Content and relationship dimensions of a conflict encounter scenario as determinants of interpersonal conflict rules

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CONTENT AND RELATIONSHIP
DIMENSIONS OF A CONFLICT ENCOUNTER SCENARIO
AS DETERMINANTS OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT RULES

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This study was designed to investigate perceptions of appropriate rules for responding to interpersonal conflict given certain contextual variables. The contextual variables isolated for study included the importance of the content or issue dimension in a conflict encounter scenario and the intensity of the relationship shared by conflicting parties.

The procedure employed in this study required subjects to indicate their degree of approval of certain behaviors in a conflict encounter. Each participant received one of six written conflict encounter scenarios depicting a hypothetical conflict between the respondent and a fellow student. The scenarios were developed to reflect two levels of content importance (low import; high import) and three levels of relationship intensity (stranger, acquaintance, close friend). Subjects indicated their degree of approval of certain behaviors for responding to the conflict scenarios on six-step scales ranging from "disapprove highly" to "approve highly." The behavioral alternatives for responding to the conflict scenarios were included on a questionnaire consisting of 20 items, with five items representing each of four possible responses — avoidance, accommodation, competition and collaboration.

The multivariate analysis of variance of the appropriateness ratings of the conflict response alternatives yielded no significant effects for either the importance of the conflict or the intensity of the relationship shared by conflicting parties. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there are no differences between treatment groups failed to be rejected. The possibility that people employ individual styles for interacting in conflict that remain relatively stable, regardless of the importance of the conflict or the intensity of the relationship, was discussed in light of the present findings. However, trends in the data suggested that manipulations of content and relationship dimensions of conflict may have been too weak to have an impact on respondents in this investigation.

Several limitations of this study were discussed, as well as some implications for future researchers interested in studying interaction rules in interpersonal conflicts.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Conflict is a pervasive and inevitable aspect of life. Its pervasiveness suggests that conflict is not necessarily destructive or lacking in pleasure. Conflict has many positive functions. It prevents stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity, it is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at; it is the root of personal and social change. Moreover, conflict is often part of the process of testing and assessing oneself and, as such, may be highly enjoyable as one experiences the pleasure of the full and active use of one's capacities. (Deutsch, 1971, 38)

Interpersonal conflict is among the most prevalent and potentially significant of the communication encounters between human beings. As such, it constitutes a valuable interaction context in which to expand the search for generalizable rules that guide human behavior. Mischel (1969) suggested that "a full and clear recognition of the purposive, rule-following character of human actions seems perfectly compatible with an empirical search for generalizations concerning the . . . comparative strength of tendencies to follow various rules" (274).

This study was designed to investigate perceptions of appropriate rules for responding to conflict given certain contextual variables. The contextual variables isolated for study included the importance of the content or issue dimension in a conflict encounter scenario and the intensity of the relationship shared by conflicting parties.
A Rule-governed Approach to Communication

A very important activity which gains significance and coherence from adherence to rules is that of communication. . . . Communication is spoken of when information is successfully transmitted from participant to participant. I know something. When I successfully communicate with you, you know it too. Information has been transmitted, that is, a structure or pattern of relationships has been sent and received approximately as intended.

(Cushman & Whiting, 1972, 219)

When individuals communicate they need assurance of the requisite degree of mutual understanding and agreement on the meaning of the symbols and situation involved in their communication. In other words, interpersonal communication is governed by rules — "sets of common expectations about the appropriate responses to particular symbols in particular contexts" (Cushman & Whiting, 1972, 225).

The claim that communication is rule-governed is not intended to suggest that individuals are passive responders to a set of laws. Instead, as Rushing (1976a) noted, communication is "characterized by action — behavior conforming to rules of people's own making — rather than by motion, behavior conforming to laws that govern natural phenomena" (1).

The rules perspective suggests that human actions are prompted by intentions (Cushman & Whiting, 1972; Harré, 1974; Cushman, 1975) — that is, people actively seek goals. As Harré (1974) noted, "In new paradigm studies a human being is treated as a person, that is a plan-making, self-monitoring agent, aware of goals, and deliberately considering the best ways of achieving them" (148). In general,
rules function to indicate and guide shared patterns of expectations. Rules, once discovered, provide criteria for choosing from among alternative behaviors in order to achieve one's goals.

The above discussion of communication as rule-governed behavior is not intended to imply that communication is a one-way, static process. Indeed, the transmission of information from participant to participant is a dynamic, ongoing process. Each participant simultaneously sends and receives information; and each transmission/reception affects and is affected by the participants perceptions of past transactions. This is a transactional view of communication (Barnlund, 1970; Wenburg & Wilmot, 1973).

In their discussion of communication as transaction, Cushman and Whiting (1972) referred to transaction as a process of developing and applying communication rules:

We would suggest that what an individual brings to a communication situation are a set of rules. Other individuals bring somewhat different sets of rules. The process of developing sufficient accuracy in understanding the rules being applied and perhaps achieving consensus on them so that information can be extracted "properly" is a transactional process, (235)

Rules will be the joint creation and product of the efforts of the participants — "what is said by one person becoming a stimulus for inclusion in another's rather different synthesis of his own views, which he then offers and which is built upon or revised by others" (Cushman & Whiting, 1972, 235).

Interpersonal communication, then, is a rule-governed transactional process of simultaneous transmission/reception of information resulting from manipulation of symbols in a particular context.
Conflict as a Rule-governed Communication Encounter

Conflicts in one form or another seem to be an inescapable part of the human condition.
(Burgoon, 1974, 347)

Conflict is inherent in interpersonal relationships (Deutsch, 1971; Altman & Taylor, 1973; Adler & Towne, 1975; Miller & Steinberg, 1975). The development of a relationship necessarily involves passage through a series of conflicts, which then leads to more refined definitions of the rules of the relationship.

Simons (1974) defined conflict as "that state of a social relationship in which incompatible interests between two or more parties give rise to a struggle between them" (8). Similarly, Hall (1969) suggested that conflict may be interpreted as a "collision of the personal goals of one or more parties to an interdependent relationship" (n.p.). Conflict can appropriately be viewed as an event or an encounter. According to Rushing (1976b), an encounter is "a particular situation in which actors mutually acknowledge each others' presence for a specified period of time" (1).

A conflict encounter necessarily involves communication. Jandt (1973) noted that "only through communication can we engage in social conflict. . . social conflict is not possible without verbal or nonverbal communication" (viii). The development of conflict, like the development of any other communication encounter, is a dynamic, transactional process (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). From a rules perspective, this process involves the creation and application of communication rules in the conflict encounter. Characteristics of this conflict encounter include interdependence of
participants (Hall, 1969; Schmidt & Kochan, 1972; Apfelbaum, 1974), the perception of goal incompatibility (Fink, 1968; Hall, 1969; Schmidt & Kochan, 1972; Deutsch, 1973; Simons, 1974), and the perceived opportunity for a participant to interfere with the goals of another (Schelling, 1960; Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). All of these characteristics can vary on a continuum from low to high (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). Furthermore, none of these characteristics of the conflict process are static; they constantly change as the conflict develops. For instance, in a conflict encounter the issue or content of the conflict may be perceived as extremely important by the participants; hence the degree of perceived goal incompatibility may be high. The nature of the rules at this stage of the conflict would be partly determined by the participants' perceptions of high concern for the issues. As the conflict progresses, emphasis may be shifted to the relationship shared by the participants in conflict. Assuming the participants value their relationship, and want to maintain the relationship, emphasis may be placed on the degree of interdependence. This shift in emphasis may, in turn, serve to modify perceptions of appropriate rules guiding interaction in the conflict.

All participants in a communication encounter are interdependent to some extent. When we communicate with someone our behaviors are influenced by how we perceive the other's behavior and by how we perceive the other person to be perceiving us. Likewise, our presence influences the other person's behavior (Wilmot, 1975). When the nature of a relationship is partly determined by the "perceived
other and both participants have some influence or control over the other, then the participants are interdependent (Apfelbaum, 1974).

As noted earlier, all conflict encounters involve some degree of perceived goal incompatibility on the part of the participants. Whenever two interdependent individuals perceive the other person in the encounter to be an obstacle in achieving a goal, then some degree of goal incompatibility exists. Similarly, a conflict encounter involves some degree of perceived opportunity for goal interference. This is compatible with a rules perspective assumption that "individuals recognize the capacity of the self to influence others" (Rushing, 1976b, 5).

