated in conjunction with his research involving pain-staking observation, does not seem to consider gender. This research however includes gender as one of its factors. What has emerged is that although a great deal has been written about NVC, there is a substantial gap in the literature concerning studies whose main focus is proxemics between individuals who are members of a counselling dyad. Many questions have arisen within the context of the literature debate so far, and these questions have been gathered together and are in appendix 18, because although they stem from the present investigation rooted in proxemics, they are not the main research questions here. The main research questions for this investigation are fourfold:

- Firstly, does the physical interpersonal space between a purported counsellor and client vary, depending on how familiar the members who make up such a counselling dyad are with each other (see Hall, 1966)?
- Secondly, do men sit at a different distance to the assumed counsellor than women purported clients (see Long, 1984)?
- Thirdly, do the distances chosen to sit at by purported clients, from the counsellor, vary depending on the cultural environment of the clients (see Deaux and Lafrance, 1998)?
- Fourthly, are psychological counsellors aware of proxemics within a counselling relationship (no relevant literature found)?



My goal, regarding these four important research questions which stem from the present investigation rooted in proxemics, is to eventually answer them in the main Discussion part of this research. This goal is put into action via the Method and Results parts of the current work. A summary of these first three chapters, follows, before ending this chapter with the chapter three summary in the form of bulleted points in a box.

### **3.9 Summary of first three chapters**

What has emerged, is that one of the first studies highlighting human inter-personal behaviour was by Bateson (1936) who purported that people had different ways of interacting with each other: Some interactions were symmetrical when power was equal and some were complimentary when power was not equal. Yet it was Hall (1966) who offered what is probably the most famous non-verbal inter-personal model, proposing that distance zones between people had four characteristics:

- 1     An intimate distance, up to eighteen inches (1-46 cm).
- 2     A personal distance, from eighteen inches to two and a half feet (46-122cm).
- 3     A social distance, from two and a half to twelve feet (122-366 cm).

#### **4 A public distance, over twelve feet (over 366cm).**

It is fascinating that interpersonal space was used within theatre, going back to at least the tradition of the Commedia dell 'Arte (from the 1550's), when performers used proxemics as a way of communicating the hierarchy of power between characters (Wilms, 1987). More recently, (Rudd, 1996) has shown how the position of a counsellor's body during a counselling session can either inhibit or facilitate a client's movement towards a desired direction. What has emerged from these investigations is that the context of communication is important, and that research lacks literature whose main focus is proxemics within the context of a counselling relationship.

This project fills in some of the gap which the literature has concerning the space between members who make up a purported counselling dyad. Further, it is hoped that this project may help the process of unravelling the problem of where to sit when offering a counselling session. How will this study contribute to the understanding of this problem? The study will offer a greater understanding of the counsellor-client relationship by bringing the facet of proxemics into psychological therapists' awareness (and such awareness may be beneficially used within a counselling session), by offering a theory based on the results of this research which stem from the research hypotheses ( as stated below). Within the theory, the criteria used to formulate it is based on Hjelle and Ziegler's (1976) prescription for a theory. I.e. A prescription for a theory needs to hypothesise why individuals act the way they do, describe how they act and be predictive; organising the

behaviour of individuals in a systematic way and offer a framework for interpreting that behaviour. The implication is that such a theory is testable (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1976). Maddi, (1980) declares that a theory needs to be valid, important and operational; which seems logical, therefore the theory (based on this research stemming from the data gathered) which is offered in the Conclusion section aspires to also include Maddi's (1980) prescription for a theory. And this research also endeavours to offer a greater understanding of the client/counsellor relationship by answering the following main research questions:

Firstly, does the physical interpersonal space between a purported counsellor and client vary depending on how familiar the members, who make up the counselling dyad, are with each other? Secondly, do females sit at a different distance to an assumed counsellor than males? Penultimately, do the physical distances which assumed clients have chosen to sit at from the purported counsellor, vary depending on the cultural environment of the clients? And ultimately, to what extent are those who practise psychological counselling aware of proxemics within a counselling relationship?

### **3.10 Chapter 3 summary**

- Non-verbal cues can be clues to the balance of power within a relationship between people (Fast, 1971); and inter-personal dynamics are linked with proxemics (Henley, 1980; Steiner, 1980; Wyckoff, 1980): for example, a



man who is physically closer to a woman than she wants him to be, so that she feels abused, is using proxemics to abuse his power.

- Some clients who enter a counselling room may feel disempowered hence, the importance of empowering such clients; and knowledge of NVC, wherein proxemics has a role, may help.
- The perspective of sharing knowledge is highlighted (DeGeus, 1997), just as I bring some knowledge from the field of dramatic art, to that of counselling psychology.
- Gaps in the relevant literature are listed (see sub-section 3.8) and questions arising from the literature debate are stated, leading to the main investigation of this research (the main research question is bulleted below).
- Does the physical inter-personal space between members of an assumed counselling dyad vary, depending on the culture, familiarity and gender of these members; and how aware of proxemics are those who practice psychological counselling?

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4 Method**

#### **4.1 Ethical issues**

#### **4.2 Design**

##### **4.2.1 Pilot study 1**

#### **4.3 Study 1 (quantitative method)**

#### **4.4 Study 1 contexts dates and times of data collection**

#### **4.5 Study 1 respondents**

#### **4.6 Study 1 design**

#### **4.7 Study 1 apparatus**

#### **4.8 Study 1 procedure**

#### **4.9 Study 2 outline plan**

#### **4.10 Study 2 rationale for the use of in depth interviews**

#### **4.11 Study 2 equipment**

#### **4.12 Study 2 participants**

#### **4.13 Study 2 strategy**

#### **4.14 Study 2 contexts dates and times of data collection**

#### **4.15 Interviewing for the research**

#### **4.16 Interviewing problems**

#### **4.17 Study 2 data analysis**

#### **4.18 Chapter 4 discussion**

#### **4.19 Chapter 4 summary**

## **4. METHOD**

*any piece of behaviour will –  
have two levels of explanation*  
(Burt and Oaksford, 1999, p.333).

In order to investigate proxemics within counselling relationships, whilst bearing in mind culture, gender, and the level of familiarity between the individuals who were members of purported counselling dyads, and to ascertain the awareness of counselling practitioners regarding proxemics, this work has been organised into two studies: Study 1 and study 2. Study 1 refers to the use of a quantitative methodology, where the distance was measured in inches, between purported counsellor and clients. Study 2 refers to the use of a qualitative methodology, where counselling practitioners were interviewed in depth in order to ascertain their awareness of proxemics.

### **4.1 Ethical issues**

A statement of the ethical issues considered is in appendix 2. A covering letter was written in case the experimenter needed to confirm that she was in fact carrying out research. This letter is included in appendix 3, although it was not eventually needed. Respondents gave informed consent before participating and were debriefed after data collection. They could decline from their participation at any time and their anonymity was assured. The types of questions which I asked the participants in study 2 are in appendix 4.



A substantial amount of positive interest was expressed by participants, after debriefing; and there were no objections encountered.

## **4.2 Design**

The present research was designed as two studies. Study 1 was designed to empirically investigate any differences with regard to distances chosen by individuals apparently being counselled in a purported counselling relationship, bearing in mind gender of client, familiarity between client and counsellor and the culture which the client was embedded in. Study 2 was designed to ascertain awareness of proxemics within those who practise psychological counselling, by using in depth interviews. Consequently, interviews lasted between thirty and forty five minutes. The transcriptions from the taped interviews were scrutinised to analyse their contents. Results (which are in chapters 5 and 6) are discussed in chapter 7 and several conclusions are specified.

Study 1 was piloted and the technique of interviewing in-depth was practised for study 2. Henceforth, the pilot for study 1 shall be referred to as 'pilot study 1' and the practise for study 2 shall be referred to as 'practise study 2'. Pilot study 1 and practise study 2 were evaluated before deciding on amending studies 1 and 2 in the light of that evaluation. For pilot study 1, benefactors of a natural health centre in southern England were used as a sample. For practise study 2: relatives within my own immediate family and volunteer colleagues were the participants.

#### **4.2.1 Pilot study 1**

In the pilot study 1, thirty adult participants (fifteen women and fifteen men) were approached (some were strangers, others I recognised but did not know them and the rest I knew on a superficial basis from seeing and acknowledging them by saying “Hallo” at the natural health centre on previous occasions) as they entered the natural health centre. I asked them, on a one to one basis, while sitting in a room which had other chairs in it: “If I were sitting here, put a chair at the distance you would like it to be if you were to sit in it to be counselled.” Several people moved a chair without sitting in it then moved it back to its original position before I had the chance to measure the inter-chair distance. Also, some of the participants said, “Where I put the chair depends on who would be counselling me”. Others responded: “What would I need to be having counselling for?” Indeed, one of the participants asked: “What does *counselling* mean?”

From these comments, the instructions were changed so that participants were told to choose a chair and to sit in it at the distance they would like it to be if I (the experimenter) was going to counsel them because they were seeking support concerning a personal problem they wanted to talk about. Then, respondents were asked to sit in the chair at the distance they wanted it to be if they were to talk to me about a film they saw, then they were told to sit at the distance they wanted the chair to be if they were to talk about what a shoe shop looked like. Each time, respondents moved their chairs to a



different position: Chairs were closest to me for counselling and furthest for describing a shoe shop, irrespective of participants' gender. Thus, it seemed logical to assume that the proxemics regarding inter-chair variability was not only due to culture, but was also specific to the topic which was intended to be talked about. Hence, a film was referred to, and describing what a shoe shop looked like because if just the study 1 research question was going to be asked in this pilot study, it would not have been clear from the results whether inter-chair variability was only due to culture, as opposed to also being specific to the issue of counselling. Thus, the instructions for the research were amended in the light of the pilot study. Also, participants who were strangers chose the longest inter-personal distance and those who were most familiar with me chose the closest inter-personal distance. This finding re-inforced literature speculating that strangers take the furthest inter-personal distance and friends the closest (e.g. Argyle, 1972; Bales, 1958; Birdwhistell, 1971; Fast, 1971; Pease and Garner, 1992 and Vrij et al, 1992). It also confirmed the decision of dividing the participants into the three groups of: 1) strangers, 2) those recognised though not greeted, and 3) those who were recognised and also greeted. In order to eliminate as many unnecessary variables as possible, I wore the same clothes, hairstyle and make-up throughout pilot study 1 and eventually study 1, so that any change in inter-personal distance was not due to changes in my appearance.

In the practise study 2, I took the opportunity to practise the technique of in depth interviewing using three male adult members of my family as interviewees. In order to practise the technique without worrying about the



content of the interview, I interviewed them individually on their habits when sitting at a dinner table with the temporary aim of focussing down on whether they put their elbows on the dinner table. Once I felt that I had practised the technique of in depth interviewing enough, I added my aim of ascertaining awareness regarding proxemics and practised on three volunteer colleagues. I learnt that I needed to focus on narrowing down to proxemics within the time I had set for conducting the interview or I ran the risk of counselling the participant rather than collecting the data I needed. Hence, by the time I embarked on study 2, I was practised in the technique of in depth interviewing and aware of pitfalls related to it, such as the possibility of the intended interview time being used to counsel, and the other possibility of going over the time contracted to conduct the interview in. After the pilot 1 and practise 2 studies, it was possible to embark on study 1 before conducting study 2.

#### **4.3 Study 1 (quantitative method)**

The aim which the researcher had concerning data collection for study 1, was to find a total of 144 English speaking male and female adults from three different countries and measure the distance which they each independently chose to sit at, in a purported counselling relationship. 144 English-speaking adults were selected because the research was connected with adult, English-speaking counselling, as opposed to counselling children in a different language. Further, since the minimum number of participants for research data to be accepted by the BPS levels of testing is 100 or over, 144 were included so that data was gathered from more than the minimum

stipulated. Hence, during July 1998 in Branson USA, August 1998 in Gibraltar and September 1998 in Dorset England, the researcher stayed in each respective place for seven days. These three research sites were chosen because culture was one of the factors considered, with three variables. Each country needed to be English-speaking because the research would have been more complicated if a country had been chosen where an interpreter was needed, due to not knowing the language, thus adding an unnecessary aspect to this research. In each location the experimenter found a cafeteria which had small tables and identical movable chairs for its clients to sit on. Each morning, at 9.a.m. she (the researcher) sat for up to two hours near the door of the cafeteria (with the proprietor's permission) and when a Caucasian adult walked in (who was either a complete stranger, or whose face she had recognised from seeing the stranger in the cafeteria the day before, although not acknowledged them verbally, or whose face she recognised from previously seeing the individual in the cafeteria so greeted the person with "Good morning"), she approached the adult and informally explained that she was looking for volunteers who had lived in that country from the age of two years, to help her with some research on psychology she was undertaking towards gaining her doctorate and that it would take up to five minutes of their time and would involve moving a chair and sitting in it. The experimenter then asked whether they would like to volunteer to be participants in the research or not. It was decided to choose a cafeteria because it was understood that individuals who go to a cafeteria may have a few minutes to spare for the research. Also, it was assumed that an adequate number of people would go to a cafeteria for research data to be gathered from there.



All who were approached, willingly volunteered. The researcher explained to the volunteers (on a one to one basis), that she would give some informal information to ensure informed consent, and then follow this by formal instructions so that all participants started from the same base-line of informed consent and standardised instructions. The informal information is in appendix 5. Formal instructions can be found in appendix 6. The points which were covered in the informal information were memorised to be brought up in an improvisatory way during delivery of the informal information. The script which was used for the formal instructions was rehearsed and learnt by heart, so that the formal instructions could be delivered to each participant in the same way. (The skills of improvising and delivering a script by heart are skills which the researcher had practised professionally for approximately two decades.) After anonymity was assured, and all instructions were given and it was acknowledged that they were understood, participants chose an empty chair from the cafeteria, picked it up and placed it at the distance that they wanted it to be from the assumed counsellor, as if they were having a counselling session to talk about a personal problem; which is what each participant was asked to do.

With a tape measuring inches, after each respondent sat down, the experimenter measured the distance between the nearest front chair legs of the two chairs which the purported counsellor and client sat on. Then each respondent was debriefed and asked if there were any questions, before being thanked and leaving. (These participants were given a contact



telephone number in case there was anything they wanted to talk to the researcher about, regarding their experience with her; in the hope of communicating to them that they were valued, as opposed to exploited.) This process was repeated with each participant: In this way, the raw data was collected for study 1. The measurements of the raw data are in appendix 7. In accordance with the assumption stated in the Introduction that there would be a difference in distances when specific groups of people were compared with each other, the data was grouped accordingly. The groups were organised as follows:

Males who were total strangers to the experimenter in USA, Gibraltar and England, were coded as groups one, two and three respectively. Females who were total strangers to the experimenter in USA, Gibraltar and England, were coded as groups four, five and six respectively. Males who were strangers yet whose faces were recognised by the experimenter in USA, Gibraltar and England, were coded as groups seven, eight and nine respectively. Females who were strangers yet whose faces were recognised by the experimenter in USA, Gibraltar and England, were coded as groups ten, eleven and twelve respectively. Males who were strangers yet whose faces was recognised by the experimenter so that she greeted them with “Good morning”, in USA, Gibraltar and England, were coded as groups thirteen, fourteen and fifteen respectively. Females who were strangers yet whose faces were recognised by the experimenter so that she greeted them with “Good morning”, in USA, Gibraltar and England, were coded as groups sixteen, seventeen and eighteen respectively.

The above eighteen groups were correlated with each other, and the data analysed, using factor analysis. This data is in appendix 8. Factor analysis was used in order to simplify a complex set of data, as in appendix 7; and allow an understanding concerning a matrix of correlations in terms of a few underlying factors, as in appendix 8. (The correlational matrix shows the individual correlation between every group.) 144 participants were used for collecting data in order to make sure that there were adequate samples from all variables (Nunnally, 1978; Guilford, 1958; Barrett and Kline, 1981; Arrindel and Ende, 1985). The main reason for using factor analysis was to account for the variance in distances which the participants chose to sit at, and to answer specific questions, as stated in the Introduction: Does the physical inter-personal space between members of an assumed counselling dyad vary depending on: a) the culture which the client is embedded in? b) the level of familiarity between members who make up the counselling dyad? c) the gender of individuals in the counselling relationship?

#### **4.4 Study 1 contexts dates and times of data collection:**

As already noted in sub-section 4.3, during the month of July, 1998, I flew to Branson, USA where I stayed for a week to collect the first third of my data for the quantitative part of this research. During the month of August, 1998, I travelled to Gibraltar where I stayed for a week to collect another third of my data for the quantitative part of this research. During the month of September,

1998, I travelled to Dorset in England where I stayed for a week to collect the last third of my data for the quantitative part of this research. Data was collected between 9.00. a.m. and 11.00. a.m. from each country, when I sat at a cafeteria and approached strangers who entered it. (Each cafeteria had small tables and chairs without armrests, that were identical.) During data collection my clothes were casual yet smart and I wore sunglasses on top of my head. By donning such attire my intention was to imply that I was not a local person, thus making it easier for myself to approach strangers for help, and perhaps strangers were more open to helping a person who looked reasonably clean and tidy (as opposed to looking dirty and untidy). My demeanour was unthreatening and my tone of voice was neither gruff nor shrill. Participants were approached on a first-come first-approached basis, dependant on fulfilling the criteria for approachability, which are explained in sub-section 4.5 below.

#### **4.5 Study 1 respondents**

144 participants who were unknown to the experimenter were chosen. They were selected on the basis of having lived in either England, the United States of America or Gibraltar since at least the age of two years, in order to ensure that the country they were in was their home. Participants were aged between approximately 25 and 65 years because only adult respondents were sought. 72 of them were male and 72 were female, since gender bias as well as cultural influence were searched for. The experimenter who was Greek Cypriot spoke in fluent English to all the participants. All subjects were



Caucasian, spoke English fluently, seemed able-bodied, appearing to hear and see the researcher satisfactorily. They said that they understood the instructions.

#### **4.6 Study 1 design**

An Analysis of Variance was used with the design of three between participants' variables. The first independent variable was gender of the participants with two levels (1 male, 2 female). The second was culture with three levels (1 England, 2 Gibraltar, 3 USA). The third was familiarity with three levels (1 strangers, 2 recognition, 3 acknowledge).

The dependent variable was the distance of the chairs between the individuals who made up the participant and experimenter pairs. A post experimental interview was conducted to debrief each participant and explain the study. Then each participant was given, in writing, the researcher's full name, a contact telephone number, the address of the University where she is registered as a student, and the telephone number of her temporary residence in each respective country, just in case they wanted to speak to her again with regard to the research (to date, only one has made contact).

#### **4.7 Study 1 apparatus**

Two identical chairs (in each cafeteria) for the purported counselling dyad to sit in were used, and a tape-measure to measure the distance in inches from the front chair leg of the purported counsellor's chair to the closest front chair

leg of the purported client's chair. Pen and paper for noting the distance were obviously used.

#### **4.8 Study 1 procedure**

The experimenter sat at the cafeteria in each country, as explained earlier. The tables she sat at were small and there were no other chairs at her tables. There were many empty chairs at other tables, since the cafeterias were almost empty at 9.a.m. in the mornings, and by 11.a.m. when the cafeterias were becoming relatively busy, the experimenter left (as previously agreed with the proprietor of each cafeteria). She approached strangers on an individual basis, as they entered the cafeteria. Each participant was individually asked by the experimenter if they would mind helping her in some psychological research she was conducting, which would not take more than five minutes of their time and would involve listening to instructions and then moving a chair before sitting in it. All participants who were approached said they wanted to help, so they were given the informal information (see appendix 5) then the formal instructions (see appendix 6) before being instructed as follows: "Imagine that you are coming to see me for a counselling session because you would like some support with a personal problem." Then the experimenter sat on a chair saying: "This is where I shall sit to counsel you. Please move a chair to the place you would like it to be if you were the client who was coming to see me for support about a personal problem, and then sit in it." Then the participant carried out the instruction before the experimenter measured and noted the distance between the

nearest front chair legs of the chairs which the members of the purported counselling dyad sat in. Then the experimenter explained to the participants that the purpose of their participation was to see how near or far they put their chairs, in relation to the purported counsellor's chair. Participants took up to five minutes each from initially being approached by the experimenter, to leaving after being asked if they had any questions and thanked. Each participant was dealt with on an individual basis so that there was no deliberation between them; hence, their responses were not influenced by another person. It took the experimenter approximately five consecutive days of sitting in the same cafeteria in the same chair at the same table and the same time in each country, to collect the data. After the quantitative data was collected, the qualitative data needed collecting.

#### **4.9 Study 2 outline plan**

For the qualitative part of this research, in order to ascertain awareness of proxemics regarding those who practise psychological counselling: I conducted audio-taped (for the purposes of transcription) in depth one to one interviews, with six professional psychological counsellors (group ppc) and six trainee psychological counsellors (group tpc). Half of group ppc were male and half of group tpc were female. Each interview lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. When circumstances allowed, I photographed any chairs which were relevant to the topic of the interview if the interviewee agreed to the photograph being taken. The transcriptions of the in depth interviews are



in the floppy disc attached at the end of volume 2 and copies of the photographs are in appendix 9.

#### **4.10 Study 2 rationale for the use of in depth interviews**

I chose to use the technique of in depth interviews to glean qualitative data, due to the following reasons: There has been much discontent within the relevant literature regarding what was perceived as a narrowness of vision, concerning experimental design, statistical analysis and laboratory studies; and in particular, various critiques were published in the 1970's which exemplified this discontent within the field of psychology (e.g. Harre and Secord, 1972; Gergen, 1973 and Shotter, 1975). This dissatisfaction illustrated the yearning for a different way of researching in psychology which embraced the four aspects listed below:

- 1 An acknowledgement that language plays a crucial role in researching.
- 2 A perception that dynamic inter-action is central to researching.
- 3 Being concerned with individuals, as opposed to generic rules.
- 4 Research performed with ordinary people in the world they live in, instead of in an academic laboratory.

Further, it has been suggested that just as social relationship is the basis of counselling, so human interaction is embedded in social relationship (Billing et al, 1988). Indeed, the action of collecting information by the use of one-to-

one interviewing, particularly in depth interviewing, parallels that of a counselling relationship, where the responses of participants are listened to non-judgementally and accepted, while following a model's framework.

Veritably, if respect, empathy, congruence and acceptance are established within a relationship, according to Mearns and McLeod (1984) the participant will be more inclined to be involved in the research in a productive and genuine way. Hence, I chose to use in depth interviews, hoping to initially establish high levels of these qualities with respondents.

In the light of previous literature as detailed in the Introduction, (e.g. Egan, 1977 and Steiner, 1990) it is important to see if speculation can be backed up by research, using not only a quantitative methodology (due to the generalised statements which have been made by these psychologists, such as: non-verbal communication is important) but also a qualitative one where the individual perceptions of respondents are taken into consideration.

Consequently, the two methodologies were utilised. Although it was easy to measure distance in inches for the quantitative methodology, there were difficulties which centred on the complex aspect of ascertaining awareness concerning proxemics within those who practise counselling. If I had chosen a method which relied solely on observation, it may not have been accurate, since I would have interpreted the actions of those practising psychological counselling, instead of the practitioners speaking for themselves. Indeed, according to Atkinson et al (1991) human action is part of a system which is also made up of the beliefs and emotion of a person. By using in depth interviews, these parts of a person would not necessarily be hidden.

However, if a questionnaire had been used where respondents either marked boxes or placed their responses on a continuum scale, it would have limited them to the conjectures already constructed within the questionnaire (Harre, 1979). It therefore seemed inappropriate to choose another method apart from in depth interviews to glean a rich picture of respondents' beliefs, thoughts, and actions (and therefore awareness) regarding proxemics.

#### **4.11 Study 2 equipment**

I used a black and white disposable camera with built in flash, which was bought from a supermarket, for taking photographs of any relevant seating arrangements if there was an opportunity to do so. A small portable audio tape recorder for recording the interviews (so that I could transcribe them later) was also utilised; and an IBM ThinkPad 600 lap-top computer for typing my personal diary after the interviews so that I had a record of my own process regarding the interviews (the diary is in appendix 1).

#### **4.12 Study 2 participants**

I interviewed seventeen participants. Twelve of the taped interviews were used. The other five were discarded due to very poor sound quality on the tape. Six interviewees were counselling students and the other six of the interviewees were working as professional psychological counsellors (since this research focuses on an aspect of psychological counselling). Their ages ranged from approximately 25 to 65 years (because adults who were



currently practising counselling were sought for the interviews). They all appeared to be able-bodied and spoke English fluently. Half of the interviewees were men and the other half were women, in each group (to ensure equal opportunities for both men and women to voice their perspectives). From the qualified professional group: One of the practitioners described himself as a psychotherapist, another two described themselves as professional counsellors (one female and one male), and the rest as chartered counselling psychologists.

#### **4.13 Study 2 strategy**

A minimum of three male and three female counselling students, and three female and three male psychological counsellors, were asked to be individually in depth interviewed, by me, regarding counselling and were informed that the interview would take from thirty to forty-five minutes. Each interviewee knew that I was investigating proxemics since I had verbally explained this to them, before starting the interviews. The interviews were audio-taped, informed consent was given and photographs of the seating which the interviewee and I had sat in during the interview were taken if the interviewee agreed to this and the opportunity arose. After transcribing the interviews, recurring themes were searched for by reading through the transcripts repeatedly to glean phrases relevant to proxemics and identify any other themes, as suggested by Potter and Wetherall (1987). Constructs were also focussed on to see what meaning the themes had, thus, this thematic analysis includes investigating the variety of repertoires written and the

relationships between them, as Marshall (1993) suggests. Although study 1 took gender, culture and familiarity into account, pre-conceived themes were not looked for in study 2, since emergent themes were gleaned in a heuristic way.

In order to do this, the transcripts were repeatedly read before being colour coded with regard to emergent themes. Further, the transcripts were given to one pending chartered counselling psychologist, six chartered counselling psychologists and two chartered occupational psychologists who were independently asked to see what themes (which were not pre-assumed) they could find and to colour-code them. Indeed, they did not know the themes I had in my mind concerning the data. In this way, new themes were discovered; as well as validating themes I had already coded, hence triangulating the qualitative data. The themes are stated in chapter 6. All the eight chartered psychologists were given one different transcript each, the counselling psychologist whose chartered status is pending, was given the remaining four transcripts. In order to verify this triangulation, another chartered counselling psychologist independently married the themes which I coded to the themes which the other psychologists found (i.e. not influenced by my pairings of such themes because I did not tell her my findings until she finished her matching-up). The pairings she eventually made were identical to mine. These can be found in chapter 6.

#### **4.14 Study 2 context dates and times of data collection**



During the month of February (1998), I contacted three institutions in southern England which train students on professional counselling courses, and asked the appropriate heads of departments if I could have their permission to interview four male and four female students for my research, from each institution, which would remain anonymous. They said that they would ask the students and give them my telephone number if they wanted to be involved and that if the reply from any student was a positive one, then I would be contacted. They responded in the affirmative: By March 1998, I had eighteen contact telephone numbers of female and male counselling students who had telephoned me and left their telephone number for me to contact them because they were willing to be interviewed. I telephoned each one and arranged appointments with those I was able to contact so that the interviews could take place. I was able to contact seven men and eight women student counsellors. Eventually, four men and four women were interviewed by me, on the basis of finding a mutually agreeable time and place for the interviewing. (The tape recordings of one male and one female student were too poor in sound quality to transcribe so they were not used.) I sent a letter thanking each institution which helped in enabling me to be supplied with the contact telephone numbers of student counsellors who were practising counselling. A copy of this letter is in appendix 10. The day after each interview, I telephoned the interviewees to thank them again for their helpful participation and to check that they knew how to contact me, if they wanted to. The institutions which the students trained at, were kind enough to allow me to interview participants in one of their training rooms, during lunch hours.



