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## Projected Interpersonal Distance and Orientation Choices: Personality, Sex, and Social Situation

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*Interpersonal distance and orientation choices are examined as functions of personal characteristics (sex, warmth, dominance), social situation (cooperative-competitive task, attraction toward the other, status relative to the other), and interactions among these variables. The strongest influences are attraction and cooperation and interactions among these. Smaller interpersonal distances are preferred when the individual is attracted to the other, when the social activity is cooperative, when status is equal, and when the individual is "warm" and female. In addition, three types of interactions (among personal characteristics, among situational characteristics, and person  $\times$  situation) are also significantly related to chosen distances. Larger angles (i.e., more side-by-side than face-to-face) are selected when subjects are attracted to the other, are lower status than the other, and are competing. However, interactions among the social situation dimensions are the most important determinants of orientation choice. The results (a) indicate the value of a multivariate approach, (b) suggest why sex and personality have yielded mixed results as determinants of distance preferences, and (c) indicate that situational factors are more influential than personal factors. Finally, the results illustrate how mismatched perceptions of a situation may lead to social conflict.*

In over twenty years of research, individual differences in human interpersonal distance have been linked to many influences. Several critical reviews of these determinants and correlations have appeared (e.g., Evans and Howard, 1973; Hayduk, 1978; Pederson and Shears, 1973; Sundstrom and Altman, 1976). These reviews are largely concerned with univariate influences on interpersonal distance, although occasionally (e.g., Sundstrom and Altman, 1976) the reviewers have called for closer examination of interactions among the influential predictors of interpersonal distance.

In this paper, "distancing" includes both the choice of distance from and the angle of orientation to another individual. In everyday interaction, a number of influences on distancing presumably operate; various personal and social influences as well as influences due to the interactions between person and situation may assist in the determination of distance and orientation preferences of proximate, socially involved individuals. A number of studies have examined interactions as well as main effects (e.g., Bass and Weinstein, 1971; Gifford and Price, 1979; Tennis and Dabbs, 1975). However, studies that take a multivariate approach to interpersonal distancing

are still the exception. Much more work concerned with how the important influences jointly operate is necessary to understand the process.

While interactions among variables may be important influences on behavior, often not all types of interactions are examined. When interactions have been considered, it has usually been in the context of the debate over the relative merits of person, situation, and person  $\times$  situation interaction measures as predictors of behavior (e.g., Endler, 1975). Recently, however, Gifford (1981) has suggested that other kinds of interactions (such as interactions among situational measures and among person measures) have not received sufficient attention.

In terms of univariate or main effects, the present study examines three situational and two personal influences on interpersonal distancing: status, attraction, cooperation-competition, sex, and personality. Since much less work on orientation has been reported, the following survey deals primarily with distance research. As main effects, some of these variables reliably affect interpersonal distance while others appear from past research to affect interpersonal distance inconsistently (Hayduk, 1978). For example, gender differences (males choose greater distances than females) were once accepted as clear-cut (Evans and Howard, 1973) but are now less certain: Hayduk's (1978) review lists seven supporting studies, eight nonsupporting studies, and 20 studies "partially or conditionally" supporting gender differences. This lack

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of agreement in the literature may be partly due to methodological differences such as whether same-sex or mixed-sex pairs are studied, whether interpersonal distance is measured with the stop-distance technique or chair placement, and whether the measurement occurs in the field or in the laboratory.

However, the lack of agreement may also be due to the measurement of gender differences under different conditions. A multivariate approach may help to explain some of the disagreement by demonstrating that gender differences are not present in all circumstances; rather, it is proposed that gender interacts with other characteristics of the person or with the situation to determine whether males and females choose different interpersonal distances.

Personality has also been linked to interpersonal distance differences. However, as with gender, nonsupporting studies can be found: Hayduk (1978) lists three supporting, three nonsupporting, and eight partially supporting studies. The lack of agreement about the effects of personality may be rooted in some of the same methodological causes of disagreement about gender effects, but another reason is obvious. There are many sorts of personalities (not only many traits, but even more combinations of traits); different personalities affect interpersonal distance differently.

The present study approaches this problem by using a new interpersonal behavior inventory (Wiggins, 1979) that arranges traits in circumplex form. The Wiggins inventory presumably includes *all* dispositions relevant to social behavior. If interpersonal distancing is either complexly or simply related to personality, the Wiggins inventory should detect the relationship.