As the earlier discussion indicates, the rules perspective assumes that human behavior is prompted by intentions. Likewise, Schmidt and Kochan (1972) indicated that conflict behavior is intentional. Inherent in both theoretical and empirical definitions of conflict is the concept of individuals actively seeking goals -- whether those goals are related to the content or issue of the conflict (e.g., actively trying to "win" an argument) or relationship-related (e.g., actively striving to maintain a relationship). Even in conflict research employing Prisoner's Dilemma (Luce & Raiffa, 1957) and other mixed-motive games, individuals are given a choice -- they can actively strive for whatever goals are salient for them in the encounter: they can try to maximize points; they can seek to increase the difference between the number of points they accumulate and the number accumulated by
the other; they can try to let the other person "win"; etc. In other words, experience in a conflict encounter should not be conceptualized as something that happens to us, but rather as activities we undertake in accordance with rules.

The rules perspective directly implies that individuals can intentionally interfere with the goals of another, as in a conflict encounter. In fact, Cushman (1975) argued that "another thing that man can do is intentionally interfere with the course of nature by making a cause happen or preventing a cause from happening in order to bring about certain consequences" (9). Similarly, in its concern with strategies and tactics of effective conflict management, the conflict literature tacitly assumes that the conflicting parties have an impact on the direction of the conflict (Schelling, 1960; Hall, 1969; Filley, 1975).

A conflict, then, can appropriately be viewed as an encounter in which two or more interdependent parties engage in activities resulting from the perception of incompatible interests. How that conflict gets acted out is dependent upon the rules the participants in conflict perceive as being appropriate. A closer look at two dimensions of a conflict encounter may serve to indicate the circumstances or context in which various rules may emerge as appropriate.

Content and Relationship Dimensions of a Conflict Encounter

Communication, according to Newcomb (1953), "enables two or more individuals to maintain simultaneous orientation toward one another as communicators and toward objects of communication" (393). This distinction between orientation toward each other and orien-
tation toward objects of communication constitutes the distinction made by several theorists (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967; Rossiter & Pearce, 1975; Wilmot, 1975) between the content and relationship levels of communication. These two levels or dimensions have been applied directly to interpersonal conflict (Hall, 1969; Blake & Mouton, 1970; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Filley, 1975).

More specifically, Filley (1975) suggested that "there are at least two major concerns in a conflict situation. One involves the extent to which an individual wishes to meet his own personal goals... Another concern is the extent to which an individual wants to maintain a relationship with another individual." (49). According to Hall (1969), one's concern for the relationship and concern for one's personal goals both serve to indicate "action alternatives" (rules) perceived as appropriate for dealing with the conflict. Based on these two dimensions of a conflict encounter (content and relationship) Hall conceptualized a five-category scheme for classifying interpersonal conflict management behavior. The conflict management styles (or action alternatives) are visualized in Figure 1.

Maximal Concern
for Relationship

(1/9)                                (9/9)

Minimal Concern
for

(5/5)

Content

(1/1)

Maximal Concern
for

Personal Goals

(9/1)

Minimal Concern
for Relationship

Figure 1

Hall's (1969) Conflict Management Styles
Concern for personal goals, or content, was scaled from 1 to 9, representing increasing importance in the mind of the individual; similarly, concern for the relationship was scaled from 1 (low concern) to 9 (high concern).

Given this conceptualization, Hall identified five conflict styles or action alternatives: high concern for personal goals and low concern for the relationship (9/1), typified by a competitive orientation toward the other person (win-lose); low concern for personal goals and high concern for the relationship (1/9), typified by accommodating or giving in to the other's wishes (yield-lose); low concern for personal goals and low concern for the relationship (1/1), typified by avoiding the conflict (lose-leave); moderate concern for personal goals and moderate concern for the relationship (5/5), typified by seeking a position which allows both parties to gain something, but does not allow full realization of either party's goals (compromise); high concern for personal goals and high concern for the relationship (9/9), typified by collaboration (win-win). When engaging in collaborative behaviors all concerns -- both content and relational -- are considered in an attempt to satisfy fully the goals of both participants.

Essentially identical schemes for classifying conflict management behavior employing these five conflict styles were developed by Blake and Mouton (1970) and Thomas and Kilmann (1974). However, this five-category scheme for classifying behavior in interpersonal conflicts has generated little research to date. Kilmann and Thomas (1975) examined the relationship between Jungian personality
dimensions and these five conflict management styles as measured by their MODE instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) and Hall's (1969) Conflict Management Survey. The results indicated that greater reliance on the Jungian "feeling" (versus "thinking") personality dimension was correlated with greater accommodation toward others.

In a situation where subjects played the roles of two managers meeting to negotiate a budget allocation, Ruble and Thomas (1976) asked subjects to rate their partners' use of each of the five conflict management alternatives (with each alternative represented by one item) on a scale from "very little" to "very much". Subjects were then asked to rate the other person on 10 semantic differential-type scales selected to cover the evaluative and dynamism dimensions of connotative meaning which emerged from the work of Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957). Ruble and Thomas (1976) found that concern for relationship (which they called "cooperation") was positively correlated with the evaluative factor. On the other hand, concern for content (which they called assertiveness) was positively correlated with the dynamism dimension of connotative meaning. Compromising was expected to show no significant relationship with either semantic differential factor since it was conceptualized to be intermediate or neutral in both concern for content and concern for relationship. However, although compromising was unrelated to dynamism, it showed a strong positive correlation with the evaluative factor.

Using this same five-category scheme for classifying interpersonal conflict rules, Baxter and Shepherd (1976; in press) exam-
ined the effects of sex role identity of the respondents (masculine, feminine, or androgynous), the sex of the other person in the conflict encounter (same as, or opposite from, the respondent) and the affective nature of the relationship (whether the other person was liked or disliked) on perceptions of appropriate behavioral responses (rules) to conflict. The main effect for sex of other was not significant, but both sex role identity and affective relationship yielded significant results. Feminine persons indicated significantly less approval of competition as a response to conflict than did masculine or androgynous persons. Approval of accommodation, compromise and collaboration was significantly greater when in conflict with someone who was liked than with someone who was disliked. On the other hand, disliking the other person yielded greater approval of competition.

It should be noted that factor analysis of the conflict items used in the Baxter and Shepherd (1976; in press) study failed to indicate that respondents were perceiving five distinct action alternatives. Instead, four factors (accounting for 91.3% of the total variance) emerged — competition, accommodation, avoidance, and collaboration. The compromise items tended to load with either accommodation or collaboration. It appears that, when responding to the give-and-take nature of compromising, subjects perceived the "give" to be more salient than the "take". Baxter and Shepherd reported a relatively high correlation between compromise and accommodation (r = .63) and a negative correlation between compromise and competition (r = -.51). This is compatible with Ruble and Thomas'
(1976) finding that compromise was rated more positively on the evaluative dimension of connotative meaning than the theory would predict.

It is important to note that the four alternatives for responding to conflict that emerged from the Baxter and Shepherd (1976; in press) study can still be conceptualized in terms of concern for content and relationship dimensions of the conflict encounter — both of which are assumed to be relevant contextual variables when choosing from among alternative rules.

Hall (1969) suggested that the importance of the relationship dimension may be traced to the nature of conflict dynamics: "conflict requires a state of interdependency if it is to occur at all. The state of interdependency...is the bedrock of relationships, but also the spawning ground for conflicts" (n.p.). Newcomb (1961) posited that orientation toward interpersonal relationships vary along two dimensions — sign (positive-negative) and intensity (strong-weak). As noted earlier, Baxter and Shepherd (1976, in press) examined the influence of sign on interpersonal conflict rules. They found that participants were much more likely to report approval of collaboration and accommodation with a liked other than with a disliked other. On the other hand, approval of competition was significantly greater when the other person was disliked.