Hence, between the months of March and April 1998, I interviewed one female student a week, during her lunch break, as arranged between the appropriate training institution, the student and I. Hence, four interviews were conducted during March. During the months from April to June 1998 inclusively, I interviewed four male counselling students. Two of the men were interviewed at their training institutions on the same basis as the female students. The other two men were interviewed in the privacy of the back garden of a thriving natural health centre in southern England, which I am involved with, during a sunny early afternoon on a week-day in June (on a one to one basis). Interviews with the students were transcribed during July and August, 1998.

The qualified psychological counsellors were found on an opportunistic basis: In September 1998, I attended a course on psychological testing and took my portable audio-cassette recorder with me in the hope of finding appropriate interviewees. On the first day of that course, during the morning break, I explained to as many of the professional psychological counsellors that I could, that I was looking for practitioner counsellors to interview in depth regarding proxemics within psychological counselling, as part of my research work. Consequently, a few individuals whom I had approached volunteered to be interviewees. Hence, on the first day of that course, I interviewed two male chartered counselling psychologists in the corner of the restaurant part of a pub. On the second day of that course I interviewed a female chartered

counselling psychologist in the same place as the men on the previous day, during the lunch break.

During October, November and December 1998, I attended further psychological testing trainings; having taken my portable audio-cassette recorder with me, I took the opportunity to ask for volunteer interviewees, just as I had done previously (see above paragraph). Consequently, during the lunch break on one of the days of the October training, I interviewed a male psychological counsellor in the corner of a restaurant. During the lunch break on the first day of the November training, I interviewed a female psychological counsellor in the corner of a restaurant, and a male at 5.00.p.m. On the second day I interviewed a female chartered counselling psychologist at the same time and place as the male on the previous day. During the December training, as I had previously done: I took the opportunity to tape interviews. On the first day of that training, during the lunch break, I interviewed a female psychological counsellor in the corner of a restaurant which was attached to a pub. During the month of January 1999, I attended a counselling course as part of my continuing professional development, and acting opportunistically again, when I saw a colleague on the course whom I had trained with at a University previously, I told him about my search for interviewees regarding this research on psychological counselling and he volunteered to be interviewed. Consequently, I interviewed him, a counselling psychologist, sitting on a bench in a quiet corridor of an art gallery in London during the lunch break (on the same day that I saw him).

I now had a total of seventeen taped interviews. The professional psychological counsellors' interviews were transcribed during the months of February, March and April 1999. The five interviews which were not transcribed had such a poor sound quality when the cassette tape was listened to, that it was not possible to transcribe those tapes fully.

#### **4.15 Interviewing for the research**

The in depth interviews were used to ascertain awareness in counselling practitioners of proxemics within counselling. The text of the transcribed in depth interviews is in the floppy disc which is attached at the end of this project. This is because if I had attached a hard copy of all the interviews, it would have taken up a whole other volume. As it is, the floppy disc only takes up a relatively small amount of space. Such is the power of technology.

Regarding interviewing, Mischler (1986) declares that "The text of an interview schedule is of course only one element of an interview situation that may produce estrangement and alienation in respondents. Problems of context and the meaning and impact of specific types of questions are related intimately to the relative power of interviewees and interviewers. The marked asymmetry of power manifest in current forms of research practice reflects more than the essential feature of an interview as a speech event, that is, a situation with defined roles for questioners and respondents. It is indicative beyond this feature, of an interviewer's relatively total control over the structuring of meaning" (p. 90).



Being aware of the above caveat as explained by Mischler (1986), my intention to redistribute power for interview purposes, was organised as follows: I perceived myself, the interviewer, as a reporter, and the interviewees as reporters. As an investigator, I saw my role as reporting the understandings of the respondents' reportings, within their cultural experiences, as correctly as possible. To help myself in doing this, I followed the guidelines which have been laid down by Sudman and Norman (1982). As they suggest, I specify the context, date and time of where the action of each interview took place. These details are included in this Method section, (see sub-section 4.14).

#### **4.16 Interviewing problems**

A problem with interviewing was that the interview was concerned with an aspect of non-verbal communication, yet the non-verbal aspects of the interview were lost when the discourse was transcribed. Each symbol on the page of the written word which was verbalised, is a transformation from vocal to written form. This transformation re-arranged the rhythm of speech into lines of written language and the vocal qualities of warmth or harshness are excluded by the limits of transposing verbalisations onto a page. Other vocal qualities are also lost, such as pace, stress, volume and pitch. Non-verbal dimensions of vocalisations may be only partially represented by text (such as writing LAUGHS when there is laughter or GRUNTS when there is grunting). Audio-taping may have captured these, but still was unable to capture bodily

stances, gestures and facial expressions, which a video camera perhaps could have captured.

Another problem encountered was that I did not feel that I had freedom of choice to change the direction any interview was going in order to explore a multiplicity of avenues fleetingly glimpsed during the interviewing process (such as working with children). This is because not all dimensions glimpsed could be explored, since to discuss every possibility, with all interviewees, would be too slow a process, and perhaps ultimately destructive to the whole project. I, like the theatre director Brook (1968), needed a sense of timing, needed to be aware of the rhythms of the process and how working on each part of it meant that it must not be at the expense of any other part. I experienced the interviewing process as simultaneously private and privileged during the moment to moment inter-personal relating. It was my intention to empower respondents through the interview process in the arena of moment to moment awareness (Zake, 1993). In this way, I hoped that they felt free and safe enough to deliberate on their awareness of proxemics.

A problem was the potential power imbalance between the interviewees and myself and how this might have had an effect on their responses (Kvale, 1990 and Smith, 1995). Hence, I realised that I needed to bear in mind informed consent and find a fit between my interpretation as interviewer and the respondents' understandings. I repeatedly listened to the taped interviews. The interviews were at least speech happenings. The interaction where the happenings took place were within the framework of what the interviewee and

I experienced as appropriate to disclose, within the culture at that moment in time. And each interview experience was a facet of the interviewee's and my shared verbal competencies. Further, bearing in mind that the interviews were concerned with proxemics, the respondents chose the distance which they were happy to sit at while being interviewed. Additional details regarding the in depth interviews are in chapter 6.

A further problem was that I was so interested in what the participants were telling me that sometimes my enthusiasm for what I was researching seemed to be catching, so that many of the interviewees disclosed information after the taped interview, especially concerning the issue of power in relation to proxemics, which they did not want taped or published, hence, in order to honour their wish, those rich deliberations remain confidential.

#### **4.17 Study 2 data analysis**

The guidelines set by Smith (1995) for analysing data were chosen so that unpredicted themes could emerge:

- I studied the transcripts individually and categorised the text into emerging themes (by choosing words or phrases to underline), then I colour coded each theme (a sample of this is in appendix 11).
- For purposes of triangulation (to ensure verifiability), a group of colleagues were shown the transcriptions and asked to find the themes which



emerged, i.e. not themes which were pre-conceived (a sample of themes which colleagues found is in appendix 12); a different colleague was asked to pair the themes which peers found with the ones I gleaned.

- A list of main themes was highlighted by cutting and sticking the words or phrases which were colour coded in order to eventually put one main theme on the sheets and identify inter-connections with other themes. Main words were allocated to each sheet, such as “power”, in order to identify the emergent key themes. If any uncommon themes were found, they were not excluded (a sample of a main theme cut and stuck together, showing inter-connections with other themes is in appendix 13 and a sample of an uncommon theme is in appendix 14).
- In order to confirm that the way the words and phrases were sorted into themes was true to the original intended meaning which each interviewee had, I re-examined the original transcripts and listened to the tapes repeatedly.
- The themes which were finally gleaned were then linked to the current work.
- I wrote a diary regarding my impression of each interview (see appendix 1) and transcribed all recorded interviews (see floppy disc at the end of this project in volume 2).

- I themed my process diary in a similar way as I themed the transcripts; retrospectively, to see if similar themes emerged to those which were in the transcripts, and as part of the method I used for being transparent within the qualitative research (a sample of my themed diary is in appendix 15).

The themes are in chapter 6. These are discussed, in relation to relevant literature, in the main Discussion section (in chapter 7).

#### **4.18 Chapter 4 discussion**

The present research was not only designed to empirically investigate the physical distances between members who made up purported counselling dyads (study 1), but also to investigate awareness within individuals who practise counselling (study 2). Hence, two methodologies were used: quantitative and qualitative, respectively. Results of the pilot studies determined the eventual modifications leading to the final versions chosen for giving instructions to participants (study1) and conducting in depth interviews (study 2). None of the literature found had described using more than one methodology; hence, using two methodologies here, adds a refreshing dimension to existing works.

On the basis of the literature cited (see chapters 1 - 3) it was felt that the issue of proxemics within a counselling relationship was not (fully) addressed, hence it is spot-lighted in this research bearing in mind not to under-estimate



its breadth, depth and complexity, therefore factors of gender, familiarity and culture were included, in study 1, using a quantitative methodology; as previously stated; the aim of this was to see if variations in distances between members of purported counselling dyads were influenced by gender, familiarity and cultural factors. In addition, themes entwined within the aspect of proxemics with reference to counselling, were identified in study 2 using a qualitative methodology of in depth interviews to ascertain awareness of proxemics within those who practise counselling. Thus bringing depth, breadth and texture to this research.

#### **4.19 Chapter 4 summary**

- **Two methodologies were used for this research.**
- **A rationale for using two methodologies is offered.**
- **The design, procedure and participants of the two studies are described.**
- **One method, study 1, involved factor analysis to see if there was a difference in distances chosen by individuals in a purported counselling relationship depending on the factors (regarding apparent clients) of gender with two levels (female and male), familiarity with three levels (strangers, recognised and acknowledged) and culture with three levels (Dorset in England, Gibraltar and Branson in USA).**
- **The other method, study 2, involved in depth interviews with individuals who practice counselling (both students and**



professionals) in order to ascertain their awareness regarding proxemics.

- I kept a diary of my own process, regarding the in depth interviews.
- Both methods were conducted after appropriate pilot and practise studies were performed (pilot study 1 and practise study 2, respectfully).
- There was a consideration of ethical issues.
- Findings are in the following two chapters (5 and 6).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5 Results of study 1**

#### **5.1 Study 1 results**

#### **5.2 Study 1 summarising information**

##### **5.2.1 Study 1 central tendency**

##### **5.2.2 Study 1 spread**

##### **5.2.3 Study 1 normal distribution**

#### **5.3 Study 1 correlation**

##### **5.3.1 Study 1 strength and direction of relationship**

#### **5.4 Study 1 samples and population**

#### **5.5 Study 1 reliability and validity**

##### **5.5.1 Study 1 overall distances**

##### **5.5.2 Study 1 specific distances**

#### **5.6 Post Hoc Tests**

## **5.7 Study 1 overview**

### **5.7.1 Study 1 discussion**

## **5.8 Chapter 5 summary**



## Chapter 5

### 5 RESULTS OF STUDY 1

*people were different from one another*

(Dr. D'Adamo, 1996, XIIV).

Although the epigraph to this chapter states the outcome of what was observed, there were also similarities between individuals. In order to provide structure in the way that the results are presented, the results of study 1 are shown in this chapter before stating the findings of study 2 in chapter 6. Results are coloured by the research questions which for study 1 are threefold: 1) Does the distance between members of a purported counselling dyad vary due to gender? 2) Does the distance between members of a purported counselling dyad vary due to familiarity? 3) Does the distance between members who make up a purported counselling dyad vary due to culture?

As a reminder, a summary of the data regarding the participants of study 1 follows (a fuller description of participants is in the previous chapter): There was a total of 144 participants. Half of these were women and the other half, men; this is shown in table 8. Each of the three familiarity groups (i.e. strangers, recognise and acknowledge) had forty-eight participants with an equal distribution of women and men; this is shown in table 9. All of the participants were equally distributed between the three cultures (i.e. forty-

eight in England, forty-eight in USA and forty-eight in Gibraltar); this is shown in table 10. Each participant was asked to place her or his chair at the distance she or he would like it to be, and sit in it, if the experimenter was the counsellor whom she or he was seeing about a personal problem. This summary data of participants is to help put the results (see below) into perspective.

### **5.1 Study 1 results**

The study 1 analysis examined proxemics between purported counselling dyads while taking into account gender, familiarity and culture. The 2 (Gender i.e. male and female) x 3 (Familiarity i.e. strangers, recognised and acknowledged) x 3 (Culture i.e. USA, Gibraltar and England) ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) revealed a significant main effect for familiarity: This means that using a linear contrast analysis a main effect was found showing significantly different distances between levels of familiarity ( $F_{40.973, df=2, 141}$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The analysis which was run also showed that there were significantly different distances between gender ( $F_{10.924, df=1, 142}$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and culture ( $F_{66.445, df=2, 141}$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

These results indicate that the participants sat at different distances as a function of the group sample of people they were chosen from. Since the between participants ANOVA results supported the hypothesis as stated in the Introduction that purported clients would choose different distances to sit from the assumed counsellor depending on gender, culture and familiarity

factors, post hoc tests were performed to determine which combinations of respondents were at a significantly different distance. Subsequent Tukey Honestly Significant Differences (HSD) post hoc tests revealed that all combinations of respondents were, indeed, at a significantly different distance ( $p < 0.001$ ), apart from respondents from the USA when compared with respondents from Gibraltar (where the distance was not significantly different). Initially, the data was summarised to obtain an overall view of the results.

## **5.2 Study 1 summarising information**

Descriptives were used to summarise the information regarding the study 1 data which revealed the following concerning central tendency and spread:

### **5.2.1 Study 1 central tendency**

The central tendency (i.e. the 'centre of gravity' regarding individuals' distances) was expressed in the following three ways

- 1 Mean (this was the average distance). The overall (N,144) mean was 27 inches, the females (n, 72) mean was 32 inches and the males (n, 72) mean was 21 inches; all means here are to the nearest inch.

Relating these means to the hypothesis as stated in the Introduction that men and women would choose different distances from their purported client, the means do indeed show that women chose more



distant proximity (a mean distance of 32 inches) to their assumed counsellor than men (a mean distance of 21 inches). Table 1 shows the overall, females and males means in inches to four decimal places.

The means were analysed in more detail using descriptive statistics on the SPSS (version 8) and results revealed that when the mean distances from each of the countries were compared to each other, participants in the USA chose to sit at a closer distance than those from Gibraltar and England, and participants from England chose to sit at a further distance than those from USA and Gibraltar. Relating these means to the hypothesis as stated in the Introduction that proxemics would vary depending on culture, it does indeed show that participants from England, Gibraltar and the USA had different mean distances: 45 inches, 18 inches and 17 inches (to the nearest inch), respectively. This is shown in inches (up to four decimal places) in table 2.

Further, strangers took the most distance, and those acknowledged chose the least physical distance, as shown in table 3 where the mean distances are documented in inches to four decimal places. This relates to the hypothesis as stated in the Introduction that purported counsellees would choose different distances depending on the factor of familiarity. And indeed, the mean differences between the levels of acknowledged, recognised and strangers were 15 inches, 26 inches and 38 inches (to the nearest inch), respectively.

- 2
- Median (this was the middle position regarding distance). The overall median (N, 144) was 25 inches. It was important to work out the mode since the mean median and mode need ideally to be the same in order to have a normal distribution.
- 3
- Mode (this was the distance which occurred most frequently). The overall (N, 144) mode was 25 inches. This figure is important because it is identical to the median, which indicates a normal distribution.

**Table 1** Mean distance and SD in inches of males, females and overall

Gender1male2female	Mean	N	StandardDeviation
Male	21.3194	72	19.1825
Female	31.9167	72	19.2922
Total	26.6181	144	19.8938
This shows females (2) preference for more distance when compared to males (1) and the Standard Deviation (SD) of 1, 2 and overall.  N = number of participants.			

**Table 2** Distance & SD in inches of participants in England, USA & Gibraltar

Culture	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
England	45.1042	48	18.1966
USA	17.0625	48	16.5779
Gibraltar	17.6878	48	8.6299
This shows that participants in England chose the greatest distance and participants in the USA chose the least distance, and the greatest SD was from the English, whereas the least SD was from Gibraltarian participants.  N = Number of participants.			

**Table 3** Mean distance and SD in inches for Strangers, Recognise and Acknowledge groups

Familiarity	Mean	N	SD
Strangers	38.2917	48	19.7893
Recognise	26.2500	48	18.3204
Acknowledge	15.3125	48	14.3885
This shows that the more familiar the assumed clients were with the purported client, the closer to her they chose to sit. The Standard Deviation shows that the most deviation from the mean was in the Strangers group and that the least deviation from the mean was in the Acknowledge group.			



### **5.2.2 Study 1 spread**

Spread refers to the variability around the mean. Hence, as the spread increased, the more varied the distances were which participants had chosen.

Spread was expressed in the following ways:

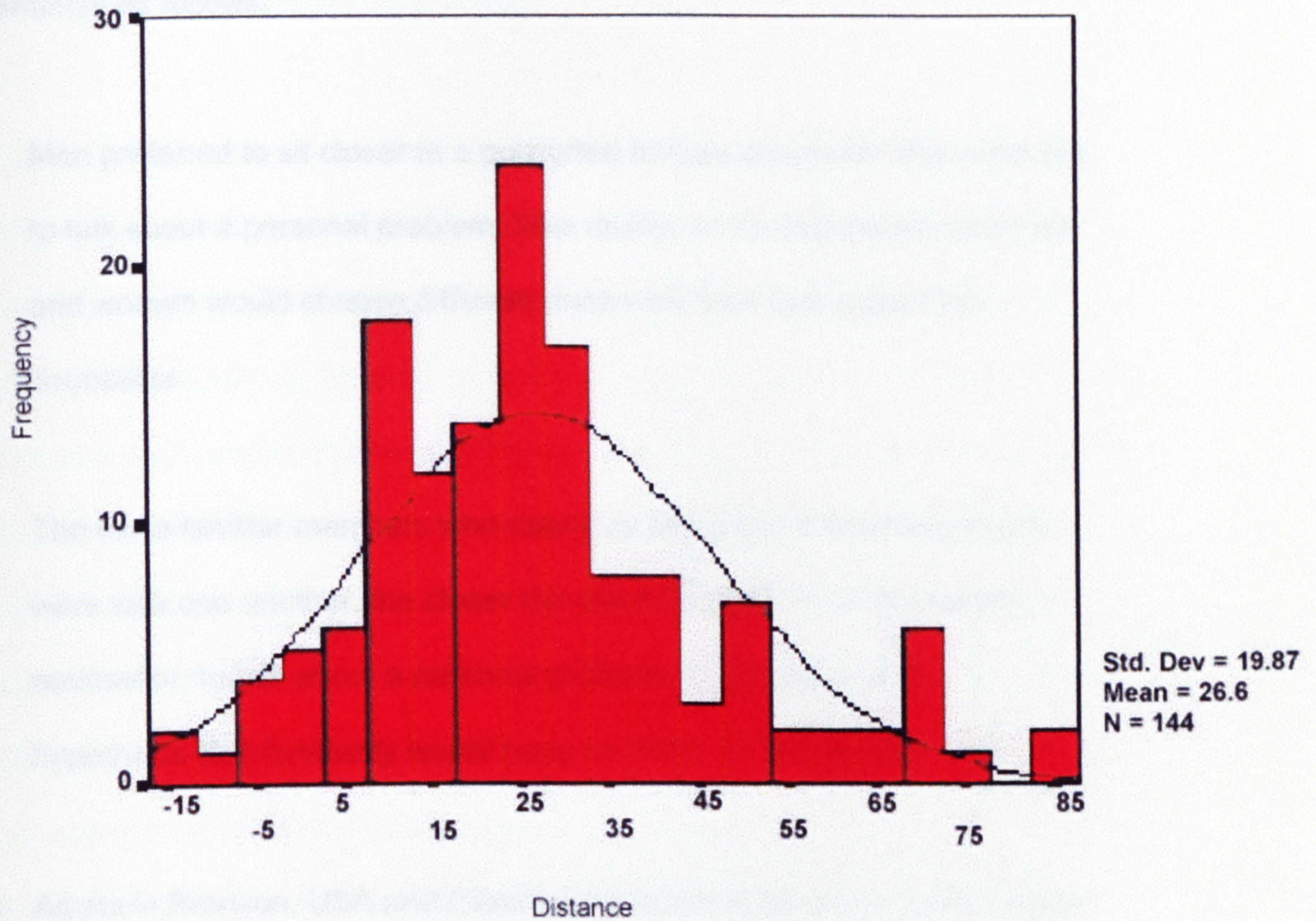
- 1      Range (this was the number of inches between the most and the least distance): 102. The minimum number of inches was –16 and the maximum was 86. Such a large range is indicative that there was a satisfactory number of participants to run the analysis.
  
- 2      Standard deviation (this was the most typical amount of inches which participants deviated from the mean distance): 19.8938, this is the overall SD. A large SD is indicative of the satisfactory amount of participants chosen for study 1. The SD's for participants from Gibraltar, USA and England are shown in table 2; participants from England had the most SD and participants in Gibraltar had the least. SD's for participants from the three familiarity groups (strangers, recognise and acknowledge) are in table 3; the strangers group had the most SD and the acknowledge group had the least SD.

### **5.2.3 Study 1 normal distribution**

There was a normal distribution. A bell shaped curve illustrating the normal distribution is shown in figure 1. Consequently, the analysis could continue, while ruling out the possibility of skewness. Figure 1 is on the next page.



**Figure 1 Bell shaped curve**



This bell shaped curve illustrates a normal distribution.



### **5.3 Study 1 correlation**

The statistical technique of correlation showed relationships between variables as follows:

- 1 Men preferred to sit closer to a purported female counsellor than women; to talk about a personal problem. This relates to the hypothesis that men and women would choose different distances from their purported counsellor.
- 2 The more familiar members who made up assumed counselling dyads were with one another, the closer the client chose to sit to the female counsellor; to talk about a personal problem. This relates to the hypothesis that familiarity would have an effect on proxemics.
- 3 Adults in Branson, USA and Gibraltar preferred to sit closer to the female counsellor than adults in Dorset, England; to talk about a personal problem. This relates to the hypothesis that culture would have an influence on interpersonal space.

#### **5.3.1 Study 1 strength and direction of relationship**

Bearing in mind the above correlations, there was a strong negative relationship between an increase in levels of familiarity between individuals

who made up adult members of a purported counselling dyad, and a decrease in the physical distances between them. This also supports the hypothesis that familiarity has an effect on proxemics.

#### **5.4 Study 1 samples and population**

The participants from each of the three different cultures (USA, England and Gibraltar) were only samples of the total population, hence it is unlikely that the mean and standard deviation from one sample of people from one culture would be identical to a different sample of people from the same culture.

The standard error of the mean (SEmean) was therefore calculated to show the extent to which the mean of the total sample of people chosen was likely to deviate from the means of other samples of the same size from the total population from which the participants were chosen. Statistics showed that the Std. Error of Mean was 1.6578 inches. Thus, the actual mean of the population from which the total sample of participants was drawn was 26.6181 inches plus or minus 1.6578 inches. Importantly, while bearing the SEmean (1.6578) in mind, the distribution is still normal (i.e. bell shaped curve)

#### **5.5 Study 1 reliability and validity**

The level of reliability shown by the statistics was acceptable. Since the validity co-efficient ( $r$ ) = >0.8, the results are valid and reliable. This is bearing

in mind that  $r$  needs to be no less than 0.7 for the results to be valid and reliable

### **5.5.1 Study 1 overall distances**

The raw data showing the distance which each participant chose is in appendix 7, however table 4 shows the distances in inches of the total participants, in order, from the least distance to the most distance, including the cumulative percent. For instance: 25 percent of the participants chose to sit twelve inches or less away from the purported counsellor; fifty percent of the participants chose to sit twenty-four inches or less away from the purported counsellor and seventy-five percent of the participants chose to sit thirty-five inches or less away from the purported counsellor. Further, table 4 shows the frequencies which individuals chose distances; e.g. two people chose to sit at eighteen inches distance from the purported counsellor and one person chose to sit at nineteen inches. Such diversity is understood in the light of the results which structures the data around the factors related to the hypotheses as stated in the Introduction.



**Table 4 distance in inches****DISTANCE**

Inches	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid -16.00	1	.7	.7	.7
-13.00	1	.7	.7	1.4
-8.00	1	.7	.7	2.1
-7.00	1	.7	.7	2.8
-5.00	1	.7	.7	3.5
-4.00	1	.7	.7	4.2
-3.00	1	.7	.7	4.9
-2.00	1	.7	.7	5.6
.00	1	.7	.7	6.3
1.00	2	1.4	1.4	7.6
2.00	1	.7	.7	8.3
3.00	2	1.4	1.4	9.8
4.00	1	.7	.7	10.4
5.00	1	.7	.7	11.1
6.00	2	1.4	1.4	12.5
8.00	2	1.4	1.4	13.9
9.00	6	4.2	4.2	18.1
10.00	2	1.4	1.4	19.4
11.00	3	2.1	2.1	21.5
12.00	5	3.5	3.5	25.0
13.00	3	2.1	2.1	27.1
14.00	4	2.8	2.8	29.9
15.00	1	.7	.7	30.6
16.00	2	1.4	1.4	31.9
17.00	2	1.4	1.4	33.3
18.00	2	1.4	1.4	34.7
19.00	1	.7	.7	35.4
20.00	6	4.2	4.2	39.6
21.00	1	.7	.7	40.3
22.00	4	2.8	2.8	43.1
23.00	2	1.4	1.4	44.4

**Table 4 continued on next page**

Table 4 continued				
DISTANCE				
Inches	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 24.00	5	3.5	3.5	47.9
25.00	8	5.6	5.6	53.5
26	6	4.2	4.2	57.6
27	3	2.1	2.1	57.7
28.00	3	2.1	2.1	61.8
29.00	5	3.5	3.5	65.3
30.00	3	2.1	2.1	67.4
31.00	4	2.8	2.8	70.1
32.00	2	1.4	1.4	71.5
33.00	1	.7	.7	72.2
34.00	1	.7	.7	72.9
35.00	3	2.1	2.1	75.0
36.00	2	1.4	1.4	76.4
37.00	1	.7	.7	77.1
38.00	1	.7	.7	77.8
39.00	2	1.4	1.4	79.2
40.00	2	1.4	1.4	80.6
41.00	2	1.4	1.4	81.9
42.00	1	.7	.7	82.6
43.00	1	.7	.7	83.3
44.00	1	.7	.7	84.0
46.00	1	.7	.7	84.7
48.00	2	1.4	1.4	86.1
49.00	1	.7	.7	86.8
50.00	3	2.1	2.1	88.9
52.00	1	.7	.7	89.6
53.00	1	.7	.7	90.3
55.00	1	.7	.7	91.0
58.00	1	.7	.7	91.7
60.0	1	.7	.7	92.4
Table 4 continued on next page				

Table 4 continued				
Inches	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid 63.00	1	.7	.7	93.2
67.00	1	.7	.7	93.7
69.00	1	.7	.7	94.4
70.00	3	2.1	2.1	96.5
72.00	2	1.4	1.4	96.5
77.00	1	.7	.7	98.6
84.00	1	.7	.7	99.3
86.00	1	.7	.7	100.0
<p>The importance of this table (4) is that it shows, in order, the cumulative percent which participants sat at regarding each distance from the purported counsellor.</p>				

### 5.5.2 Study 1 specific distances

Using the between participants data on distance regarding the factors of gender, familiarity and culture, descriptive statistics showed aspects of the spread and central tendency by specifying the SD and mean for every level of each factor (i.e. the factor of gender with two levels, the factor of familiarity with three levels and the factor of culture with three levels). This is shown in table 5.