The social situational factors to be investigated have received less attention than gender and personality, but their main effect influences have been clearer. Four of six studies of attraction reviewed by Hayduk (1978) support the notion that liking the other person produces closer interpersonal distances; the remaining two studies partially support this trend, which is also confirmed by Evans and Howard (1973) and Sundstrom and Altman (1976). In the two studies of status reviewed by Hayduk, differences in status were associated with greater interpersonal distance than was equal status. The single study that investigated cooperation found that subjects exposed to a cooperative confederate chose closer distances than did subjects exposed to a competitive confederate.

If everyday social situations contain some degree of all three social dimensions (Attraction, Status, and Cooperation-Competition), a taxonomy can be developed. In the taxonomy used in this study, three levels of Attraction

(Like, Neutral, Dislike), three levels of Status (High, Neutral, Low) and two levels of Social Activity (Cooperation, Competition) are combined to produce 18 varieties of situations.

The purposes of this study are (a) to investigate whether the effect of gender on interpersonal distance and orientation is a main effect or an interaction with other personal or situational influences; (b) to examine the role of personality by employing a comprehensive trait inventory; (c) to attempt to replicate, using the social situations taxonomy, the apparently clear main effects of Attraction, Status, and Social Activity; and (d) to determine whether and how personal and situational variables interact to predict interpersonal distance and orientation.

An important issue in interpersonal distance research is whether to use naturalistic observation or projective methods; both have been used extensively. Hayduk (1978) points out that the validity of projective methods has most often been measured by correlating projective measurements with those obtained by naturalistic observation methods. This validation procedure assumes that naturalistic observation is the only or best indicator of interpersonal distance choice. However, several reasons militate against the assumption that naturalistic observation is necessarily the best measure. First, some studies have found projective measures of interpersonal distance to be reliable (e.g., Haase and Markey, 1973). Second, others have found that projective measures *do* correlate significantly with naturalistic observation measures (e.g., Duke and Nowicki, 1972), although this is not always the case (Tennis and Dabbs, 1975; Knowles, 1980). Third, Knowles (1980) has recently asserted that correlation may not always be an adequate measure of convergent validity. Finally, others (e.g., Gifford and Price, 1979) have reported data consistent with this contention and have argued that projective measures should not necessarily be judged against naturalistic observation measures because they may represent fundamentally different concepts.

Since this controversy has not been resolved in favor of projective or naturalistic methods of measurement, the choice of methods for this study was made on other grounds. The projective technique described below was devised primarily because it allows the subject flexibility to construe the social situations in personally relevant terms, and because it facilitates presentation of the 18 social situations. This choice does not mean, however, that projective techniques are faultless; they doubtless suffer from some of the more general arguments against self-report measures (cf. Hayduk, 1978).

## METHOD

*Subjects and Independent Variables*

Forty-two participants (22 males, 20 females) were recruited on a voluntary basis from undergraduate psychology classes. They responded to the Wiggins (1979) personality inventory and to the social situations taxonomy.

The Wiggins inventory requests ratings of 128 adjectives on eight-point self-applicability scales. The adjectives are unscrambled during scoring to create eight primary dispositions that, theoretically, are ordered in a circumplex manner. Clockwise, beginning at twelve o'clock, these dispositions are Dominant-Ambitious, Extraverted-Gregarious, Warm-Agreeable, Ingenuo-Unassuming, Lazy-Submissive, Aloof-Introverted, Cold-Quarrelsome, and Arrogant-Calculating.

Wiggins (1979) reports that the reliabilities of all eight scales are greater than .80. In the present study, the predicted pattern of correlations for the circumplex was confirmed. For example, the correlation between Extraverted-Gregarious and Introverted-Aloof was  $-.72$  (theoretically  $-1.00$ ), while the correlation between Ambitious-Dominant and Cold-Quarrelsome was  $.13$  (theoretically  $.00$ ).

Brief verbal descriptions of 18 representative social situations were written for the social situations taxonomy. Two examples of these situations follow. The situation representing the combination of cooperation, liking, and high status read:

Your relatives are visiting during a holiday. Your favorite among your uncle's children asks you to help with a geography assignment. You're supposed to name cities and the child will say which country they are in. You agree to do it, and go off to a quiet room.

The situation representing competition, equal status, and neutral attraction read:

You know there are only a few places left in next year's first-year Medical School classes. Another applicant you've never met is sitting with you while you both wait to hear the news about admissions.

