In a man's own living-room, surprisingly, this did not apply. Though distances between people are supposed to narrow with the degree of intimacy, the distances for comfortable conversation are much greater within the walls of a home, perhaps because of the greater security it affords. F. de N. Schroeder, an interior designer, describes the "arc of comfortable conversation" within a private home as eight feet.

How people sit and stand, and how close, may sound trivial, but can have broad significance. Dr. Edward T. Hall, Washington, D. C., anthropologist, in his book, *The Silent Language*, points out that to many Latin Americans the description "nose-to-nose" for comfortable conversation is almost literally that; and North Americans who become nervous at such propinquity or try to retreat behind desks or tables to keep back can offend them. Hall suggests that if we observe their rules of spatial distance, our relations with Latin Americans, at least, might become somewhat easier—and closer.

SEE: Robert Sommer, "Leadership and Group Geography," *Sociometry*, 1961.
Robert Sommer, "The Distance for Comfortable Conversation: A Further Study," *Sociometry*, 1962.
F. L. Strodtbeck and L. H. Hook, "The Social Dimensions of a Twelve Man Jury Table," *Sociometry*, 1961.

Could Reduced Air Fares Increase Travel?

(But some won't fly free of charge)

A basic concern for all businesses whose main revenue comes from selling seating space is what to do about the empty seats. There is very little if any less expense in flying a half-empty passenger plane or in playing to a half-filled theater, but there is a great deal less income. To sell the unsold tickets regularly at reduced rates might bring in what seems windfall revenue for a time but could undermine the whole price structure.

Would a substantial cut in airline fares result in any considerable increase in passengers—temporary or permanent? Or is flight so special a form of travel that price decrease—or even increase—will have little effect?

The answer, according to studies by the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan, is that a cut might increase airline business—though not uniformly among all potential travelers.

A corollary finding is of perhaps even greater interest to the airlines: the resistance to increased air travel depends largely on the amount of flying a traveler has done rather than the cost, and particularly whether he has taken his first flight. Older people find it more difficult to change. The best potential source of new customers for airflight might therefore be among those young people who have flown only a very few times, or not at all.

- 34 percent of the more than 2600 respondents surveyed said they would fly if the fares were halved.
- An additional 34 percent overcame their nervousness at the prospect of a free ticket and said they would take a trip if it cost nothing (The researchers did not feel they would get significant response to offers of a few cents off, so they made their reductions more enticing to get at basic attitudes.)
- 32 percent were not going to be persuaded to fly more even at no cost.
- 44 percent of frequent air travelers would fly more if prices were halved, while only 20 percent of those who had never flown thought they would try it at that rate.

Other results were consistent. Those who were favorably disposed toward flight believed by large margins the statistics which said that airline travel was getting safer, while those who distrusted the whole idea in the first place weren't so sure.

People with college degrees were convinced by larger percentages that flying was safer, and would prove it by flying more if it were cheaper; those with less education retained their suspicions.

Young people also were more apt to believe the figures about the increase in air safety, and to be favorably disposed. The old, who had been on earth a long time, wanted to stay there. Fewer wanted to fly, fewer had ever flown, and they did not care *how* safe they were told the planes were.

SEE: John B. Lansing, William Ladd, and Nancy Barth, *The Travel Market 1961-1962*, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.