**Table 5 descriptive statistics showing specific distances**

Dependent Variable: distance

Gender1male2female	familiarity	culture	Mean	Std.Deviation	N
Male	strangers	England	49.2500	15.9888	8
		USA	19.2500	10.4163	8
		Gibraltar	24.5000	4.9857	8
		Total	31.0000	17.2324	24
<hr/>			<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
-	recognise	England	43.8750	15.2825	8
		USA	5.5000	10.7438	8
		Gibraltar	16.0000	6.0945	8
		Total	21.7917	19.7770	24
<hr/>			<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
-	acknowledge	England	29.0000	8.3666	8
		USA	-4.5000	7.3485	8
		Gibraltar	9.0000	4.7509	8
		Total	11.1667	15.5638	24
<hr/>			<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
-	Total	England	40.7083	15.7079	24
		USA	6.7500	13.5462	24
		Gibraltar	16.5000	8.2251	24
		Total	21.3194	19.1825	72
<hr/>					
Table 5 continued on next page					

Table 5 continued					
Descriptive statistics					
Dependent Variable:distance					
Gender1male2female familiarity culture			Mean	Std.Deviation	N
Female	strangers	England	68.3750	13.7730	8
		USA	40.7500	9.1300	8
		Gibraltar	27.6250	5.2082	8
		Total	45.5833	19.8076	24
-	recognise	England	47.0000	16.2657	8
		USA	26.7500	5.0071	8
		Gibraltar	18.3750	6.8855	8
		Total	30.7083	15.9141	24
--	acknowledge	England	33.1250	10.2461	8
		USA	14.6250	3.7393	8
		Gibraltar	10.6250	5.2898	8
		Total	19.4583	12.0397	24
-	Total	England	49.5000	19.7374	24
		USA	27.3750	12.4963	24
		Gibraltar	18.8750	9.0329	24
		Total	31.9167	19.2922	72

Table 5 continued on next page

<b>Table 5 continued</b>					
<b>Descriptive statistics</b>					
<b>Dependent Variable: distance</b>			<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>strangers</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>58.8125</b>	<b>17.4746</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>USA</b>	<b>30.0000</b>	<b>14.5877</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Gibraltar</b>	<b>26.0605</b>	<b>5.1829</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>38.291</b>	<b>19.7893</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>-</b>	<b>recognise</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>45.4375</b>	<b>15.3315</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>USA</b>	<b>16.1250</b>	<b>13.6376</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Gibraltar</b>	<b>17.1875</b>	<b>6.4002</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>26.2500</b>	<b>18.3204</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>-</b>	<b>acknowledge</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>31.0625</b>	<b>9.2842</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>USA</b>	<b>5.0625</b>	<b>11.3694</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Gibraltar</b>	<b>9.8125</b>	<b>4.9291</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>15.3125</b>	<b>14.3885</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>-</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>17.0625</b>	<b>18.1966</b>	<b>48</b>
		<b>USA</b>	<b>17.6875</b>	<b>16.5779</b>	<b>48</b>
		<b>Gibraltar</b>	<b>45.1042</b>	<b>8.6299</b>	<b>48</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>26.6181</b>	<b>19.8938</b>	<b>144</b>

Table 5 shows that females in England who were strangers to the purported counsellor took the furthest distance and that males in the USA who had been acknowledged chose the closest distance to the purported counsellor, when compared to the other groups. The mean distances and SD distances of all the groups is specified.



However, the importance of the figures in table 5 depends on whether the distances regarding the factors of familiarity culture and gender, were significant. Table 6 shows that distances regarding these factors were indeed highly significant.

**Table 6 analysis showing levels of significance regarding the DV  
relating to the IV's**

<b>DV:Distance</b>	<b>IV's</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	Familiarity	2	40.973	.000
	Gender1male2female	1	10.924	.001
	Culture	2	66.445	.000

Table 6 shows that all three factors of familiarity, gender and culture were significant:  $F = 40.973$ ,  $df = 2, 141$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $F = 10.924$ ,  $df = 1, 142$ ;  $p < 0.001$  and  $F = 66.445$ ,  $df = 2, 141$   $p < 0.001$ , respectively.

DV = dependent variable.

IV's = independent variables.

Since such significant distances were found, as shown in table 6, post hoc tests were used to determine the levels at which the significant distances occurred. The post hoc tests are elaborated on in sub-section 5.6 which follows.

## **5.6 Post Hoc Tests**

Tukey HSD was used for the post hoc tests to show multiple comparisons of the different levels in every factor. The results of this are shown in table 7 which is on the next page.

**Table 7 multiple comparisons**

Dependent Variable:distance

(I) familiarity (J)			Mean	Std.	Sig.	95% confidence interval.	
familiarity			diff.(I-J)	Error		Lower bound	Upper bound
-      -  -	Tukey HSD	strangers recognise	12.0417*	1.9787	.000	7.3844	16.6990
		Acknowledge	22.9792*	1.9787	.000	18.3219	27.6365
		recognise strangers	-12.0417*	1.9787	.000	-16.6990	-7.3844
		acknowledge	10.9375*	1.9787	.000	6.2802	15.5948
		acknowledge strangers	-22.9792*	1.9787	.000	-27.6365	-18.3219
		recognise	-10.9375*	1.9787	.000	-15.5948	-6.2802
(I) culture (J) culture							
-      -  -	Tukey HSD	England USA	28.0417*	1.987	.000	23.3844	32.6990
		Gibraltar	27.4167*	1.987	.000	22.7594	32.0740
		USA England	-28.0417*	1.987	.000	-32.6990	-23.3844
		Gibraltar	-.6250	1.987	.947	-5.2823	40.0323
		Gibraltar England	-27.4167*	1.987	.000	-32.0740	-22.7594
		USA	.6250	1.987	.947	-4.0323	5.2823

Based on observed means. \*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level. Multiple comparisons as shown in table 7 reveal that all combination were significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) apart from Gibraltar when compared to USA.



The mean differences in distance between gender, familiarity and culture as tabulated in table 7, are also illustrated in the form of profile plots so that one can see at a glance that there were clear differences between the participants, depending on which group they belonged to. The profile plot in figure two shows an interaction effect in England between gender and familiarity: The female strangers chose a mean distance which was twenty inches further than the mean distance which the male strangers chose from the purported counsellor, although the mean distance from the recognise group for females was reduced to just above 30 inches, while that of the males recognise group was just below thirty inches. Figure 2 is on the next page.



**Figure 2 profile plot at culture = England.**

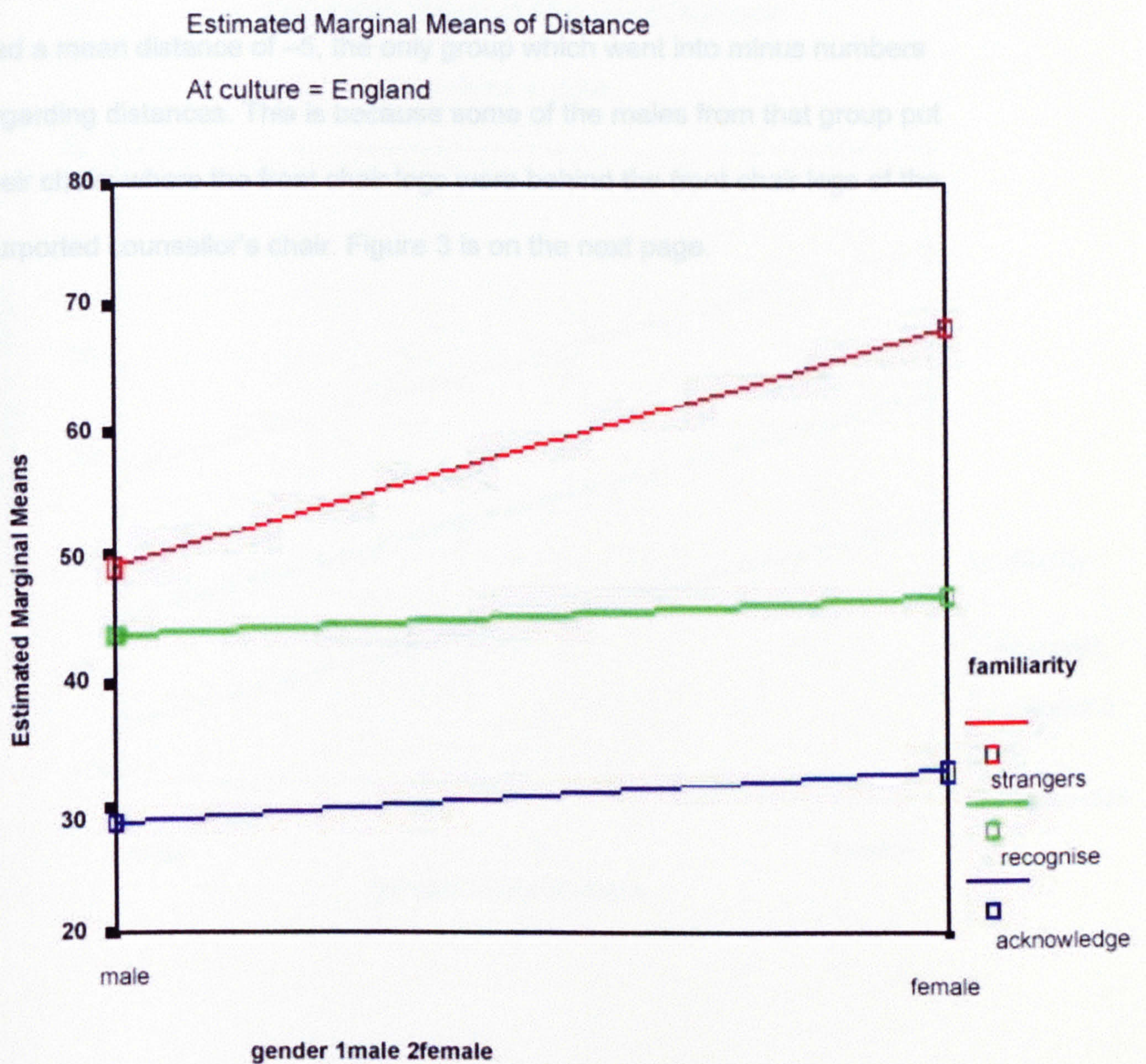


Figure 2 shows an interaction effect regarding females' (mean distance chosen from the purported counsellor) in England between the recognise and strangers familiarity groups.



The profile plot in figure 3 illustrates that the males in the acknowledge group had a mean distance of  $-5$ , the only group which went into minus numbers regarding distances. This is because some of the males from that group put their chairs where the front chair legs were behind the front chair legs of the purported counsellor's chair. Figure 3 is on the next page.



In Gibraltar, the mean distances between the males and females was closer to each other than in either the USA or England. The mean distances of males and females in Gibraltar is shown in figure 4. Figure 4 is on the next page.

**Figure 3 profile plot at culture = USA**

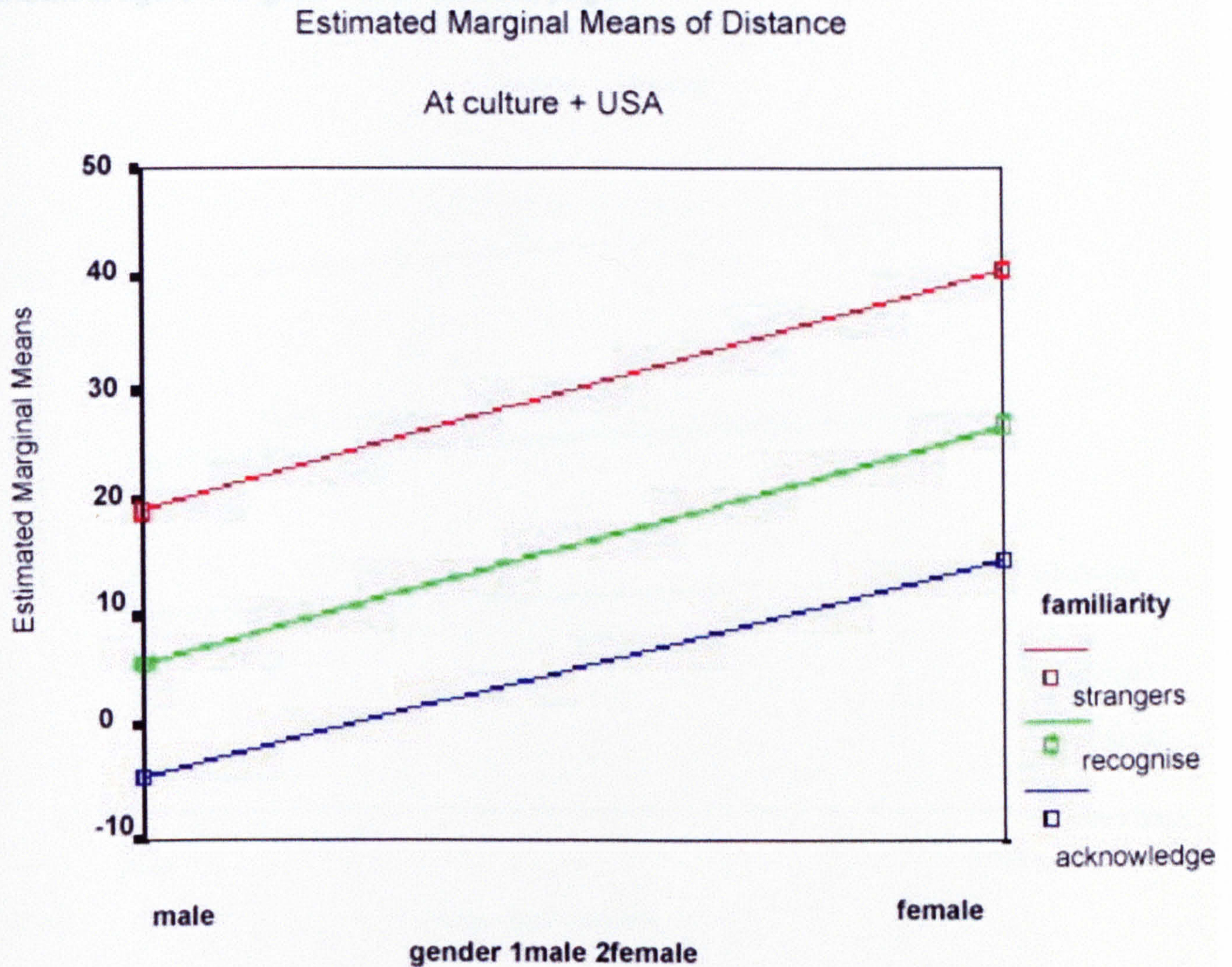


Figure 3 shows that the mean distance of the male group in USA was the group where the mean was a minus number.



In Gibraltar, the mean distances between the males and females was closer to each other than the mean distances between males and females in either USA or England. The mean distances of males and females in Gibraltar is shown in figure 4. Figure 4 is on the next page.



Figures 2, 3 and 4 illustrate that across culture and gender, those within the strangers group took the furthest distance and those within the acknowledge group chose the

**Figure 4 profile plot at culture = Gibraltar**

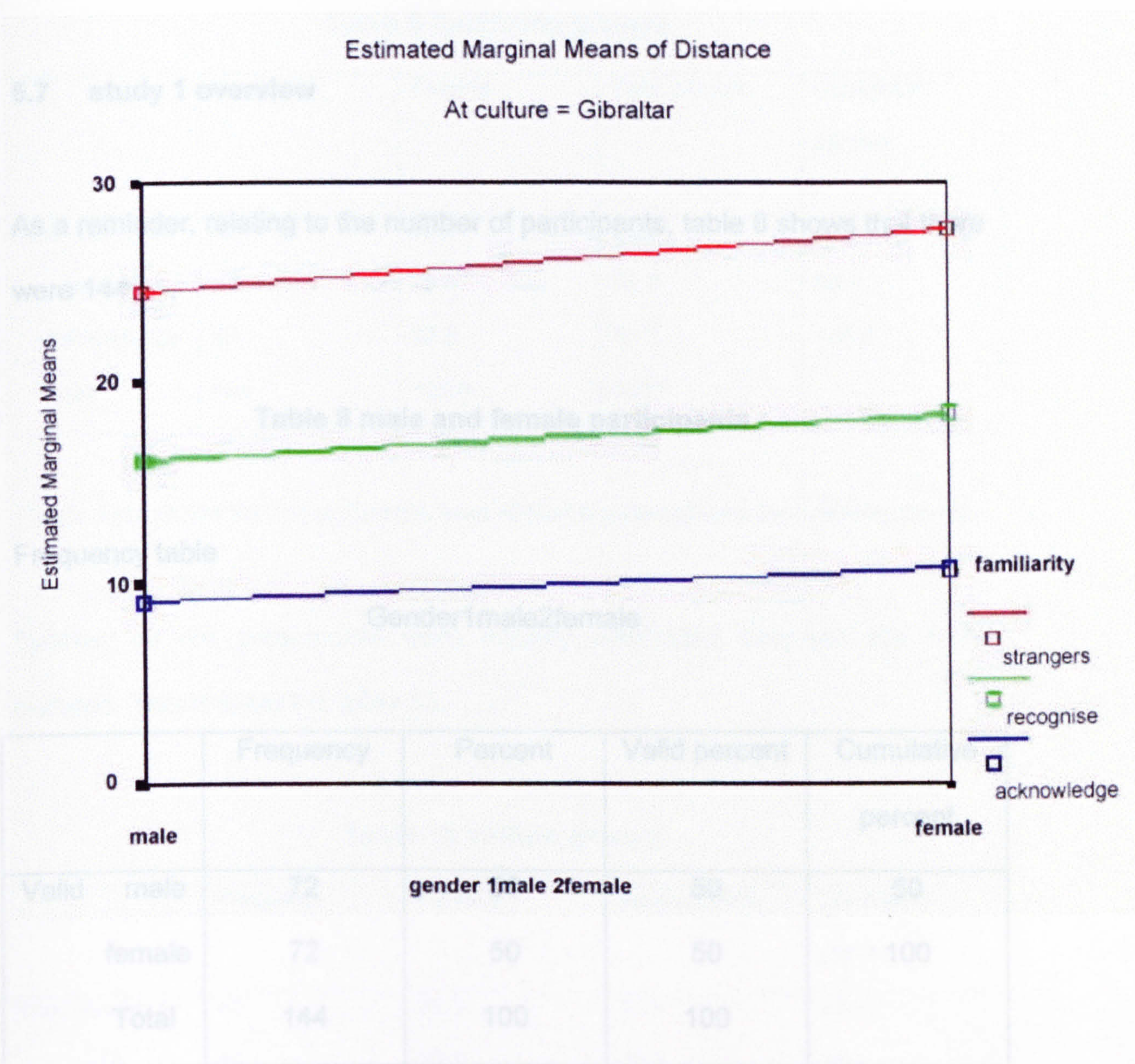


Figure 4 shows that the mean distances between the males and females in Gibraltar were similar.

Table 8 shows that there were 144 participants, 50% male and 50% female.



Figures 2, 3 and 4 illustrate that across culture and gender, those within the strangers group took the furthest distance and those within the acknowledge group chose the closest distance in relation to the purported counsellor.

**5.7 study 1 overview**

As a reminder, relating to the number of participants, table 8 shows that there were 144.

**Table 8 male and female participants**

Frequency table

Gender1male2female

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid male	72	50	50	50
female	72	50	50	100
Total	144	100	100	

Table 8 shows that there were 144 participants, 50% male and 50% female.

The three familiarity groups had 48 participants in each of them. This is shown in table 9.

**Table 9 familiarity groups**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid strangers	48	33.3	33.3	33.3
recognise	48	33.3	33.3	66.7
acknowledge	48	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 shows that the 144 participants were divided equally between the familiarity groups.

Further, all the participants were equally distributed between the three cultures. This is shown in table 10.

**Table 10 culture groups**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid England	48	33.3	33.3	33.3
USA	48	33.3	33.3	66.7
Gibraltar	48	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	

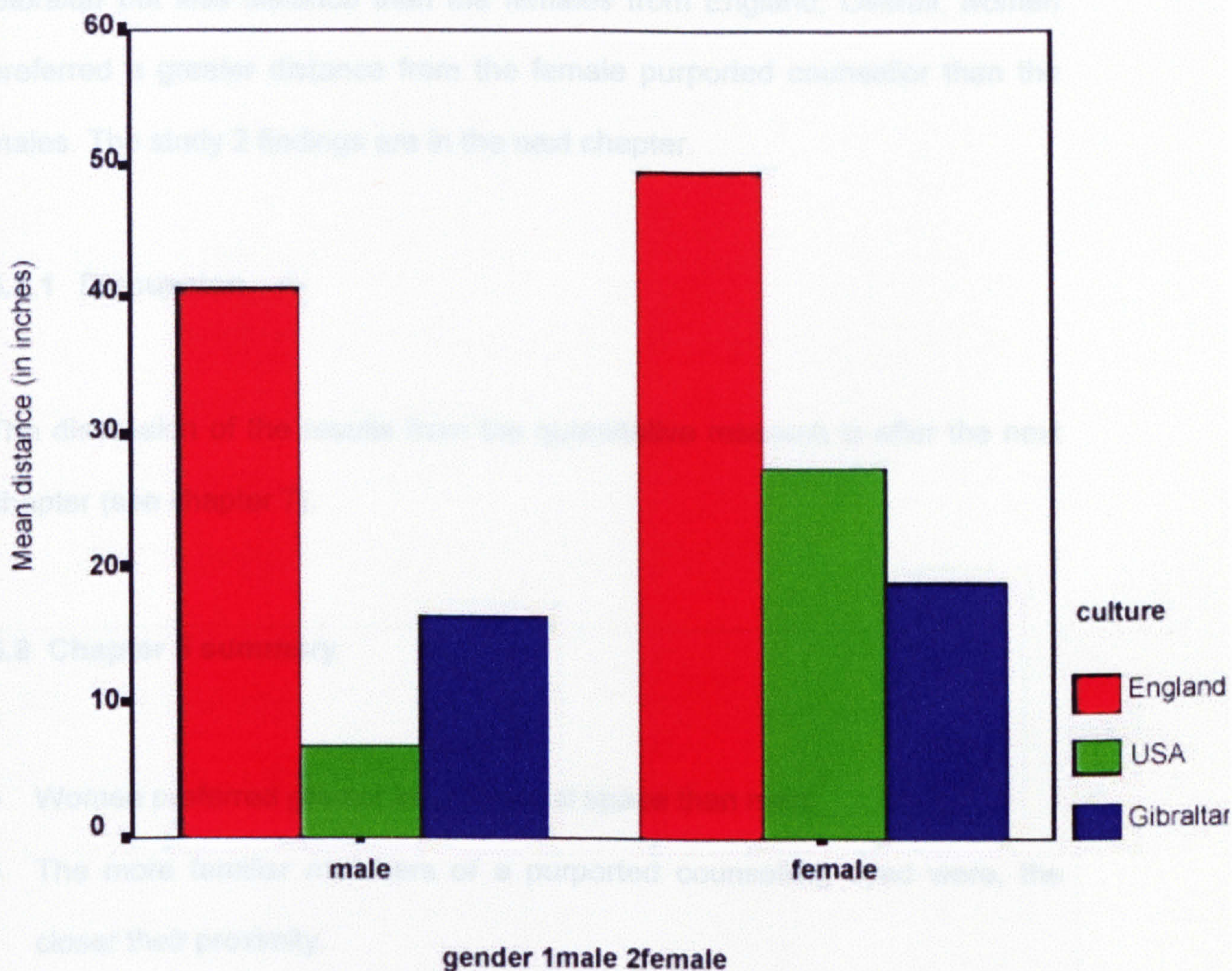
This table (10) shows that there were forty-eight participants in each of the three culture groups.

In terms of mean distance regarding gender in relation to culture, figure 5 illustrates that the males chose less distance from the purported counsellor than the females, irrespective of culture. Figure 5 is on the next page.



Figure 5 also illustrates that the participants in England chose the furthest distance. The graph further reveals that the males in Gibraltar chose less distance than the males from USA, the females in USA chose more distance than the females from Gibraltar but less distance than the females from England. Overall, women

**Figure 5 gender and culture**



This graph shows that irrespective of culture, women preferred more space.



Figure 5 also illustrates that the participants in England chose the furthest distance. The graph further reveals that the males in Gibraltar chose less distance than the males from England but more distance than the males from USA; the females in USA chose more distance than the females from Gibraltar but less distance than the females from England. Overall, women preferred a greater distance from the female purported counsellor than the males. The study 2 findings are in the next chapter.

### **5.7.1 Discussion**

The discussion of the results from the quantitative research is after the next chapter (see chapter 7).

## **5.8 Chapter 5 summary**

- Women preferred greater interpersonal space than men.
- The more familiar members of a purported counselling dyad were, the closer their proximity.
- Participants in the USA chose the least interpersonal distance, those in England preferred the most interpersonal distance, and the Gibraltarian participants preferred more interpersonal distance than those in the USA but less than the participants in England.
- These results support the hypotheses that, regarding counselling: 1) Proxemics varies depending on familiarity, 2) Proxemics varies depending on gender and 3) Proxemics varies depending on culture.



- Study 2 findings are in chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6 Study 1 continued

#### 6.1 Study 2 format

#### 6.2 How were the two study 1

#### 6.3 What was the study 2

#### 6.4 Goals for study 2

#### 6.5 Power for study 2

#### 6.6 Culture in study 2

#### 6.7 Effect in study 1

#### 6.8 Study 2 aims in study 1

#### 6.9 Study 2 construct

#### 6.10 Power for study 2 for study 1

#### 6.11 Discussion

#### 6.12 Chapter 3 summary



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **6 Study 2 outcome**

#### **6.1 Study 2 themes**

#### **6.2 How peers themed study 2**

#### **6.3 Other themes in study 2**

#### **6.4 Gender in study 2**

#### **6.5 Power in study 2**

#### **6.6 Culture in study 2**

#### **6.7 Affect in study 2**

#### **6.8 Orientation in study 2**

#### **6.9 Study 2 constructs**

#### **6.10 Process diary for study 2**

#### **6.11 Discussion**

#### **6.12 Chapter 6 summary**

### 6 STUDY 2 OUTCOME

*"Bodies never lie."*

(Irina Kuzminskaya, 1996,13.)

The qualitative findings are presented differently from the quantitative, that is why a new chapter has been made for them. This is because the quantitative results are written in the third person singular, as tradition has dictated (i.e: "it"). The qualitative findings however, are written in a way which includes me, the researcher, in a transparent way, thus remaining faithful to the phenomenological way in which study 2 was conducted; so this chapter is written in the first person singular (i.e: "I").

Although Marshall (1993) criticises traditional research, here, the limited choice of response to my question directed to the participants of study 1 (see previous chapter) relating to where they would put their chairs while being counselled, was balanced by the more free reign of response which individuals had during the qualitative research (study 2). The 'informal' research of finding personal views, enriched the information already available (Lewis, 1993).

Findings are coloured by the research question (as stated in the Introduction) which for study 2 is: Are individuals who practise counselling aware of proxemics? Study 2 was conducted after the quantitative study and it investigated awareness of proxemics within those who practise counselling.

Concerning study 2, there follows an overview of the participants and what I did, as a reminder; in order to put the outcome of the analysis into perspective. A fuller description of the participants' data is in chapter 4. In order to investigate awareness regarding proxemics I interviewed, in depth, twelve individuals who practise psychological counselling, then transcribed the interviews to look for emergent themes. Six of the participants were trainees, half of these were women and the other half were men. The other six were qualified practitioners; similarly, fifty per cent of these were women and the other fifty per cent were men. What I have done in this chapter, based on the transcribed interviews, is to show that I found a certain amount of awareness regarding proxemics, since issues concerning the distance between a client and counsellor formed part of the dialogues.