To determine whether or not the 18 situations were perceived by the subjects as they were intended to be, a separate sample of five judges, peers of the participants, rated the degrees of Attraction and Status and the type of Social Activity depicted in each situation. Reliability, measured as a mean correlation among the five judges, was  $.78$  for Status,  $.72$  for Attraction, and  $.79$  for Social Activity. The Spearman-Brown formula predicts that the re-

liability of these ratings for the larger group of participants would be  $.96$ ,  $.88$ , and  $.97$ , respectively. It is reasonable to conclude that the situations were reliably perceived as intended.

In each of the 18 situations, the subject was instructed to imagine entering a room with a same-sex, same-age person. The room was depicted as a  $9 \times 12$  cm rectangle drawn on a sheet of  $13 \times 21$  cm paper. Based on the size of the chairs shown in the room, the life-scale size of the room was approximately  $5 \times 7$  m with two tables approximately  $2 \times 4$  m and  $1 \times 1$  m immediately adjacent to each other. The arrangement of the two tables permitted the participant a wide variety of chair placement angles and distances, while the size of the room permitted distant chair placements if a participant preferred.

One room was used for each situation. Each situation was identical in that the two people were to enter the room; the subject was to "offer" the other person a chair, thereby controlling the arrangement of both chairs. In the drawing, the two chairs were shown just outside the only door to the room. The subject's specific directions were to "place" the two chairs (by drawing them) inside the room wherever he or she would feel comfortable under the circumstances described in the situation.

*Distance and Orientation: The Dependent Measures*

Distance was measured as the number of millimeters from the center of one chair to the center of the other chair. Angle or orientation was measured in degrees. A face-to-face orientation was coded 0 degrees; side-by-side facing the same direction was coded 180 degrees; halfway between these positions, as at the corner of a table, was coded 90 degrees. Orientations greater than 180 degrees are uncommon, but they are possible as the chairs face away from each other, up to a maximum of 360 degrees (a back-to-back arrangement).

The two dependent measures, distance and orientation, were examined as functions of three between-subjects factors and three within-subjects factors. The between-subjects factors were Sex and two dimensions of personality from the Wiggins inventory (Warmth and Dominance; see the next section); the between-subjects factors were the three dimensions of social situation: Attraction, Status, and Social Activity.

## RESULTS

*Sex and Personality*

First, gender and the eight Wiggins dispositions were correlated with the total interper-

sonal distance and orientation choices of each participant (i.e., pooled across all 18 social situations; see Table 1). Gender was significantly correlated with distance: women chose closer distances than did men ( $r = -.32, p < .02$ ). The strongest correlation between distance and personality involved the Cold-Quarrelsome trait: greater distances were chosen by individuals who described themselves as cold ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ). As would be predicted from Wiggins's circumplex, the next strongest correlations were 180 degrees around the circumplex from Cold-Quarrelsome and they were of opposite sign. That is, the Warm-Agreeable trait was significantly correlated with distance ( $r = -.34, p < .02$ ). Orientation was not significantly related to sex or any personality dimension.

The circumplex is so constructed that traits orthogonal to (i.e., 90 degrees around the circumplex from) Cold-Quarrelsome would next be examined for assistance in predicting interpersonal distance choices. This is because even if a trait immediately adjacent to Cold-Quarrelsome is significantly related to distance, using it to predict distance is not likely to assist in the prediction since it will be very highly correlated with Cold-Quarrelsome.

Ambitious-Dominant, which is most nearly orthogonal to Cold-Quarrelsome ( $r = .13$ ), is, however, only slightly correlated with distance ( $r = .20, p > .10$ ). Nevertheless, both Cold-Quarrelsome and Ambitious-Dominant were retained for further analysis, since one goal of the study is to investigate the significance of interactions among personality measures. Also, Cold-Quarrelsome and Ambitious-Dominant represent the two primary dimensions in the circumplex (Wiggins, 1979); predecessors of the circumplex model have tended to be organized around these same two interpersonal tendencies, which might broadly be termed love and power dimensions.

The correlation matrix (Table 1) reveals that gender and personality are not independent. In

particular, gender is very much related to the Cold-Quarrelsome and Warm-Agreeable dimensions ( $r = -.54$  and  $.66$ , respectively); males are more likely than females to ascribe coldness to themselves. Thus, while both sex and Cold-Quarrelsome disposition are related to distance choices, they are themselves significantly correlated. In the analysis to follow, it may be anticipated that since these two factors are correlated, they will compete with each other in explaining the variance in distance choices.