With respect to the intensity of a relationship, it has been suggested that relationships progress from a nonintimate, non interpersonal sphere to greater intimacy and personalness (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Miller & Steinberg, 1975). Altman and Taylor (1973)
noted that "interpersonal exchange gradually progresses from super-
facial, nonintimate areas to more intimate, deeper layers of the
selves of the social actors" (6). Altman and Taylor suggested four
stages of relationship development (which they refer to as stages
of the "social penetration process"). Stage 1, the earliest phase
of interaction, occurs at the periphery of personality between
relative strangers. Stage 2 is characterized by the kinds of rela-
tionships between casual acquaintances or friendly neighbors. Stage
3 characterizes close friendship or courtship relationships in which
people know each other well and have engaged in extensive inter-
action. And stage 4 is achieved whenever two people know each other
well and can readily interpret and predict the feelings and probable
behavior of the other.

The degree of involvement appears to be closely related to the
amount of personal information exchanged. In a thirteen-week study
of college roommates, Taylor (1968) found that, as the college
semester progressed, roommates reported disclosing an increasingly
greater amount of personal information to one another.

Deutsch (1973) posited that the stronger and more salient the
friendship bonds, the more likely it is that conflict will be
resolved cooperatively. And, according to Deutsch, "a cooperative
process is characterized by open and honest communication of relev-
ant information between the participants" (29). Bach and Wyden
(1970) also suggested that, through open and honest communication of
feelings, parties to conflict can effectively develop a cooperative
orientation.

In a Prisoner's Dilemma context, Fahs (1976) found that subjects
exposed to self-disclosing communication responded with a significantly higher frequency of conflict-reducing behavior than those exposed to non-disclosing communication. Furthermore, it has been found that self-disclosure is correlated with liking or friendship (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Landsman, 1960; Taylor, Altman, & Sorrentino, 1969; Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969). In a series of studies involving monetary rewards where strangers, close friends and married couples served as participants, Marwell and Schmidt (1975) found that strangers usually chose to work individually, even though cooperating was potentially more profitable. On the other hand, they found that long standing relationships outside the laboratory do have a marked effect on behavior. Most close friends and married couples were eventually cooperative. In fact, the studies revealed that 10-20% of the strangers eventually cooperated, whereas 65-100% of the close friends and spouses cooperated. Similarly, in a mixed-motive matrix game, participants having a friendly relationship responded more cooperatively than hostile subjects, or subjects having no previous acquaintance (McClintock & McNeel, 1967).

However, not all of the research employing mixed-motive games have yielded unequivocal findings with respect to the relationship dimension of the encounter. Marlowe and Strickland (1964) found no consistent relationship between friendship and cooperation. Using a preexperimental sociometric questionnaire to establish friendship ratings, participants in one study (Oskamp & Perlman, 1966) were paired with close friends, acquaintances, and disliked
others in a Prisoner's Dilemma game. The main effect for friendship was not significant. However, the study was completed using two college populations — students from a small college and students from a large university. A significant positive relationship between friendship and cooperation was obtained at the small school, but not at the large one.

Swingle (1966) found that, after experiencing noncooperation from a liked or unknown opponent, participants in a mixed-motive game became less cooperative. However, levels of cooperation remained unchanged after subjects experienced noncooperation from a disliked opponent. Swingle explained the results by suggesting that, with small payoffs, subjects may try to increase psychological distance between themselves and disliked others by failing to reciprocate the negative behavior. In a competitively structured Prisoner's Dilemma context Swingle and Gillis (1968) found that participants who disliked their opponent settled, relatively early in the game, upon a highly competitive strategy and remained unaffected by abrupt strategy changes of their opponent. Subjects who had a friendly relationship with their opponents, on the other hand, were initially less competitive and were markedly affected by changes in the other's strategy. Friends had a greater tendency to match the behavior of their liked opponent. It appears, then, that friendship, in the context of a mixed-motive game, may be related to the responsiveness of the partners toward each other, rather than to the level of cooperation, per se.

It should be noted that some theorists (Pruitt, 1967; Gergen,
1969) have indicted research employing mixed-motive games for their relative lack of "real world" applicability. Believing that the laboratory game fails to duplicate the intricacies of the conflict process, these authors suggest the need for care when interpreting the results of studies employing mixed-motive games, as well as a need for other types of research to supplement the findings of the vast amount of literature employing the gaming paradigm. Nevertheless, it does appear that the literature cited lends some support to the notion that the intensity of the relationship has an impact on the rules seen as appropriate for interacting in a conflict encounter.

The conflict behaviors chosen as appropriate may also be influenced by the perceived importance of the content of the conflict. Deutsch (1973) suggested that the more substantially significant the conflict issue, the more difficult it is to resolve. Rosenfeld (1973) indicated that, when a conflict is seen as trivial or unimportant, avoiding the conflict is an appropriate response. Hall (1969) would amend that notion to suggest that when the conflict and the relationship are seen as unimportant, avoidance is likely to result. With a conflict perceived as unimportant and a relationship seen as important, accommodation may be the appropriate rule.

Blake, Mouton, and Shepard (1964) suggested that when the participants believe that the outcome of a conflict is important, they will engage in collaboration, if they believe that agreement is possible. However, if the stakes are low (and agreement is still seen as possible), the parties to conflict will accommodate. In contrast, when agreement is not seen as possible and the stakes
are high, the parties will compete; when the stakes are low, the parties will simply remain inactive (avoid). This is compatible with Hall's (1969) suggestion that individuals will compete or collaborate (depending upon degree of concern for the relationship) when concern for the content dimension of the conflict encounter is high.

Even though there appears to be some agreement on the theoretical importance of the content and relationship dimensions of a communication encounter, there appears to be a dearth of research in this area. This study was designed to investigate the effects of varying both the importance of the content dimension and the intensity of the relationship dimension of a conflict encounter upon perceptions of appropriate communication rules.

**Summary**

The conceptualization of interpersonal conflict rules employed in the present study is visualized in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Interpersonal Conflict Rules](image)

[Interpersonal Conflict Rules diagram]
The content dimension of the conflict encounter refers to the specific issue(s) under contention. To the extent that concern for content is high, this conceptualization specifies collaboration or competition as appropriate rules, depending upon the nature of the relationship.

The relationship dimension of the conflict encounter can vary in terms of sign and intensity (Newcomb, 1961). Varying the sign of the relationship, Baxter and Shepherd (1976; in press) found that collaboration and accommodation were seen as more appropriate when in conflict with someone who was liked than with someone who was disliked, indicating greater concern for the relationship with the liked other.

The intensity of the relationship is the concern of the present study. It is assumed that, as relationships become more intense in terms of progressing through the stages of relational development discussed earlier (Altman & Taylor, 1973), concern for the relationship dimension of the conflict encounter increases.

In essence, content and relationship dimensions are examined as possible contextual cues for determining appropriate rules for interacting in a conflict encounter.

**Statement of Hypotheses**

Earlier discussions suggest that content and relationship dimensions of a conflict encounter may have an impact upon rules perceived as appropriate for interacting in conflict. The four rules serving as dependent variables in the present study include degree of approval toward accommodation, degree of approval toward avoidance,
degree of approval toward competition, and degree of approval toward collaboration. It was anticipated that these four dependent variables were interrelated (Baxter & Shepherd, 1976; in press), therefore, hypotheses were written in a form testable by multivariate analysis of variance (Hummel & Sligo, 1971).

1) Ratings of approval of each of the four conflict rules will differ significantly as a function of the intensity of the relationship. Assuming the validity of the earlier discussion, several univariate subhypotheses seem appropriate. Participants should approve of collaboration and accommodation more with relationships that are more intense than with relationships that are less intense. With less intense relationships, participants should approve more of avoidance and competition.

2) Ratings of approval of each of the four conflict rules will differ significantly as a function of the importance of the content of the conflict. It follows from the earlier discussion that with an important content issue, participants will approve of competition and collaboration more than when the content is of lesser importance. With a content issue of low importance there will be greater approval of avoidance and accommodation than with an issue of greater importance.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

One hundred thirty-seven students enrolled in eight sections of Interpersonal Communication 111: Introduction to Public Speaking at the University of Montana volunteered to serve as participants. Due to incomplete responses, data from four subjects were not included in data analysis. Furthermore, data from one respondent were randomly chosen for elimination in order to assure an equal number of subjects per treatment group. Therefore, data from 132 respondents, 53 women and 79 men, were included in final data analysis.

