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The effects of gender on perceptions of conflict management behavior.

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THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ON PERCEPTIONS OF
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR

A Dissertation Presented

By

Diane Plunkett Flaherty

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1987

Education

Diane Plunkett Flaherty 1987

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are numerous people who provided assistance and support throughout this doctoral process, to whom I am deeply grateful. My first acknowledgement is owed to my family: Rick, Heidi, Eric and Meghan, who made numerous personal sacrifices, tolerated my varying moods, and continued to be understanding and supportive throughout.

Much appreciation goes to my dissertation committee for their considerable contributions: Don Carew, for his continual support, encouragement, expressions of interest, and good-natured responses, no matter how long I took. Bob Marx, for his suggestions, questions, sense of humor, and willingness to participate. Their trust in my ability was personally very motivating.

Sheryl Riechmann Hruska, my chairperson, gave generously of her time, contributing stimulating and thoughtful ideas, insights, intuition, and perspective. Her high standards, attention to detail, and superb editing skills; always expressed constructively; inspired me to work my hardest. She has also been a valued role model, mentor and friend. I feel fortunate to have her in my life.

A number of people provided professional and technical assistance during this study, and deserve credit. First, the "expert judges", who generously gave time and attention evaluating the newly-designed instrument: Rene Carew, Drea Zigarmi, Eunice Parisi-Carew, Art Eve, Maurianne Adams, Ed Travis, Neil Yeager, Nancy Wilson, and Kenneth Thomas. Their comments and suggestions were invaluable.

A large debt of gratitude is owed to the faculty and graduate assistants, who provided consultation in research methodology and statistical analysis: Hari Swaminathan, Ron Hambleton, Anne Stoddard, Pat Collins, Debbie Sellers, and Laurel Long. I couldn't have done this without them.

Others also contributed to my learning in important ways: Faculty members, Norma Jean Anderson and Doug Forsyth, were the first to encourage me to pursue a graduate degree, and were instrumental in my entering the doctoral program; colleagues and friends, Gale Ewer, Neil Yeager, and Donna Mellen, were supportive and encouraging throughout, often when most needed; and finally, my treasured friend and colleague, Ed Travis, provided the perfect balance of pushing and supporting, and was always there for me. His strong belief in me, eventually got me to believe in myself.

ABSTRACT

The Effects of Gender on Perceptions of Conflict Management Behavior

(May 1987)

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The major purpose of this study was to examine same and cross-gender conflict to determine whether the gender of the other party is related to the choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation. Within the context of multiple-choice responses to given conflict situations in a constructed instrument, this study examined the interaction of three variables: 1) the gender of the individual responding to the conflict situation; 2) the choice of conflict-handling behavior by that individual in a given situation; and 3) the gender of the other party as described in the conflict situation. The added dimension of the appropriateness (according to contingency conflict management theory) of the conflict-handling behavior chosen in response to the situation given, was also examined.

Significant differences were found regarding choice of conflict-handling style in relation to the gender of the other party. The sex of the respondent was not found to

relate to either of these variables. Specifically, subjects chose accommodating more often with females, and avoiding and compromising more often with males. Competing and collaborating were chosen with equal frequency, regardless of the gender of the other party.

So-called "appropriate" choice of competing and accommodating was found more often with female others, while avoiding and compromising were chosen "appropriately" more often with male others. Women chose collaborating "appropriately" more often with other women. Men did not differ based on the other party's gender in this regard.

Other interesting results emerged from this study. Overall, women subjects chose the "appropriate" style, given the situation, more often than did men subjects. Also, "appropriate" choices were made more frequently in response to situations in which a male was described as the other party. This may reflect a male bias in the theory or perhaps gender bias in the workplace.

Additional research is needed, both to further the development of the instrument constructed for use in this study, to identify whether a bias exists in available theory, and to identify intrapersonal processes that would provide greater understanding of these findings.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

The importance of conflict is reflected in current writing on organizational and management effectiveness. Organizational literature stresses the inherency of conflict in the process of organizational maintenance as an open system (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Lebell, 1980). The focus in these models is on conflict that originates externally, in the environment surrounding the organization. Conflict is viewed as arising out of the organization's response to environmental pressure for change (Beckhard & Harris, 1977). Management literature, on the other hand, emphasizes internal sources of conflict, stemming from structural differences, communication problems, and personal differences (Hermone, 1983; Labovitz, 1980). This literature focuses on the individual level, and stresses interpersonal processes (Hoh, 1981; Jones, 1983; Kleiner, 1978).

Collectively, the literature reveals a recent shift in emphasis from the elimination of conflict to the need for more effective methods of management. The current focus on

conflict management rather than conflict resolution, reflects a recognition of useful as well as destructive consequences of conflict (Likert & Likert, 1976; Robbins, 1978).

A number of authors suggest that conflict be viewed as a dynamic process which includes perceptions, behaviors, emotions, and outcomes, rather than as a single state or condition (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Pondy, 1967; Thomas, 1976). Related theories of conflict management focus on the sequence of events that take place during the dynamic phases of a conflict situation, and on the conditions which shape conflict behavior. These theories suggest that there is no "one best way" to manage a conflict situation. The method or style used to best manage conflict, would be dependent on numerous situational factors. Effective conflict management, according to these theories, is based on an ability to accurately analyze and diagnose a conflict situation, and to select and implement the conflict management strategy appropriate to the situation (Lippitt, 1982; Smyth, 1977; Schmidt & Tannenbaum, 1960).

This trend toward a contingency approach to conflict management, emphasizes the importance of the individual's abilities and skills in effectively managing conflict situations. While organizations can attempt to manage

conflict by creating changes in structures, conflict will occur regardless of the structure of the organization. Changing the structure only changes the form of the conflict (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). People organized in these structures must interface as they carry out the goals of the organization. It often becomes the responsibility of the individual then, to deal with the communication problems and individual differences that occur in the course of organizational activities (Thompson, 1984). Given a contingency view that the constructiveness of a conflict situation depends on how it is managed, an individual's ability to respond appropriately is crucial to the effective handling of these situations as they occur.

The literature identifies two main sets of variables in a conflict situation that are relevant to a contingency approach to managing conflict. First, there are structural and process variables in the situation that help to determine which conflict-handling method or style is most appropriate. A number of authors have focused on integrating existing theories and research, and identifying the factors that influence the functionality or effectiveness of the various methods of conflict management in specific situations (e.g. Beres & Schmidt, 1982; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Stimac, 1982; Thomas, 1976). These works are a

major contribution to a contingency theory of conflict management and provide a framework for analyzing conflict situations.

The second set of variables that need to be considered in a contingency view toward conflict, are those factors that influence an individual's choice or use of conflict-handling behavior. Research indicates that the same individual may behave differently in different situations, and different individuals may not behave similarly in the same situation. A knowledge of what factors influence this choice or use of conflict-handling behavior would add to our understanding of the situational variables that relate to effective conflict management.

Research examining conflict behavior suggests a variety of factors that may influence the use of a particular mode or style of managing conflict. These studies link the following variables to conflict behavior: commitment (London & Howat, 1978), the behavior of the other party in the conflict situation (Cosier & Ruble, 1981), organizational climate (Likert, 1967; Renwick, 1975), topic and source, status, attitude toward conflict (Renwick, 1975), and sex (Zammuto, London & Rowland, 1979). The latter was the focus in this study.

Statement of the Problem

An understanding of conflict situations that occur with and between men and women is becoming increasingly important in organizations today, in light of the phenomenal rise of women in the workforce (from 32% of the female labor force in 1947 to 51% in 1980 [Smith's 1979 study, cited in Brown, 1981]). Women's roles in organizations are expanding as well, although not in proportion to the overall influx of women into the workforce. The growth of the number of women in management positions shows a slow but steady trend (Brown, 1981). With a larger proportion of women in both superior and subordinate positions in the workplace, conflict situations now occur across as well as within gender. Gender then, is likely to have particular importance as a variable in a contingency approach to conflict management.