After illustrating this, I continue with a phenomenological approach and show the emergent themes which I discovered (by repeatedly reading the transcripts and colour coding the themes which developed). The phenomena of the key themes which were elicited give us insight into the world of the individuals (whose interviews I transcribed) in terms of their thoughts and therefore perhaps their awareness about proxemics. Similar themes to those which I had elicited were also found by my peers who were given the



transcriptions in order to elicit the themes which they thought emerged, without knowing the themes that I had found. In this way, the themes found were verified. This is explained in more detail in a sub-section below (see 6.2 *how peers themed study 2*). Following the findings of the data analysis there is also the outcome regarding the analysis of my own diary (see sub-section 6.10: *process diary for study 2*). Regarding this diary, I looked at the text of what I had written and colour coded it to see if the themes which were emergent in the transcripts were also in my diary, so that I treated my data in a similar way as the interviewees' data. Intriguingly, they were in my diary (I show these later in this chapter).

Hence, in study 2, I investigated awareness of proxemics within those who practise counselling and gleaned themes related to proxemics, from the transcribed depth interviews. I analysed my diary looking for the themes which had emerged in the transcriptions. The main issue looked for in my work was awareness of proxemics within individuals who practise counselling and as a result of this, it appeared that the outcome of where individuals sat in a counselling relationship (amongst those interviewed), was as follows: Most interviewees (i.e. 92% of the trainees and 75% of the practitioners) experienced counselling (either being counselled or practising counselling) at a particular distance because that is how the furniture was pre-arranged in the counselling room; although a few of the participants had not thought about this issue of proximity until the interview. The following are two extracts which show that there was dialogue regarding proxemics, which may indicate

awareness of proxemics (From such dialogue I looked for any emergent themes, and these are shown further down.):

- Extract 1

E.g. (Female student counsellor code 5.22, interaction 210)

INTERVIEWEE: *I have been to the same counsellor for more than three years*

(Interaction 211) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 212) INTERVIEWEE: *and she counsels in her own home, within a very small living-room*

(Interaction 213) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 214) INTERVIEWEE: *and because it is small there are great restrictions on seating*

(Interaction 215) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 216) INTERVIEWEE: *and we sit on the seat*

(Interaction 219) INTERVIEWEE: *we are close.*

(Interaction 225) INTERVIEWEE: *And she also sits with her back to the window.*

(Interaction 226) INTERVIEWER: So you're getting all the light which she doesn't face?

(Interaction 227) INTERVIEWEE: *... And I only see her outlined. Because I've got the light upon me and I can't see her, she's in shadow.*

Clearly, in the extract above coded 5.22, the interviewee (who was a counselling student) was aware of proxemics within a counselling relationship (see interaction 219): She experienced her long-term counsellor as having close physical proximity to her. Since my aim was to ascertain awareness

regarding proxemics within those who counselled, repeated listening to the tape-recordings and scrutinising of the interview transcripts, revealed that awareness of proxemics amongst psychological counsellors seemed to be present within all student counsellors, as exemplified by the extract coded 5.22 above. Such awareness seemed dormant in 50 percent of those individuals interviewed who were professionally qualified (as either a counsellor, a psycho-therapist or a chartered counselling psychologist), until such awareness was awakened during the interview:

- Extract 2 E.g. (Male chartered counselling psychologist code z99, interaction 152)

INTERVIEWER: Anything else you want to say?

(Interaction 153) INTERVIEWEE: *Mm. Nah. I hadn't actually thought that much about physical distance. And I find the questions very interesting actually. Um. Um*

Then I said that perhaps it was time to finish the interviewing, to which he responded as follows:

(Interaction 157) INTERVIEWEE: *Let me do this justice (pause). I think, I think, the general thing, um, and I think it's a result of this interview, I, I'm actually going to pay attention to gender and physical space.*

Statements such as these (i.e. extract 1 code 5.22 and extract 2 code z99) occurred spontaneously to do with proxemics, then each statement was looked at more closely to look at themes emerging; and as a reminder of how I did it, please see paragraph four of this chapter (alternatively, chapter 4 shows in detail the way I analysed the materials). One of the themes which



was high-lighted as being inter-twined with proximity, as exemplified by interaction 157 in the extract coded z99 above, was gender.

## **6.1 Study 2 themes**

Thus, although the main theme searched for was proxemics other themes which were inter-linked to proxemics were also gleaned. I identified the emergent themes which were entwined with proxemics as follows: gender, counselling orientation, culture, affect and power.

The way I elicited these, as explained in the fourth paragraph of this chapter, was to repeatedly read the transcribed interviews while colour-coding themes which emerged; then I gave the transcripts to my peers (who did not know the themes I had found) and asked them to colour-code emergent themes. The themes that they found were similar to the ones which I elicited. This is explained below.

## **6.2 How peers themed study 2**

The emergent themes which my peers identified are as follows: Control, self-formulation, heritage, background, comfort, emotion, work, approach, male, female, space and distance. These appeared to fit into the themes which I had named although the peers did not know about the themes I had identified. I did this in order to ensure that it was not my bias which led me to identify the emergent themes. The themes which my peers stated as having

emerged from the data, were the same as the themes which I had searched for in the same data, although different words were used to describe the themes. I asked an independent chartered counselling psychologist to pair the themes which I had chosen, with those which my peers had identified (as the same), even if different words were used. To my delight, the outcome was that she classified the themes which my peer group identified as emergent with the themes I found, in exactly the same way as I did (although she did not know this at the time she was doing it); which is as follows:

Proxemics was interpreted to be the same theme as space and distance.

Gender was interpreted to be the same theme as male and female.

Orientation was interpreted to be the same theme as work and approach.

Affect was interpreted to be the same theme as comfort and emotion. Culture

was interpreted to be the same theme as heritage and background. Power

was interpreted to be the same theme as self-formulation and control.

However, a few other themes were identified as emergent, by peers, which I had not chosen. These are stated below.

### **6.3 Other themes in study 2**

One chartered psychologist identified the theme of: 'interviewing technique'.

Another chartered psychologist identified the theme of: 'not exploring everything that the interviewee says'. Although these themes are valid, they are not commented on further because they do not fall under the umbrella theme of proxemics, which is what this research is about. The themes

identified here which are different from the other themes (i.e. interviewing technique and not exploring everything that the interviewee says) are valid because I did have a certain interview technique, as explained in chapter 4. Also, I did not explore everything which an interviewee commented on, since my aim was to explore proxemics. In retrospect, I remember wanting to explore some things which interviewees spoke of, such as changing from a different profession in order to do counselling, but that would have taken the emphasis away from proxemics. Knowing that it is important to be transparent during qualitative research, as already explained, I kept a process diary which I wrote after each interview and the outcome of this is described later on in this chapter (see *process diary for study 2*, sub-section 6.10).

Importantly, I did not know what themes would emerge from the interviews, hence the emergent themes did not colour my diary, within my awareness. There seems to be a parallel here between my delving into my own awareness by analysing my process diary, and the way I delved into the transcripts to glean awareness of proxemics within the interviewees. Although awareness amongst interviewees regarding proxemics was varied, not surprisingly, most of the interviewees reported that they would give greater consideration to proxemics within a counselling relationship, as a result of the process of being interviewed. Indeed, one chartered counselling psychologist said that due to the depth interview he would not only be more aware of proxemics when counselling, but also be more gender sensitive.



## 6.4 Gender in study 2

As noted earlier, within the main theme of proxemics, there were other themes inter-twined, one of which was the theme of gender. It was not only the extract coded z99 which referred to gender (as already illustrated): The interviewees unanimously mentioned it in relation to proxemics. For example, in the following extract, the interviewee (who is a chartered counselling psychologist), after telling me that a male client initiated moving towards her, responded to my question in a way which described how she felt when the male client initiated reducing the physical distance between her and himself:

(Extract code z97, interaction 61)

INTERVIEWER: What was the flavour of that like for you?

(Interaction 62) INTERVIEWEE: *(Coughs.) Well it was a client who I felt was, who I'd known, know, who had, who has been violent, you know, but was drawing closer to me and I felt a bit concerned about that, and that was fear. And then I saw like, warning signs, sort of tension in his body.*

The issue concerning the safety of the counsellor, when faced with a male client, was not only voiced by this woman, but also re-iterated by a male professional counsellor who said that he would ensure that there was another person on the premises if seeing a new male client in his (the counsellor's) own house:

(Extract code z76 interaction 28) INTERVIEWEE: *if I was getting a new client, who was a big man, for instance, or somebody that I didn't know the background of, I would ... make sure there was somebody in the house.*

To give another example regarding the theme of gender, a male counselling student, when asked by me if there was anything else he wanted to say, spoke of gender:

(Extract code I, interaction 131) INTERVIEWER: Bearing in mind that I am researching proxemics, that is, the distance between people ... is there anything you think I haven't thought of that you'd like to tell me?

(Interaction 134) INTERVIEWEE: *Power I suppose really. Yeah, it's the male influence and it's the male female. And I think it's a good idea, em, particularly if you've got, a, er, well, any kind, I suppose. Whether it's male or female, you ask them if they're happy with your gender, to be counselled by you, if female, to be counselled by a male, if they would prefer female. If they agree to be seen by a male. Because I personally prefer to be seen by female counsellors, er*

(Interaction 138) INTERVIEWEE: *...because the male has the power in our society.*

This interaction (138), from the extract coded I (above), hints at the notion that gender is a cultural construction; and is deliberated on in the Discussion (chapter 7).

Regarding the extract above (coded I) not only does the interviewee inter-link culture with gender when thinking of proxemics within a counselling relationship, but he also associates proxemics with power.

## 6.5 Power in study 2

The theme of power as being interlinked with proxemics was found in each transcript. Interaction 138 in the extract coded I (above), states that there is a power imbalance in our society, hinting that this is easily transferred onto the counselling relationship and is linked with the proximity between client and counsellor. A further example where an interviewee links power to proximity within a counselling relationship is in the extract which follows below. The issue of the counsellor having control and therefore more power than a client, is commented on by a male student interviewee in response to my question, after the counselling student tells me that he visits some of his clients in their own homes for counselling sessions:

(Extract coded O, interaction 67)

INTERVIEWER: So in that sort of circumstance where you are going into their territory, where do you think the, kind of, power lies?

(Interaction 68) INTERVIEWEE: *I still find that it does lie within me. Yes. Because even though they are inviting me to their house, it is still within me, because the counsellor does control.*

(Interaction 69) INTERVIEWER: Right. So what's the flavour of the situation when they come to your territory?

(Interaction 70) INTERVIEWEE: *Well obviously they have come to see me and some clients have remarked that it does feel different, slightly uncomfortable for them. One person said he envisaged it as like going to a dentist.*

In the following extract coded z98, there is another example of how an interviewee interlinked proximity with power, when the female chartered



counselling psychologist remembers a male closing the physical distance between her and him:

(Interaction 66) INTERVIEWEE: *The client, in coming closer to me, took control.*

The issue of power within a psychological counselling relationship, and the ease with which it can be abused, is indicated in this sub-section. Further, a link within a counselling relationship between power and gender within a culture has been brought into relief by analysing the transcribed interviews (see sub-section 6.6: *culture in study 2*).

## **6.6 Culture in study 2**

The perspective that there is a power imbalance within our culture has been mentioned previously (see extract code I). Indeed, the theme of culture is not only linked with power, but also entwined with the main theme of proxemics. The transcripts are speckled with such a perspective, four examples from the transcripts of the interviews regarding proximity with the entwining theme of culture, are offered immediately below:

(Extract code J, the interviewee was a male counselling student who was remembering a black person who came to England. Interaction 140)

INTERVIEWEE: *He was a surveyor when he first came to England. He would not sit. Not because he felt inferior but because the white person he thought thought he was inferior.*

The man whom the above interviewee spoke of, may have picked up verbal or non-verbal messages from his host culture, about how the host culture may have tended to think about people of colour. Indeed, in the new culture (i.e. England), the man which the above interviewee refers to, decided to choose for himself not to sit near a Caucasian person, but to keep himself separate.

Following the theme of culture, a professional counsellor who was female and Irish explicitly spoke of culture in relation to inter-personal proximity within a counselling relationship as illustrated in the extract coded Z32 which follows:

(Interaction 76) INTERVIEWEE: *And of course I think also personality and cultural backgrounds. If I sense that somebody is used to being close, and doesn't feel threatened, or overpowered, I just have to feel that. And I get to know them if they've come for two or three sessions already. I'll know if they want to be closer, or what they really would like.*

Another interviewee who was an English female chartered counselling psychologist said she thought the distance she counselled at was related to her background:

(Extract code Z59 interaction 179) INTERVIEWEE: *I think my own background is one of quite a lot of distance, not being physically close to people. Um.*

(Interaction 180) INTERVIEWER: So what kind of distance would you say you're comfortable with?

(Interaction 181) INTERVIEWEE: *What kind of distance? Um. Well this is a comfortable distance. Which is about three feet, two and a half feet?*

(Interaction 182) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 183) INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah. I noticed the other day, actually I was at a conference and they were all a bit closer than this and they were all stood up, and they felt a bit intimidating. And I stepped back, but nobody said I was outside the ring of um, three other people who were there. So I thought then perhaps I was a bit more distant than other people. Um. (Pause)*

(Interaction 184) INTERVIEWER: Where does that come from?

(Interaction 185) INTERVIEWEE: *I guess it's my family not being particularly touchy.*

Extract code Z59 illustrates the role which the interviewee's family background had on her feeling of being too close to someone. The extract immediately below illustrates how an English female chartered counselling psychologist experienced proximity while working in a Middle Eastern culture:

(Extract code Z65, interaction 40)

INTERVIEWEE: *I was very conscious there tended to be less sort of distance between people.*

This interviewee who had worked in a culture where she noticed individuals sat closer to each other than she was used to, was the one who sat closer to me when compared to all the other interviewees. The link regarding culture is also apparent in the following extract coded Z38 where the Irish professional counsellor speaks about Irish people:

(Interaction 126) INTERVIEWEE: *Very warm. They're very chatty and um the art of repartee is very alive in Ireland. So they're very verbal,*



*vocal people. When it comes to humour and that sort of thing, they're quite fun, 'specially in Northern Ireland. They find it difficult to talk about their feelings. And they find it, although they hug and kiss each other, it's all very formalised. It's quite unlike, say, southern Europe.*

In the above extract (code Z38) the interviewee brings in the notion of affect as she speaks of culture. Affect was another theme which was inter-linked with the main one of proxemics.

## **6.7 Affect in study 2**

Continuing with extract Z38, the female Irish counsellor (interviewee) describes the Irish people further:

(Interaction 130) INTERVIEWEE: *Um, they're open about welcoming people into their homes but at the same time they find that, 'specially in Northern Ireland, they're quite, find it quite difficult to talk about their feelings. Mm.*

(Interaction 131) INTERVIEWER: Mm.

(Interaction 132) INTERVIEWEE: *They need a lot of encouragement. They need a lot of, um. Familiarity with the person before they can actually talk about their feelings.*

Then the interviewee went on to describe how hard she had to work on her own feelings in order to do professional counselling.

This interviewee also said that she chose to be a humanistic counsellor; which brings in the issue of counselling orientation (spotlighted in the sub-section immediately after this one).

To continue with the entwining theme of affect, a female chartered counselling psychologist revealed that she felt uncomfortable with clients, depending on where they were sitting: (extract code Z46, interaction 54)

INTERVIEWEE: *If the, the chairs are pointing exactly opposite themselves in space, a sort of 'V' shape, that feels very intimidating for me.*

The interviewee quoted in the extract coded Z46 immediately above, was not alone in commenting on affect during the depth interviews regarding proximity. It was common amongst interviewees to reflect on their own feeling of comfort while counselling clients, an example of this is in extract Z94 as follows: (a male chartered counselling psychologist, interaction 33)

INTERVIEWER: And I'm wondering what distance you're most comfortable at when you're working?

(Interaction 34) INTERVIEWEE: *Physical distance?*

(Interaction 35) INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

(Interaction 36) INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah. Um. I'm certainly aware that I need a minimum of physical distance, I think.*

(Interaction 37) INTERVIEWER: What would that be?

(Interaction 38) INTERVIEWEE: *Looking back, um. Probably about the distance that we're apart now, really. I wouldn't want to be any closer than that.*

(Interaction 39) INTERVIEWER: So about how much apart are we in feet and inches?

(Interaction 40) INTERVIEWEE: *In feet and inches, well, we're talking about, well, we're also sitting side by side, rather than facing each other.*

(Interaction 41) INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

(Interaction 42) INTERVIEWEE: *In feet and inches, well we're talking about. I mean I tend to sit not quite facing the client. I mean, you know, off centre slightly.*

(Interaction 42) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 43) INTERVIEWEE: *So I would say, if we were about like that, not quite facing each other, er, at a slight angle, not in a straight line, I would say,*

(Interaction 44) INTERVIEWER: Yes?

(Interaction 45) INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah. About eighteen inches.*

This interviewee's feeling of comfort was associated with the distance which the client chose; and the theme of affect, not surprisingly, ran through all the interviews. 'Not surprisingly', because part of being human is to feel emotions. Not only affect, but also counselling orientation was interlinked with the main theme of proxemics, as illustrated in the sub-section which follows.

## **6.8 Orientation in study 2**

Counselling orientation was indeed, another theme inter-linked with the main one of proxemics. This is illustrated in the following extract coded Z43 (a female chartered counselling psychologist, interaction 23):



INTERVIEWER: Where people are physically in the room, you know, for the analytic work, do they sit down, lie down?

(Interaction 24) INTERVIEWEE: *Mm. No. Both sitting. I mean it's very much the same. Um. In my CBT work I'm sat quite, quite close to people, but then I think that's more the actual layout of the room rather*

*than a feature of the model itself.*

(Interaction 25) INTERVIEWER: D'you mean the room's furniture, like, is pre-arranged, the furniture is pre-arranged?

(Interaction 26) INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah.*

(Interaction 27) INTERVIEWER: So

(Interaction 28) INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah. The room's a different shape.*

(Interaction 29) INTERVIEWER: so

(Interaction 30) INTERVIEWEE: *Mm.*

(Interaction 31) INTERVIEWER: So in feet and inches

(Interaction 32) INTERVIEWEE: *Mhm.*

(Interaction 33) INTERVIEWER: in the room where you do CBT.

(Interaction 34) INTERVIEWEE: *Mhm.*

(Interaction 35) INTERVIEWER: How, about how far?

(Interaction 36) INTERVIEWEE: *Um. Let me work it out. (Long pause) Say, about four feet I suppose, if you sit about another foot from where I am sitting from you.*

(Interaction 37) INTERVIEWER: Mm.

(Interaction 39) INTERVIEWEE: *And in the analytic it's probably more like five feet.*

Hence, in this extract, the distance varied, apparently at first sight, according to the model which the counselling psychologist used. However, upon second sight, this was not due to the actual model, but due to the pre-arrangement of furniture. Yet other interviewees, specifically, trainee counsellors, appeared to be more aware (than the interviewee in extract Z43) of proximity. These were

counselling trainees who described themselves as having a humanistic orientation. An example of such a student counsellor (male) showing awareness regarding proxemics is in the extract coded A which immediately follows:

(Interaction 29) INTERVIEWER: Now I'm wondering whether, em, within your counselling relationships, whether you sort of, em, consider physical distance between you and the client?

(Interaction 30) INTERVIEWEE: *Yes. Er. It will change with clients, er. Some will allow you closer and (pause). I am a tactile person. Not that I get so close to become overbearing, but sometimes it's a sympathetic hand on the shoulder and I'm aware that in counselling, I won't use that, where I would in friendships.*

(Interaction 31) INTERVIEWER: Yes?

(Interaction 32) INTERVIEWEE: *That's the difference. There's a different distance because it's. (Pause) Although you're getting to know and become empathic with that person, you're still not close, like to be a friend, because there's a difference. You're crossing the boundary line I feel and you've still got to keep a professional distance but remain open and close enough for that person to feel.*

(Interaction 33) INTERVIEWER: And how close would you say that is?

(Interaction 34) INTERVIEWEE: *Well, you see, probably as we're sitting now, which is, you know. A maximum, well a minimum of say a foot, eighteen inches.*

The reason why a certain interviewee had a particular counselling orientation was not an aim of this research, however, the psychotherapist (who had initially trained as an architect) who was interviewed gave a clear explanation regarding proximity during a therapeutic encounter, and was the only interviewee who explicitly incorporated the use of proxemics within the counselling orientation which was being followed. An extract from the



interview with him, follows, starting with my summary of how he explained he worked: (Extract code Z 115, male professional psychotherapist, interaction 286)

INTERVIEWER: So you use words and thinking and movement.

(Interaction 286) INTERVIEWEE: *Movement.*

(Interaction 332) INTERVIEWEE: *That's very spatial.*

(Interaction 333) INTERVIEWER: A human mind?

(Interaction 334) INTERVIEWEE: *Yes, yes. Architecture is above all space management. Space creation. Space manipulation.*

(Interaction 335) INTERVIEWER: So you use space

(Interaction 336) INTERVIEWEE: *Yes.*

(Interaction 337) INTERVIEWER: in a physical way?

(Interaction 338) INTERVIEWEE: *So I'm very aware of space*

(Interaction 339) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 340) INTERVIEWEE: *all the time.*

(Interaction 341) INTERVIEWER: And now you've transposed that onto working

(Interaction 342) INTERVIEWEE: *working with people*

(Interaction 343) INTERVIEWER: in a therapeutic way.

(Interaction 344) INTERVIEWEE: *Yes. And that's wonderful. And I don't know how to call it. That was used by an architect some years ago that went like this: Space in the image of man is place. And time in the image of man is occasion.*

(Interaction 364) INTERVIEWEE: *This is really what architects do you know. They make cases of safety so that we can do different things.*

This extract clearly shows how the interviewee's previous training as an architect influences his work during a counselling relationship, in that he explicitly uses proximity within his counselling orientation.



In order to gain a deeper understanding regarding the meanings of the themes, constructs were formulated around each theme, which were based on the analysis of the interviews. These are shown in the following sub-section (*study 2 constructs*).

## 6.9 Study 2 constructs

Constructs were identified around each theme, using the words from the transcripts to formulate the constructs in order to gain more understanding of what the interviewees meant and as a safeguard against me unwittingly seeking themes which confirm my own beliefs and hypotheses. The emergent constructs follow from each theme:

From the main theme of **proxemics**, the constructs of 'close' and 'distance' emerged. E.g. In response to my question regarding whether the interviewee, who was coded A, considered inter-personal distance within a therapeutic relationship, he (a counselling student) mentioned that he did not get too close to clients:

(Code A, interaction 30) INTERVIEWEE: *Not that I get so **close** to become overbearing.*

The same interviewee speaks about maintaining distance:

(Code A, interaction 32) INTERVIEWEE: *You've still got to keep a **professional distance**.*

That professional distance was not exactly the same for each individual. Further, the individuals had various counselling orientations. These were as

follows: Rogers, TA, systemic, CBT, integrative, eclectic, NLP, hypno-therapy and analytic.

Each interviewee, whether a professional or a student, spoke of their counselling orientation. From the inter-linked theme of **orientation**, the constructs of 'Rogers' and 'analytic' emerged. E.g. When I asked the following question to a chartered female counselling psychologist, regarding whether the distance which she counselled in ever changed, she commented on an analytic orientation:

(Code Z45, interaction 39) INTERVIEWER: I wonder if that ever varies?

(Interaction 40) INTERVIEWEE: *Um in the **analytic** work it has, interestingly, yeah. I had a client last week who'd brought some photos in to show me, and she brought them up and sat at my feet.*

Regarding where a counselling dyad sit, a male student counsellor spoke of Rogers, when I asked him about distance within a counselling relationship:

(Code C, interaction 44) INTERVIEWEE: *We had a tape of Rogers sitting down. I think it was Gloria. Is it Gloria You know, one of the famous.*

(Interaction 45) INTERVIEWER: Yes.

(Interaction 46) INTERVIEWEE: *He was sitting like that (**sits leaning forward with his elbows leaning on his uncrossed knees, as he quickly speaks**). They sat opposite if I remember, the other side of the table.*

(Interaction 47) INTERVIEWER: Yes. What did it mean to you?

(Interaction 48) INTERVIEWEE: *Comfort. To me, sitting like this is comfortable.*

However, this interviewee complained that when he sat opposite a female volunteer client during his training, in the same way as Rogers sat opposite Gloria, he was criticised by his female tutor who said that she believed he was in an aggressive posture. He went on to explain to me that for a male that posture was comfortable, as opposed to aggressive. This seems to be a gender issue.

From the inter-linked theme of **gender**, the constructs of 'male' and 'female' emerged. E.g. when I asked a male student counsellor if there was anything else he would like to tell me he responded as follows:

(Code I, interaction 134) INTERVIEWEE: *I think it's quite a good idea, particularly if you've got, a, er, well, any kind, I suppose. Whether it's **male or female**, you ask them if they're happy with your gender, to be counselled by you ...*

This interviewee also spoke of male power.

From the inter-linked theme of **power**, the constructs of 'empowered' and 'disempowerment' emerged. E.g. When I asked a female student counsellor if there was anything she had thought of regarding proxemics and power, she replied:

(Code Z, interaction 88) INTERVIEWEE: *Yes. I've not thought about that before but I was just thinking, about feeling **disempowerment**, it, and I think that when someone comes too near to me, in my space, without checking out with me.*



A different interviewee (female counselling student) speaks of being empowered in relation to where her counsellor physically is in the counselling session:

(Code Z14, interaction 237) INTERVIEWEE: *And I often feel **empowered**, and again that can be to do with seating. And she will move to another place in the room, or ask me: do I actually want her to go behind a screen or something. This is to do with my own personal problems.*

Another interviewee said that she physically leans towards her clients sometimes (with her upper body, without moving her chair), and gave an example of when one of her clients was becoming empowered because he uncharacteristically did something for himself and she leaned towards him as a way of supporting that. She also said that how close she sits depends on what she senses the client is used to, and that the client's culture influenced this.

From the inter-linked theme of culture, the constructs of 'British' and 'southern European' emerged. E.g. The interviewee who was a female Irish professional spoke about Irish culture and compared it to other cultures:

(Code Z38, interaction 126) INTERVIEWEE: *They find it difficult to talk about their feelings. And they find it, although they hug and kiss each other, it's all very formalised. It's quite unlike, say, **southern European**. So that in a way, they're more open to dropping into peoples' houses, informal meeting, and so on, than **British** people who tend to expect to be invited and not be so free and easy dropping in.*

The interviewee whose extract is immediately above links affect, in her first sentence (interaction 126) with culture and both these themes are entwined with the main one (proxemics).

From the inter-linked theme of affect, the constructs of 'comfortable' and 'threatening' emerged. E.g. When a female chartered counselling psychologist was explaining to me during the interview that she had a male client who sat as far away from her as possible and would not let her near him either psychologically (by being withdrawn) or physically (by putting up his foot, as if to kick her), she explained how she experienced that when I asked her the following question:

(Code Z53, interaction128) INTERVIEWER: What was that like for you?

(Interaction 129) INTERVIEWEE: *It was very hard work in the sessions with all of that. Um, and it was like trying to find a little chink of a way in, to get in there to his world. To be able to see it from his point of view. I'd often say things and he'd sort of part agree with me. And I knew I wasn't really there. And I didn't know how to correct it, and how to really get in there with him. Sometimes he used to stick up his foot, as though he was getting ready to kick me away.*

(Interaction 139) INTERVIEWER: Oh really.