Materials

Six separate conflict scenarios were developed reflecting three levels of relationship intensity (stranger, acquaintance, close friend) and two levels of content importance (low import, high import). A 20-item questionnaire was developed to assess respondents' reactions to the scenarios in terms of degree of approval toward the four conflict rules described earlier.

The Scenarios

The procedure employed in this study required subjects to respond to the appropriateness of certain behaviors in a communication encounter. This procedure was suggested by Harré (1974) as appropriate for the discovery of perceived rules and is
referred to as the "scenario method." Harre noted that "in one application of the scenario method people are asked to give their views on the propriety or impropriety of certain courses of action in defined situations. . . . The method of scenarios. . . [can give] clues as to the paradigms of correct social action and the rules according to which various actions and action sequences are decided upon" (155).

Several criteria were employed when developing the six conflict encounters or scenarios (see Appendix A). First, in order to make the scenarios as realistic as possible, an attempt was made to consider the population from which participants would be drawn. Since respondents would consist of college students the setting chosen for the scenarios was an academic one. More specifically, when responding to one of the six scenarios, subjects were asked to imagine that an assignment in one of their classes consisted of a term project they were to complete with another person. The conflict, per se, remained stable across all six conditions. The latter part of the written scenarios described the conflict as follows:

At your first meeting with the person you're working with (someone of the same sex as yourself) you discover that the other person has already begun doing some work on a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
Second, in order to control for sex, the scenarios specified that the other person was of the same sex as the respondents. This was done also to prevent possible ambiguity associated with an opposite sex-close friend category, which may be interpreted in terms of friendship and/or in terms of a romantic attachment.

Manipulation of the importance of the content dimension of the conflict encounter was accomplished by varying the payoffs (Schelling, 1960). In the low import condition the scenarios indicated that respondents were being graded pass/not pass in a class which was not in their majors. Furthermore, the project, in the low import condition, counted for only 10% of the final grade in the class. In contrast, the scenarios in the high import condition indicated that respondents were being graded for a letter grade in a course which was in their majors, and the project counted for more than half of the final grade in the class.

Manipulation of the relationship dimension of the conflict encounter was patterned after Altman and Taylor's (1973) first three stages of relational development discussed earlier. The fourth stage was not included since Altman and Taylor noted that this stage is reached in only a few relationships. Furthermore, Miller and Steinberg (1975) suggested that relationships approaching the level of intimacy similar to Altman and Taylor's fourth relationship phase are never experienced by some people. Therefore, the three levels of relationship intensity employed in this study were stranger, acquaintance, close friend.

The scenarios in the stranger condition indicated that respond-
ents had never met the person they were assigned to work with before the class started. The scenarios in the acquaintance condition suggested that respondents had met the other person before, and, although they didn't know each other well, they had been in a few of the same classes and shared a few of the same friends. In the close friend condition, participants had known the other person for several years; in fact, they had been close friends since high school and saw each other regularly.

In order to check subjects' perceptions of the conflict scenarios along several dimensions pilot data were collected. Fifty-one students enrolled in Interpersonal Communication 118: Language and Behavior at the University of Montana volunteered to serve as subjects. Subjects received one of two written versions of the conflict scenarios -- either the scenario where the content of the conflict was of high import, or where the content was of low import. The portion of the scenarios manipulating the intensity of the relationship was not included in the pilot study scenarios. The pilot study questionnaires appear in Appendix B.

In order to assess the perceived realism of the conflict scenarios subjects were asked to indicate whether the situation described in the scenario sounded like a situation they could realistically find themselves in with a stranger, an acquaintance, and a close friend. For all three of the relationship types subjects responded to the likelihood of the scenario on a scale from 1 (unlikely) to 5 (likely). Respondents were also asked to suggest anything that would make the situation described in the scenario more realistic.
Similarly, respondents were asked to indicate how important the content of the scenario would be to them if the other person was a stranger, an acquaintance, and a close friend. For all three of the relationship levels respondents indicated the importance of the content or issue on a scale from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (important). Respondents were then asked to suggest anything they could think of to make the situation any more important and to suggest anything to make it less important.

Two separate 2X3 analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to analyze the data. Due to incomplete data, results from one subject were not included in data analysis. Data from twenty-one respondents receiving the low import scenario and twenty-nine respondents receiving the high import scenario were included in analysis.

The ANOVA for the dependent variable, ratings of liklihood (realism), yielded significant main effects for the content (F=5.06; df=1.48; p<.05) and relationship (F=32.76; df=2.96; p<.05) dimensions of the conflict. Subsequent Sheffé contrasts indicated that the scenario was seen as significantly less likely with a close friend than with a stranger or an acquaintance. The difference in ratings of liklihood between a stranger and an acquaintance was not significant. Table 1 contains the mean ratings of liklihood from 1 (unlikely) to 5 (likely).

| TABLE 1 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Means for Liklihood (Realism) of the Scenario (pilot data) | STRANGER | ACQUAINTANCE | CLOSE FRIEND |
| Low Import | 4.57 | 4.14 | 2.76 | 3.82 |
| High Import | 3.86 | 3.45 | 2.41 | 3.24 |
| | 4.16 | 3.74 | 2.56 |
Only one respondent suggested a possible reason why the scenarios might be judged as less realistic with a friend than with an acquaintance or a stranger. The respondent indicated that a close friend would not begin working on the joint project without first consulting the respondent. Therefore, the portion of the scenario stating that "the other person has begun doing some work on a topic...
was rewritten as "the other person has developed an idea for a topic...

It is unclear why the scenario of low import should be judged as significantly more likely or realistic than the more important scenario. Perhaps less important conflicts are more prevalent, and are, therefore, judged as being more likely. In other words, participants may have been responding to the likelihood of the scenarios in terms of prevalence, rather than in terms of realism.

The ANOVA for the dependent variable, ratings of the importance of the content of the conflict yielded a significant main effect for the importance of the content of the conflict ($F=5.37; \text{df}=1.48; p<.05$). The main effect for the relationship dimension was not significant. In other words, the conflict scenario was perceived as being equally important regardless of whether the other person was a stranger, an acquaintance or a close friend.

It appears that the manipulation of low and high importance of the content of the scenario was successful. The scenario written to reflect low importance of the content was indeed rated significantly lower in importance than was the high import scenario.

Table 2 contains the mean ratings of importance from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (important).
TABLE 2

Means for Importance of the Scenario (pilot data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRANGER</th>
<th>ACQUAINTANCE</th>
<th>CLOSE FRIEND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Import</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Import</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the two scenarios were perceived to be significantly different in importance, the mean rating of importance for the low import condition (3.73) was considerably above the midpoint on the five-point scale. In order to make the low import scenarios appear even less important, the sentence "The project counts for 10% of your final grade in the class" was rewritten to read, "The project is not an important part of your grade; it counts for only 10% of your final grade in the class." This rewritten sentence was consistent with the wording of the parallel sentence in the high import scenario which began, "The project is an important part of your grade. . . ."

Analysis of the pilot data resulted in the final forms of the conflict scenarios found in Appendix A. Results of the pilot study suggested that subjects tended to perceive the scenarios as realistic or plausible situations. Furthermore, the check on the manipulation of the importance of the content dimension indicated that subjects were indeed differentiating between conflicts of high and low import.

The Conflict Response Instrument

Factor analysis of Baxter and Shepherd's (1976; in press) data
suggested that subjects tended to perceive four action alternatives (rules) as appropriate for choosing from among when responding to interpersonal conflict.

Baxter and Shepherd (1976; in press) had subjects indicate their degree of approval of possible behavioral responses to conflict as indicated by 25 statements. Five statements on the questionnaire were designed to reflect each of the five conflict modes posited by Hall (1969) and Thomas and Kilmann (1974). The content of the statement pool was generated in close consultation with the work of Thomas and Kilmann (1974) and Hall (1969). Respondents in the Baxter and Shepherd study were asked to indicate their degree of approval of the behaviors in the twenty-five statements as elements of their own conflict management repertoires. A copy of the 25 conflict items employed by Baxter and Shepherd appears in Appendix G.

Factor analysis of the 25 items indicated that fifteen of the items were sufficiently unambiguous as to which factor the items loaded with to be used in the present study. Criteria for this decision included a primary factor loading of at least .50 with the target factor and a loading of less than .30 with any other factor. Employing these criteria, four accommodation items, four avoidance items, four competition items, and three collaboration items were retained for inclusion in the conflict instrument employed in the present study.