There are basically two ways in which gender may interact with conflict behavior. First of all, men and women may use different behaviors in similar conflicts, because they have learned to behave differently in these situations. Literature focusing on the socialization and development processes of males and females offers some support for this theory (e.g. Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Gilligan, 1982). Secondly, the gender of the other party in

the conflict situation may influence an individual's choice or use of a particular behavior in dealing with that conflict. Research in this area is extremely limited, although there have been tentative findings that indicate that the gender of the other party may be a variable to consider in examining male and female conflict behavior (Renwick, 1977; Zammuto et al., 1979).

An overwhelming number of studies of conflict behavior have utilized only male subjects (Cosier & Ruble, 1981; Hunger & Stern, 1976), or have not reported the gender of the subjects chosen (Harrison, 1979; Hill, 1977; Katz, 1977; Ruble & Thomas, 1976; Thamhain & Wilemon, 1977). A few studies that included both males and females, failed to report any findings based on gender as a variable (Howat & London, 1980; Phillips & Cheston, 1979). One problem with the research cited so far, is that the findings focus on conflicts between men, and relate either only to male behavior in conflict, or fail to distinguish any difference between the behavior of men and women.

Only two studies could be found that examine the variable of gender in dyadic conflict (Renwick, 1977; Zammuto et al., 1979). These studies found differences in conflict behavior used, based on the gender of the other party. In both studies however, use of conflict behavior by

one individual, was reported by the other party in the conflict situation. The findings therefore, could be attributed to perceptual, rather than behavioral differences. These studies were also based on superior-subordinate dyads, suggesting that status may have been a variable that influenced conflict behavior. In addition, neither study had a sufficient number of subjects to fill all the mixed gender and status groups possible. Their findings then, fail to provide a complete profile of conflict in mixed gender dyads. Despite these shortcomings, findings from these studies suggest that the gender of the other party may influence an individual's behavior in a conflict situation. Further research is needed to more fully examine gender as a variable in use of conflict-handling behavior.

Purpose of the Study

The major focus of this study was to examine same and cross-gender conflict in an attempt to determine whether the gender of the other party is related to the choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation. Within the context of multiple-choice responses to given conflict situations in a constructed instrument, this study is concerned with the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation and the gender of the other party?

2. Is there a relationship between choice of "appropriate conflict-handling behavior" (see definition of terms, p.9) in a given situation and gender of the other party?

3. Is there a relationship between the gender of the individual responding to a given conflict situation, the individual's choice of conflict-handling behavior in that situation, and the gender of the other party?

The hypotheses derived from these questions for research purposes are stated below as nondirectional. Although there was evidence in the literature reviewed earlier to suggest that gender of the other party may influence choice of conflict behavior, previous research does not support a directional statement (Beatty & Gardner, 1980).

1. There will be a significant relationship between gender of the other party and choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation.

2. There will be a significant relationship between gender of the other party and choice of "appropriate" conflict-handling behavior in a given situation.

3. There will be a significant relationship between gender of the other party, choice of conflict-handling behavior, and gender of the individual responding to a given situation.

Significance of the Study

Although a few studies of conflict behavior have been done using both male and female subjects (e.g. Burke, 1970; Zammuto et al., 1979), there is a dearth of studies on the effects of gender on conflict behavior. Without precedent, this study drew on the theoretical fields of organizational behavior and sex role socialization in an effort to determine if there is a relationship between the gender of the other party and an individual's choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation. To that end, this study was undertaken to add to the literature on the process of managing conflict, and the interaction of situational and gender variables in that process.

The development of an instrument to measure situational choice of conflict-handling behavior is a significant contribution to future research on conflict management effectiveness. Such an instrument may also be a valuable tool to be used in training people in organizations to accurately diagnose conflict situations, and to choose

appropriate conflict management strategies. Furthermore, feedback from the instrument on how one's style of managing conflict is affected by situational and gender variables would increase an individual's level of self-awareness.

The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the relationship of gender to conflict-handling behavior as they affect the ability of men and women working together in organizations to effectively manage conflict that occurs between them. Results also add to the growing body of knowledge in two important areas, contingency conflict management and gender differences.

The results of this study may also have implications for interpersonal skills training of organization members. Findings of this study may inform the design and implementation of training aimed at increasing self-awareness and the ability to effectively manage conflict situations that occur in today's organizations. The study may be useful to trainers as well as supervisors, managers, administrators, and anyone interested in dealing effectively with others in conflict situations.

Definition of Terms

Conflict situation is a term being used here to describe a situation in which one person perceives that their own needs

or wants are being frustrated, or are about to be frustrated by the other party.

Conflict-handling behavior refers here to the behavioral mode, method or style used to deal with a conflict situation.

"Appropriate conflict-handling behavior" for the purposes of this dissertation is defined as the best way to respond to a conflict situation as suggested by the literature on contingency conflict management.

Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI) refers to the instrument to be designed for the purpose of this study to measure choice of conflict-handling behavior in a variety of situations.

Organization of Dissertation

The first chapter of this dissertation provided an organizational context for the problem focused on in this study, stated this problem, and described the purpose and significance of the study. The remainder of this dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter II examines the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to this study. Chapter III describes the design of the study and outlines the research methods used. Chapter IV reviews the development of the instrument. Chapter V

presents the results and discusses the findings; and Chapter VI provides a summary, and conclusions and recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter examines the theoretical and empirical developments that relate to contingency conflict management, and the role of gender in that process. The purpose of this chapter is to identify gender differences found in this literature that may influence an individual's choice of conflict-handling behavior.

The first section of this chapter reviews the philosophical underpinnings of a contingency approach to conflict management, with a focus on the process of individual behavior in conflict situations. References in the literature to the functionality or effectiveness of specific conflict-handling behaviors are drawn out as a basis for the development of the Conflict Situations Inventory. The second section focuses on sex role socialization as it may relate to behavior in conflict situations. Related research in both areas are reviewed and evaluated, drawing out implications for this study.

Context and Background of Organizational Conflict

In order to understand the importance of conflict management in organizations it is first necessary to examine the phenomena of conflict in an organizational context: what is it, where does it come from, and what effect does it have on the organization?

Occurrence: The context of organizational conflict

"Conflict in organization is probably inevitable due to the nature and design of the structure itself" (Smyth, 1980, p.225). A number of authors concur with this view of the inevitability of organizational conflict (Labovitz, 1980; Phillips & Cheston, 1979; Rahim, 1980). Katz and Kahn (1966) offer an explanation for the inherency of conflict by viewing it as a natural result of the maintenance of the organizational system.

Some continuing struggle for existence is implied in the definition of organizations as open systems, systems that tend to "run down" and to lose the qualities that differentiate them from their environments. They maintain themselves and their boundaries only by means of continuing advantageous interaction processes for resources...The consequent emergence of conflict seems unavoidable...(p.616).

The numerous challenges that organizations face in today's rapidly changing world, provide fertile ground for conflict in organizations, given their systemic nature. These challenges come in the form of increased competition,

advances in technology, new governmental legislation, and pressing social demands (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1983). The environment surrounding an organization today is more turbulent than it was even a few years ago and the turbulence appears to be increasing at an accelerating pace (Beckhard & Harris, 1977). The consequence of the environmental turbulence is increased pressure on the organization to change in order to adapt to the changing environment. Hellriegel et al. (1977, p.520-526) list six major pressures for change that will face organizations in the near future. These pressures are briefly outlined below:

1. Changing Technology. The increased rate of technological change is changing the nature of jobs performed at all levels (Handy, 1980). This results in lessened requirements for direct labor, and fewer employees learning to perform different tasks.
2. Knowledge Explosion. The rate of society's ability to store useful information is increasing. This results in a need to acquire, create, and disseminate new knowledge, and convert it into profitable products and services. The knowledge explosion also creates a need for managers who are able to manage people who work with knowledge.