(Interaction 131) INTERVIEWEE: *Mm. So. And that felt quite threatening.*

An example of another female chartered counselling psychologist who uses the term threatening in relation to interpersonal distance follows. Her response comes after I enquire about how far apart she would like the chairs to be which she and her client sit on:



(Code Z68, interaction70) INTERVIEWEE: *Mm you know. Easy chairs just, yes, fairly close to the other person, but not sort of too threatening.*

It seemed that the opposite of threatening was the feeling of being comfortable, since the term comfortable was peppered throughout the interviews by the interviewees, regarding the interpersonal space when counselling. An example of this follows: The interviewee (professional male counsellor) responds after my question regarding where he and his client sit.

(Code Z75, interaction 14) INTERVIEWEE: *where they feel most comfortable so I can*

(Interaction 15) INTERVIEWER: Yes?

(Interaction 16) INTERVIEWEE: *so I can have time to assess where they would feel comfortable. Which direction they want to face in.*

(Interaction 17) INTERVIEWER: So it sounds like they would come in, you would ask them to take a seat and then after that, what?

(Interaction 17) INTERVIEWEE: *And then I would take the other seat then I would check with them the distance, whether they felt comfortable with that or whether they would prefer for me to move further away. Um. And then I ask them whether they feel comfortable with this distance between us or whether they would like to put a little bit more distance between us.*

Themes which emerged from the transcripts when peers were asked to find themes from the interviews, were similar to the ones I found, as shown earlier (see *how peers themed study 2*, sub-section 6.2). After eliciting the emergent themes and verifying them with the appropriate constructs as explained above, I analysed my own process diary to see if similar themes emerged.



## **6.10 Process diary for study 2**

I themed my process diary by colour coding different themes, as I had themed the transcripts of the interviews, so that I treated my own data in a similar way as I treated the interviewees' data. I found it surprising that when I searched for the same themes (as those which were in the interviewees' data), I discovered that they were also in my process diary. Extracts from my diary regarding the interviews on proxemics are shown below, under the name of each theme which is entwined with proxemics:

**PROXEMICS:** Regarding proxemics, this is a quote from my process diary concerning interview 2:

"I wondered why he believed that showing professional qualifications meant that the person is boasting but I did not follow that train of thought because it would have been at the expense of gleaning data regarding proxemics. Interesting for me, the distance he felt most comfy at, was a little too distant for me, I overcame my urge to move my seat closer to his because he was comfortable, and seemed in full verbal flow so I did not want to do anything which might spoil that."

From this extract it is clear that the distance which this interviewee felt most comfortable at, was not the distance that I would have chosen for my optimum comfort in interpersonal distance between him and myself. However, I felt that if I had taken the initiative of changing the distance between us in order to please myself, irrespective of the interviewee's feelings, then it would have tilted the balance of power, in this inter-personal relationship, against

him; since I would have been taking control of the space between us. This brings in the theme of power.

**POWER:** Regarding power, this is an extract from my process diary concerning interview 3:

“Today (Tuesday) before the 2.00.p.m. interview with the male counselling student, I was wondering how to equalise the balance of power between us because I think that he looks up to me, in a way. ... I think that somehow he looked up to me during the interview and he disclosed words to that effect so I light-heartedly asked if he'd like me to sit on the floor and it seemed to dispel his reluctance in offering his beliefs, which I was pleased about. Indeed, this interview was forty-five minutes long and he spoke in depth about his belief concerning power and counselling and was skilled in explaining the seating arrangements when he counsels.

I was happy with this interview on the whole, but a bit sorry that he seemed to be putting me on a pedestal to begin with. ... It certainly made him think about the aspect of power within counselling.”

This extract shows that I was aware of feeling that the interviewee perceived me as having a higher status than him, which I felt might influence his responses during the interview; so I thought that a way of counter-balancing this was to be overt about it. Indeed, he seemed to find it hard to think of the notion of power in relation to his humanistic counselling model. This brings in the theme of counselling orientation.

**ORIENTATION:** Regarding (counselling) orientation, the following is an extract from my process diary concerning interview 4:

**“Although I knew what counselling model her college taught her, I did not want to have any pre-conceived ideas about how she worked, in case she had some other trainings previously to attending that counselling course, which influence the way she works. ...**

**I got the feeling that she would have talked on and on until stopped, she was oozing information about her personal and professional background, the trainings she has had, her sexual orientation, including how this affects proximity.”**

**The above extract illustrates that although I knew I could have fallen into the trap of assuming what counselling orientation the interviewee used, I did not fall into that trap. This is because of my own background of having been trained in various models so I did not presume to believe that she used the model which she was being trained in at the time of the interview. During the interview it indeed transpired that she had had other trainings which she disclosed had an effect on her way of working. Further, she said that she thought her sexual orientation influenced her preference for a female, as opposed to a male counsellor for her own problems. This brings in the theme of gender.**

**GENDER: Regarding gender, the following is an extract from my process diary concerning interview 11:**

**“Oh how I warmed to his expressive vulnerability yet deep professionalism. Sitting next to each other, he was able to disclose what seemed to be so important to his very life and what caused him the most pain: the relationship with his son.”**



This indicates that I experienced a psychological closeness with the interviewee who was a male chartered counselling psychologist. I not only found his vulnerability touching but also the way in which he spoke about what was very meaningful to him in his life, which he seemed to struggle in his search for words to express himself. In my experience as interviewer, I felt that the women seemed to reveal their vulnerabilities a little more readily than the men. And retrospectively, the struggle to express something of great importance captures my high respect, whether the communicator is a man or a woman. Further, this man found the courage to disclose that he had prejudices concerning Muslim people and he himself is Muslim. This brings in the theme of culture.

**CULTURE:** Regarding culture, the following is an extract from my process diary concerning interview 9 (an English female chartered counselling psychologist):

“During the interview my tiredness was forgotten as I listened to how she worked as a psychologist abroad and how the people in a Middle Eastern country wanted to sit closer than those in England. I also felt empathic towards her as she disclosed how she felt disempowered when she experienced unnecessary criticism from her husband.”

The extract above exemplifies how inter-personal proximity is entwined with the culture one is embedded in. My process diary also reveals how I felt while I interviewed her. This brings in the theme of affect.



AFFECT: Regarding affect, the following is an extract from my process diary concerning interview 6 (with an English female counselling student):

"I felt happily relaxed about meeting a new student and I remembered how enthusiastic this one sounded when she and I spoke on the telephone regarding the interview today. ...

I felt disappointed that during the interview, she started off appearing to be nervous of me. ...

I felt that she had given me a gift of her thoughts and feelings in this interview, for my research. Now I am happy to have finished the student interviews, but I shall be happier when I start interviewing the qualified practitioners, and happier still when I have finished the interviews so that I can get on with the transcribing for the analysis."

The above extract reveals that I felt pleased with myself for having finished the student interviews while looking forward to finishing all the interviews, although I was not pleased that the interviewee initially appeared to be nervous of me.

So, all the themes gleaned from the transcripts of the interviews were also gleaned from my process diary.

## **6.11 Discussion**

The discussion of the findings from the qualitative research is in the next chapter.

## **6.12 Chapter 6 summary**



- The students of counselling all seemed to be aware of proxemics in a counselling relationship.
- Half of the professionally qualified interviewees disclosed that they had not thought about proxemics before the interview process.
- All of the counsellors counselled at the distance which they felt comfortable at.
- The main theme of proxemics is entwined with gender, orientation, affect, power and culture.
- Constructs elicited verified the emergent themes within the transcribed interviews.
- I found the same themes which emerged from the transcribed interviews, in my process diary.
- The space between members of a counselling dyad is important.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **7 Discussion**

#### **7.1 Methodological issues**

#### **7.2 Study 1**

##### **7.2.1 Study 1 familiarity**

##### **7.2.2 Study 1 gender**

##### **7.2.3 Study 1 culture**

#### **7.3 Study 2 themes**

##### **7.3.1 Study 2 gender**

##### **7.3.2 Study 2 power**

##### **7.3.3 Study 2 culture**

##### **7.3.4 Study 2 affect**

##### **7.3.5 Study 2 orientation**

##### **7.3.6 Study 2 proxemics**

##### **7.3.7 Study 2 emergent themes**

#### **7.4 Combined findings in light of literature cited**

#### **7.5 Possible reason for non-significance**

#### **7.6 Communication**

#### **7.7 Kinesics**

#### **7.8 Inequality**

#### **7.9 Proxemics**

#### **7.10 Ethical control**

#### **7.11 Economics and politics**

#### **7.12 Local and global**

- 7.13 Public and private**
- 7.14 Representation and reality**
- 7.15 Intra-personal relating**
- 7.16 Inter-personal relating**
- 7.17 Trans-personal relating**
- 7.18 Individually tailored proximity**
- 7.19 Education**
- 7.20 Empowering the counselling psychologist**
- 7.21 Confidence**
- 7.22 Power**
- 7.23 Status**
- 7.24 Counselling practitioner**
- 7.25 Risk and advantage**
- 7.26 Vision**
- 7.27 Philosophical roots**
- 7.28 Conclusion**
- 7.29 Implications**
- 7.30 Future studies**
- 7.31 Summary**

### 7 DISCUSSION

*Your actions speak so loudly I can't hear what you're saying*  
(Anonymous).

This research investigated proxemics using two studies. Study 1 investigated the effects of gender, culture and familiarity on proximity between members who made up purported counselling dyads. Study two explored awareness of proxemics within those who practise counselling. Findings showed that proxemics was important in the counselling encounter, indicating support for an interactionist perspective; that is: in order to move closer or more distant to a person, one moves in relation to that individual. Although this is unremarkable because it seems obvious, it is important, since, as explained in chapter 1, previous research does not seem to have addressed proxemics within a counselling relationship.

Due to the gap between research and application regarding proxemics in a counselling relationship, the following questions emerged as stated in the INTRODUCTION: 1) Are there individual differences with clients as to where they expect seating to be? 2) Do counselling clients have preferences regarding how seating is arranged within a counselling session? 3) If the answer to the previous question is "yes", then are these preferences influenced by cultural, gender and familiarity factors? 4) Is there awareness of proxemics in individuals who practise counselling? This research which



comprises of two separate studies was carried out in order to address these four questions.

The respective answers to the above four research questions are indicated as follows: 1) There are individual differences with clients as to where they expect seating to be since the assumed clients in study 1 did not all choose the same distance in seating between themselves and the purported counsellor . 2) Counselling clients do have preferences regarding how seating is arranged within a counselling session since some of the assumed clients from study 1 sat with their chairs so close to the purported counsellor that the chairs were extremely close to each other and overlapping (in USA) while others preferred to sit as far away as possible (in England). 3) . These differences in preferences are indeed, influenced by cultural, gender and familiarity factors because in study 1, the women preferred the most distance when compared to the men, the more familiar participants were with the experimenter the closer they sat to her and those in USA chose the least inter-personal distance while those in England chose the most. 4) Study 2 revealed that student practitioners of counselling were all aware of proxemics, although only one of them acted on this knowledge, but only half of the qualified practitioners were and three of them acted on that awareness. Further, this study (2) shows that the issue of proximity is a web made up of not only proxemics but also gender, counselling orientation, affect, power and culture.

## **7.1 Methodological issues**

Before the depth discussion of these findings it seems important to disclose that I have experienced a tension between the methodologies used for the two studies. In my endeavour to manage this tension, chapter five has focussed on study 1 while chapter six has concentrated on study 2. In this chapter, I have continued in my endeavour to manage this tension (regarding the two methodologies) by tending to use the term “researcher” concerning study 1 (the quantitative study) and the term “I” regarding study 2 (the qualitative study) as deemed appropriate. Further, there is first a discussion (of chapter five) to clarify the results of study 1, then there is a discussion (of chapter 6) to clarify the findings of study 2, before a discussion which draws the two studies together.

Part of the tension between the two methodologies, is that unlike study 1, some of the literature related to study 2 which is found later in the Discussion, has not been cited in previous chapters because I did not know which themes would emerge from the transcriptions. Additional literature is therefore highlighted in this chapter because it relates to the phenomena of the study 2 emergent themes. Hence, due to the qualitative nature of the study 2 analysis, themes emerged which had not been pre-conceived, since I allowed the data to help me build points of the discussion; therefore in this chapter the findings of the two chapters (5 and 6 respectively) are also discussed differently due to literature which has not been discussed earlier, that I draw in as appropriate, regarding study 2. I identify this where it happens, so that the phenomenon is transparent.

If I had the opportunity to do this research again, I would conduct certain aspects of it differently: Regarding the quantitative methodology, I would train a researcher to undertake collecting the data, without telling that researcher my hypotheses, as a way of ensuring that data collection was not biased by my hypotheses.

Regarding the qualitative methodology, I would have a second researcher conducting depth interviews on proxemics with a parallel group of interviewees and then see what themes emerged from the interviews. In addition, video-taping the interviews would add a wealth of NVC to the data for analysis.

Concerning the tension I experienced regarding the two methodologies, if another researcher chose to do similar research, I would like to point out the following: The apparent tension experienced may be due to the researcher's difficulty in making a leap in their mind, but this does not mean that the researcher cannot use the two methodologies. Also, it is important to remember to be cautious and not go over-board in terms of making generalisations about the results from the studies.

## **7.2 Study 1**

In study 1, the hypothesis (that proxemics would yield different distances depending on gender, culture and familiarity factors) was supported by the



statistically significant results ( $p < 0.001$ ) from the quantitative methodology.

Results show that gender, familiarity and culture were important in the purported counselling encounters. These factors were related to the proxemics within the assumed counselling relationship.

Regarding study 1, women preferred greater inter-personal space; and the more familiarity there was between members of a purported counselling dyad, the closer the distance was between the members who made up the dyad. Further, there were differences in inter-personal distance which were related to culture. In sum, differences were found between the different groups in each country where data was collected. However, since all the respondents in the overall group for study 1 were Caucasian, the results possibly reflect this population only. (Similarly, the outcome of study 2 possibly reflects the interviewee population only, while inter-acting with me.) Each factor relating to study 1 is discussed bearing in mind the findings in the light of literature cited earlier. This is done under the subheadings *study 1 familiarity*, *study 1 gender* and *study 1 culture*.

### **7.2.1 Study 1 familiarity**

The findings of study 1, which show that proximity is influenced by the kind of relationship (i.e. familiarity level) there is between two people, back up Hall's (1966) findings: The results from study 1, that the level of familiarity has an effect on inter-acting members of a dyad, do not conflict with Hall's work(1966) because the difference between the conclusions of Hall's (1966)

investigations and that of study 1 is lexical: Hall (1966) stated that proxemics varied depending on the type of relationship (e.g. intimate, personal, social or public); study 1 results showed that the level of familiarity had an effect on inter-personal proxemics within a purported counselling relationship. Hence, if more familiarity means more intimacy, study 1 findings support Hall's (1966) findings.

If being more familiar with another person means that one is more interested in the other person, then this study also supports Swap et al's (1983) work, as cited in the Introduction, who stated that the more interested one was with the other person, the closer the proximity which was sought. Overall, the relationship (i.e. level of familiarity) one has with another person influences proxemics, as study 1 findings show, thus supporting the work of others (e.g. Hall, 1966; Jenkins et al, 1998 and Swap et al, 1983). Further, Kahn et al (1971), as stated in the Introduction, declared that inter-personal proximity was influenced by how attractive one found the other person. Study 1 findings do not challenge their work. This is because it seems logical to assume that if we find someone attractive, we want to become more familiar with that person (and so move closer towards them).

Hall's (1966) painstaking work which has been detailed in the Introduction is highlighted here because it seems that, with hindsight, it may be possible to think of his research on proxemics, in terms of counselling whilst bearing in mind results from the current investigation: His work is of particular interest because he has developed the theory which states that people use different

zones of proximity depending on their relationship with whoever they are interacting with; hence, it seems logical to conceptualise that as the relationship between counsellor and client changes, a difference in their physical proximity may occur. However, one of the limitations of Hall's (1966) work is that by generalising about the proximity of humans, any differences between genders may have been overlooked. Hence, although his work has a bearing on this investigation, one cannot generalise from his research that individuals world-wide will use proximity in the same way, irrespective of gender.

Conceptually, research shows that proxemics between individuals varies depending on their relationship; for instance, whether one has an intimate, familiar relationship with a person or whether one is disinterested in the other person (e.g. Hall, 1966; Swap et al, 1983 and Kahn et al, 1971). Following on from this research therefore, what seems to be required is an understanding of whether there are cultural related to gender differences regarding proximity. And if so, are these differences important within the counselling relationship? Hence, this study was undertaken which has confirmed previous research that familiarity levels influence proxemics within a relationship (e.g. Swap et al, 1983) and that there are gender and cultural differences. Gender and culture are discussed in sub-sections 7.2.2 and 7.2.3, respectively.

The finding from study 1 that the more familiar assumed clients are with their purported counsellor the closer they prefer to sit with their counsellor, has implications for managing proximity within a therapeutic counselling



relationship. It may be appropriate for the counsellor to choose her or his seat first and to have a choice of seating for the client, or to have chairs on wheels, like office-secretaries chairs, or to have settees so that a client can sit at different distances on a settee. If the client initially chooses the seat furthest away, it may indicate that she or he feels that the counsellor is a stranger. This statement is supported by results from study 1 which show that strangers (cross-culturally and irrespective of gender) choose a significantly greater distance from the purported counsellor than the acknowledge and recognise groups. After the initial encounter when socialisation has taken place, a decrease in inter-personal space which is initiated by the client may indicate that the client feels more comfortable or familiar with the counsellor. This statement is supported by results from study 1 which show that the more familiarity there is between members of an assumed counselling dyad, the closer the client chooses to sit to the counsellor, cross-culturally and irrespective of gender. Further implications regarding this finding are discussed later, under the sub-heading *implications*. Study 1 results also revealed that women preferred greater inter-personal distance than men with their purported counsellor, irrespective of culture and level of familiarity.

### **7.2.2 Study 1 gender**

The intriguing finding that cross-culturally, women preferred significantly greater distances than men in study 1, is important due to implications within the counselling arena. These are discussed under the sub-section *implications* further down (see sub-section 7.29). However, on the one hand,

findings from study 1 that females choose greater inter-personal space than males, challenge not only Sermat's (1967) work but also Cochran et al's (1984), who state that there is no relationship between gender and personal space. One reason for these conflicting findings may be because study 1 looked at the counselling relationship in particular, as opposed to Sermat (1967) and Cochran et al (1984) who looked at inter-personal distance in general terms. However Sermat (1967) and Cochran et al (1984) used university students as their participants and then generalised from that onto the whole of humankind; further, both studies involved interpersonal standing distances, as opposed to sitting. Hence, their work is not discussed in detail; although further studies may need to take account of inter-personal distances during counselling which does not involve sitting on a chair.

On the other hand, findings in study 1 are similar to Hall's (1966) in that groups of people choose different distances depending on how familiar the counsellor was with them; so the more familiarity there was, the closer the proximity (this has been discussed under the sub-heading *study 1 familiarity*, sub-section 7.2.1, above). However, this was dependent on cultural and gender factors: That is, as already shown, females took the most distance and the female groups in USA took the least distance when compared to the females from Gibraltar and England, while those females in England took the most distance when compared to the females from USA and Gibraltar.

Indeed, how distant or close one person is to another, differs due to whom one is with and the situation individuals are in, as Egan (1977) clearly stated.

Implications stemming from the result that females preferred statistically greater inter-personal distances than men, cross-culturally, are under the sub-heading *implications* sub-section 7.29, further down. However, reasons for such clear demarcations cross-culturally between the men and the women inter-personal distances, are not clear from study 1, so may depend on other factors such as what has emerged from study 2, which is discussed later.

### **7.2.3 Study 1 culture**

The finding that participants in England preferred the most distance, when compared to participants from the other cultures, may have something to do with the proverbial reserve of the English. Also, the finding that the participants in the USA preferred the closest distance, when compared to participants from the other cultures, might be to do with the reputation Americans have of wanting to get to (what they are known to call) “the bottom line”. Hence, inter-personal distance depends not only on how familiar one is with another, but also the culture one is embedded in and the gender one is embodied with.

The findings from study 1 support Argyle’s (1982) and Lett et al’s (1969) statements that: a) interpersonal distance is influenced by one’s surroundings, b) inter-personal distance is influenced by one’s culture and c) inter-personal distance is influenced by one’s friendliness towards the other person. Lett et al (1969) do not provide more details on interpersonal proxemics so their work is not discussed further. However, both Sullivan



(1953) and Leary (1957) are cited because they focused on the individual's interpersonal communication within a social definition and cultural context.

Sullivan (1953) was a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist who emphasised the biological and cultural aspects of humans. He postulated that people strive towards satisfaction, e.g. a person is thirsty, so that person has a drink to satisfy a biological need. Sullivan (1953) also stated that individuals seek security and that this is found within culture i.e. all that can be found which is made by a human being. Sullivan is famous for his work on interpersonal thinking, but he does not focus on proxemics. For this reason, his work is not deliberated on in more detail.

Leary (1957) took over ten years to develop an interpersonal communication model. His system shows a range of social behaviours which are circular. That is, one moves from a dominant to a submissive behaviour and visa versa, and from love to hate and visa versa, within a social context. He explains how one person can influence the behaviour of another and visa versa; hence his circular model. However, one of the limitations of Leary's (1957) circular theory is that it does not seem to include gender and apparently is not context specific, hence the presenting study focuses on a counselling context and includes gender as one of its factors.

A quarter of a century later, Argyle (1982) stated that Americans seek very close proximity and study 1 results support his statement because participants from the USA chose the closest distance when compared to the

rest of the participants. A reason for this is offered in the paragraph immediately above. Interestingly, two of the factors from study 1 (gender and culture) emerged as themes in study 2. This does not seem surprising, since both studies investigated proxemics.

The work of these researchers (e.g. Lett et al, (1969); Sullivan, (1953); Leary, (1957) and Argyle, 1982) have remained fruitful because they have provided some stepping stones leading to the current research which has developed their investigations by focussing on the aspect of proxemics in counselling. Consequently, the conceptualisation which is emerging so far is that individuals influence each other regarding their interpersonal proximity and this is related to cultural, gender and familiarity factors. This has been exemplified by study 1. Study 2 is discussed below.

### **7.3 Study 2 themes**

Within this study (2), after transcribing the twelve interviews concerning proxemics with men and women, both students and professionals, who practise counselling, themes emerged by using the colour-coded method as described earlier. The themes of gender and culture which were gleaned, overlapped with two factors from study 1. However, other themes linked with proxemics relating to counselling, were emergent, due to the phenomenological nature of study 2. These were orientation (counselling), power, and affect. Since I did not know what themes would emerge in this study, my discussion brings some literature which has not been cited in the



Introduction (I state when this happens). This is because I searched for further literature pertaining to emergent themes, after they emerged. It seemed to me, that returning to the Introduction to look for a place to put the newly found literature there, would not have honoured the phenomenological conducting of study 2. I put this literature in the Discussion to be transparent regarding the way I build up the Discussion. Some of the literature which is cited for the first time in this chapter relates to more than one theme, as the next sub-section shows.

Study 2 enabled me to look, to a certain extent, into the world of the experiencer, which Keen (1975) states is the foundation of a phenomenological approach. Looking into the world of the experiencer is a thread which runs through humanistic psychology (Sanders, 1982; Greenberg, 1986 and Kuiken et al, 1989). Indeed, Rogers (1942) emphasised the crucialness of endeavouring to look at the world from the other person's perspective. Hence, phenomenological elements were used in this research, as stated in the Introduction, to remain faithful to the father of counselling (i.e. Rogers) and hence the humanistic approach; since proxemics was investigated within the field of counselling. However, although two different methodologies were used for the two studies, some similarities appeared. E.g. Each participant in study 1 chose their own personal proximity from the purported counsellor. Similarly, participants chose their own distance, wherever possible, from me in study 2. This supports Bourne and Ekstrand's (1985) statement that humans have personal space. Another similarity, as



explained earlier, is that the study 1 factors of culture and gender emerged as study 2 themes.

### **7.3.1 Study 2 gender**

The theme of gender was not only a factor in study 1, but also an emergent theme in study 2, as noted above. However, what has emerged from study 2 regarding this theme, is that it is not only entwined with proxemics within a counselling arena, but also enmeshed with other themes. Indeed, Imber-Black et al (1988) state that it is via one's cultural environment that one learns to understand the meaning of what it is to be a female or a male. Imber-Black et al (1988) and Bateson (1984), also Margaret Mead in Bateson, (1984) are cited in this sub-section without being referenced in the Introduction because until I had analysed the data from study 2, I did not know what themes would emerge. Nor did I have a pre-conception of the entwining of emergent themes.

I deemed it important to look for further literature regarding gender and culture and in particular the entwining of these two issues, since it emerged from study 2 that these themes are not only important within a counselling relationship, but also inter-twined with the main focus of the research, i.e. proxemics. The perspective that gender is a cultural construction is not new. Anthropologists such as Gregory Bateson (see his daughter's book: Bateson, 1984) had such a view, and Bateson (1984) also reflected on Margaret Mead's idea that there was a cultural construction of gender (in Bateson, 1984). Pertinently however, Imber-Black et al (1988) not only show that

gender and culture are entwined, but also that power is enmeshed with these aspects, just as study 2 has also revealed and is discussed in the next subsection.

Imber-Black et al's (1988) work is based on extensive clinical experience and scholarly knowledge. She has taken the perspectives of Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead (see Bateson, 1984) further by explaining that gender is not only entwined with culture, but also enmeshed with power. I would like to see her type of work use more research based non-verbal resources and therefore further research into NVC within counselling is needed.

Hence, the current research is timely. Research findings indicate that within a counselling relationship, humans relate in a way which their culture, gender and level of interpersonal familiarity seem to dictate, with regard to proxemics; however, it is important not to generalise what has emerged, onto the whole of humanity. What is also emerging is that the concept of the interpersonal balance of power, has a part to play with reference to the role of proximity within counselling.

### **7.3.2 Study 2 power**

The concept of power has unfolded during this work, as noted in the Introduction section, and further deliberated on in this main Discussion section. Regarding a counselling relationship, the theme of power in relation to proxemics was gleaned by analysing the data from study 2. This is not



surprising because the literature search revealed a connection between power and proxemics (e.g. Bateson, 1936; Clegg, 1993; Fast, 1971; Henley, 1980; Steiner, 1980 and 1990; Wilms, 1987 and Wyckoff, 1980), as explained in the Introduction to this research. While interviewing one of the participants, I was keenly interested in his disclosure that a relationship made him feel empowered, specifically, when the relationship between him and his wife was going well. Clearly, an outcome of study 2 shows that when this interviewee was feeling disempowered, having close proximity with his wife when the relationship between them was experienced as good by him, empowered him. Further, he was one of the qualified practitioners who explained to me during the depth interview, his keen awareness of inter-personal proximity while counselling. It seems important to note that certain authors, such as Wilms (1987) and Fast (1971) have not had their work detailed in depth because they seem to write speculatively. Others, such as Bateson (1936) and Steiner (1990) have been deliberated on in more depth (see Introduction) due to their scholarly approach.

Another outcome of study 2 gives support to the proposition by Bateson (1936), Sullivan (1953) and Leary (1957), as explained in the Introduction, that the physical way one relates to another person shows how power is distributed between the inter-acting members of the dyad. This is because (in study 2) the theme of power was entwined with that of proxemics. The study 2 finding also supports Fast's (1971) declaration that there is power in NVC since findings show that proximity (being part of NVC) is inter-linked with



power. This study 2 finding also supports the works of Henley (1980) and Wyckoff (1980) who link power with NVC (which proxemics is a facet of).