In addition, five new items were created in order to assure an equal number of items per response style, and to increase the length of the questionnaire. Therefore, the conflict instrument used in this investigation consisted of twenty items, with five items...
reflecting each of the four behavioral alternatives — avoidance, accommodation, competition and collaboration. A table of random numbers was used to determine the order of the items. A copy of the conflict instrument used in the present study appears in Appendix D.

The conflict response instrument was attached to one of the six conflict scenarios described earlier and was accompanied by the following written directions:

Imagine yourself as a participant in the scene described on the preceding page. On the following pages you will be presented with several ways in which you might react to disagreements with others. The following exercise asks you to indicate your degree of approval of specific behaviors you might use in responding to the situation described on the first page of this booklet. The specific behaviors appear in a series of 20 statements on the following pages.

Keeping in mind the situation described earlier, respond to each statement by recording your approval or disapproval in the appropriate space. Let the following scale serve as a standard for your responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>quite a lot</td>
<td>only</td>
<td>only</td>
<td>quite a lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The entire exercise should take about 10 minutes. Work rapidly and use your first reaction without thinking it over.

Beside each of the twenty statements a blank space was provided for subjects to indicate their degree of approval toward the item. Respondents were also given the opportunity to generate rules that may not have been included in the conflict response instrument. The twenty-first item asked the subject to specify any other possible reaction to the conflict scenario and to rate that response on degree of approval.
The procedures employed in the present study are described in terms of (1) experimental procedures and (2) statistical procedures.

Experimental Procedures

With the consent of the course director and the respective instructors the experiment was administered during a regular class meeting of each of eight sections of Interpersonal Communication 111: Introduction to Public Speaking during Spring quarter, 1977. Respondents were first given a booklet containing one of the six conflict scenarios, the conflict response instrument, and accompanying directions. Subjects were randomly assigned to treatment groups via random assignment of booklets.

After distributing the booklets the experimenter offered the following standardized verbal directions:

I am interested in looking at how people respond to potential disagreements with other people. The first page of this booklet describes a situation that I'd like you to imagine yourself a part of. The following pages ask you to indicate whether or not you would approve of your behaving in certain ways, given the situation. There are no right or wrong answers, except to the extent that you approve or disapprove of certain behaviors for yourself. Your participation is not required, but it would be appreciated. The questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete. If you have any questions bring the booklet up to me and I'll be glad to answer them.

After responding to each item in terms of degree of approval participants were asked to indicate their sex. And finally, they were asked to rate the scenario on perceived realism and perceived importance on scales provided on the last page of the booklet.
After the booklets were completed and returned subjects were given a description of the six scenarios in terms of content and relationship dimensions of the conflict, as well as an indication of expected results.

Final experimental results were made available to subjects upon request.

**Statistical Procedures**

The twenty items constituting the conflict response instrument were first factor analyzed with the SPSS-10 factor analysis package, principle factoring with iteration and oblique rotation. An oblique rotation was employed since it was assumed that the factors were correlated (Baxter and Shepherd, 1976; in press). Results of the factor analysis determined which items to include in final data analysis. Based on a priori criteria, only those items with a primary loading of at least .50 with the target factor and a loading of less than .30 with any other factor were to be included in the analysis. An additional advance criterion required at least two items loading on a dimension before considering the dimension in final data analysis.

Results of the factor analysis yielded an unexpected five-factor solution, rather than the hypothesized four factors. The first factor to emerge, accounting for 52.2% of the explained variance appeared to represent a general concern for the relationship. One item written to reflect accommodation and one item written to reflect avoidance loaded "purely" (based on criteria noted above) on this factor.

The second factor to emerge, accounting for 23.8% of the ex-
plained variance, was clearly a competition dimension — all five competition items loaded purely on this factor. The third factor, accounting for 11.3% of the variance, consisted of two accommodation items. The fourth factor (7.6% of the variance) consisted of two collaboration items. And finally, the fifth factor, accounting for the remaining variance — 5.2%, was comprised of two avoidance items.

Since the first factor to emerge accounted for much of the explained variance and the items comprising the factor met a priori criteria for item inclusion (even though the factor was not a "target" factor), this first dimension was included in final data analysis. The items utilized in final data analysis and the primary factor loadings for each are listed in Table 3.

The items retained for analysis were scored such that each subject received an average score — ranging from 1 (disapprove highly) to 6 (approve highly) — for each of the five factors: degree of approval toward the factor labeled 'general concern for relationship', degree of approval toward competition, degree of approval toward accommodation, degree of approval toward collaboration, and degree of approval toward avoidance.

The relationship among the scores on the five variables was examined through Pearson r correlation to determine the appropriateness of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical procedure. Table 4 indicates that the variables were indeed correlated, justifying the use of the MANOVA.

The scores were then analyzed using the BMD12V MANOVA statistical package. The .05 level of significance was required to reject the
null hypothesis that no differences existed between the treatment
groups.

TABLE 3
Conflict items included in final analysis (with factor loadings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Concern for Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid expressing my disagreement verbally if doing so would lead to an extended argument. (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect our relationship at all costs, even if it means complying with the other's wishes. (.64)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try to win my own position. (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse to yield to compromise when I am right and the other is wrong. (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to convince the other that my position is the correct one. (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain firm in an attempt to get the other person to adopt my viewpoints. (.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold to my goals firmly even if it means the other won't get his or her way. (.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accomodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If it is important to the other person, give in to his or her wishes, even though I haven't really changed my position on the issue. (.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to meet the other's wishes if they are important to him/her. (.68)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openly confront the other person with my feelings on the issue, and ask him/her to do the same — even if it means engaging in an argument. (.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean toward a direct discussion in order to satisfy both of us, even though the discussion may be blunt and cause tension. (.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try to change the focus of our attention away from the conflict. (.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postpone discussing the problem in the hopes that it will disappear with time. (.53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Accomodate</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Compete</th>
<th>Concern for Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.25^0</td>
<td>-0.31^0</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.27^0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomodate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.20^0</td>
<td>-0.24^0</td>
<td>0.46^0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.25^0</td>
<td>-0.42^0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compete</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Relationship</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^0p < 0.05
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

In order to check the perceived realism and importance of the conflict scenario participants were asked to respond to the following questions: "Considering the scene described on the first page of this booklet, how plausible or realistic do you consider the situation to be?"; "If you found yourself in a similar situation, how important would the issue be to you?" Subjects responded to both questions on five-step scales ranging from 1 (unrealistic; unimportant) to 5 (realistic; important).

Two separate analyses of variance were used to analyze this data. The ANOVA for realism yielded a significant main effect for the importance of the content of the conflict ($F=4.13; \text{df}=1,126; p<.05$) and a significant content importance X relational intensity interaction ($F=3.90; \text{df}=2,126; p<.05$).

It appears that subjects in this experiment perceived the high import scenario to be significantly more realistic ($\bar{x}=4.20$) than the low import scenario ($\bar{x}=3.85$), even though both scenarios were judged to be on the realistic end of the five-step scale. In order to judge the strength of this effect the omega-squared statistic was computed, indicating that only 2% of the variance in realism scores could be attributed to the manipulation of importance of the
scenarios. It should be noted that these results are in opposition to the results that emerged from the pilot study. In the pilot study the low import scenario was judged as more realistic; in the present study the high import scenario was judged as more realistic.

The ANOVA for realism also yielded a significant interaction. The omega-squared analysis indicated that 4% of the variance could be attributed to this interaction. Examination of cell means suggested that the low import scenarios were judged to be least realistic in the acquaintance condition, whereas the high import scenarios were rated most realistic in the acquaintance condition. (See Table 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>Close Friend</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Import</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Import</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA for ratings of importance of the scenario yielded significant main effects for both the importance of the content of the scenario ($F=15.42; df=1,126; p<.05$) and the intensity of the relationship ($F=3.70; df=2,126; p<.05$).

The manipulation of importance of the content of the scenarios appears to have been relatively successful. The low import scenarios were rated as significantly less important ($\bar{X}=3.73$) than the high import scenarios ($\bar{X}=4.35$). However, the omega-squared analysis
indicated that only 1% of the variance in ratings of importance could be attributed to manipulation of importance.

