ELEVATOR

The rules of space and proxemics are well defined in different cultures. Read the following and answer the questions according to the customs of your culture.

Discuss with your group:

Imagine that you are in a crowded elevator in an office building in the United States. All of the other occupants are unknown to you.

A. What are the rules are for standing in the elevator? How do people stand when there are only two or three people? What happens when a fourth person enters the elevator.

B. How would you feel if there were two people on the elevator and a third person entered and stood right next to you?

C. What happens when the elevator becomes more crowded and there are now four or more people?

D. How close do people stand?

E. What do people look at in a crowded elevator?

F. When is it permissible to talk to the other people?

Response to Elevator Etiquette

RULES FOR BEHAVIOR ON AN ELEVATOR IN THE U.S.

Elevator behavior in the United States is very rigid.

A. If there are only two or three people on an elevator, each person usually leans against the walls. If a fourth person boards the elevator, the four corners are normally occupied.

B. This would be a breach of our personal "space."

C. When there are more than four people on an elevator, the occupants begin to follow a complex set of rules for behavior. Everyone turns to face the door. Hands, purses, and briefcases hang down in front of the body.

D. People don't touch each other in any way unless the elevator becomes very crowded, and then they only touch at the shoulders or upper arms.

E. Everyone usually looks at the lighted floor indicator.

F. It is unusual for people (who are strangers) to speak to each other in an elevator unless they are sharing some kind of similar experience. (Such as a conference) People who do know each other will usually speak softly. When a group of people enter the elevator and do not follow these rules, other occupants usually feel very uncomfortable.

If you think this behavior is overstated? The next time you are on an elevator, don't face the door. Turn and face the occupants. If you really want to upset everyone, give them a broad smile.