Bateson's (1936) work illustrates that there is a link between how people relate non-verbally and their status and interpersonal power. An outcome of study 2 supports his work to the extent that it shows that interpersonal proximity is related to where the balance of power is perceived to be between the interacting individuals. Bateson (1936) theorised that parents have power and if parents regularly said one thing to their children, while non-verbally they were communicating a contradictory message, then this would have a main developmental effect on psychopathology. For example, if a parent physically abuses a child by coming very physically close to that child in order to beat up the child while saying something like, "I'm doing this because I love you, you're bad, so it's for your own good", then the child, being dependent on the parent, may take on board the statement "I love you" at the expense of self-loathing. This conceptualisation is not unusual; for instance, Bowlby (1952) also theorised that contradictory communications from a parent to a child had a major developmental influence on psychopathology. This raises questions about the behaviour of that child when he or she becomes an adult. Perhaps that adult will believe that close physical proximity will lead to pain and consequently have difficulty with relationships and the emotions which are involved in such a situation. It is tempting to develop this and other conceptualisations, but they need adequate research backing. Hence, there is more research work needed, to see for example, if such a conceptual theory can be evidence based. What seems to have emerged from the

presenting research, is that proxemics is linked to the perception of the balance of power between those who interact. Importantly, within counselling, as an independent adult, one may have the opportunity to change one's childhood assumptions so one may re-interpret what it means to be physically closer to or more physically distant from another person.

Since utilising the distance between two inter-acting individuals for the purpose of illustrating the type of relationship there is between them (as in Bateson, 1936) has been used within the field of dramatic art for centuries (see Wilms, 1987), it is surprising that Bateson's (1936) work has not been taken on board by the field of counselling psychology. Hopefully, my profession will consider taking this present research on board in a practical way.

The issue of power, and in particular, the abuse of power, is deliberated on by Aveline (1993) who states that one way in which power is abused within a counselling relationship, is by having a power imbalance between the client and counsellor. Specifically, he says that this happens because the conducting of the counselling is in the hands of the counsellor, i.e. the beginning and the ending of a session; and that the counsellor is seen as the expert by the client (Aveline, 1993). Aveline, (1993) has not been cited in the Introduction, because the theme of power was not specifically searched for in a pre-conceived way, but it emerged from the phenomenological way study 2 was analysed. Hence, it was after the emergent theme which is linked with proxemics was identified as power, that I looked for further works to see what



literature I could find to build this argument which is unfolding, that the balance of power is not only entwined with proximity but also important within a counselling relationship. Other works regarding power are by Jones (1913) and Bamberger (1974); these are cited below, as well as Imber-Black (1988), although not in the Introduction, for the same reason that Aveline (1993) has not been included in the Introduction, (as explained earlier in this paragraph).

Pertinently, the issue of power within a psychological counselling relationship, and the ease with which it can be abused, has been highlighted early in this century by Jones (1913) who warned that if unwary, therapists may view themselves like gods, ruling their patients (or clients). Indeed, Imber-Black (1988) draws a link between power and culture, stating that the men have the power in our culture, thus disempowering the women.

Such a link between gender and power within a culture has also been brought into relief by Bamberger's (1974) paraphrasing of a Brazilian myth:

"Once upon a time, many years ago, in the land of the Mundurucu, in Brazil, the sacred trumpets of the tribe were all owned by the women. These women kept the golden trumpets in the forest, where they convened secretly to play them. But, alas, the women devoted so much time to playing the trumpets that they eventually abandoned their husbands and their household duties. The women, as possessors of the trumpets, had thereby gained ascendancy over the men. The men had to carry firewood and fetch water, and they also had to make manioc bread-. But the men still hunted and this angered them for it



was necessary to feed meat to the trumpets-. So one of the men suggested that they take the trumpets from the women. This they did, forcing the women to return to the dwelling houses and to remain subservient to the men. Subsequently the people were taught that the women should not be permitted to meddle in the affairs of men, or take part in the secret male rites when the sacred musical instruments were played. The woman who would violate this prohibition stands condemned to death, and any man who shows the instruments or reveals the secret laws to a woman will be obliged to kill himself or be killed by his fellow man" (Bamberger, 1974, p.273).

As specified in the Introduction section to this research, one's power is in relation to a situation (Clegg, 1993). The above myth exemplifies this. Indeed, Clegg's (1993) study implies that changing a physical boundary without the authentic consent of all those who are involved, is an abuse of power. Hence, if a counsellor takes power by changing the space between her or him and the client, the client might find this abusive, just as the chartered counselling psychologist I interviewed in study 2 did when her client moved towards her without her consent.

Following on from Clegg's (1993) argument which states that power deals with a relation to an issue and boundaries, (as explained in the INTRODUCTION section); perhaps personal integrity is linked with psychological boundaries. Maybe proxemics is a manifestation of a psychological boundary which can be abused in a similar way which Clegg

(1993) argues countries can abuse their power. For instance, by changing the physical space between members who make up a counselling dyad without negotiation between the individuals who make up that dyad.

It seems that some individuals who practise counselling overlay new patterns of proximity over their clients' preferred choices by using their (the counsellors') power to decide on the inter-personal proximity within the counselling relationship, irrespective of issues such as the culture or gender of a client, as indicated by study 2. Proxemics is a huge topic, and who knows what such an overlay of proximity hides unless what is underneath the overlay is revealed. I am moved to declare that body-talk/language and non-verbal messages which envelop proximity are powerful communicators in counselling relationships.

Clearly, power is entwined with inter-personal proximity. Study 2 themes of gender and power which are entwined with proxemics (within a counselling relationship) are also enmeshed with culture, thus supporting the works of Bamberger (1974), Imber-Black (1988), Jones (1913) and Aveline (1993), as cited above.

### **7.3.3 Study 2 culture**

The point that the way individuals respond is in some way coloured by their culture, seems to be in line with Capra's (1996) argument who writes

convincingly that in human societies, individual members of that society have much autonomy and can choose to be independent of others, in many ways, while responding to their cultural enmeshment. Capra (1996) has not been cited in the Introduction, due to the qualitative nature of the analysis concerning study 2. However, due to the emergent themes, I am allowing the data to help me build the points of this discussion by bringing in Capra (1996). This is because he explains how an individual has the power to choose, within a culture, how to behave, to a certain extent. This is not juxtaposed to the findings of study 2, since one of the interviewees explained how he knew some-one who chose to behave in a certain way (e.g. by not sitting near to some-one who had a different colour of skin to his), in his host culture. This student counsellor disclosed an awareness of proximity within his counselling relationships, which he revealed as an inextricable part of other issues (i.e. counselling orientation, affect, gender, and the inter-personal balance of power), including culture.

Indeed, several authors have commented on the issue of inter-personal distance being dependent on cultural factors (e.g. Kahn et al, 1971; Bateson, 1936; Hall, 1966; Lett et al, 1969 and Argyle, 1982). Study 2 (and 1) affirms the works of these authors. However, what has also emerged from study 2 is that whether an individual is a woman or a man, emotions have a role in proxemics, since affect was one of the emergent themes from all the transcribed interviews.

#### **7.3.4 Study 2 affect**



Study 2 findings indicate that affect has an effect on behaviour which involves proxemics, thus supporting the work of Ridley (1998), Simon and Claridge (1998 [2]) and Rothschild (1997). Indeed, Rowan (1992) argues that feelings are an important part of humans and therefore not to be ignored. "If someone tells you that being emotional is irrational, tell them that it is leaving feelings out that is irrational" (Rowan, 1992, p.33). Rowan (1992), who writes convincingly from personal experience, has not been cited in the Introduction because the theme of affect which emerged from the analysis of study 2 was not pre-conceived so I sought further literature regarding affect, after this theme emerged.

The finding from study 2 that affect is linked to proxemics supports the works of Rothschild (1997), Goleman (1966), Chopra and Simon (1999), showing, as Jenkins et al (1998) assert, that the body and mind are interlinked. If one's inner mental attitude can become fixed by believing that inter-personal closeness causes pain, as Rothschild (1997) theorises, then this link between affect and proximity could be the reason why the client of one of the interviewee's, would not allow her (the chartered counselling psychologist) to move closer towards him, and indeed, she explained that he (the client) would raise his foot as if to kick her, at the slightest hint of her moving closer towards him. Perhaps if she were more aware (maybe via continuing professional development) of proxemics and how to work with proximity, she would not be, as she described: so lost regarding what to do.

Kahn et al (1971) have previously shown that inter-personal distance is

influenced by the attractiveness of the other person; and the works of Argyle (1982) and Lett et al (1969) state that inter-personal distance is influenced by how much one likes the other person. Both attractiveness and liking another person imply that affect has a role in these issues. Hence, affect is linked to proximity, as study 2 indicates, whether the counsellor is aware of this or not. In addition, the proximity between members who make up a counselling dyad may also depend on what counselling orientation is being used, as indicated in study 2.

### **7.3.5 Study 2 orientation**

Certain models incorporate affect within their counselling orientation, for example, Rowan (1992) and Wilber (1980), seem to agree that human beings function on a fourfold level of spirit, intellect, body and emotion. Wilber (1980 and 1998) has not been cited in the Introduction for the same reason that Rowan (1992) has not, as explained previously. Emotion is also floodlighted, at least in theories of behaviour and cognition, as is amply illustrated in the scholarly book "Cognition and Emotion" (Power and Dalgleish, 1997). 'At least', because, cognitive and behaviour therapies are not the only counselling models which incorporate affect.

Power and Dalgleish (1997) have not been cited in the Introduction since I sought further literature to put in this chapter, to aid me in discussing the study 2 emergent themes, after their emergence. According to Power and Dalgleish (1997), humans are adaptive and that is beneficial to their survival.



Although Power and Dalgleish's (1997) work does not seem to be research based, they have drawn on the investigations of others with approximately eight-hundred references, which circumscribe their theoretical deliberations. They write convincingly that some individuals may adapt in a way which society as a whole regards as maladaptive, and then stay fixed in that "maladaptive" mode, which their thinking supports. Although this is a well thought out theory which incorporates the concept of schemas as used within the CBT model, it is apparently based on the concept of the adaptability of affect and does not seem to include the physical space between interacting individuals. The present research highlights the importance of affect, as Power and Dalgleish (1997) do; however, unlike Power and Dalgleish (1997), interpersonal physical proximity is focused on, within which the concept of affect emerged as one of the themes from study 2. Hence, I find it worthwhile citing Power and Dalgleish (1997) here because they state that affect needs considering during a psychological session. This is in line with study 2 findings which indicate that proxemics within a counselling relationship is not only entwined with affect but also counselling orientation.

In sum, Power and Dalgleish (1997) theorize within their extensive work on affect, that an individual's adaptable emotions can become stuck and maladaptive with the back up of thought processes due to trauma. This conceptualisation can be taken further, since thoughts and emotions are linked to behaviour. Consequently, it seems to logically follow that the individual may behave in a way which may not serve him or her well. Further,



one way which behaviour is manifested, is by interpersonal physical proximity.

If a counsellor has a set distance from the client; and if that is the counsellor's comfortable interpersonal distance, then this would perhaps be different to the proximity the client may choose, as studies 1 and 2 indicate. Hence, the counsellor may be overlaying the client's choice of interpersonal proximity (perhaps dictated by the client's schema) with the counsellor's own preference regarding interpersonal proximity (perhaps dictated by the counsellor's schema). If the counsellor overlays her or his schema over the client's, regarding interpersonal proximity, then the counsellor loses one opportunity for a glimpse into the client's schema regarding her or his (the client's) inter-active relating which includes preferred physical interpersonal distance at that moment in time. Whilst proxemics in counselling was not a part of Power and Dalgleish's (1997) work, it seems reasonable to conceptualise that the client's authentic affect may enter the counselling relationship, and therefore her or his authentic thought and behaviour, as opposed to an overlay of what the client believes that the counsellor expects. This may perhaps be facilitated by offering the client an easy choice regarding where she or he sits. For example, by having movable seating, or indeed two settees instead of two chairs, so that clients have an opportunity to edge along the settees if they wish.

It has been stated elsewhere that I have witnessed clients move physically either closer or more distant within a counselling relationship, during their

disclosures, with various levels of emotion. Affect therefore seems to have an effect on interpersonal distance, as indeed, study 2 shows. It is conceptualised that if a counsellor has a chair which is set in a particular place for the client and asks that client: "Are you O.K. sitting there?" Then the client may say: "Yes" while perhaps feeling that this is the answer expected and wanted; just as a sick person who needs and wants to be left alone to curl up in bed and sleep, may smile and speak to a visitor, apparently coping with this interaction on the outside, but on the inside needing and wanting something else, which the visitor has not been made aware of.

Hence, although Power and Dalgleish (1997) draw attention to the non-verbal subject of affect and show how affect and cognition effect each other, I would like to see this work taken further, to show how behaviour incorporating physical proximity, develops and augments the linked aspects of cognition and affect. This type of work is needed to take this conceptualisation further in order to highlight proxemics and affect but also culture, gender, interpersonal power and counselling orientation since these themes emerged from study 2. It is not possible to answer all questions on physical proximity in counselling therefore further studies on NVC need to take account of not only the relevant past literature, but also the current emergent themes regarding face to face counselling while sitting on chairs.

However, if a counsellor has a psycho-dynamic orientation, then she or he may either be situated behind the client who might be lying on a couch unable to see the counsellor (as a friend and colleague of mine counsels), or, she or

he may sit as far away from the client as is physically possible (as one of my ex-therapist's who followed a psycho-dynamic orientation, counselled me). Hence, proximity can be related to orientation. Indeed, the interviewee in study 2 who had worked for many years as an architect and was a professional psycho-therapist, used his architectural training within his counselling sessions by utilising the space between him and his clients as part of the therapeutic relationship.

### **7.3.6 Study 2 proxemics**

Although interviewees in study 2 seemed to be aware of proxemics, some said that they had thought of the issue of proxemics before the interview and others disclosed that they had not considered proxemics prior to being interviewed. The degree to which interviewees were aware of proxemics seemed to be related to whether they were in training as student counsellors or were already qualified psychological counsellors in professional practice, because one-hundred percent of the students who were interviewed said they noticed the distance between them and their clients, compared to the qualified therapists of which only fifty percent who were interviewed said that they were aware of the distance between themselves and their clients. Further, interviews revealed that most individuals counselled at a certain distance not because the client wanted that distance, but because the counsellor was comfortable at that distance. This was juxtaposed to the way I conducted the interviews, which was for myself to sit down first and then see



the distance which each interviewee placed herself or himself at in relation to where I was sitting.

Since opportunistic sampling was used regarding the depth interviews (because it was economical and the interviewees were the most readily accessible individuals within the purposive groups I had chosen, i.e. half female and half male of which fifty percent were student counsellors and fifty percent were qualified practitioners), it was not possible for all student and qualified psychological counsellors in the population to have an equal chance of being chosen for an interview. Hence it is impossible to ascertain how representative the outcome of study 2 is regarding the awareness of proxemics within the rest of the population of student and professional psychological counsellors. Therefore, the findings regarding study 2 are not generalisable. Concerning study 2, a heuristic mode of reasoning seemed to emerge from the qualitative data.

### **7.3.7 Study 2 emergent themes**

A heuristic mode of reasoning seemed to emerge because study 2 is pertinent to the dynamics of the moment-to-moment interaction between the interviewee and myself, and the meaning which emerged from that. In this way, study 2 supports the work of Harper et al (1978), who stressed the dynamics of moment-to-moment interaction, as stated in the Introduction. Indeed, they structured inter-action into five non-verbal behaviours which include proxemics: 1) para-linguistic, 2) facial expression, 3) kinesics, 4)

visual behaviour and 5) proxemics. However, study 2 structures proxemics, with regard to counselling, into the emergent themes of gender, culture, affect, the balance of power and counselling orientation.

#### **7.4 Combined findings in light of literature cited**

What has emerged from studies 1 and 2 is that how one person relates to another, in a corporeal way, indicates the kind of relationship there is between the two people; thus supporting the works of others (e.g. Bateson, 1936; Sullivan, 1953; Leary, 1957 and Bruner and Taguiri, 1954). From such findings, a theory that individuals are influenced by where they are embedded, is emerging.

However, Bowlby's (1969) theory, supported by Ainsworth et al (1974), Brazelton and Cramer (1989) and Holmes (1993), that seeking proximity with others is embodied within each person, may explain the reason why none of those who were approached in the studies, declined to take part. From such findings, a theory is emerging that individuals inherit the seeking of proximity, as put forward by others (e.g. Darwin, 1872 and Ekman et al, 1969).

Both studies affirm the perspective viewed by Harper et al (1978), that proxemics is a central tenet of human response; since their combined findings show that proxemics within the counselling arena is part of a non-verbal web which is influenced by familiarity, gender, affect, culture, the balance of power and counselling orientation. This is in line with Burley-

Allen's (1983) investigations as cited in the Introduction that we can have an effect on each other without saying a word. The following theory is now emerging: not only are we embedded (e.g. within the culture which surrounds us), but we are also embodied (e.g. within our body, whether male or female) and both these aspects (i.e. being embodied and embedded) combine to influence our inter-personal proximity.

Findings from studies 1 and 2 illustrate that the individual's proximity to another is influenced by culture, supporting Hall's (1997) and Bateson's (1936) work. Simon's (1999) statement is also supported that culture influences people, as cited in the Introduction. It seems important to re-enforce here, that the three countries I collected my data from were sufficiently similar (e.g. English was fluently spoken at each location) so that I could relate to the participants and they could understand what I was talking about. However, if I had chosen a more different culture, such as Japan, the research would have had to be thought through again, therefore further studies need to take this into account. This raises questions about the generalisability of the results. However, I was looking for differences in proximity within a counselling context, as opposed to generalisability. Since significant differences were found, the question is raised about how much difference there would be within individuals from much more diverse or different cultures than the English speaking ones which data was collected from. To re-iterate: proxemics is viewed interpersonally within a situation. Indeed, both studies view proxemics within a situation and regard the individual as inter-actional, influenced by at least gender and culture, as



Deaux and Lafrance (1998) have concluded. Regarding studies 1 and 2, it appears that proxemics is influenced by one's familiarity or social role, culture and gender. However, study 2 goes further. What has emerged from study 2 is that, regarding counselling, proxemics is not only influenced by familiarity, culture and gender, as illustrated by study 1, but also affect, counselling orientation and the balance of power; supporting Deaux and Lafrance's (1998) investigations. They state that an individual is influenced by power, gender, culture and social role (Deaux and Lafrance, 1998).

According to Rothschild (1997) individuals' emotions activate their behaviour to elicit proximity and those with the greatest unresolved stress choose greater distances. Perhaps it was more stressful for strangers to approach the researcher than those who were either recognised or acknowledged, which would explain the differences in proximity, while supporting Rothschild's (1997) theory. This would also be in line with Simon and Claridge's (1998[2]) work who imply that those with the most stress choose the most inter-personal distance; indeed, they say that individuals with the greatest stress choose reclusiveness.

Findings show that each individual chooses to be at a certain distance from another. Perhaps every person has a metaphorical invisible sphere around them, not only in a counselling relationship but wherever they go, this being their territorial space as Argyle (1982) noted. However, this sphere can change in size, depending on the type of relationship one person has with

another, as aptly noticed by Hall (1966) when he documented the four distance zones (which have been commented on earlier).

Findings in study 1 are similar to Hall's (1996) in that groups of people chose different distances depending on how familiar the counsellor was with them so the more familiarity there was, the closer the proximity. However, this was dependent on cultural and gender factors: females took the most distance and the groups in USA took the least distance while those in England took the most. Indeed, how distant or close one person is to another, differs due to whom one is with and the situation individuals are in, as Egan (1977) clearly stated.

Egan's (1977) statement is in line with the findings from study 2 where interviewees remembered sitting at a certain distance from a client, depending on where they were and who the client was. This is useful information for counsellors because the exact distance a client chooses to sit from a counsellor may offer a non-verbal cue as to how she or he feels and the way that the client envisages the counselling relationship. This also links with Hall's (1966) work, since Hall (1966) documented an intimate zone of proximity from skin to skin contact to approximately one and a half feet of inter-personal distance.

Indeed, in study 2, a chartered counselling psychologist spoke of a client who had sat at her (the psychologist's) feet, while disclosing something intimate and making herself vulnerable; after that disclosure, the client sat further

away. Hence, if a client chooses to put her or himself at this intimate zone of proximity (see Hall, 1966) from a counsellor, it may indicate that the client is trusting the counsellor enough to reduce her or his defences. Conversely, if a counsellor decides to sit within the intimate zone of a client's proximity without that client's sincere consent, then that client may experience her or his personal space being invaded, as well as experiencing the counsellor as threatening; this being similar to an interrogation situation where the interrogator sits close to the person being interrogated.

Perhaps if a client sits in what Hall (1966) described as the personal zone of proximity, that is, at about an arm's length, the client is not wishing to be very open emotionally, but would still like to disclose personal information.

However, if a counsellor is the one who chooses this distance, the client may perceive this as: the counsellor wishing to keep the client "at arm's length".

Indeed, concerning interview 1 (an English male counselling student) in study 2, the interviewee said that he found it extremely painful to be closer than eighteen inches to a client and that any inter-personal distance between him and a client which was closer than three feet was not comfortable for him.

Bearing in mind the results from study 1 which clearly show that the males and females from Branson Missouri USA prefer to sit statistically significantly closer than those in Dorset England, the need for training in at least proxemics as part of improving counselling in a culturally sensitive way, seems obvious.



In a similar vein, if a client places her or himself at what Hall (1996) called the social distance, which is about the length of a person, this may indicate to the counsellor that the client wants help but feels not ready to disclose certain personal material to the counsellor. And if the counsellor chooses to be within the range of social distance which Hall (1966) specified, then the client may assume that the counsellor is unable to take certain personal material the client may wish to disclose. Of course, if both client and counsellor are mutually satisfied to sit at such a distance due to sincere inter-action between the two, then the counselling encounter may not be undesirable. This kind of inter-action was clear during interview 10 in study 2, when the professional counsellor said that he checked out with clients if they were fine with where they were sitting, while making sure that he was comfortable himself.

As for Hall's (1966) most distant zone of proximity, the public one (which is anything over twelve feet), if a client sits at this distance, it may be very difficult for that client to hold a dialogue; yet if a counsellor chooses to be that distant from a client, the client might assume that the counsellor does not wish to have a dialogue with the client. Intriguingly, in interview 8 (study 2), the chartered counselling psychologist disclosed that one of her clients sat as far away from her as he physically could in the counselling room and she said that this, coupled with his closed body posture, made it excruciatingly difficult work for her during the counselling sessions, to try and find a glimpse into his world and she revealed that she did not know what to do about it.

Consequently, it is concluded that training in NVC which encompasses proxemics could be apt in rectifying situations like this.

The finding's (from study 1) of assumed clients choosing to sit at significantly different distances from a purported counsellor depending on gender, familiarity and cultural factors are not in line with current mainstream recommended practice of counselling, "at arm's length" as explained to me at each main practical counselling course which I have attended. Similarly, the outcome from study 2, that gender, the balance of inter-personal power, counselling orientation, culture and affect are all enmeshed with proxemics, does not seem to have been previously addressed, in depth. Hence the uniqueness of this research.

Nevertheless, an outcome of study 2 gives support to a proposition by Bateson (1936), Sullivan (1953) and Leary (1957), as explained in the Introduction, that the physical way one relates to another person shows how power is distributed between the inter-acting dyad. This is because (in study 2) the theme of power was inter-twined with that of proxemics. Since utilising the distance between inter-acting individuals for the purpose of illustrating the type of relationship there is between them (as in Bateson, 1936) has been used within the field of dramatic art for centuries (see Wilms, 1987), it is surprising that Bateson's (1936) work has not been taken on board by the field of counselling psychology.

If having greater power means having a higher status, then this may explain the statistically significant differences between the female and male genders in study 1. For instance, one allows a person with a higher status more space

than a person with a lower status, thus showing respect for the person with the higher status. E.g. a queen is surrounded by much space around her throne while people may crowd around a baby who is a non-royal (it seems obvious to state that the queen has more power than the baby and that much respect is bestowed upon royalty). The possibility therefore follows that the male participants in study 1 did not respect the female experimenter as much as the female participants, because the males chose much closer proximity to her than the females. This may be a reflection of cultural influence, if the males have more power than the females, which manifests for instance in more men than women being in managerial positions and tending to have more pay.

However, there are further possible explanations for this difference in proxemics between the females and males. For example, the men may have felt more comfortable with the experimenter than the women, or they may have found her more attractive, or they may have sat close to her as way of flirting or showing bravado. This result challenges Sermat's (1967) finding since Sermat (1967) stated that gender did not influence the space between people. This discrepancy may have arisen, however, because Sermat (1967) looked at the distance university students chose to stand from an experimenter, irrespective of a specific situation; whereas this research was more specific by asking strangers to sit where they would choose to sit in relation to the purported counsellor if they were her clients. Intriguingly, in this research, regarding study 1, women preferred significantly greater distances than men, cross culturally.



This is an important finding (that women preferred greater inter-personal space than men) because of implications within the counselling arena: Some males offering counselling to women may be seating themselves so close that the women feel abused, but dare to do nothing about it maybe because they experience themselves as being in a vulnerable position, while the men are comfortable, perhaps comfortable with keeping the power they have become accustomed to; possibly this situation can also arise if the counsellor is aware of proxemics but does not know what to do with it, or the counsellor is unaware of the notion of proxemics. Hence the importance of educating student and professional psychological counsellors in proxemics (which is a facet of non-verbals).

Importantly, affect is another factor which has an impact on interpersonal proximity, as previously discussed. Indeed, the interviewees spoke of affect in relation to inter-personal proximity in various ways. E.g: a counselling student said she felt she could get physically closer to her counsellor if her counsellor was a woman as opposed to a man; a chartered counselling psychologist said that she felt scared when a male client moved physically closer towards her; and a male client said that he felt comfortable when he was at a specific distance from his client. So, it has been shown that culture, orientation, gender, familiarity, power and affect influence inter-personal proximity. Hence, various non-verbal factors impact on the space between two interacting individuals, as shown by study 1 and study 2. Further, whether an individual is aware of proxemics, seems to be related to whether the

individual is a student counsellor or not. Perhaps student counsellors seem more aware of proximity because they may cover where to sit, during their training, as opposed to the qualified practitioners who may take for granted, where they sit, and so be less aware of proxemics; although this does not explain why the student counsellors were less pro-active than the qualified ones, concerning proximity with regard to this research.

A reason may be that they feel they have less power than the qualified practitioners, or they may believe that the counselling modes they use do not encompass proxemics. Nevertheless, what seems to have emerged is that if , for instance, person A behaves in a certain way, i.e. chooses a certain physical distance, then person B will interpret ( for her or himself) an understanding of that behaviour and visa versa. Consequently, an interpersonal understanding (or misunderstanding) grows wherein physical proxemics plays a part within the framework of the gender which the individuals are embodied with, the counselling orientation followed, the level of interpersonal familiarity, the culture they are embedded in and the perceived balance of power between person A and person B. Hence the potentially elastic distance between them is played out within this continuous framework. This cyclical (cyclical because it is continuous) interpersonal conceptualisation is illustrated in figure 6.

## **7.5 Possible reason for non-significance**

Fascinatingly, in study 1, all combinations of respondents were at a significantly different distance ( $p < 0.001$ ) apart from respondents from USA when compared to respondents from Gibraltar (as already stated). A possible reason for this non-significance between USA and Gibraltar is that the extreme figures (which even went into minus numbers) from the data in the USA cancel each other out, thus appearing similar to the data collected from Gibraltar. Caution therefore needs to be exercised from a counsellor's perspective, so that it is not assumed that a client from Gibraltar would be comfortable at the same inter-personal distance as a client from USA, and so that the counsellor's non-verbal message regarding proxemics is not misinterpreted by the client.