3. Rapid Product Obsolescence. There is a shortened life cycle of products and services based on fast changing technology and consumer preferences. This results in a need to shorten production lead times, and create flexible decision making structures.

4. Changing Nature of the Work Force. Changes predicted during the 1980's are: an increase in the number and proportion of women and young people; more pressure for equal opportunity for minorities; greater variety of lifestyles and values; better-educated workers demanding more challenging jobs with greater participation in decision making (Mills, 1979). This results in a need for organizations to meet worker's needs for vocational and personal development. Better-educated managers are also needed to manage better-educated workers.

5. Quality of Work Life. It has become increasingly more important to today's organization members to be able to satisfy personal needs through work. This results in a need for organizations to design change activities aimed at improving the quality of work life.

6. New Management Ideas. The success of the Japanese in international markets due to their maintenance of high levels of quality and productivity creates an interest in

Japanese management philosophy. "The problem of productivity in the United States will only be remedied when we learn how to manage people in such a way that they can work together more effectively (Ouchi, 1981)". This results in a need for organizations to be more concerned with human resources. There is also a need for integration of techniques reflecting this concern: slow promotion; complex appraisal system; emphasis on working groups; open communication; consultative decision making; and concern for the employee (Hatvany & Pucik, 1981).

These pressures for change deriving from the changing expectations, values, and demands of the environment surrounding organizations, require that organization leaders begin to develop strategies to insure the growth and survival of the organization. "It is increasingly necessary in today's complex organizations to have a planned, managed-from-the-top, organization wide effort to create a set of conditions and a state that will allow the organization to 'creatively' cope with the changing outside demands on it and that can also increase the possibility of organization survival (Beckhard & Harris, 1977, p.4)". The transition state resulting from this planned change effort is a period of dismantling old systems, building new ones and learning how to operate them, developing new skills and

relationships, and managing complex role interactions (Beckhard & Harris, 1977). These conditions would appear to be fertile ground for conflict.

An additional increase in the potential for conflict in a planned change effort is due to what appears to be a natural resistance to change. In any change situation, there are certain forces which tend to resist the change and seek to maintain the status quo, while at the same time the force of the pressure for change is pushing in the opposite direction (Lewin, 1947). This resistance can occur on two levels: the organization resisting adaptation, and the individual resisting the necessary changes in behavior. The process of overcoming this resistance can lead to conflict on both levels.

In summary, the consequence of a turbulent environment is increased pressure for change on the organization. This change, while necessary for organizational survival, is accompanied by resistance to change. "Change and the resistance to change, however, mean conflict (Katz & Kahn, 1966)".

Sources of Organizational Conflict

Conflict can originate externally, given a systems view that organizations operate in an environment in which they must respond to conflict and cannot be insulated from

it (Lebell, 1980). However, since a good deal of the literature on conflict management stems from the field of organizational behavior, most of these authors focus on the internal sources, and stress interpersonal processes.

Our discussion earlier, of how conflict occurs in the context of an organization, established the inherency of conflict in the process of organizational maintenance as an open system. This section focuses on the specific sources of conflict within that system as described in the literature.

The major internal sources of organizational conflict found in the literature can be divided into three categories: structural differences, communication problems, and personal differences (Hermone, 1983; Labovitz, 1980; Phillips & Cheston, 1979).

Structural differences. The hallmark of today's complex organizations is their high degree of differentiation (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969). These organizations are made up of interdependent departments or sub-units with conflicting needs, goals, reward systems, time orientations, and management styles. Complex organizations expect these departments "to integrate their efforts into a cohesive whole directed toward the accomplishment of organizational objectives (Labovitz, 1980)". Miller and Form (1980) see conflict as an inherent

consequence of structural integration, because differentiation causes managers and subordinates to have different and incompatible interests.

The interdependence of departments and competition for scarce resources is considered to be a major source of organizational conflict (Phillips & Cheston, 1979; Pondy, 1967). The felt need for joint decision making and the interdependence of schedules among organizational groups are sources of conflict mentioned by March and Simon (1958). In addition to these sources, Walton and Dutton (1969) recognize that task related asymmetry (a requirement imposed on one group but not on the other) may be a cause of organizational conflict.

The implication from the literature is that some conflict can be seen as a by-product of the organizational structure. The more complex the organization, the more frequent and varied are the situations which produce conflict. The greater the differentiation between departments, the greater the likelihood of conflict and the greater the need for mechanisms for intergration. (Labovitz, 1980).

Communication Problems. Because of the complexity of organizations and the high degree of differentiation, communication between units is essential. Poor

communication results in the misunderstanding of ideas, messages and intentions which can lead to both the creation and escalation of conflict levels (Pneuman & Bruehl, 1982). Failure to separate facts from assumptions, or to accurately communicate facts is another source of misunderstanding from which conflict can arise (Hermone, 1983). The liklihood of conflict is increased by differences in semantics, use of unfamiliar language and ambiguous or incomplete information (Phillips & Cheston, 1979). Filley (1975), suggests that communication problems are a primary source of conflict in organizations (p.9).

Personal Differences. Interpersonal conflict that arises in an oganizational setting is frequently the result of personal differences. Pneuman and Bruehl (1982) examine the individual factors that can be sources of conflict by dividing them into four categories:

1. Background. Cultural differences, educational differences, differences in values or beliefs, and differences in experiences encountered in others.
2. Style. Personal style differences in behavior can engender conflict. Some examples cited are psychological style, emotional style, negotiation style, and leadership style.

3. Perceptions. When two or more individuals interpret the same information differently, or have differing perceptions of the same situation, conflict can result.

4. Feelings. The tendency to personalize feelings can result in an escalation of a conflict situation. Feelings can be an indicator as well as a source of conflict (p.36-40).

Differences in perceptions, values, interests, goals and objectives are recognized by numerous authors as sources of conflict (Bacon, 1980; Harrison, 1979; Lippitt, 1982; Schmidt & Tannenbaum, 1960). Certain personality characteristics, such as authoritarianism or dogmatism, as cited by Phillips and Cheston (1979) are additional factors in the cause of conflict.

In short, the literature above identifies three areas to which the source of conflict in organizations can be traced: organizational conditions which result from the structuring of people and resources to achieve goals; problems which relate to the communication process between individuals or groups; and individual differences in personality, style, background, perceptions and feelings. Identifying these sources of organizational conflict contributes to an understanding of the multitude of factors that influence a conflict situation.

Conflict Management vs Conflict Resolution

There is a major divergence in the literature in opinions concerning the relative merits and uses of conflict management versus conflict resolution. The literature focusing on conflict in formal organizations places a responsibility on management to detect conflict and resolve it before it assumes dysfunctional proportions, using appropriate conflict resolution techniques (Litterer, 1966; Schmidt & Tannenbaum, 1960; Thompson, 1960; Walton & Dutton, 1969). This prescription seems to be a carry-over from early, traditional management thought based on the belief that conflict was dysfunctional and time consuming and should be eliminated. Even more recently, some authors seem to equate success in dealing with conflict with its resolution (Harrison, 1979; Maples, 1980). In spite of their recognition of the positive value of conflict, some researchers devote their attention to the topic of conflict resolution (Hunger & Stern, 1976; Renwick, 1975).

Robbins' (1978) explanation for the prevalence of this traditional philosophy in organizations is that they exist in a "society that has been built on anticonflict values (p.68)". We have all "been indoctrinated in the belief that it was important to get along with others and to avoid conflicts.(ibid.)". Robbins finds it no surprise that

children raised to view conflict as destructive, might then become adult senior managers who would reward and praise managers who maintain peace and harmony in their units, and negatively evaluate units where there is confrontation and conflict. Therefore, it is not unusual to find that managers are concerned with eliminating or suppressing all conflicts.