#### *Person and Social Situation Measures*

To simultaneously examine the main and interaction effects of person and social situation variables, fixed-effect ANOVAs with three between-subject measures (Sex, Cold-Quarrelsome, and Ambitious-Dominant) and three within-subject measures (Attraction, Status, and Social Activity) were computed for distance and for orientation. Two levels of each trait (Cold-Quarrelsome and Ambitious-Dominant) were created by dividing the sample at the median of the distribution. Table 2 presents the mean distances and orientations chosen as a function of the three most important of these factors. Table 3 is a summary of the ANOVA results for distance.

*Distance: Main effects.* Among the main effects, the social situations are the strongest determinants of interpersonal distance choices. In particular, the effect of Attraction is very significant ( $F(2, 68) = 43.6, p < .001$ ). Individuals choose closer distances when they imagine themselves with a liked other. Another strong effect is that of Social Activity ( $F(1, 34) = 22.6, p < .001$ ). Individuals choose to sit closer when the activity is a cooperative one. The effect of Status is also significant ( $F(2, 68) = 4.46, p < .02$ ), although less so. An examination of Table 2 shows that individuals choose to sit closer when the other is equal in status and significantly farther away when the other

Table 1. Correlations Among Interpersonal Distance and Person Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Distance	—									
2. Sex	-.32	—								
3. Dominant-Ambitious	-.20	.23	—							
4. Extraverted-Gregarious	-.35	.59	.46	—						
5. Warm-Agreeable	-.34	.66	.12	.66	—					
6. Ingenuous-Unassuming	-.26	.46	.18	.56	.57	—				
7. Lazy-Submissive	.26	-.15	-.75	-.32	.05	.10	—			
8. Aloof-Introverted	.30	-.40	-.47	-.72	-.33	-.20	.51	—		
9. Cold-Quarrelsome	.50	-.54	-.13	-.56	-.81	-.44	.16	.51	—	
10. Arrogant-Calculating	.25	-.54	-.03	-.46	-.67	-.64	.06	.43	.72	—

Note: Decimal points omitted. For  $p = .05, r = .26$ ; for  $p = .01, r = .36$ . For Sex, female = 1, male = 2.

Table 2. Mean Interpersonal Distance and Orientation Choices

	Distance	Orientation
High Status	32.97	64.45
Positive Attraction	26.05	65.56
Cooperation	18.81	65.36
Competition	33.29	65.76
Neutral Attraction	34.11	56.71
Cooperation	26.52	62.02
Competition	41.69	51.40
Negative Attraction	38.76	71.08
Cooperation	35.40	35.55
Competition	42.12	106.62
Equal Status	27.72	79.75
Positive Attraction	20.43	105.74
Cooperation	25.26	59.88
Competition	15.60	151.60
Neutral Attraction	25.66	103.75
Cooperation	23.40	75.24
Competition	27.90	132.26
Negative Attraction	37.07	29.76
Cooperation	33.07	39.05
Competition	41.07	20.48
Low Status	32.40	80.98
Positive Attraction	25.34	90.14
Cooperation	17.71	156.83
Competition	32.98	23.45
Neutral Attraction	29.63	84.44
Cooperation	30.39	37.69
Competition	28.88	131.19
Negative Attraction	42.19	68.37
Cooperation	40.50	31.02
Competition	43.88	105.72
Grand Mean	31.03	75.06

Note: Distances are in mm. Orientation was measured as angle. Angle scored 0° for a face-to-face position, up to 180° for a side-by-side position and up to 360° for orientations toward back-to-back position. Only one out of the total 756 choices exceeded 180°.

person is either higher or lower in status. No difference in distance preference occurs be-

tween the conditions when the subject is higher or lower in status than the other individual.

Among the main effects of personality, Cold-Quarrelsome is a significant determinant of distance choice ( $F(1, 34) = 4.65, p < .04$ ). Cold individuals choose larger interpersonal distances. As expected, the effect of sex is muffled by competition from Cold-Quarrelsome. Sex significantly predicts distance when considered alone, but when considered in conjunction with personality it loses its predictive utility. This is because certain traits are more strongly related to distance than is sex, and they are simultaneously strongly correlated with sex.