Ratings of importance were also affected by the intensity of the relationship. Sheffé contrasts indicated that the content of the conflict scenario was judged to be significantly more important with a stranger than with an acquaintance or a close friend. The ratings of importance in the acquaintance and close friend conditions were not significantly different. The omega-squared for relationship intensity indicated that 3.5% of the variance in ratings of importance of the conflict could be attributed to the relationship manipulation. The means are included in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>Close Friend</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Import</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Import</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that the scenarios employed as stimulus encounters were perceived as realistic by the respondents in this study. Furthermore, subjects tended to perceive the high import scenarios as significantly more important than the low import scenarios, even though the magnitude of this effect was weak.

**Experimental Results**

The MANOVA of the appropriateness ratings of the five conflict factors yielded no significant effects for either the import-
ance of the content of the conflict or the intensity of the relationship shared by the participants in conflict. Table 7 contains the source table for the MANOVA.

**TABLE 7**

**MANOVA Source Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Approximate F</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Importance (C)</td>
<td>5,122</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Intensity (R)</td>
<td>10,244</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C X R</td>
<td>10,244</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, respondents were more approving of collaboration ($\bar{x}=4.72$) than any other response alternative. In fact, collaboration was the only dependent variable with ratings of approval on the "approve" end of the six-step continuum (i.e., $\geq 4.00$). Ratings on the other four variables, in descending order of approval, include 3.63 for competition, 3.33 for accommodation, 2.42 for 'general concern for relationship,' and 2.19 for avoidance.

The items generated by participants in response to the question asking for any other possible reaction to the conflict scenario were examined. Of the 34 items generated by respondents, only four could not be classified into one of the four conflict rules employed in this study (or a combination of these rules). One of these four items ('"compromise 50-50, or 60-40 if 50-50 isn't possible"') was clearly a compromise item. The other three items ('"talk to the professor," "bring in a third person to mediate," and "get another
opinion on the topic for the project") appear to reflect some sort of "responsibility for conflict resolution" dimension that was not included in the two-dimensional content/relationship scheme employed in the present study. The remaining 30 items and their experimenter-generated classifications were included as Appendix II.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

Test of Hypotheses

The MANOVA failed to support either of the two general hypotheses advanced in this study. Neither manipulation of the importance of the content, nor manipulation of relationship intensity, had a significant impact upon patterns of endorsing the conflict management rules examined in this study. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there are no differences between treatment groups failed to be rejected.

Several possible reasons could account for the failure to reject the null hypothesis. First, perhaps conflict rules are much simpler than is assumed by the two-dimensional model of conflict employed in this study. It is possible that people approve of the same types of rules for responding to conflict regardless of the nature of the conflict encounter.

On the other hand, the manipulations of content and relationship dimensions of the conflict scenarios may have been too weak to have an impact upon subjects in this study. Even though the high import scenario was judged as significantly more important than the low import scenario, the magnitude of the effect was weak.

The fact that some of the differences in scores between groups, though they failed to reach an acceptable level of signif-
icance, were in the direction specified by the subhypotheses lends some credence to the idea that the lack of significant results may be partly due to weak manipulations. For instance, the mean score for approval of accommodation was greater when the conflict was of low import ($\bar{X}=3.52$) than when it was of high import ($\bar{X}=3.14$). Approval of competition was greater with a conflict of greater import ($\bar{X}=3.76$) than with a less important conflict ($\bar{X}=3.50$). Competition was also approved of less as the relationship became more intense, regardless of the level of importance. And approval of the 'general concern for relationship' dimension (though not considered in hypotheses formation) was less with a stranger ($\bar{X}=2.22$) than with an acquaintance ($\bar{X}=2.56$) or a close friend ($\bar{X}=2.49$).

Table 8 presents a table of means from the MANOVA analysis.

**TABLE 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>LOW IMPORT</th>
<th></th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>HIGH IMPORT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acq.</td>
<td>Cl. Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acq.</td>
<td>Cl. Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accom</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collab</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compete</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship concern</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, it is possible that failure to find significant differences between the treatment groups is related to the failure to
distinguish between constitutive and strategic rules. According to Harré (1974) constitutive rules consist of the whole range or repertoire of available appropriate responses. Strategic rules, on the other hand, consist of the rule(s) perceived as most appropriate for meeting one's goals in the conflict encounter. The procedure of having respondents indicate their degree of approval of each of the rules examined in this study allows respondents to approve of all of the rules and would appear to be a methodology aimed at discovering constitutive rules. It would seem likely that judgements of approval based on strategic rules would be more in line with actual rule-conforming behavior in a conflict situation than would judgements based on the broader concept of constitutive rules. Perhaps an examination of strategic rules would be more fruitful in terms of assessing the impact of content and relationship dimensions of conflict.

Discussion of Other Findings

Examination of the items generated by subjects in response to the question asking for any other possible reaction to the scenario lends some support for the four-category typology of interpersonal conflict rules employed in the present study. Eighty-five per cent (30/34) of these respondent-generated items could be classified into one of these four conflict response alternatives.

Of these four action alternatives respondents indicated clear approval of only collaboration as a response to the conflict encounter scenarios employed in this study. Approval ratings of competition and accommodation were near the mid-point on the scale, whereas, avoidance and 'general concern for relationship' tended to elicit
These findings differ somewhat from the results obtained by Ruble and Thomas (1976); they found that collaboration and accommodation were evaluated positively, with avoidance and competition evaluated negatively. The results of the present study indicate that competition was evaluated somewhat positively on the six-step scale ($\bar{X}=3.63$), and accommodation was evaluated in a similar manner, though not as positively ($\bar{X}=3.33$). These conflicting results may be explained by an examination of the task subjects were asked to perform in the two studies. Respondents in the present study were asked to evaluate behaviors as elements of their own conflict management repertoires. Subjects in the Ruble and Thomas (1976) study, on the other hand, were evaluating the other person. Those who accommodated were evaluated positively, whereas those who avoided or competed were evaluated negatively. In other words, people may perceive different rules for themselves than for the other person in a conflict encounter. It may be that people tend to approve of accommodation for the other more than for themselves, and to approve of competition for themselves but not for the other person.

A tendency emerged, in both the pilot study and the present study, for subjects to rate a conflict as important regardless of the importance of the outcomes of the conflict. Even though the low import scenarios were rewritten to reflect even less import after analysis of pilot data, ratings of importance remained essentially unchanged. Subjects in the pilot study rated the low import scenario above the midpoint on the five-step scale ($\bar{X}=3.73$). Surprisingly, the mean rating of importance for the low import scenarios in the
present study was identical with the rating in the pilot study (\(\bar{X} = 3.73\)). Similarly, ratings of importance of the high import scenario were almost identical between the pilot study (\(\bar{X} = 4.34\)) and the present study (\(\bar{X} = 4.35\)).

Several factors could be operating to influence participants' ratings of importance of the scenarios. First, demand characteristics may have influenced respondents' ratings of importance of the scenarios. Subjects may have felt that the experimenter wanted to be told the scenarios (and hence, the research) were important. This possible desire to be a "good subject" (Orne, 1962) may have inflated subjects' ratings of importance of the scenarios. Second, perhaps any conflict with another person, regardless of the import of the outcomes, is perceived as important. One subject in the low import condition even noted that the issue was "important in principle even if the project doesn't count very much on the grade for the class." It is also possible that the particular setting employed in the present study (the classroom) may have been regarded as important regardless of the impact of the conflict on the subjects' grade. In other words, perhaps any conflict in a classroom setting is seen as important.

As indicated earlier, the first factor to emerge from factor analysis of the twenty conflict response items has been labeled 'general concern for relationship.' The Pearson r correlation (see Table 6) lends some credence to this interpretation. There was a significant positive correlation (.46) between this relationship factor and accommodation — which was conceptualized as reflecting
high concern for the relationship. However, the fact that this general relationship dimension was negatively correlated \(-.42\) with collaboration — which was also conceptualized as reflecting high relationship concern — suggests that this factor may be more aptly labeled 'extreme concern for relationship.' Both of the items which loaded on this factor appear to reflect rather extreme behavioral options aimed at protecting and maintaining a harmonious relationship.