In its extreme, this philosophy views conflict as a disease to be stamped out, as if its very appearance indicated a troubled unit (Thomas, 1980) or diminished the manager's effectiveness (Ace, 1983).

In recent contrast to this emphasis on the eradication or resolution of conflict, numerous authors are focusing on the functional aspects of conflict, and advocating conflict management as a way to maximize them (Ace, 1983; Hermone, 1983, Jones, 1983; Weiss, 1983; Wolff, 1982). King (1981) claims that by identifying, seeking out and utilizing the functions of conflict and their outcomes, "the maximum benefit can be wrung out of conflict situations - even 'losses' (p.14)". For him the aim of conflict management does not even include resolution.

The implications for management in this philosophy that emphasizes the positive aspects of conflict, are that activities should be designed that encourage and creatively

channel conflict (Lippitt, 1982). Rather than conclude that a company with a high level of conflict has problems, Bernard Rosenbaum (quoted in Wolff, 1982), the director of a management training firm, focuses instead on how they manage the conflict. His belief is that conflict should be productively managed, rather than eliminated. Kenneth Sole (quoted in "Teaching how", 1980), a psychologist who conducts conflict seminars for NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, believes that working toward the elimination of conflict is a waste of energy. His goal is "not to have fewer conflicts, but to make conflicts productive (p.136)".

In view of the complexity of today's organizations and the existing turbulent environment, conflict management may offer a way to help cope with the consequences of the turbulence. Recognizing conflict as part of the change process, Smyth (1977) states:

The business organization today exists in a turbulent social climate and must keep pace with the society in which it operates. It is here that properly managed conflict can provide the organization with precious data on its new pattern and direction (p.253).

While some authors use the terms conflict resolution and conflict management interchangeably (Blake & Mouton, 1983; Fitzpatrick & Zimmer, 1983; Harrison, 1979; Hoh, 1981), Robbins (1978) argues that they are not synonymous.

He traces the transition in conflict thought from the early traditional view that it was destructive and should be eliminated; through a behavioralist orientation that it was unavoidable but could be resolved. Robbins advocates a third philosophy, the interactionist, which:

1. recognizes the absolute necessity of functional conflict;
2. explicitly encourages functional opposition;
3. defines conflict management to include stimulation as well as resolution techniques;
4. considers the management of conflict as the major responsibility of all managers (p.13-14).

The advocacy of encouraging and stimulating conflict in the interactionist approach, represents the extreme in a positive view of the function of organizational conflict.

A major deficiency in the literature is that it offers no clear guidelines for determining when either conflict resolution or management would be preferable. "There are no clear set of rules to suggest when conflicts ought to be maintained at a certain level, when reduced, and when ignored (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979)". An exception to this is the suggestion that conflict management is not appropriate in handling inter-ethnic conflict in business organizations (Raizada, 1981), or in conflict between social or political

groups (Beck & Berg, 1973), and that conflict reduction is needed to control these situations. Still, more theory or advice is needed in this area to be able to make the appropriate diagnoses and interventions necessary for effective conflict management.

Summary

The existence of conflict in organization stems from its very nature as an open system interacting with its environment for maintenance and survival. The environment surrounding today's organizations is a turbulent one; a consequence of the rapidly changing technology, social demands, expectations, and values. These changes create increased pressure for adaptation and change on organizations. The planned change efforts designed by organizations to respond to these environmental challenges, while necessary for growth and survival, increase the potential for conflict within organizations.

In addition, there are three internal sources of conflict in organizations: 1) structural differences in the way people and resources are organized to accomplish goals; 2) communication problems between individuals or groups; and 3) individual differences in personality, style, background, perceptions and feelings.

Although traditional organizational design and individual socialization processes fostered a negative view

toward conflict, changes in perspective are recently evidenced in the literature. Recognition of the functional aspects of conflict has led to a shift in emphasis from the elimination of conflict, to the need for methods for positively exploiting conflict situations to enhance productivity, stability and adaptability of the organization.

The remainder of this chapter examines and organizes situational variables related to the effective management of conflict in organizations that are identified in literature and research, with a focus on how gender interacts with those variables. A determination of some of these variables would be a valuable contribution to management theory and have important implications for training managers and change agents to respond effectively to conflict.

Conflict Management Contingencies

The literature on conflict in organizations provides evidence that conflict can be beneficial to an organization when it is effectively managed. It seems that to a large extent, positive outcomes are dependent on the ability of an individual manager to accurately analyze and diagnose a conflict situation, and to select and implement the appropriate conflict management strategy. The accuracy of

this analytic and diagnostic process would seem to depend on an ability to determine which factors in a given situation relate to the process of conflict management, and how they might influence the outcome. Such a determination suggests the need for a situational approach to conflict management. This need is substantiated in the literature by a number of authors who express the hope that ultimately a contingency model of conflict management will be developed (Derr, 1978; Filley, 1978; Robbins, 1978; Thomas, 1976).

This section provides a framework for examining those contingencies which are thought to relate to the effective management of conflict in organizations. In this section attention is restricted to dyadic conflict, i.e. conflict occurring between two social units which may be individuals, groups, or organizations. The first part of this section examines theories of conflict management found in the literature; pulling out and organizing those factors which relate to situational effectiveness. Additional variables that influence an individual manager's choice of conflict handling behavior are extracted from these theories and from research studies on dyadic conflict. The second part of the section focuses on how gender interacts with these variables, providing an overlay on a contingency framework

of conflict management, and addressing an important issue of management in today's complex organizational context.

Conflict Management Theories and Models

One of the first and most significant steps toward a contingency theory of managing conflict was the work of Kenneth Thomas (1976). He believed that "in order to manage conflict, we must understand what sort of conflict behavior is most likely to lead to constructive outcomes and which behaviors tend to be either unproductive or destructive (p.892)". In his integration of the literature relevant to industrial and organizational conflict, he suggests that much of the diversity in the literature regarding the results of conflict can be accounted for by distinguishing between process and structural methods of conflict analysis. The process and structural models which he developed focus on conflict-handling behavior and attempt to identify the variables which influence the occurrence of these behaviors. The two models incorporate research focusing on the internal dynamics of conflict episodes, and research focusing on the underlying conditions which shape conflict events. Together they provide a broader view of the phenomena of conflict, and the basis for understanding conflict-handling behavior. Since they are frequently

referred to in the literature, these models are presented below to serve as a comprehensive framework for analyzing the research on dyadic conflict, and identifying conflict management contingencies.

Process Model of Conflict

The process model draws on the work of Pondy (1967) and Walton (1969), describing dyadic conflict as a cycle of conflict episodes. Based on this view of conflict as a dynamic process, the objective of the process model is to "identify the events within an episode and to trace the effect of each event upon succeeding events". Figure 1. shows the five main events in a conflict episode from the perspective of one of the parties: frustration, conceptualization, behavior, other's reaction, and outcome.

Events of Dyadic Conflict Episode. The following is a brief outline explaining the events Thomas proposes are involved in a conflict episode.

Frustration. The conflict begins when one party perceives that another party frustrates the satisfaction of one of its concerns (i.e. needs, desires, goals, standards). Frustrating behavior may be in the form of a disagreement, denial of request, violation of agreement, an insult, active interference with performance, vying for scarce resources, etc.