*Distance: Interactions.* In a multivariate study, three types of interactions are possible. The first type involves interactions among person measures. One such interaction is significant in the present study, Cold-Quarrelsome  $\times$  Ambitious-Dominant. Individuals who describe themselves as cold and ambitious choose larger interpersonal distances than those who describe themselves as cold and nonambitious; those who describe themselves as warm do not make this distinction ( $F(1,34) = 4.01, p = .05$ ). This effect is, of course, separate from and in addition to the Cold-Quarrelsome main effect.

A second type of interaction includes only aspects of the situation. In this study, a significant interaction of this type is the Social Activity  $\times$  Status interaction ( $F(2,68) = 4.14, p = .02$ ). This interaction indicates that when an individual has higher status than the other person, he or she prefers greater distance in competitive situations than in cooperative situations. At other status levels, there is no difference in distance preferences between types of Social Activities.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance in Interpersonal Distance Choices: Main Effects and Significant Interaction Terms

Source	df	Ms	F	$\eta^2$
Between				
Cold-Quarrelsome (CQ)	1	4585.7	4.65*	.11
Ambitious-Dominant (AD)	1	1.5	<1	.00
Sex (S)	1	227.1	<1	.01
Within				
Attraction (A)	2	11683.9	43.59***	.53
Social Activity (SA)	1	6367.0	22.63***	.36
Status (St)	2	1167.0	4.46**	.09
Interactions				
SA $\times$ St	2	1368.1	4.14**	.10
CQ $\times$ AD	1	3959.2	4.01*	.09
A $\times$ St $\times$ SA	4	834.5	3.20**	.07
CQ $\times$ St	2	1341.6	5.12**	.10

\*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .02$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

A second significant interaction of the situation  $\times$  situation type occurs among the three dimensions of the social situation taxonomy: Attraction  $\times$  Status  $\times$  Social Activity ( $F(4,136) = 3.20, p < .02$ ). This interaction indicates that as the subject is increasingly attracted to the other person, the difference in preferred distance between competitive and cooperative situations grows; this increase appears first at the high status level and later (as attraction increases) at the other two levels of status. In other words, when the subject has low status with respect to the other person, there is a difference in distance preferences between competitive and cooperative situations when the subject likes the other person, but not when attraction is neutral or the subject dislikes the other person. Then, as status increases, the subject extends the increase in the magnitude of the difference in distance between competitive and cooperative situations to those occasions when attraction for the other is neutral and negative.

The third (and most frequently discussed) type of interaction is between person and situation. In this study, a significant interaction of this type is Cold-Quarrelsome  $\times$  Status ( $F(2,68) = 5.12, p < .01$ ). This interaction indicates that as status increases, the difference in distance preferences between cold and warm individuals increases. Those who describe themselves as cold choose greater distances at all status levels, but this difference between cold and warm individuals is largest at the high status level.

In sum, at least one interaction of each type is significantly related to distance preference and therefore aids in the understanding of interpersonal distance choices.

*Orientation: Main and interaction effects.* Mean orientation choices by situation are pre-

sented in Table 2. The ANOVA results for orientation are presented in Table 4. As can be seen, none of the person measures are significant but all of the social situations are. That is, as attraction increases angle increases ( $F(2, 68) = 13.57, p < .001$ ); competitive situations produce larger angles than cooperative ones ( $F(1,34) = 13.42, p < .001$ ); and as status of the individual increases chosen angle decreases ( $F(2,68) = 4.86, p < .02$ ).

However, these main effects do not apply to all situations equally. Three interactions among situational dimensions are significant. One between Social Activity and Attraction indicates that individuals select slightly larger angles when cooperating with a liked other than when competing against a liked other, but select much smaller angles when cooperating with a disliked or neutral other than when competing with a disliked or neutral other ( $F(2,68) = 13.6, p < .001$ ).

In a second significant interaction, status and attraction jointly influence orientation. When participants like the other or are neutral, the largest angle is chosen when the participant and the other are of equal status, followed by situations in which the participant holds high status and low status roles. However, when the other is disliked, participants select much smaller angles for the equal status situations compared to the high and low status situations.

