

Connecting through Smartphones and Open Doors:

A Spatiotemporal Perspective on Communication Technologies at Work

Abstract

Our discipline has long regarded the study of time and space, termed proxemics and chronemics respectively, as vital to communication scholarship. While the socio-cultural influences on time and space are particularly well established, recent scholarship suggests that there are other ways in which time and space are relevant for communication scholarship. Notably, Castells and colleagues (2007) theorize about how societal shifts associated with new communication technologies find us collectively experiencing a *space of flows* and a *timeless time*. Indeed, they argue that these new communication processes associated with space and time are key to the emergence of the network society. In the following paper, we elaborate on Ballard and Seibold's (2003) notion of *separation*, conceived as a measure of spatiotemporal connection, or availability, among organizational members. To that end, we briefly consider four types of spatiotemporal enactments—*connecting*, *commuting*, *screening*, and *separating*—achieved through a variety of workplace technologies. Our discussion illustrates the ways in which organizational members' traditional enactment of the "open door" as a symbol of connection and competence (indicated by one's ability to be productive while being everpresent and available) has become typified by the Smartphone in a network society.