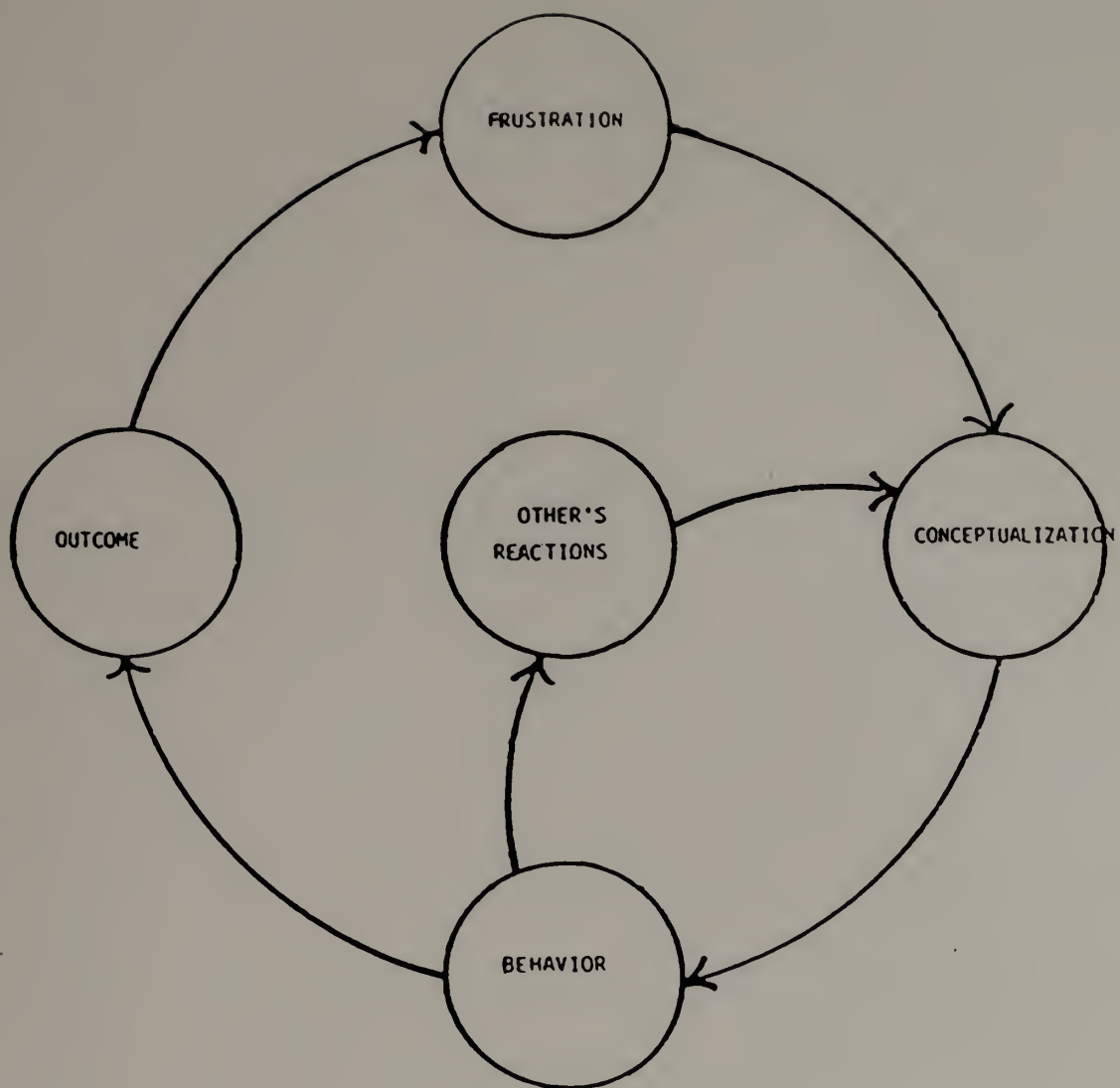


FIGURE 1. Process Model of Dyadic Conflict Episodes

SOURCE: Adapted from Kenneth Thomas (1976). Conflict and Conflict Management

Conceptualization. When a party deals consciously with the frustrating experience, the situation is conceptualized. This involves defining the conflict issue in relation to the concerns of both parties, and in consideration of possible action alternatives and their outcomes. When not dealt with consciously, the conceptualization event is compared to March and Simon's (1958) "performance programs" which are habitual responses based on conceptualizations of past experiences.

Behavior. Based upon this conceptualization of the conflict situation, the party copes with the situation by engaging in behavior in relation to the other party. The term behavior is used here in a general sense, including both active (assertive) and passive (avoidance, withdrawal) forms.

Other's Reactions. The other party responds to the initial behavior with additional behavior. "Each party's behavior serves as a stimulus for the other's response (p.895)". The inner loop in Figure 1. represents the effects of one party's behavior on another. The conflict may escalate or de-escalate as a result of the effects of one party's behavior on the other. Behavior may change during this interaction process, subject to changes in conceptualization.

Outcome. The outcome resulting from the end of an interaction on a given conflict issue is dependent on the preceeding behaviors. The outcome may be agreement or unresolved disagreement, and may take a variety of forms; avoidance, domination, etc. The outcome of one episode provides the basis for subsequent episodes, by determining the degree to which the concerns of the parties continue to be frustrated. This creates the potential for again experiencing frustration which will provoke another episode.

Before going on to the structural model, the intermediate events in this process model (i.e. conceptualization and the behaviors of each party) deserve further examination in order to identify situational variables within these events that influence conflict-handling behavior. This examination draws on Thomas' work as well as the writings of other conflict theorists and researchers.

Conceptualization

The way a conflict situation is conceptualized appears to have an influence on the way a party behaves in response to that conflict. Thomas (1976) identifies two basic elements to the process of conceptualization that have implications for influencing conflict-handling behavior. Before discussing these two elements, it is helpful to keep

in mind that there is not necessarily a relationship between the objective reality of conflict conditions and an individual's perception of those conditions. Deutsch (1969) states that the "presence or absence of conflict is never rigidly determined by the objective state of affairs (p.9)". Therefore, it is the individually constructed version of reality which is involved in the conflict. The following two aspects of an individual's conceptualization process are situational variables that would seem to influence subsequent conflict management.

1. Definition of Issue. Due to the influence of subjective reality, there is no one objective definition of a conflict issue. The dimensions of a definition that are relevant to a party's response to that issue are : (a) the extent to which the party defines the issue in terms of their own concerns and fails to recognize the other party's concerns; (b) the amount of insight into underlying concerns; and (c) the perceived size of the issue in terms of the number of people, principles and precedents involved.

The relationship of an individual's definition of the issues involved, and the subsequent behavior used in response to that conflict situation is indicated by several researchers. For example, in a research study conducted by Renwick (1972, 1975), employees in two large manufacturing

firms were surveyed and a significant relationship was found between their response to a conflict issue and their perception of the topic and source of the issue.

Specifically

Employees were inclined to confront issues involving salaries, promotion, or performance appraisal and were likely to rely on compromise to deal with conflicts concerning personal habits and mannerisms Disagreements originating from substantive factors such as differences in knowledge or factual material were more likely to elicit confrontation than any other method.

Guetzkow and Gyr's (1954) study of conference groups observed that behavioral responses to conflicts focusing on substantive issues, differed from responses to conflicts which were affective in nature. Similarly, an examination of third party behavior (Walton, 1969) revealed that substantive conflicts, based on logical facts or events, were responded to differently than were conflicts of a more personal or emotional nature. Walton points out that personal or emotional concerns are viewed as less acceptable than substantive concerns in organizations. He suggests that this may prevent recognition of emotional concerns and encourage the tendency to express conflict around more acceptable, substantive matters.

2. Salient Alternatives. The second important element in a party's conceptualization of a conflict issue is the awareness of action alternatives and their outcomes.

The number of alternative ways of resolving the conflict perceived by the party, together with their probable outcomes, determines the party's view of the conflict of interest in relation to the other party. For example, if no alternative to a conflict is seen as satisfying the concerns of both parties, a high degree of conflict of interest would be perceived. Blake and Mouton (1964) suggest that such a win/lose conceptualization determines a particular kind of response to a conflict situation. The perception of more satisfactory alternatives would presumably lead to different conflict responses.