The results of the present study provide some support for the idea that higher concern for the relationship tends to reduce concern for the content or issue of the conflict. Subjects in this study rated a conflict with a stranger as significantly more important than a conflict with an acquaintance or a close friend. In other words, having some stake in the relationship shared with the other person may tend to reduce perceptions of the importance of the conflict issue.

In fact, comparatively large standard deviations in realism ratings of the low import/acquaintance scenarios (SD=1.30) and of the low import/close friend scenarios (SD=1.21) may signify some ambiguity over whether it is even possible to have an unimportant conflict with a friend. This idea is consistent with pilot study results indicating that perceived realism of the scenarios was below the mid-point on the five-step scale (\(X=2.56\)) when the conflict was with a close friend.

**Limitations and Implications**

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First of
all, although the development of conflict, and the concurrent development of appropriate conflict rules is a dynamic, constantly changing process, no attempt was made to examine the changing nature of the rules in a real conflict encounter. Instead, emphasis was placed on identifying and examining some of the rules that participants might bring to a conflict encounter. Therefore, identifying these individual rules is only one step in studying the dynamics of conflict behavior.

Second, this study assessed rules of conflict management through a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. From the standpoint of communication, observation of actual conflict encounters would be a research strategy of perhaps greater utility. However, to the knowledge of the author, the typology of conflict rules employed in this study has not yet received translation into its associated communication behaviors (Kilmann & Thomas, 1975). Once this translation has been achieved the discovery of the rules of conflict management could occur in actual or role-played conflict encounters.

Furthermore, this study did not distinguish between the constitutive and strategic rules of interaction (Harré, 1974). In other words, this study did not address itself to the question of whether respondents' judgements of approval or disapproval were based on perceptions of the range of legitimate behaviors (constitutive rules) or on perceptions of appropriate strategies for meeting their goals in the conflict encounter (strategic rules). If, as the rules perspective indicates, people are plan-making, goal directed individuals, then it would seem likely that judgements of approval based on
strategic rules would be more valuable in terms of predicting actual behavior.

The failure to reject the null hypothesis in the present study suggests a need for further research examining the effects of the content and relationship dimensions of a conflict encounter upon appropriate communication rules for interacting in the conflict. It is possible that people employ individual styles for interacting in conflict that remain relatively stable regardless of the importance of the conflict and the intensity of the relationship shared by conflicting parties. However, trends in the data suggest that it is more likely that manipulations of the content and relationship dimensions of the conflict encounter scenarios may have been too weak to have an impact on the respondents in this study. Perhaps written scenarios do not have enough psychological reality for the participants to influence perceptions of appropriate conflict rules.

It is possible that a priori assumptions that a relationship with a stranger indicated low relationship concern and a relationship with a close friend indicated high relationship concern may have been invalid. For instance, it is possible that a stranger (who also happens to be a fellow student) may not be a good representative of low relationship concern. Future researchers could examine the types of relationships that elicit low and high relational concern on the part of the participants in conflict.

Similarly, more research is needed examining the impact of different settings on perceptions of conflict. As discussed earlier, the classroom setting employed in this study may have influenced
participants to rate the conflict as important regardless of the importance of the outcomes associated with the conflict.

This investigation did not tap all of the variables that may be present in determining appropriate rules for communication in conflict encounters. No study can, since there are bound to be variables perceived by respondents that are not perceived by researchers. However, it can only be hoped that the results of this study, and recognition of its limitations, can offer insight and direction for future researchers interested in studying communication rules in conflicts.

Summary

This investigation was conducted in order to ascertain perceptions of appropriate rules for interacting in conflict. Four rules were conceptualized as possible behavioral alternatives for responding to interpersonal conflict — avoidance, accommodation, competition and collaboration.

The procedure employed in this study required subjects to indicate their degree of approval of certain behaviors in a conflict encounter. Each participant received one of six conflict encounter scenarios depicting a hypothetical conflict between the respondent and a fellow student. The scenarios were developed by the experimenter to reflect two levels of content or issue importance (low import; high import) and three levels of relationship intensity (stranger, acquaintance, close friend). Subjects indicated their degree of approval of certain behaviors for responding to the conflict scenarios on six-step scales ranging from "disapprove highly" to "approve highly."
The behavioral options for responding to the conflict scenarios were included on a questionnaire consisting of twenty items, with five items representing each of the four rules mentioned above.

The MANOVA of the appropriateness ratings of the conflict response alternatives yielded no significant effects for either the importance of the content of the conflict or the intensity of the relationship shared by conflicting parties. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences between treatment groups could not be rejected. The possibility that people employ individual styles for interacting in conflict that remain relatively stable regardless of the importance of the conflict or the intensity of the relationship was discussed. However, trends in the data suggested that manipulations of content and relationship dimensions of conflict may have been too weak to have an impact on respondents in this investigation.

Several limitations of this study were discussed. In addition, discussion of the implications of this investigation was included in order to offer some direction for future researchers interested in studying communication rules in interpersonal conflicts.
NOTES

1. Ruble and Thomas (1976) computed a cooperation index (concern for relationship) by adding the ratings on accommodation and collaboration and subtracting the ratings on avoidance and competition. Similarly, an assertiveness index (concern for content) was computed by adding ratings on competition and collaboration and subtracting ratings on avoidance and accommodation. Because compromise was expected to be exactly intermediate or neutral on both content and relationship dimensions, it was not included in either index.

2. Reliability coefficients for the five factors were computed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The reliability coefficient for the first factor to emerge ('general concern for relationship' items) was .51; reliability was .85 for competition items, .52 for accommodation items, .45 for collaboration items and .38 for avoidance items. Competition was the only factor to demonstrate high reliability (Nunnally, 1967). However, competition was comprised of five items while the other four factors were comprised of only two items each. Since coefficient alpha is based on the average correlation among items (internal consistency) and the number of items comprising the factors, the low reliability of the other four factors was not surprising. According to Nunnally (1967) low reliability coefficients using coefficient alpha are due to either the shortness of the test or the lack of commonality among items. Using procedures suggested by Nunnally (1967, 193) the correlations of each factor with "true" (errorless) scores were as follows: 'general concern for relationship' (.71); competition (.92); accommodation (.72); collaboration (.67); avoidance (.62).
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Orne, M.T. On the social psychology of the psychological experiment: With particular reference to demand characteristics and their implications. AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST, 1962, 17, 776-783.


APPENDIX A

SIX CONFLICT ENCOUNTER SCENARIOS
Low Import/Stranger Scenario

An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is not in your major) on a pass/not pass basis. The project is not an important part of your grade: it counts for only 10% of your final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. You've never met the person you're assigned to work with (someone of the same sex as yourself), so after the first class meeting you introduce yourselves and arrange a future meeting to discuss the project.

At this meeting you discover that the other person has developed an idea for a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
Low Import/Acquaintance Scenario

An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is not in your major) on a pass/not pass basis. The project is not an important part of your grade; it counts for only 10% of your final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. You've met the person you're assigned to work with (someone of the same sex as yourself). Although you don't know each other well, you've been in a couple of the same classes and have a few of the same friends.

At your first meeting you discover that the other person has developed an idea for a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
Low Import/Close Friend Scenario

An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is not in your major) on a pass/not pass basis. The project is not an important part of your grade: it counts for only 10% of your final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. You've known the person you're assigned to work with (someone of the same sex as yourself) for several years. In fact, you've been close friends since high school, and see each other regularly.

At your first meeting you discover that the other person has developed an idea for a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
High Import/Stranger Scenario

An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is in your major) for a letter grade. The project is an important part of your grade: it counts for more than half of the final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. You've never met the person you're assigned to work with (someone of the same sex as yourself), so after the first class meeting you introduce yourselves and arrange a future meeting to discuss the project.

At this meeting you discover that the other person has developed an idea for a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is in your major) for a letter grade. The project is an important part of your grade: it counts for more than half of the final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. You've met the person you're assigned to work with (someone of the same sex as yourself). Although you don't know each other well, you've been in a couple of the same classes and have a few of the same friends.

At your first meeting you discover that the other person has developed an idea for a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
High Import/Close Friend Scenario

An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is in your major) for a letter grade. The project is an important part of your grade: it counts for more than half of the final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. You've known the person you're assigned to work with (someone of the same sex as yourself) for several years. In fact, you've been close friends since high school, and see each other regularly.