## **7. 6 Communication:**

Following on from the above, counsellors need to be aware what non-verbal messages they are communicating to their clients, when they (the counsellors) choose to sit at a certain proximity from their clients within the context of a counselling relationship. In addition, by being more keenly aware of non-verbal communications such as proxemics, counsellors may learn something extra about what is happening inside their clients; counsellors could also gain further insight concerning how clients communicate and possibly glean further perceptions such as: how clients cope with the communication of others.



Egan (1977) implied this: He realised the importance for counsellors to attend to their clients as much as they possibly could. The importance of a physical attending or listening is spotlighted here, within the inter-personal counselling relationship. Although inter-personal distance is as old as humankind, this work offers a new handle to the counselling face-to-face relationship. If counsellors become highly skilled in their use of non-verbal communication incorporating body language, including inter-personal space, then this could aid them dramatically in transforming the counselling session into a kind of democratic arena, where the balance of power may be less unequal than if the counsellor did not have this skill within her or his repertoire. Within such an arena, the client may be empowered to contribute by confronting problems and a whole plethora of different types of oppression and exploitation. It appears therefore that status and power are related to action within the arena of a counselling relationship and this is linked with proxemics, which is part of non-verbals.

## **7.7 Kinesics:**

As noted in the Introduction part of this research, in order to understand non-verbals (unspoken body language or kinesics), it is important to at least consider cultural differences. Hence, it is re-iterated that culture was one of the factors in study 1 and indeed results showed its significance. For a psychological counsellor, the following perspective is spotlighted: It is not only crucial to send the unspoken message of one's body language with respect, but also critical that one receives the intended communication from a client.

For instance, if a man, from Dorset in England, named John becomes a client of a counselling psychologist named Mario whose cultural roots are Gibraltarian, and John feels tearful so he braces himself to protect himself from crying; then if Mario decides to comfort John in the way his (Mario's) culture has taught him, which might be by cradling John in his arms, thus ignoring John's protective non-verbal cues, then Mario's body language, specifically, his proximity to John, may be experienced by John as violating. Thus, Mario's behaviour would not be deemed to be in proper order.

Yet it is deemed to be in proper order when a psychological therapist intervenes with adequate power to elicit desired change in a client. The development of a client moving in a desired direction is linked with inter-personal dynamics, which envelops proxemics, between client and counsellor, and may include flattened hierarchy and equality between individuals who make up a counselling dyad. This possibility of flattened hierarchy could be seen as a threat to existing power bases and discrimination may be practised by people wishing to keep the status quo, for instance: by dictating the inter-personal proximity, either covertly or overtly. To overcome this, it is argued that professionals need to accept its occurrence, however subtle, and endeavour to redress the balance, perhaps via education, so that a mutual respect can be created between the members of a counselling dyad. This issue of power has been deliberated on in the Introduction section; further, it was a theme which was gleaned as intertwined with proxemics in study 2. Hence, it is further expanded in this Discussion section (see 7.3.2 *study 2 power*).



## **7.8 Inequality**

There is a meagre amount of literature concerning itself with power within a psychological counselling relationship (Steiner, 1990). It is argued, however, that the aspects of power within relationships are important enough to be systematically investigated. It is not easy to find a counselling model where the power of each actor within the counselling dyad is considered a relevant factor. Indeed, what is meant by the term “power”? Power means being able to force someone to do something because of exerting physical force onto that person, because person x has greater physical power than person y (Steiner, 1990). For example, a stronger person grabs very close physical proximity by pushing another out of a room against that person’s will. For instance in a hypothetical situation: Bill (person x), who is stronger than Anna (person y), pushes her out of a room against her will, by exerting force, because Bill has greater physical power than Anna. This crude sort of power is not the only type of personal power there is. For instance, even if Bill is capable of pushing Anna out of the room, she may have a body-guard working for her who could easily push Bill around, so Bill could be intimidated out of the room, even before he lays a finger on Anna. Thus intimidation, by abusing inter-personal proximity, is another form of power (Steiner, 1990).

There is also a further type of power: A third type of power, is for Anna to convince Bill to voluntarily walk to her across the room, thus having closer inter-personal proximity between them, without threatening him, due to her



attractiveness, while Bill could not do this to Anna. Hence, power is the ability to make people behave in a certain way. As Steiner (1990) concludes: Its distribution is not evenly balanced between people, consequently, some individuals have more power than others. In focussing on the proxemics of counselling dyads, the aspect of power clearly emerged. Bearing in mind Steiner's (1990) perspective in conjunction with the clinical experience of not only myself but also supervisees, it is argued that a number of clients have become so used to compromising their own needs on behalf of pleasing others, that they need to learn again, not only to recognise their own needs and wants, but also how to express them.

Thus, the study of proxemics extended into exploring inter-personal power and status which have an effect on both women and men. On the issue of gender, it is argued that individuals learn to perform (behave) according to gender or role expectations. The performance envelops status and power within inter-personal relationships. By teasing out information concerning counselling dyads, it is posited that: how power is arranged within a relationship, is a crucial aspect which effects it. Therefore, a psychological counsellor who is unaware of this, so does not respond appropriately to the power arrangement (which is entwined with proxemics as shown in study 2), is not aware of a very important issue. Bearing this in mind it is disturbing that half of the qualified practitioners said that they had not thought of inter-personal distance with regard to counselling.

Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest the following: Just as professional actors are trained to be aware of relative inter-personal power (by utilising proximity) and learn how to respond to such an aspect appropriately; so psychological therapists could train to become aware of the relative power (which is enmeshed with proxemics as previously shown) of each client they work with; as opposed to ignoring that dimension. Due to the remarkably meagre amount of information on proxemics (as opposed to speculation) within counselling relationships, the paucity of literature on power or status within a counselling relationship is unremarkable, since proxemics and power, as argued thus far, seem to be inextricably entwined. Due to the lack of a body of literature concerning these issues for counselling psychologists, it seems logical to assume that there is, to a certain extent, a lack of awareness with regard to such aspects. Perhaps the lack of awareness concerning power, proxemics and status which some psychological counsellors seem to have, stops them from realising the repertoire of abuses of power which happen between people and the unhappiness which such abuse causes.

## **7.9 Proxemics**

By bringing proxemics into the repertoire of skills which psychological practitioners learn, thus acknowledging power and status, and recognising the abuse of power, even when it is subtle; they become ambassadors of a psycho-therapeutic profession. Also, they may rapidly choose to become allies with the individuals who are being oppressed (as opposed to not taking

sides or being neutral), due to a perceived consequence of losing neutrality by taking sides with the powerless.

If psychological therapists ignore the dimension of proxemics and therefore also the facets of power and status, or do not seem eager to train in how to be aware of such dimensions or do not want to learn how to use such awareness towards a sensitive understanding of how power is distributed within a relationship (bearing in mind culture and gender), it may be due to the issue of the perceived consequence of loss of neutrality or taking sides, as argued above. Yet it is important to satisfactorily support clients.

## **7.10 Ethical control**

In order to support clients it is important to have an empowered counselling psychologist (to aid empowering a client). This is a perspective which Gordon and Harold (1997) are aware of with their clients, as stated previously in the Introduction. Indeed, it is argued that practitioners have a moral requirement to build themselves up or become empowered, for the purpose of being robustly strong enough, regarding their psychological make-up, in supporting their clients. In study 2, one practitioner stated how doing something physical such as yoga empowered him. Another practitioner in study 2 stated that being physically and psychologically close to another person was empowering for her. This shows that these interviewees were aware of how to empower themselves. Importantly, they took control of empowering themselves outside of their counselling session rooms in order to aid themselves in supporting



their clients within their counselling session rooms. This is deemed as ethical since the clients are not used or abused in order to build up the therapists.

As mentioned earlier, for practitioners to control what they ethically can, is important; for instance: recognising that they are responsible for their own career and that the employer or client is leasing their skills (Gordon and Harold, 1997). If the practitioners sharpen their skills (including NVC techniques such as proxemics) then others may want to lease them. This can be one way towards empowering counselling psychologists. Also, counselling psychologists are urged to accept the challenge of learning for a lifetime, thus being prepared to be employed by others; since learning all through life could guide practitioners into being ready at any time to move on. It could also mean having skills which are transferable, that would be useful to a different employer, and it means keeping those skills current. This could be another way towards counselling psychologists' empowerment. And still a different way for them to have some ethical control in order to empower their professionalism, is by building a network of people they know they can interact with for contacts, a referral source either way, and help. The following three-step model is therefore tentatively offered to practitioners, as a guide for their empowerment:

Step one: sharpen skills so people will want to lease them.

Step two: learn through life so skills are transposable, thus being ready to move on to a different employer whenever this arises and keeping skills up to date.

Step three: build up a network of people for connections, referrals, support.

These three steps however, are enmeshed with economics and politics. Yet what is important is that the three steps do not involve counsellors in using counselling relationships as a means of empowering themselves. Hence, the use of proxemics within a counselling relationship could be used for the benefit of the client.

### **7.11 Economics and politics**

Learning more about proxemics may be one way which counselling practitioners can sharpen their skills. In order for practitioners to sharpen their skills, they need to provide the finances to do so, before others pay them for the leasing of those skills. This touches on the political arena, because the government may wish to utilise the expertise of a practitioner, or a team of psychologists within an organisation, perhaps due to concern regarding an area such as bullying, which is rife with non-verbal communications incorporating proxemics. If, however, a practitioner is of a private agency, then it is important for that person not to become too dependent on clients, thus perhaps not being tempted to use knowledge such as that gained concerning NVC to gain more work from a client when that client does not need it. If a client has finished satisfactorily with a practitioner and that practitioner has no more clients, then the lack of finances, if the clinician is a private agent, may require that person to claim unemployment benefit, thus perhaps becoming another political statistic concerning figures on unemployment. However, bearing all this in mind, it is stated that counselling

psychologists help clients to "run their own show"; and utilise proxemics with this end in mind.

On a local level, this means being responsible for one's own power. How realistic is this? As Hall (1997) states, politics and economics are interlinked and England is specific with this. For example, there are calls on many women's time in private life, so part-time work suits, for instance, some women with children in school; therefore these women have not been able to claim benefits such as sick-pay and holiday money until the present government recently came into power; similarly, no special pension had been offered to them (the women). This implication of second-class citizenship has been touched on by the research, perhaps due to the cross-cultural aspect of it (which the investigation into proxemics enveloped), which is explained in the section immediately below.

### **7.12 Local and global**

This project may have inadvertently thrown into relief the rocking of gender stereo-typing. An instance of this may have been during that part of the research which I, the female researcher, performed in England. In England, the image of a woman, which the media often feeds the public on, is generally that of a female interested in trivia, such as which make-up and washing powder are the best to use. When this image of a woman interested in trivia is put together with a profession, then gender stereo-typing is rocked. A common reaction to the experimenter in this country during study 1 was an



initial fleeting one of surprise on the faces of the participants, which may have been a clue to the rocking of a stereo-type: Perhaps they did not imagine a fat, middle-aged woman to be researching scientifically. Concerning proxemics, the participants in England had a greater distance to the experimenter, at all levels, than in the other countries; this could be construed as a tendency towards the proverbial reserve of the English.

Interestingly, participants' reactions from the other side of the Atlantic were different: Reaction from the USA was mainly one of apparent happy interest, which may have been a clue to a tendency towards the participants perhaps being more open to the experimenter in America than in this country. Indeed, many participants in the USA were keen to stay with the experimenter and talk about themselves. The aspect of staying with her (the experimenter) is similar to the experimenter's experience with the Gibraltarian participants.

From Gibraltar, the reaction was usually to ask questions about the research and what was to happen with it, which may have been a clue perhaps to their interest in an outside person visiting Gibraltar, who was not just a tourist. I (the experimenter) sensed a respect from the Gibraltarian participants which was not apparent from the participants in England and the USA. Perhaps those in Gibraltar had a respect for me (the experimenter) because I (she) had a profession. Maybe they stereo-typed an individual who had a profession as respectable and so worthy of respect. Perhaps "propaganda" on a macro or national level has micro level or local implications.

A local event, as Hall (1997) declares, can have global implications. For example, what goes on inside a consulting room can have an effect on the client's and counsellor's world outside that room. For instance, if a counsellor always chooses the proximity between her or him and the client, then that client may dare not use the skill of initiating proximity to a person in perceived authority outside of the counselling room (if they are not enabled to practise that skill inside the counselling room), which may be a deep problem for that client, that the counsellor remains unaware of. Furthermore, events outside the consulting room can have implications for inside the room. Specifically: one person behaves in a particular way, but the implications are wider than that individual. For example: Cognitive behavioural therapy is used not only in England but also in other countries such as Australia and the United States of America. In this way therefore, many counselling psychologists are involved globally in what is happening locally.

It is argued that for clinicians to work at a satisfactory level, they need to feel that they have to perform to certain standards. Furthermore, it is tentatively suggested that perhaps in the future counselling psychologists could become subject to random tests which may help towards achieving and maintaining a global standard, including the skilled use of NVC which incorporates proxemics, as well as appropriate counselling models. In this way, insight may be gained at different levels, both global and local, that lets counselling psychologists know what is happening at different places, and not just with their clients. Hence, it is considered important to be aware of working on different levels when practitioners are working for the well being of clients,



whether in the public or private domain. In addition, local clinical work can be placed within a global context of practitioners. This work attempted to fill in part of this dimension by conducting cross-cultural research on inter-personal distance regarding a counselling relationship. Perhaps inter-personal distance is monitored by an intra-personal facet, which is discussed in sub-section *7.15 intra-personal relating*.

What is unintentionally emerging from this current work on proxemics, is the un-researched question: How does the stereo-typing within a nation, affect the individual and families on a local level? (This links with the *economics and politics* sub-section 7.11.) For instance, the media's role in stereo-typing can produce powerful feelings of belonging, such as is put across to the British during the last night of the annually performed Henry Wood Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London during part of the summer. These powerful feelings of belonging help with issues like identity. However, if a black person is born in England and is British, and the media stereo-type black people, what happens to that individual's sense of identity? Christie in the Olympics exemplifies this because when he wins he is not called "West Indian" by the media, he is called "British". However, if a black person gets into trouble, then the media do not call that person "British", the media call that person "West Indian", for instance. So, how can one person be both? This work on proxemics is revealing that the local and global, and the public and private domains overlap, as discussed above and below, respectively.

### **7.13 Public and private**



Veritably, the private and public domains can have an effect on each other. For instance, a public disaster can have a private disaster as a consequence, which may be why a person has sought counselling; and needless to say, being skilled in NVC incorporating proxemics would be useful in this situation. For example: as a way of ascertaining when the client is needing silent time to inwardly process. If this is the case, then moving either closer or further away from the client, may disturb that inward processing.

In addition, a private domain can become a public one if a practitioner is working with a famous person and that work affects them in such a way that the public perceives that person differently. Further, Hall (1997) highlights that public decisions affect private individuals who make decisions. A private act of violence which perhaps involves two people in very close proximity so that they have an aggressive skin to skin interaction, maybe ending with a disastrous consequence, can lead to a public action of police arresting and putting in prison, the perpetrator. Indeed, one reason there seems to be aeroplane rage on some charter flights may be because the seats are placed too closely together, so passengers experience their personal space is being invaded. Hence the importance of honouring the personal space which a client chooses in the counselling room. Indeed, when an interviewee (in study 2) attempted to get closer to a client than the client wanted, the client became physically threatening to the chartered counselling psychologist.

#### **7.14 Representation and reality**

A clinician needs to highlight for a client, a boundary of self-care and professionalism. For example, by going well in life and keeping firmly within the counselling relationship. The reality of self-care or neglect and whether one is acting professionally or not, is sometimes obvious, especially when it is extreme. However, representation sometimes needs to be made explicit. For example, counselling psychologists practice through the body of their professional organisation, which represents their jobs in the real world. However, their clients may not know this unless it is made explicit to them. This can be done by displaying their membership to the appropriate professional body, on a wall that is easy for clients to see. That is, close to eye level, as opposed to a distance which is far from eye level.

Further, the myth of life in England, that English people only talk about the weather, traffic and foreigners (foreigners being the representation of an anonymous other, such as the French), can be perpetuated by clients, thereby not focussing on the reality of their own lives; so the counselling psychologist can explicitly invite the clients to speak of their own lives. When I have done so, clients have physically often moved closer to me in a counselling session, as they changed the spotlight from the outside world to themselves. Numerous clients talk about others in a way which excludes them as a private person, and includes them in a purported conspiracy against them, planned by the others. Professional counselling psychologists need to look behind the representation to find whatever reality there is. In this way the predicament of the client can be viewed from a different angle, so the

professional can help the client perceive this from a different perspective. Do not trust the surface experience, because for instance, the client may be wearing a "gallows smile". So, find the person behind that smile. Look behind the way people represent themselves to see what reality underlies that representation; thus getting psychologically closer to clients to gain a fuller understanding of them. One way to do this is perhaps to be highly skilled in NVC which incorporates proxemics. Hence, there is implicit power in having knowledge of proxemics and other aspects of NVC.

### **7.15 Intra-personal relating**

As shown in the Introduction to this research under the sub-heading *philosophy*, individuals experiencing in depth interviews found their subjective meanings while deliberating on the issues which emerged during the interviewing. As interviewees grappled with their search for meaning, concerning at least proxemics within a relationship, they were undergoing an intra-action. That is, they were looking within themselves, and communicating with their inner life or self, to find and express the process they were deliberating on. In this way, they had an intra- personal relationship with themselves. It is argued that the closer they approached their inner knowing, the closer they became in relation to the issue being deliberated.

As also shown in the Introduction under the *philosophy of using two methodologies* sub-title, by keeping a journal of my emotions and thoughts after each interview experience, I kept a record of my own process. Hence, I



too was intra-relating. This intra-action balanced the inter-action between the participants and myself. Further, I experienced my inner processing as becoming enriched due to relating on an inter-actional level. Indeed, I had fleeting glimpses of what can be described as transpersonal experiences, where, for instance, time seemed to stand still as I felt the “link” between myself and another human being. It seems obvious that being aware of one’s own emotion is an intra-personal communication. The importance of intra-personal relating has been shown in the Introduction section (see for instance: Baker, 1998; Chopra, 1993 and Goleman, 1996). Indeed, study 2 shows how affect is entwined with proxemics.

Consequently, it is posited that a key aspect of not only mental but also physical health, is emotional literacy, so it is considered important for psychological counsellors to have the ability to foster such qualities in their clients. Hence the posited importance of non-verbal (e.g. proxemics) cues to emotional states.

It is suggested that professional practitioners need to practice emotional literacy themselves so that they can impart it to their clients if appropriate. Perhaps they can do this by being appropriately emotionally spontaneous and taking good care of themselves, so that they can be potent positive role models for their clients. Perhaps learning about their own non-verbal behaviour, which includes proxemics, can be a way into their own self-caring. However, on a local level: What did each individual experience during the in depth interviews? It seems logical to assume that what each individual experienced was affected by inter-personally relating with me.

### **7.16 Inter-personal relating**

The effect which an individual's experience has may (or may not) influence her or him to shy away from inter-personal relating. If an individual feels that she or he are no good, that others are bad and that the world is wicked, then that person can quickly become isolated, and eventually alienated. If the individuals who follow such a path feel that they are no good because of continual oppression, and believe that others are bad because of being told many lies, then in isolation it is not difficult to dislike oneself when the sources of discontent are not there to challenge. Thus in such a scenario, lack of inter-personal proximity is not deemed to be satisfactory for that individual.

The opposite to such a negative situation, is if the individual is facilitated to discover her or his power. This may be facilitated by contacting relevant others who can help her or him with her or his problem once inter-personal contact has been made, thus bringing that particular chapter of isolation and alienation in her or his life, to an end. In this way the outcome of action towards inter-personal proximity (with awareness) facilitates the empowerment of the individual (client) since she or he may then become more positive about her or himself.

### **7.17 Trans-personal relating**

If trans-personal means going further than an individual person, perhaps to make an impact at the community level, then rather than focussing solely upon one problem, a goal could be for a human being to learn how to build a positive community which grows and thrives beyond the individual's problem so that the person has a network of support to draw upon whenever that is needed. This perspective is important not only for clients, but also for practitioners. Clients, with the support of counselling psychologists, can learn to develop an identity and build positive relationships with other individuals; existing not only just to survive, but also to aspire towards fulfilling their maximum potential. However, in order to approach others, inter-personal proximity is often needed. By being skilled in the art of proximity, practitioners may be able to support clients in being in charge of their (the clients') growth, and one step towards this may be to be permission giving, regarding where (at what distance) the client wishes to sit.

However, it is suggested that practitioners not only need to be aware of NVC incorporating proxemics, this is merely the first phase, they must also be adaptable. For instance, if they become used to sitting at a certain distance from their clients, it is important to be able to adapt to a change in the seating arrangement. In this way, their NVC may imply that they are there helping the clients face up to the changes in their lives. By becoming attuned to the proxemics within a counselling relationship, they may pick up signals from clients which they may not otherwise have perceived. Sometimes, after a change in intra-personal distance, a client discloses at a level which I have experienced as trans-personal. It takes experience to recognise non-verbal



signals, that is why training in NVC, encompassing proxemics, is useful. If practitioners commit themselves to their own personal and professional growth and become more skilled, knowledgeable and effective, then their clients could benefit. One way of doing this is by inviting practitioners to create an environment where they willingly share their skills, including those to do with NVC incorporating proxemics.

### **7.18 Individually tailored proximity**

As study 1 indicates, the environment in which a person is embedded influences how proxemics is generated, maintaining and creating a social environment which individuals are a part of. Each person takes their cues regarding proxemics, from another, yet each person's pattern of proximity is individually tailored, as study 2 implies. People believe that it is "natural" to have the distance they choose from the person with which they have an inter-personal relationship with. Yet what is regarded as natural in England, is different to what is regarded as natural in Gibraltar.

Perhaps proxemics evolved via an inner need for inter-acting with outer reality, putting the emphasis on how far or near to make inter-personal distance, on the individual person. This is the intriguing part: Perhaps without the participation of psychological therapists, clients may carry on in the same pattern as their personal history dictates for them, regarding inter-personal proximity. By introducing another element of the possibility of a new way of being, via psychological counsellors connecting to their clients with the aid of

NVC which envelops proxemics and managing the therapeutic situation so the clients can cope, it might also help the practitioners to be more professionally effective as counsellors. However, the balance between exploitation, or subduing and creating more problems due to a counsellor's enthusiasm about what can be accomplished, and creating an environment where the client experiences the safety in which to nestle within a therapeutic relationship where the client can expand her or his options for her or his benefit, may be a delicate one.

It seems unfortunate therefore, that as a profession, counselling psychologists do not appear to have the seemingly vital activity of teaching NVC which includes proxemics, developing and investing time and money in helping build projects within learning institutions for the existence of a package of learning where the prime attention is NVC incorporating proximity between client and counsellor. I am not making an implication about a multi-million pound development, but a development within our profession which requires a purported client, counsellor and a space for them to be in for such teaching. Essentially, I suggest that a once weekly slot regarding NVC which incorporates proxemics during a psychological counsellor's training, behoves the therapeutic psychological counselling profession.

Since the space between individuals is influenced by factors such as power and culture, inter-personal distance may sometimes reflect a type of social injustice. This does not mean that one does not have a conscience if proximity is ignored in the counsellor's session room; since a counsellor may



not know what to do regarding proxemics, as illustrated by study 2. However, it may be possible for a kind of spatial justice to be present during a counselling session: by achieving a kind of environment which is just, within the counselling relationship. Our clients offer a profound investment during counselling and we counselling psychologists tend to focus very much on verbalising, thus emphasising the spoken words. Yet non-verbals are tremendously influential, as the literature cited in the Introduction, experience, and this research show. Perhaps the wider use of video recording, as opposed to only audio recording, may be one way of helping to re-dress the balance between the verbal and non-verbal. Maybe, if non-verbals including proxemics are recognised further and worked with, then such a situation has the promise that some of the barriers which exist may be worked on.

It is tentatively suggested that a sea change is needed towards accommodating practical and specific learning about non-verbals encompassing proxemics, within the training of individuals entering the counselling profession. Such a training may facilitate the understanding of the politics between people; i.e: How power is distributed within those who are inter-relating. Working sensitively with high skill regarding proxemics, is working on a powerful connection between one person and another. Yet it may sound revolutionary to invest in non-verbals in a profession whose tradition mainly focuses on verbals.

## **7.19 Education**



One way to show respect may be to be respectful of zones of proximity. It is tentatively suggested that a psychological therapist who is trained in NVC, incorporating proxemics, can pass on that knowledge, thus educating others such as teachers who may teach at multi-ethnic schools.

Perhaps, with adequate training, teachers may propagate psychological well being in each child who passes through their care by teaching ways of being healthy. Indeed, the satisfactorily qualified psychological therapist might train teachers in understanding NVC and how to use it, incorporating proxemics, for the psychological enrichment of their pupils. Perhaps Simons' (1998) theory, as stated in the Introduction section (that either the way individuals interact or the culture prevents desired outcomes), can be transposed onto a counselling dyad's situation: Lack of awareness on the counsellor's part concerning NVC may prevent desired outcomes.

It is important not only for psychological counsellors but also for teachers in schools to spotlight wellness, but under enormous curriculum and assessment pressures, this seems to have been easy for teachers to overlook. However, the use of Circle Time in some educational establishments may have started to re-dress the balance. Prevention is better than cure. Perhaps teachers can have some extra support. This support could come via psychological practitioners to facilitate teachers in understanding NVC, including proxemics.

It is tentatively suggested that if certain individuals were more emotionally literate (in England), then their mental suffering might be reduced. Teachers are in an ideal position to teach emotional literacy, right from when children first start school. The theme of affect which has emerged from study 2, seems important enough to research in its own right, to see if such an educational project is worth investing in. It behoves psychological therapists to be up to date with their continuing professional development concerning emotional literacy so that, if necessary, some can offer courses to teachers. NVC, which encompasses proxemics, may be a fun yet respectful way of unlocking a key to emotional awareness.

## **7.20 Empowering the counselling psychologist**

An empowered counselling psychologist is a potent role model for a client; yet counselling psychologists may have plenty of reasons to feel anxious and not in control. Hence, disempowerment may be experienced. Perhaps this is due to reasons such as listening (over a period of many years) to other peoples' problems, and/or employers down-sizing. Consequently, the importance for them to control what they ethically can control and claim their power, is acknowledged in this work: It is argued that there is a need for practitioners to recognise that their career is their responsibility and that the client or employer is leasing their skills. If the practitioners have sharpened their skills, then others may want to lease them. This can be one way of empowering counselling psychologists. Interestingly, a similar view was advocated within generic marketing sales and career marketing in "Climb a Fallen Ladder"

(Gordon and Harold, 1997), as cited in the Introduction. If practitioners were empowered themselves, then they may be less likely to act unethically, for instance, by disempowering their clients in ways such as via non-verbal communication, which includes manoeuvring the space between them and their clients to raise their own status and lower the clients'. This is bearing in mind that study 2 highlights a link between gender and proxemics within a counselling relationship. To communicate in a powerful (and presumably ethical) way, one needs the confidence to do so.

### **7.21 Confidence**

Hence, developing self-confidence is deemed as beneficial. A self-confident practitioner can be reassuring to a client. It is imperative to build a substantial knowledge base which can include NVC (enveloping proxemics), at least because the more knowledge one has, the more self-confident one might become.

### **7.22 Power**

It follows that a counselling psychologist needs to be a highly skilled communicator in order to support clients in an optimal way. In order to be a highly skilled communicator, one needs to know about NVC, incorporating proxemics. Good communication is not only imperative for great leaders, but also, as indicated above, for counselling psychologists. By being skilled in non-verbal communication which envelopes proxemics, it may help a



practitioner to successfully connect with a client and perhaps support the client's empowerment. Also, within the arena of a counselling relationship, psychologists are aware that one problem which a client brings is linked to other areas of that client's life. So, investigating one problem, may be the tip of an iceberg for certain clients. The link between proximity and a balance of power between members who make up a counselling dyad is spotlighted in study 2.