These aspects or elements of the conceptualization process appear then to be important to an understanding of conflict handling behavior for two reasons: 1. the way a conflict is defined in terms of size and importance of concerns, determines the stakes a party has in the conflict; and 2. the pattern of salient alternatives and their outcomes leads to a perception of the degree of conflict of interest in the situation. The perception of stakes and conflict of interest, in turn, influence behavior in the process and structural conflict models, and are therefore situational variables that would be important to consider in managing conflict.

Behavior. The components of the behavior event in Thomas' process model that are influential in determining the behavior used in response to a conflict situation are: orientation, strategic objectives, and tactics.

Orientation. Building on the work of Blake and Mouton (1964) and Hall (1969), Thomas (1976) describes a party's conflict-handling orientation as having two dimensions: 1. assertiveness, the degree to which a party wants to satisfy their own concerns; and 2. cooperativeness, the degree to which a party would like to satisfy the concerns of the other. Based on perceptions of salient alternative actions and their outcomes, a five-category scheme is presented, describing five conflict-handling orientations (Fig.2.). Thomas defines these orientations as follows:

Competitive - "a desire to win one's own concerns at the other's expense, namely, to dominate".

Accommodative - "Appeasement - satisfying the other's concerns without attending to one's own".

Compromise - "a preference for moderate but incomplete satisfaction for both parties - for compromise".

Collaborative - "a desire to fully satisfy the concerns of both parties - to integrate their concerns".

Avoidance - "indifference to the concerns of either party".
(p.901)

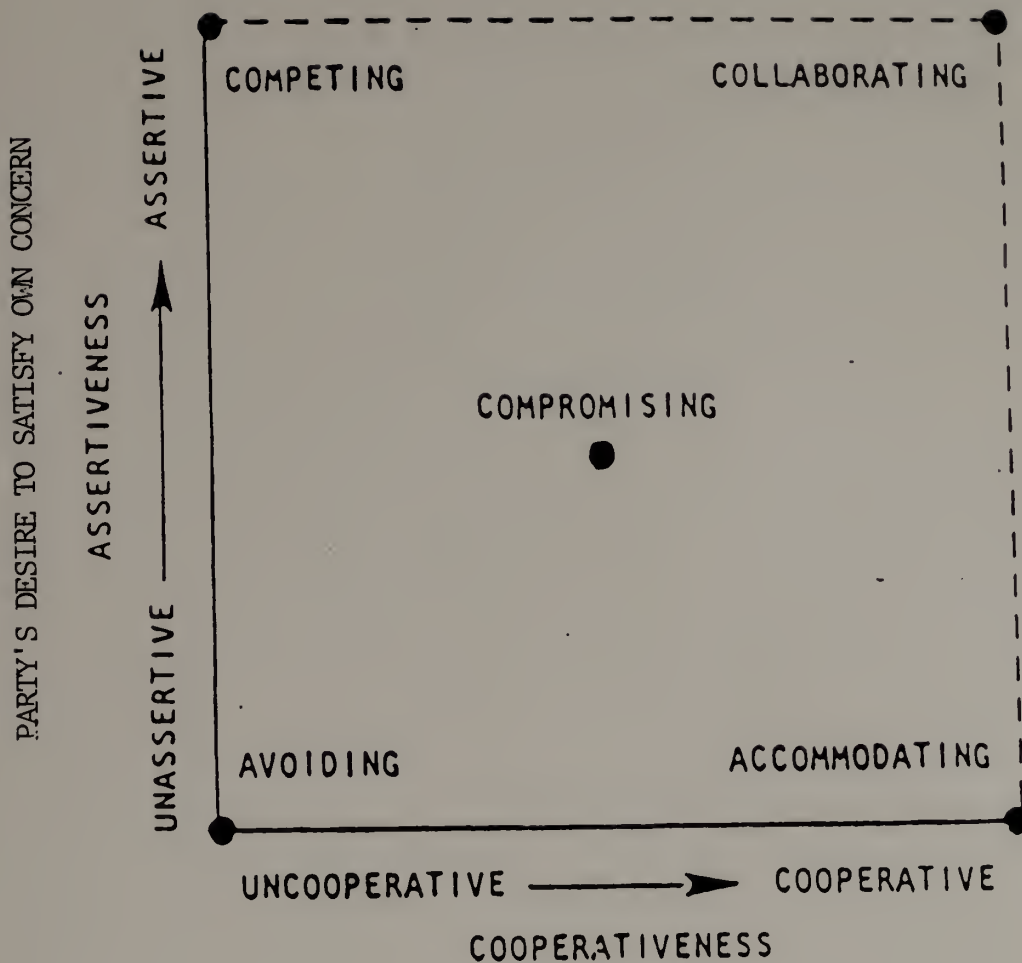


FIGURE 2. FIVE CONFLICT - HANDLING ORIENTATIONS

SOURCE: Kenneth Thomas (1976) Conflict and Conflict Management

Thomas attributes the cooperativeness of one party toward another, to identification with the other. This identification can range from positive, through indifferent, to hostile. Collaborative and accomodative orientations, high on the cooperative dimension, appear to be manifestations of positive identification. Avoidance or competition, both uncooperative orientations, may stem from indifferent or hostile identifications.

The assertiveness dimension is seen by Thomas as a result of the strength of the party's concern, known as the party's "stakes" in the conflict. The orientations high on assertiveness; competition and collaboration; require high energy, and therefore some commitment to one's concern. In contrast, avoidance and accomodation are low on assertion, require little energy, and are apt to be used in matters of little importance. Compromise or sharing is seen as intermediate in cooperativeness and identification with other, as well as in assertiveness and energy expense.

Strategic Objectives. At this stage of the process model, Thomas suggests that a party's preferred outcomes (orientation) interact with notions of which outcomes are feasible, to result in some sort of strategic objective. He speaks of a party's strategic objectives as having integrative and distributive dimensions, terms used by

Walton and McKersie (1965) in their work on union-management conflict. The integrative dimension represents the degree of satisfaction of concerns possible for both parties, and the distributive dimension represents the amount that each party will be satisfied as a result of a given response to a conflict. A party's perception of the amount of integration possible, will be based on the perception of the degree of conflict of interest present. The amount of satisfaction along the distributive dimension seen as feasible to a party, will be influenced by an assessment of the power and commitment of the other. In short, an individual faced with a conflict situation, will form objectives and strategies based on conceptualizations of the issue, namely the conflict of interest between the parties and the stakes in the issue for each party. The conflict of interest and the stakes in the issue could be perceived differently by each party, depending on the perceived circumstances in the situation. The formation of different strategic objectives, being dependent on these varying perceptions, is then, another situational variable to consider in managing conflict.

Tactical Behavior The actual tactics used by a party in a conflict episode are the next phase in the process model. Thomas focuses here only on competitive and

collaborative tactics used to increase one's own satisfaction or to increase joint satisfaction, reflecting the attention these tactics have received in the literature. The forms of competitive tactics include the use of a variety of power bases, bargaining, and coercion. Collaborative tactics are essentially problem-solving behaviors designed to increase joint gain. Competitive and collaborative tactics tend to interfere with each other, e.g. problem-solving requires trust, bargaining reduces trust, bringing us to the fourth phase in the process model, interaction of party's behaviors.

Interaction

As we continue to look at how conflict behavior is influenced, one of the more significant aspects of the process model, is Thomas' proposal that one party's behavior influences the behavior of the other. This interaction of behaviors may then be another situational factor in dealing with conflict.

Thomas discusses the way in which one party's behavior influences another's in this phase of the process model from two different perspectives: first, the psychological dynamics which are triggered by the other party's conflict behavior; and secondly, the conscious manner in which a

party manages their own conflict behavior during an interaction.