The most powerful orientation effect is the triple interaction among the three situational dimensions. The pattern just described for the Social Activity  $\times$  Attraction interaction holds reasonably well for competitive situations, but not for cooperative ones. The largest discrepancy occurs in cooperative activities with a liked other in which the participant has high status. In this case very large angles are selected, while in competitive situations with a

Table 4. Analysis of Variance in Interpersonal Orientation Choices: Main Effects and Significant Interaction Terms

Source	df	Ms	F	$\eta^2$
<b>Between</b>				
Cold-Quarrelsome (CQ)	1	2986.8	<1	.01
Ambitious-Dominant (AD)	1	6783.2	1.13	.03
Sex (S)	1	2784.6	<1	.01
<b>Within</b>				
Attraction (A)	2	48675.4	13.57***	.26
Social Activity (SA)	1	58658.0	13.42***	.24
Status (St)	2	11005.6	4.86**	.11
<b>Interactions</b>				
SA $\times$ A	2	53356.6	13.16***	.26
A $\times$ St	4	29916.1	9.82***	.19
SA $\times$ A $\times$ St	4	112691.8	35.09***	.47

\*\*  $p < .02$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

liked other in which the participant has high status, very low angles are selected ( $F(4,136) = 35.09, p < .001$ ).

#### DISCUSSION

This study began with the assertion that a multivariate approach to the study of interpersonal distancing would assist in the understanding of how several key variables separately and jointly influence distance and orientation preferences. The multivariate approach can be used to examine three basic types of interactions and to obtain estimates of the relative potency of the several variables.

#### *Strength of Effects*

The eta-squared values in Tables 3 and 4 estimate the strength of various effects. In repeated measures designs, these values are not strictly comparable. Nevertheless, the differences are so large that certain conclusions seem safe. The most striking conclusion is that aspects of the social situation influence distancing much more strongly than do personality and sex. Attraction and Social Activity in particular appear to strongly influence distance choices (primarily as main effects) and orientation choices (primarily as interaction terms).

These findings suggest an explanation of the pattern of findings discussed in Hayduk's (1978) review. The social situation dimensions, in general, were reported to have clearer, more consistent effects on interpersonal distance. Sex and personality were reported to have mixed effects. If characteristics of the social situation dominate sex and personality effects, then in studies that focus on (i.e., vary) the social situation, differences in gender and personality will alter the results very little. On the other hand, when the focus of a study is on sex and personality and the social situation is constant, personality effects will emerge. Sex and personality consequently are found to have "mixed" effects on distancing. Furthermore, sex and personality effects may be inconsistent because they themselves are confounded.

#### *Interactions*

The results of this study in the area of interactions appear to support the notion that person  $\times$  situation interactions are of some value (Endler, 1975). Two such interactions significantly influence distance choices. The results do not support the notion, however, that much or all of the variance in behavior is due to person  $\times$  situation interactions. In fact, the study indicates that more attention should

be paid to interactions *among* person measures and especially *among* situation measures. These interactions have been able to account for significant portions of the variance in social behavior (Gifford, 1981). In the present study, very strong situations  $\times$  situation effects were found in the case of orientation choices.

#### *Measurement Technique*

The results of the study, of course, are based on the use of a projective technique, which was devised partly to ease the difficulties of presenting each participant with 18 different social situations in the field or laboratory. Projective techniques do have limitations; subsequent work will attempt to replicate the present findings with nonprojective methods and utilize designs that permit more inferences about the reliability and validity of the dependent measures.

#### *Interpersonal Distance and Situational Conflict*

On a conceptual level, the study offers some insight into the nature of social conflict. Classic observations in the area of interpersonal distance (Hall, 1959) include descriptions of what happens when two people from different cultures with different preferred interpersonal distances meet. Attempts are made by both people to adjust the distance between them to the "proper" size; various negative feelings and attributions may emerge from the experience.

The present results suggest that something akin to this can occur *within* a culture. A clash does not depend on culture, but on the individual's *perception* of the other's attractiveness, status, and the type of social activity in progress. Consider status. If John perceives himself to be of higher status than Peter, present results suggest that he will prefer a greater interpersonal distance than if he perceives Peter as a peer. But if Peter's reading of the situation is that he and John are of equal status, Peter will be seeking the smaller distance. As Peter approaches, John will feel that "this nobody" is crowding him and may express his feeling nonverbally. If John consequently begins to increase the existing distance between them, Peter may be hurt because his peer is "running away" from him and seems to choose to be "distant." Both may begin to make attributions: John thinks of Peter as pushy, while Peter wonders if perhaps his mouthwash or deodorant have failed him. A curiously different scenario develops when both John and Peter believe they are of higher (or lower) status than the other. They are both happy with the

relatively large distance between them, but for the wrong reasons!

Finally, the present results suggest that status is the mildest conflict-producing effect among the social situational variables. When mismatched perceptions of attraction or degree of competition exist, analogous but even stronger conflict scenarios may be expected.

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