There is some cause for concern regarding the issue of power. Those who are involved in psychologically therapeutic work, need to be aware of the potential use and abuse of power within a relationship, whether it is concerning a facet of non-verbal behaviour, or any other aspect. Perhaps the media has sometimes painted therapists in a negative light because they are in a situation where they can potentially abuse their power. Information therefore, e.g. on proxemics, needs to be expertly applied.

It is easy to do harm if information is mis-applied, that is why thorough training is important. With the understanding which such training promises, knowledge of non-verbal communication which incorporates proxemics, offers exciting possibilities for psychological therapists of supporting a client to move in a desired direction. It enables users to add to their "bag of tools" and even have fun applying it. This element of fun can be included in training programmes on non-verbal communication which envelop proxemics. Indeed, perhaps by becoming familiar with the intricacies of NVC incorporating proxemics, counselling psychologists may contribute (within the counselling

relationship) in such a way as to make a profound difference in the way that clients feel about themselves.

### **7.23 Status**

If an individual seeks help by becoming a client to a psychological therapist, it may be construed by the client as an implication of dependence and incompetence and is therefore linked to powerlessness and consequently low status. There is possibly a link between gender and status. Further, power and status are interlinked with influence. In addition, status and power can maintain or threaten identity. Indeed, domestic violence may be rooted in gender and power issues, and as illustrated in the Introduction section, actions taken by those with power can safeguard the status quo. From study 2, it appears that power is distributed asymmetrically, with power tilted towards the professional. Hence, power is perceived relationally, and power can influence the cognitions of the power holders. There seems to be an enmeshment of power, gender and stereo-typing, and status legitimises power. Bearing in mind the power of status, social distance can be used as an imposition and threaten the understanding of social order, since the power which comes with status can be used as a means of dominance; as already explained.

It is argued that the human body is capable of communicating a myriad of messages. As previously deliberated on, non-verbal communication forms part of the parcel of communication skills and proxemics is part of that.



Effective communication skills are important requirements for the job of psychological counsellor, assuming that psychological therapists aspire to support their clients. It is therefore considered necessary to learn how to communicate with expertise and marry this to whatever therapy model is chosen to use. Even with a most sophisticated therapeutic model, the basic skills of communication are needed, which include awareness of non-verbal manifestations, encompassing proxemics. It is argued that a thorough grounding in NVC is important for counselling practitioners, because just a little learning could be dangerous. It seems important to re-iterate that feeling close or distant may not correlate with physical space because person A may feel psychologically close to person B but person B may live in a different country to person A.

#### **7.24 Counselling practitioners**

The importance of a counsellor being aware of what message she or he is communicating to a client, which is below the verbal message, cannot be over-estimated. For example: in what way does the counsellor secure her or his own private zone of proximity, and how does the counsellor enter into the client's zone of proximity?

Perhaps by applying the suggestions based on relevant research in this work as indicated previously (i.e. train in proxemics and NVC), psychologists in therapeutic practice will boost the professional impact of their work, by at least becoming more aware of the proxemics part of non-verbal



communication. With these potential advantages, there are also parallel risks, such as the temptation to abuse one's power for one's own needs. That is why one's own on-going commitment to personal growth, as an independent avenue of client work, is important. Hence, only use information gleaned when it is to enhance the goal that is being worked towards within the therapeutic relationship. Consequently, provide information to clients which will facilitate to enable them.

### **7.25 Risk and advantage**

During the study 2 interviews I was aware of the distances which interviewees chose to sit at, just as I was aware of the spaces which participants chose during the quantitative study; and I am pleased to bring the two methodologies together. However, the action of endeavouring to bring the apparent schism between the two methodologies closer, meant that I was to take a risk: It would have been safer and easier for me to have stayed with either a qualitative or a quantitative methodology throughout. Yet I choose to take this risk because a goal is to make an important contribution towards my profession of counselling psychology, which could also have the advantage of benefiting clients.

### **7.26 Vision**

I have a vision: My vision is looking at re-directing growth within the field of counselling psychology by re-distributing the focal-point to include non-

verbals of which proxemics is a major and complex part, in order to support clients. This can be taught on a one to one basis or in groups. A programme to help train counselling students and trainees in becoming highly skilled in NVC incorporating proxemics, so that eventual clients will benefit, could be a first step towards putting that vision into action. Anticipating the benefits that could flow from such a move, is exciting.

Without such action, it may mean that, regarding NVC which incorporates proxemics, the counselling profession might, in one way, stay where it is. That is, some people, clients and or counsellors, may feel displaced just by not understanding the non-verbal communications during their contacts with others; like a constant pulling and pushing to find the (illusive) best space. What is exciting about putting the above vision into action is that it may help to facilitate the client and counsellor in engaging in a relationship where they both work together like a team. There is a trade-off: a letting go of power from the therapist; however, such a letting go of power would be in such a way as to benefit clients. This is not viewed as a problem, if it is assumed that the reason for coming into the profession is to help others. So putting the vision into action may help us as a profession in becoming more of what we are capable of; and in some way re-vitalise training institutions by adding non-verbal training, since proxemics (which is enveloped by the term non-verbals) seems such a critical part of human inter-action.

Indeed, proxemics might be a critical part of inter-action because it may be the cross-roads between intra-personal and inter-personal activity (since



several factors are involved which are not only related to inter-personal interactions, such as the familiarity between individuals who are communicating together, but also intra-personal factors such as affect). For instance, how one feels inwardly coupled with how one would like to appear outwardly may be mediated by inter-personal proximity.

Non-verbals, which envelops proxemics, has extra-ordinary power in a unique way which verbals do not encompass. Hence, bearing in mind the crucial role which proxemics plays between people, it seems logical to at least consider the implementation of a plan, in the psychology departments of learning institutions, which includes a programme that envelops proxemics: This implementation perhaps being the responsibility of the heads of the counselling psychology courses. The training programme can be fun and attractive, without throwing out what already exists. After the training, it is hoped that those practising counselling will give clients more opportunity to articulate their views by including non-verbal aspects, which are within the awareness of the professional. Programmes may also be implemented as part of continuing professional development. Training in non-verbals can almost be like lively entertainment, where all participate, like a party, due to the aspect of inter-active learning. Yet access to learning provides power and privilege so it needs to be undertaken seriously. However, such an implementation could possibly provide fun and heart to join the head of the body of our profession; which is what Professor Watts (1997) declared we need, as described in the Introduction. We need to respond to the “re-inventing” of the therapeutic relationship within this part of the western world.



## **7.27 Philosophical roots**

The origins of western philosophy are rooted in ancient Greece from which is embedded the mould of western thinking, influencing the way in which our society acts. Thus, the source of my ideas seems to stem from this mould which shapes my world, since I and my fore-parents have been embedded within the western world. Hence, if I had visited a non-western country, such as Japan, to collect data, the cross-cultural differences may have been too great for me to comprehend. However, since those ancient Greek times, it is possible to distinguish two broad approaches to research in social psychology whose philosophical threads can be traced back to Locke (C17th) and Descartes (C17th) respectively. Locke looked at the observable world, and a quantitative methodology is sympathetic to his philosophy. Descartes investigated the world of the experiencer, and a qualitative methodology is sympathetic to his philosophy. However, both these philosophers were influenced by ancient Greek thinking which, to look at the original meaning of the word 'philosophy' (which is Greek), means 'love of wisdom'. I trust that by utilising the two methodologies here, I take a small step towards putting that love of wisdom into action, irrespective of the methods I used for this research.

## **7.28 Conclusion**

In this work I aspire to not only make a scholarly contribution for my profession but also to help in empowering my practitioner colleagues by enriching their understanding of proxemics in a counselling relationship. What I am endeavouring to do is to share learning, as DeGeus (1997) states (see Introduction sub-section 3.4 *community and flocking*). A number of important issues however, remain unresolved. E.g: did the participants from study 1 who were the most familiar with the assumed counsellor choose to sit closer to her (than the participants from the other groups) because they found her more attractive than the other groups, or because they liked her more than the other groups, or because they felt more comfortable with her than the other groups or because they felt less respect for her than the other groups or because they felt a more equalising of inter-personal power than the other participants, or because there was more familiarity between her and them? Also, it is unclear why the participants from the groups in England preferred statistically significant greater distances from the assumed counsellor than the participants in Gibraltar and USA.

Nonetheless, this work does serve four important functions. First, it provides direct support for prior claims concerning the importance of culture in relation to inter-personal proximity. Second, it suggests that training in NVC incorporating proxemics may be necessary for the formation of a more client-sensitive counselling profession. Third, it demonstrates that the gender of a counsellor has an effect on where the client prefers to sit. Finally, it implies that not only gender and culture, but also counselling orientation, familiarity, affect and power influence inter-personal proximity.



This research has started to fill some of the large deficit within the literature concerning physical proximity with regard to counselling work. It has brought literature together from other fields (such as the theatre and the business world) regarding NVC, of which proxemics is a facet. (E.g. from theatre: Frost and Yarrow, 1990; Johnstone, 1981 and Wilms, 1987 and e.g. from business: Leigh and Maynard, 1997.) It seems obvious to state that works from psychologists who have considered NVC have also been included (e.g. Rudd, 1996; Sullivan, 1953 and Leary, 1957).

It appears that the findings regarding study 1 support Hall's (1966) work. I.e: Individuals whom one is most familiar with, seek closer proximity than those whom one is most unfamiliar with. This is if intimacy parallels most familiarity and seeking an inter-personal distance of over twelve feet parallels most unfamiliarity. However, the reason why no person declined from participating in either study 1 or study 2 does not seem so clear cut. Perhaps, as Bowlby's (1969) theory asserts, humans have an inbuilt mechanism for seeking inter-personal proximity. Hence, within a counselling relationship, if a client sits twelve or more feet away (see Hall, 1966) then this may be a clue for the counsellor to perceiving some of the pain which that client may have survived and or be enduring. Perhaps the risk of being hurt by another individual (i.e. the counsellor) is perceived as too much. Maybe this risk is what the client of the female chartered counselling psychologist was experiencing in study 2, where the psychologist explains that the client sat as far away as possible



from her and would put a foot up as if to kick her, if she endeavoured to be less distant from him (see chapter 6).

Yet if Bowlby's (1969) theory is put into practice, an individual seeks to promote proximity. Indeed, in study 2, the chartered counselling psychologist previously mentioned, felt that closer proximity was needed, but did not know how to manage proxemics. This seeking of proximity seems to be supported by the current research because the more inter-personal familiarity there was (regarding study 1), the more participants sought closer inter-personal proximity.

Others also support Bowlby's (1969) theory that humans have an innate need to seek proximity, as stated in the Introduction (e.g. Brazelton and Cramer, 1989; Holmes, 1993 and Ainsworth et al, 1974). If part of our biological inheritance is seeking proximity, then bearing in mind the findings of study 1, it seems that the culture, gender and familiarity of the individuals who are interacting, have a significant effect on the distance between a client and a counsellor.

Further, study 2 clearly shows that not only gender, but also power, culture, affect, and counselling orientation are webbed with the main theme of proxemics. Within a counselling situation therefore, when bearing in mind inter-personal proximity, it is important to be aware of the balance of power within the relationship, the emotions of client and counsellor, and the cultural environment of both when using one's counselling model. Thus, the dynamics

of proxemics may have the potential of supporting clients by helping the counselling practitioner to gain more insight into the world of the client.

Although Sermat's (1967) work did not find a relationship between gender and inter-personal space, it is concluded that it is important to bear in mind the gender of a client. This is because study 1 found a significant effect between gender and proximity regarding a purported counselling relationship. Perhaps the conflicting results relate to this study because study 1 was looking at proxemics within a specific situation using participants "from the street", whereas Sermat's (1967) and other studies (as Rubin and Brown's, 1975, work shows) tended to use university students where a situation was not specified. Indeed, within a counselling relationship, studies 1 and 2 were complimentary in showing that the gender of each member who made up a counselling dyad, was important.

This work supports Kahn et al's (1971) and Argyle's (1982) in that it shows culture as being an important factor regarding inter-personal proximity. E.g: those in England preferred to sit statistically significantly further away than participants from USA and Gibraltar. Bearing in mind such findings, it is tentatively suggested that within a counselling relationship, perhaps the counsellor may allow the client to choose a seat that feels at a comfortable distance. If a male American client is paired with an English female counsellor, however, the counsellor may experience such a distance as uncomfortably close. What has emerged supports Deaux and Lafrance's work (1998) that the individual is an inter-actional being surrounded by culture

and influenced by gender. While this is so, inter-actions between two people are context dependent and issues of power within a counselling relationship have been brought to the fore.

The issue of power within the social context of a counselling relationship has emerged as important in relation to proximity because it appears that the perceived influential power of men may enable them to feel comfortable being closer to females while the women may experience discomfort at such a distance. This is irrespective of whether they are the client or the counsellor; as supported by perusing the results from studies 1 and 2. The emergent web of inter-personal proximity, gender of counsellor and client, level of familiarity, counselling orientation, cultural background and balance of power, are indeed, important to consider.

Further, proxemics, as detailed in the Introduction, is a facet of NVC. However, as explained in chapter 1, adults are usually experienced at communicating through speech (Campbell, 1997). As counselling practitioners, we have been taught ways of responding verbally to clients, using the spoken word we already know. E.g. if using a client centred model, to repeat and summarise, as counselling practitioners, what the clients say. In a similar way, counselling practitioners may not be taught a new language regarding proxemics, since people are generally experienced at NVC of which proxemics is a part, but counsellors may be taught appropriate ways of responding so that proxemics may be utilised in a positive way, which is within the awareness of the counselling practitioner.



I propose that a client's perception of a counsellor changes over time and across counselling sessions, as study 1 indicates. Due to these changes it is possible that a change in inter-personal proximity between client and counsellor is reasonable. There needs to be action rooted in research regarding concern with how counsellors understand their individual clients' differences, cross-cultural inter-action, and balance of power within a counselling relationship. A greater emphasis on NVC incorporating proxemics may provide greater insight in understanding individuals and becoming sensitive to the diversity of their nuances in our dedication to helping others.

In conclusion, a theoretical model is emerging from the presenting work which is shown below. This bears in mind Maddi's (1980) prescription for a theory, as stated in the Introduction: A theory needs to be valid, important and operational.

The theory is that:

- proxemics is part of NVC
- proxemics is a dynamic and inter-actional hinge pin which we are not only embodied with but also embedded in
- a web of aspects influences proxemics within a face to face counselling relationship which are culture, gender, counselling orientation, the balance of power in the relationship, affect, familiarity, and uncharted territory such as health

- proxemics is contextual, e.g. within the context of a counselling session
- proxemics is influenced by the client's and counsellor's worlds outside of the counselling session.

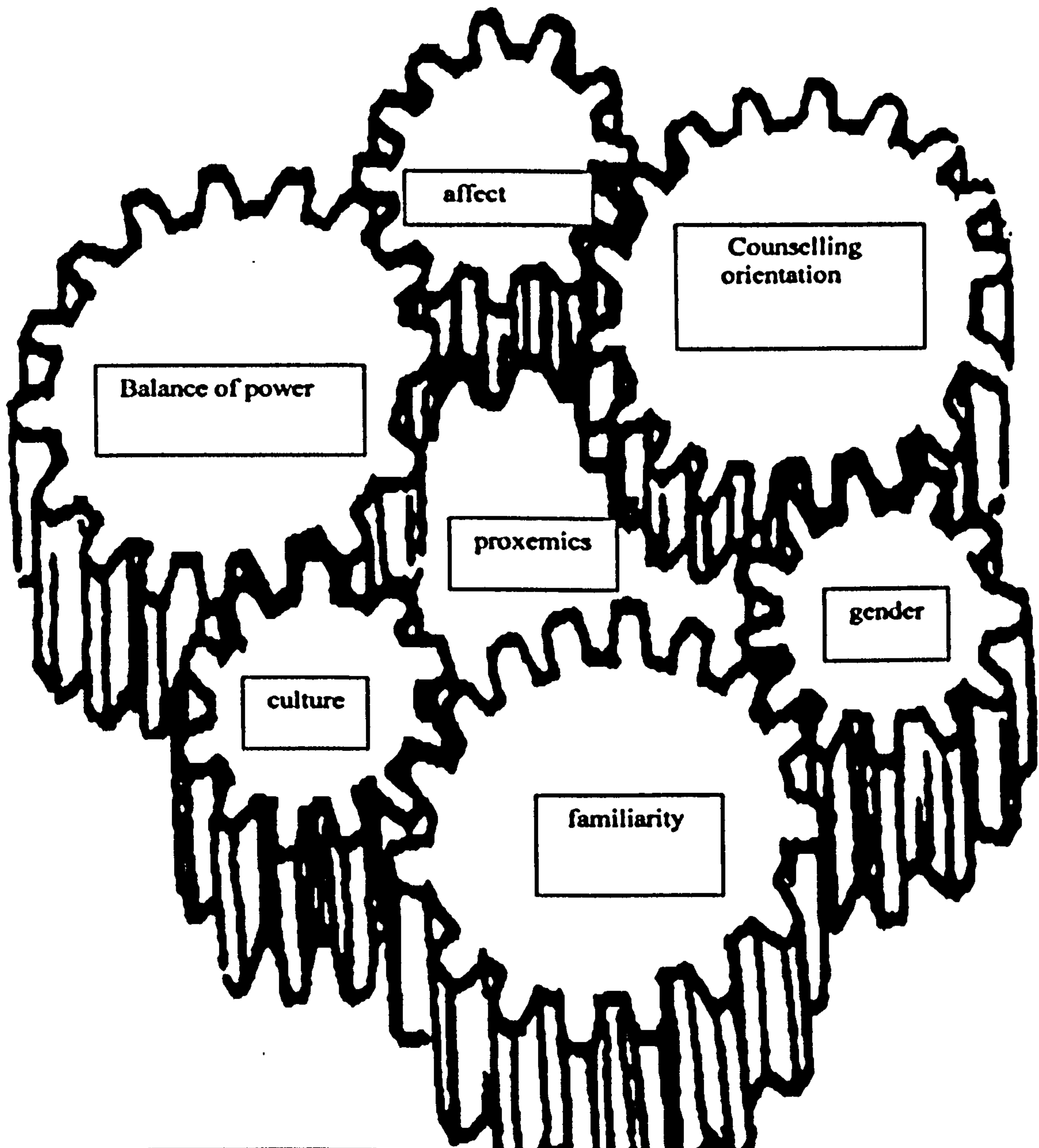
This conceptualisation is illustrated as a model that I created (from this research) in figure 6 which is below. This model seems to stand up to Maddi's (1980) specifications for a theory (as stated in chapter 3: that it needs to be valid, important and operational) since it is based not only on clinical work and personal experience but also on research, so it is **VALID**. In addition, it is **IMPORTANT**, because what we do non-verbally (such as the physical distance [as opposed to a feeling of psychological distance which may not correlate with physical space] we have between us when we are members of a counselling dyad) is one way in which we communicate within our social system. Further, it is **OPERATIONAL** because it can fortunately be used for the benefit of the counselling psychology profession (to empower counsellors for enabling clients) and unfortunately abused in relation to power issues.

As also stated in chapter 3, a theory needs to be testable (Hjelle and Zeigler, 1976). According to Hjelle and Ziegler (1976), in order to be testable, a theory needs to hypothesise why individuals act as they do, describe how they act, be predictive, organise individuals' behaviour in a systematic way and offer a framework for interpreting that behaviour. The above theory is testable since other researchers may follow the methods undertaken for this research, to investigate the same questions as this work. Further, the hypothesis regarding why individuals act as they do, regarding choosing various

distances in a counselling relationship, is that this distance is dependent on other factors such as culture, level of familiarity, balance of power,



**Figure 6**  
**A Proxemics model**



**Kinesic inter-personal cog model (KIC model)**  
*The KIC model illustrates certain factors involved within a face to face counselling encounter, which influence proxemics*

counselling orientation and gender. Regarding how individuals act: clients who are the least familiar with the counsellor choose the greatest distance and men prefer closer inter-personal distance to a female counsellor than women. This is predictive, since cross-culturally, women purported clients in each group chose to sit at a greater distance from me (the female assumed counsellor) than the male purported clients. It therefore follows that individuals' behaviour can be organised in a systematic way: Making cultural and gender allowances within a counselling relationship, bearing in mind the issues of the dynamics of power (within a one-to-one face-to-face counselling encounter), the counselling orientation of the counsellor, the level of familiarity and the gender of each individual who is a member of a counselling dyad. A framework of interpreting that behaviour of choosing different inter-personal distances in counselling, is that it depends on the factors which have previously been outlined (gender, culture, familiarity, affect, power and orientation) so that, for instance, native English people like a relatively large counselling inter-personal space, while those individuals who are in the USA prefer a relatively small counselling inter-personal space, bearing in mind that cross-culturally, women choose a greater distance than men, between themselves and a (female) counsellor.

Hence, the proxemics model which I name the Kinesic Inter-personal Cog (KIC) model also fits into Hjelle and Ziegler's (1976) specifications of a theory. This proxemics model is called KIC because it involves kinesics, since it deals with physical movement, it involves inter-personal aspects because it is between a client and a counsellor, and all the factors inter-relate with each

other like cogs which are linked to each other so when one moves, it affects the others. There are implications to this.

## **7.29 Implications**

One implication is that some individuals who are counselling may inadvertently be causing distress to their clients due to their unwitting NVC which might include a proximity to their clients which is inappropriate. A further implication is that counselling chairs may have little wheels put under them so they can be moved easily during sessions. Another implication of the findings is the importance of becoming more skilled regarding NVC which envelops proxemics. From such an implication, one of the challenges ahead is to teach those (of us) involved in practising counselling to not only be more self-aware regarding their/our own feelings and non-verbals, but also how to manage the dynamic NVC incorporating proxemics within a counselling relationship while being alert to the web (which the combination of studies 1 and 2 imply) it is a part of (i.e. affect, orientation, gender, power, culture and familiarity). This implication seems so important that more research is needed, as discussed in sub-section 7.30 (*future studies*).

## **7.30 Future studies**

Additional research using larger sample sizes may be needed to further substantiate the current studies on proxemics and the implied effects of culture, gender and familiarity between members who make up a counselling



dyad. Also, a team of experimenters could conduct collecting the data, such as three men and three women, all trained to undertake the research in an identical manner, and then compare their findings. Perhaps a similar experiment could be undertaken on English people who live abroad, to see if there is any difference between them when compared to English people living in England, with regard to proxemics. Further depth interviews could be undertaken, with a male interviewer and a video camera, to see if similar themes emerged as the ones regarding the depth interviews performed for this project.

Although studies 1 and 2 focussed on proxemics, the cross-cultural aspect of this work has pushed concern to the fore regarding stereo-typing, and perhaps future research could look at this question more closely by investigating immigrants, their children and grandchildren, what image of these people the media puts across, and what the rest of the public's views are concerning this subject. Similar investigations could be carried out concerning the stereo-typing on men, women and children in various countries, to ascertain how the macrocosmic aspect of this issue affects the microcosmic part. Globally, what are the distances between individuals who are members of counselling dyads? The question may be researched further in the future by perhaps visiting more countries, such as those in the east and those in the southern hemisphere. This needs to be done while being respectful of the host cultures.



Indeed, many questions arose while undertaking this research, as stated earlier. Each one of them is worthy of research in its own right, e.g: How can people know what their thoughts and emotions are? And: If high self-esteem is linked to good health, what are the consequences of poor self-esteem? Questions such as these have not been addressed in the main text because they are not the research questions for this project. However, many such questions arose which could be useful in researching NVC further, and these additional questions are included in appendix 18. Volume 1 ends after the References. Volume 2 contains the appendices and floppy disc of the transcribed interviews,

I am moved by my heart and mind, to declare that a higher level of awareness concerning NVC and enveloping proxemics is a challenge which behoves the profession of counselling psychology to be stirred to willingly commit to.

### **7.31 Summary**

- The outcome of the findings showed that proxemics is important in a counselling encounter, indicating an inter-actionist perspective.
- The inter-actionist perspective supports the results that individuals prefer to sit at different distances (which are influenced by familiarity, culture, orientation, affect, power and gender) from their counsellor.
- Some counselling practitioners do not seem to be aware of proxemics.



- The finding that females preferred more inter-personal space than males has important implications for the counselling relationship because some male counsellors may choose to sit at a distance which female clients may experience as abusively close.
- A power imbalance is indicated which is tilted in favour of the psychological counsellor.
- Training in NVC incorporating proxemics may help towards having less of a power imbalance.
- It is important for psychological counsellors to attend to their clients as much as possible, within the professional boundaries of a counselling relationship; and training in NVC which incorporates proxemics may help practitioners to attend more sensitively to their clients (e.g. bearing in mind the gender, emotional state and culture of their clients).
- Since affect not only has an effect on proxemics but also is linked to better health if one is emotionally literate (see Chopra, 1993; Baker, 1998 and Goleman, 1996), then an implication seems to be that it is important for practitioners to foster their own emotional literacy to help them be healthy enough for supporting their clients.
- A further implication of this research is that individuals learn to behave according to gender expectations within their culture; so the counselling relationship may mirror the client and counsellor's experiences of the distribution of power within their environmental enmeshment.
- The need for CPD has emerged, although it has not been researched here.



- Linking research with practice and practice with research has also been emergent.
- Perhaps the need for proximity is embodied because all who were approached to be participants chose to sit at a certain proximity to me, the researcher.
- Individuals are also embedded in cultural expectations since participants' choice of proximity varied between cultures.
- It is possible that an aspect of NVC within a counselling relationship has not previously been researched in depth because of the complex web which it forms a part of, as illustrated by studies 1 and 2 (e.g. counselling orientation, culture, affect, gender, inter-personal familiarity and the distribution of power between members of a counselling dyad).
- Obtaining a higher degree of awareness and knowledge regarding NVC which incorporates proxemics, is a challenge which behoves our profession to willingly commit to, and further research on this topic is needed, perhaps using video recording equipment and live observation in a respectful way.
- I hope that this project will trigger a response.



## **EPILOGUE**

My intention throughout has been to offer a balance of practitioner, research and theoretical dimensions. Meaning is something which many of my clients search for. Perhaps what we do non-verbally, is one way in which we communicate meaning within our social system. Indeed, the notion of meaning runs through this work like a fine thread.

Although I have not concentrated on young people in this work, I have focussed on children elsewhere. During informal deliberations with colleagues I discovered a substantial lack of information concerning what to do with young people, since most of their work and trainings spotlighted adults. Hence, I am currently designing a co-operative board game (that has grown from this work) which can be played by almost any age group, although it is recommended that those under the age of four years are too young for it. Currently the game which I am creating to enhance empowerment needs a trained facilitator because although some of the cards are aimed at a superficial level, others deal with deeper aspects. However, if the less superficial cards are taken out, a trained facilitator is not necessary. This game however, has yet to be tested and refined many times over, since it has only been played approximately fifty times at the time I am typing this, and so is in an unfinished state, hence, it is not shown here, nor mentioned in the main body of this project.

I am extremely honoured that two publishers are interested in my work which has stemmed from this project. One of them has published my first book

which has blossomed from this project, and they are waiting for another two (to make a trilogy). The other publisher is excited about producing the board game mentioned above.

Regarding the floppy disc at the end of volume 2, I decided it was better to have a floppy disc with the transcribed interviews in it, as opposed to having a third volume showing the transcribed interviews, (the transcriptions are approximately 300 pages). I feel that investigating NVC could continue indefinitely, however, this project ends here.



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