Psychological Dynamics. There are a number of psychological dynamics that can occur as aspects of the escalation/de-escalation process during the interaction phase. The eleven dynamics mentioned by Thomas, are briefly described here.

Revaluation - Party changes position (definition of issue and preferred alternative) as a reaction to other's behavior. Revaluation is facilitated by collaboration and problem-solving.

Self-fulfilling Prophecies - Other's behavior is to some extent a response to party's own behavior. In other words, the way one behaves toward the other in a conflict situation, and the feelings one has of trust or distrust for the other, has a tendency to be reinforced, by generating the predicted behavior in the other. Indications of the existence of this dynamic have been found in research. Conflict studies based on experimental games found players' behavior to be highly correlated with their opponent's behavior (Rapoport & Chammah, 1965). In a study of interdepartmental relations (Thomas & Walton, 1971), managers reported using the same behaviors they saw being used by the other party.

Biases in Perception of Other - Lack of awareness of other's motives can cause a party to view the other's behavior as unreasonable, and may fail to identify the commonalities between parties.

Cognitive Simplification - A party tends to see itself as all good and the other party as all bad. The issue becomes distorted as good against evil, increasing the party's stakes in the conflict.

Distortion in Communications - Occurs when either party uses communication to manipulate or coerce the other, diminishing trust.

Breakdown in Communications - Communication problems lead to a complete breakdown, serving to maintain the distorted views and hostility that are beginning to develop.

Coercive Tactics - Lack of trust and hostility erode power bases, causing party to resort to threats and bribes.

Goal Displacement - Party's original concerns are forgotten and the objective becomes beating the other. Competition is engaged in for its own sake.

Proliferation of Issues - Competition spreads to other issues. A new issue may be used to bring up old issues.

Perception of Incompatibility - Spreading competition and cognitive simplification combine to cause a party to

perceive the basic concerns of the two parties as incompatible, and the relationship doomed to failure.

Catharsis - Increasing hostility may cause party to ventilate feelings. Catharsis occurs when these feelings are listened to. This results in decreased feelings of hostility for party, and allows for the development of a more balanced perception of the issue. If feelings are ignored or responded to with abuse, party's hostility increases.

What we can see here, is that these psychological dynamics are triggered by one party's behavior, and in turn can trigger additional behavior in both parties. Psychological dynamics then can be factors in influencing conflict management. They are situational in that they are subject to the psychological forces that activate and maintain them in a given conflict episode.

Conscious Management of Conflict Behavior

Although the parties to a conflict are responsive to numerous psychological forces, there is some indication that they do stop and think about the consequences of their actions. The union-management conflict literature in particular (Walton & McKersie, 1965), points out the anticipation of long range and short range consequences of behavior held by both parties. According to Thomas, any

effort to modify behavior in a conflict situation in order to maintain positive interaction, is a conscious effort to manage the situation.

Implications for Conflict Management

The events of the process model described above have implications for managing conflict, whether as a party to it, or as a third party intervening in a conflict situation. A number of contingencies can be identified from the process model which influence the behavior of an individual in a conflict situation and contribute to the ultimate outcome. Knowledge and understanding of these contingencies is helpful in determining appropriate strategies to manage a conflict. The following table summarizes the contingencies identified in the process model and suggests management strategies based on these contingencies:

Table 1. Contingencies from the Process Model.

Process Contingencies	Management Strategies
Perceived Stakes	Jointly define issue
Perceived Conflict of Interest	Discuss alternative actions and outcomes
Conflict-Handling Orientation	Clarify desire to satisfy concerns of parties involved
Strategic Objectives	Jointly determine outcome probabilities
Tactics Used	Agree on method based on outcome of above
Psychological Dynamics	Open communication, trust building, acceptance of feelings, collaboration, modeling, focus on issue
Perceived Consequences of Behavior	Discuss short-term and long-term goals, seek modification of behavior to accomplish

These represent only a few, general suggestions for strategies to manage a conflict situation. These strategies serve as a context for the major purpose of this review, which is to highlight the contingencies that relate to the choice of an appropriate strategy. The process model provides an understanding of the sequence of events that influences the parties involved in a conflict. The list of process contingencies in a conflict raises possibilities for

managing the situation. Thomas' structural model of conflict presents additional contingencies that influence behavior in conflict.

Structural Model of Conflict

In contrast to the process model, the structural is not concerned with identifying the events in a conflict episode, but rather with "the underlying parameters which shape those episodes (p.902)". This model focuses on the conditions and the relationship between those conditions that influence behavior in a conflict situation. This "web of forces" acting upon the parties in a conflict situation is viewed as a structural construct for explaining their behavior (Kilmann & Thomas, 1978, p.61). Specifically, the model describes the pressures and constraints exerted upon the parties in conflict. Behavior of those in conflict is thought in this model to result from those pressures and constraints. That behavior is subject to change as the structural variables change, which underscores the situational nature of the model. The following is a brief outline of the structural model, depicted in Figure 3.

Behavioral Predispositions - While behavior varies in each conflict situation, each party is seen to have some tendencies toward certain conflict behaviors that are