At your first meeting you discover that the other person has developed an idea for a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
APPENDIX B

PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRES
An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project that you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is not in your major) on a pass/not pass basis. The project counts for 10% of your final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. At your first meeting with the person you're working with (someone of the same sex as yourself) you discover that the other person has already begun doing some work on a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
An assignment in one of your classes this term consists of a term project that you are to complete with one other person. You are taking the course (which is in your major) for a letter grade. The project is an important part of your grade: it counts for more than half of the final grade in the class. As explained by the professor, the project can be on any topic relevant to the course.

Each person in the class is assigned to work with another class member on their projects. At your first meeting with the person you're working with (someone of the same sex as yourself) you discover that the other person has already begun doing some work on a topic that he or she feels would be ideal for the project. However, you don't particularly care for the other person's topic-choice, and feel that a topic you have in mind would be much more suitable. You've taken a couple of classes from the professor before and feel the other person's choice of a topic would not be one the professor would care for. Consequently, you think that to go along with the other person's topic-choice would have an adverse effect on your grade for the project.
1. Does the situation on the previous page sound like a situation that you could realistically find yourself in with a . . .

   stranger (someone you had never met before the class started)?


   acquaintance (someone you had had a few classes with, and with whom you shared a few of the same friends)?


   close friend (someone you had been really close to since high school)?


2. Can you suggest anything you could add that would make the situation any more realistic than you think it is now?
1. How important to you would the issue (the choice of the topic for the project) in the situation be if the other person was a

- stranger (someone you had never met before the class started)?
  - unimportant :___:___:___:___:___: important
- acquaintance (someone you had had a few classes with, and with whom you shared a few of the same friends)?
  - unimportant :___:___:___:___:___: important
- close friend (someone you had been really close to since high school)?
  - unimportant :___:___:___:___:___: important

2. Can you suggest anything you could add that would make the issue any more important than you think it is now?

3. Can you suggest anything that would make the issue in the situation any less important?
APPENDIX C

BAXTER AND SHEPHERD (1976, in press) CONFLICT ITEMS
The following statements constitute the conflict response items employed by Baxter and Shepherd (1976; in press). Items retained for inclusion in the present study are indicated with an asterisk (*). Criteria for retention of items included a primary factor loading of at least .50 with the target factor and a loading of less than .30 with any other factor. Parenthetical notations following each item indicate the particular rules or response styles represented by the items.

*1. Avoid the problem for fear of intensifying controversy and tension. (avoidance)
2. Give in to the other for the sake of harmony. (accommodation)
3. Give up some points in exchange for others. (compromise)
4. Try to win my own position. (competition)
5. Let the other take primary responsibility for solving the problem. (avoidance)
6. Sacrifice my wishes so that the other can get his/her way. (accommodation)
7. Try to find a reasonable combination of gains and losses for both of us. (compromise)
8. Hold to my goals firmly even if it means the other won't get his or her way. (competition)
9. Keep quiet about my wishes in order to avoid unpleasantness. (avoidance)
10. Lean toward a direct discussion in order to satisfy both of us, even though the discussion may be blunt and cause tension. (collaboration)
11. Try to prove the other is wrong. (competition)
12. Try to find a compromise solution. (compromise)
13. Give in, if maintaining my position causes a hassle. (accommodation)
14. Ask the other to confront me openly about the problem and argue with my viewpoints. (collaboration)
15. Work for a solution that fully satisfies both of us, even though a compromise might take less time and energy. (collaboration)
16. Try to change the focus of our attentions away from the conflict. (avoidance)
17. Try to meet the other's wishes if they are important to him/her. (accommodation)
18. Try to find a quick solution through "give and take". (compromise)
19. Try to convince the other that my position is the correct one. (competition)
20. Try to solve the problem so that neither of us must compromise. (collaboration)
21. Use absolute candor in a thorough discussion of our differences. (collaboration)
22. Postpone discussing the problem in the hopes that it will disappear with time. (avoidance)
23. Protect our relationship at all costs, even if it means complying with the other's wishes. (accommodation)
24. Because it is impossible for everyone to be fully satisfied, seek a solution intermediate to both our wishes. (compromise)
25. Refuse to yield to compromise when I am right and the other is wrong. (competition)
APPENDIX D

THE CONFLICT RESPONSE INSTRUMENT

and

RELATED INSTRUCTIONS
Imagine yourself as a participant in the scene described on the preceding page. On the following pages you will be presented with several ways in which you might react to disagreements with others.

The following exercise asks you to indicate your degree of approval of specific behaviors you might use in responding to the situation described on the first page of this booklet. The specific behaviors appear in a series of 20 statements on the following pages.

Keeping in mind the situation described earlier, respond to each statement by recording your approval or disapproval in the appropriate space. Let the following scale serve as a standard for your responses.

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The entire exercise should take about 10 minutes. Work rapidly and use your first reaction without thinking it over.

1. Try to change the focus of our attentions away from the conflict.

2. Work for a solution that fully satisfies both of us, even though a compromise might take less time and energy.

3. Give in, if maintaining my position causes a hassle.

4. Keep quiet about my views in order to avoid unpleasantness.

5. Openly confront the other person with my feelings on the issue, and ask him/her to do the same -- even if it means engaging in an argument.

6. Try to win my own position.

7. If it is important to the other person, give in to his or her wishes, even though I haven't really changed my position on the issue.

8. Refuse to yield to compromise when I am right and the other is wrong.
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9. Avoid the problem for fear of intensifying controversy and tension.

10. Sacrifice my wishes so that the other can get his/her way.

11. Try to convince the other that my position is the correct one.

12. Ask the other to confront me openly about the problem and argue with my viewpoints.

13. Remain firm in an attempt to get the other person to adopt my viewpoint.

14. Postpone discussing the problem in the hopes that it will disappear with time.

15. Lean toward a direct discussion in order to satisfy both of us, even though the discussion may be blunt and cause tension.

16. Hold to my goals firmly even if it means the other won't get his or her way.

17. Try to meet the other's wishes if they are important to him/her.

18. Openly discuss my disagreement in hopes of finding a solution we can both agree on, even though this may threaten the relationship.

19. Avoid expressing my disagreement verbally if doing so would lead to an extended argument.

20. Protect our relationship at all costs, even if it means complying with the other's wishes.

21. Other possible reaction (please specify): ________
APPENDIX E

SUBJECT-GENERATED RESPONSES
to
THE CONFLICT SCENARIOS
The following items were generated by subjects in response to a question asking for any other possible reaction to the conflict scenarios employed as stimulus encounters in this study. The responses have been categorized by the experimenter into the four conflict response alternatives employed as dependent variables in the present study.

Collaboration
1. Using all factors (suitable topic, teacher reaction, etc.) to find a topic acceptable to both.
2. Incorporate both topics into project — in comparison fashion if necessary.
3. Talking it out to get a topic we both like would probably solve the problem.
4. Discuss it till both are comfortable with a topic.
5. Be open and tell my friend how I feel. I'd be very frustrated if my friend didn't tell me how he felt.
6. Talk it over and come up with something we both like.
7. Approach problem openly — present my side completely — listen to his side. This may result in argument but wouldn't jeopardize friendship.
8. Try to find a topic agreeable to both.
9. Try to find topic that both are interested in — different from either's original.
10. Possibly try to find a corollary between the two and work on trying them together.
11. Listen to the other person's ideas and have her listen to mine. Discuss.

Avoidance
1. Try to ask teacher to assign us different partners.
2. Break the relationship.
3. Find another partner.
4. Ask to change partners.
5. Tell your teacher you don't agree with your partner on a project and would like a different partner.
6. Try to get a new partner with same interests.
7. See professor and maybe work alone.
8. I would suggest changing partners.
9. Choose a different person that I don't know so well.
10. Find a new partner.
11. Try to change partners because of the disagreement.

Competition
1. Tell the other person the professor wouldn't like her topic so she'd see mine was a better one.
2. Get the other person to understand why my topic is better.
3. I would convince with logic and facts that my subject was better, but would accept and consider criticism from the other party.
4. Persuading the other person is the best way.
5. The other person should listen to me since I've taken classes from the professor before.
6. Open debate -- the winner take all!
7. It is important to assert my views.

**Accommodation**

1. Go ahead with the other person's topic. The grade's not that important.