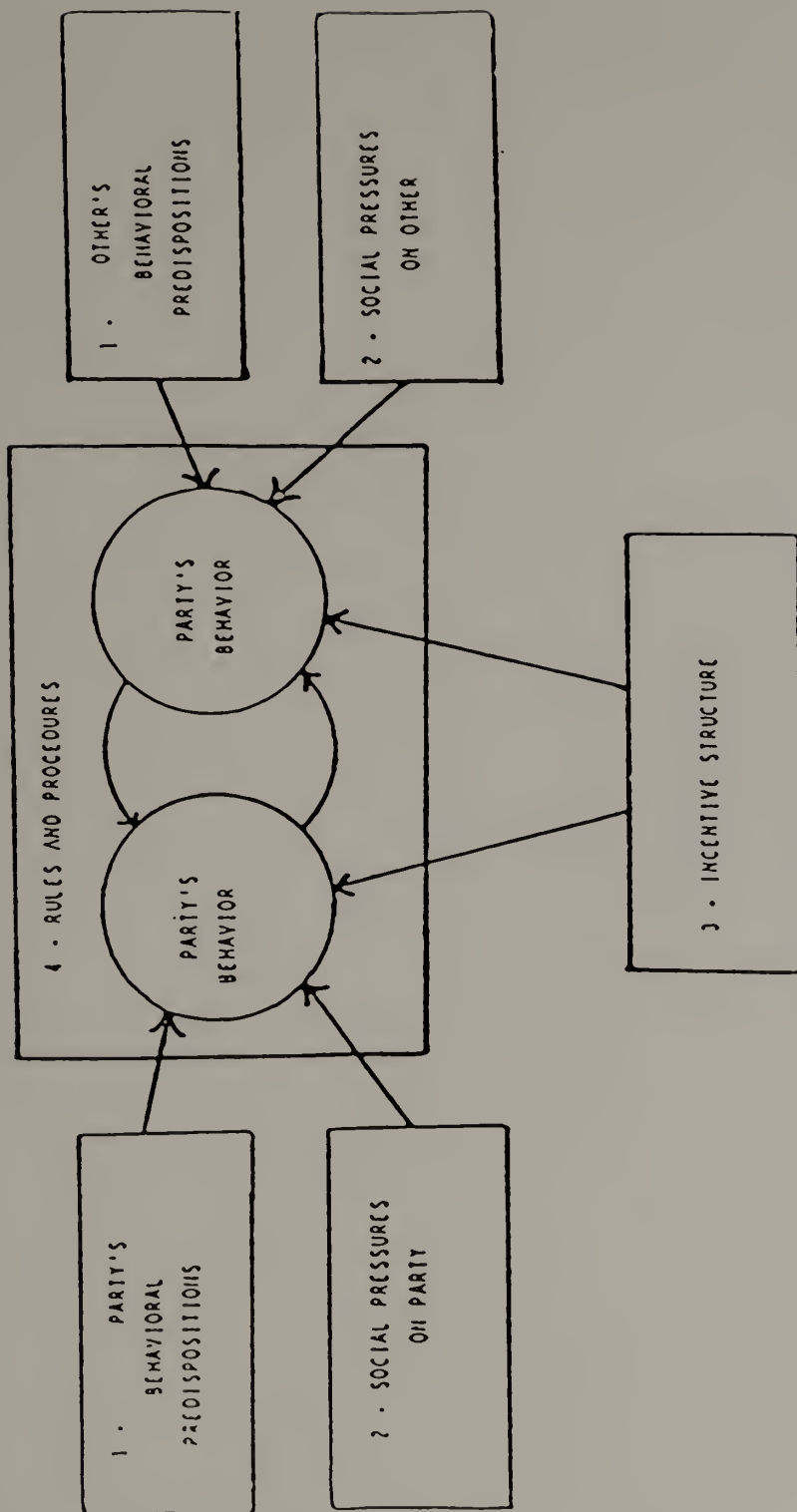


FIGURE 3. Structural Model of Dyadic Conflict

SOURCE: Kenneth Thomas (1976) Conflict and Conflict Management

partially shaped by motives and abilities. The behavior used most frequently and comfortably, is referred to as the dominant style (Blake and Mouton, 1964). Conflict behaviors are viewed as falling into a response hierarchy. When the dominant style is inappropriate, or fails to work, a party may resort to the next response in the hierarchy known as a "back-up style".

The concept of dominant style is significant in that it suggests that different individuals can be expected to use different behaviors in response to the same conflict situation. The notion of "back-up styles" is important because it indicates that although an individual may have a tendency to use a certain approach in response to conflict, that approach may change as conditions in the situation change. Behavioral predispositions then would seem to be both an influence on a given conflict situation as well as subject to influence by that situation.

Social Pressure - The second aspect of the structural model proposes that conflict behavior is influenced by social pressure. A party's behavior is subject to the norms and values held by the surrounding culture, organization, work group, and peer group; creating pressure in the form of formal sanctions (from government or superiors) and informal sanctions (public or peer disapproval).

These norms influence conflict behavior by encouraging some behaviors, and restricting or forbidding others. Particularly relevant to individuals working in organizations, are the group norms that develop as a work group passes through stages of development in which initially conflict is seen as disruptive to the harmony of the group, and is suppressed (Lacoursiere, 1980). At later stages in the group's development, emphasis is on exploring conflicts in an effort to resolve or move beyond them in order to achieve the group's goals.

Incentive Structure - Another situational factor thought to impact on a parties behavior in the structural model of conflict is the incentive structure created by the interrelationship between the concerns of the two parties. The degree to which the satisfaction of one party's concerns are linked to the satisfaction of the other's concerns, influences their behavior in a conflict. The incentive structure is a combination of the stakes involved in the relationship and the extent to which there is conflict of interest between the parties' concerns. The more a party depends on the other in some way for satisfaction of concerns, the greater are the stakes in the relationship.

It is important to note that the structural model is concerned with the "objective" realities of the issues (i.e.

the various conditions that exist) which determine the stakes in the relationship and the conflict of interest, not with how these issues are conceptualized by the parties, as in the process model. According to the structural model, a party is expected to be more assertive when the stakes in the relationship are high, and more cooperative when common interests exist.

A classic field study conducted at a boy's camp by Sherif and Sherif (1956), created conflict of interest between two groups engaged in a competitive sports event. Changing the incentive structure, by creating a commonality of interest, brought about a change from competitive to cooperative behavior. Another example of research linking competitive behavior with conflict of interest is Thomas and Walton's (1971) study of interdepartmental relations in industry. In this case, managers indicated that competition, and to some extent avoidance, was more common in relationships characterized by a high level of conflict of interest.

Rules and Procedures - The final conditions in the structural model are the rules and procedures that relate to joint decision making. Rules and procedures can influence behavioral responses to conflicts that arise out of the decision making process. These rules are established both

formally, by management or government, and by informal agreements between departments or workers. They are in place before the conflict occurs, rather than being developed specifically for handling conflict. There are mutually accepted decision rules that specify which alternatives are to be chosen, and which rejected when issues arise. In these situations both parties follow the rule, rather than use tactics to satisfy their own concerns. Rules tend to discourage problem solving and promote two-valued, right-wrong thinking. This might have even greater implications for conflict in the context of bureaucratic organizations, where rules proliferate.

In addition to rules, there are negotiation procedures that influence conflict behavior. These procedures govern the frequency, length, and style of interactions; the channel of communication; the sequence of issues addressed, etc. Negotiation procedures may encourage or discourage certain types of conflict behaviors. Third party mediation is an example of a formally developed negotiation procedure. This type of procedure may be legally required in instances of union-management conflicts.

Implications for Conflict Management

Just as the events of the process model influenced conflict handling behavior, the conditions of the structural

model suggest situational contingencies that might impact on that behavior. These contingencies have implications for managing conflict and are briefly outlined in the following table.

Table 2. Contingencies from the Structural Model.

<u>Structural Contingencies</u>	<u>Management Strategies</u>
Behavioral Tendency	Awareness development Skill development
Social Pressure	Development of functional group norms
Stakes in Relationship	Alter amount of interdependence
Conflict of Interest Establish super- ordinate goal	Create competition
Decision Rules	Review, revise
Negotiation Procedures	Develop functional procedures

In addition to these process and structural contingencies that relate to conflict management, Thomas' models suggests a source of conflict not found in our earlier review of organizational conflict. The organizational literature basically classifies sources of conflict in three categories: structural differences,

communication problems, and personal differences (Hermone, 1983; Labovitz, 1980; Phillips & Cheston, 1979). A fourth category emerges from Thomas' theory, that of conceptual or perceptual differences. His model indicates that conceptualization is a factor that influences behavior in a conflict episode. It would seem therefore that differences in perceptions in the process of conceptualizing a conflict situation might actually be a source of conflict. Table 3. integrates the four categories, and identifies some specific sources of conflict in each category.

Table 3. Sources of Dyadic Conflict in Organizations.

General Sources	Specific Sources			
Structural Procedures	Rules	Policies & Rewards	Schedules	Incentives
Personal	Back-ground	Values	Style	Behavioral Predisposition
Communicational	Delays	Errors	Channels	Inadequacies
Perceptual	Of Source	Own & Others Concerns	Own Intentions & Behaviors	Other's Intentions & Behaviors

To summarize the previous section, Thomas' (1976) process and structural models of conflict focus on different aspects of conflict phenomena and identify contingencies that might influence conflict-handling behavior. (These contingencies are summarized in Tables 2. and 3.) Identification of these contingencies helps in understanding some of the factors that influence an individual's choice of behavior in a given situation.

The process model looks at the sequence of events that take place in a conflict episode, and is helpful for understanding and managing the behavioral aspects of those events. The structural model focuses upon situational conditions which shape conflict behavior, and might be used to identify areas to be restructured in order to change behavior patterns. These models are presented here as a comprehensive scheme for analyzing the research on dyadic conflict in the next section of this chapter.

The process and structural variables identified in these models have key implications that are important to keep in mind as we examine the conflict research. First, an individual's behavior in a conflict situation is based to a great extent on how that individual conceptualizes the conflict. Specifically, how the issue is defined appears to determine the stakes involved, and awareness of alternatives

appears to determine an individual's perception of the conflict of interest present. The interaction of these variables is thought to lead to the choice of a particular conflict-handling behavior. Research methods designed to examine this conceptualization process would then provide critical information for understanding conflict behavior.

Secondly, the functionality of a specific conflict-handling behavior seems to vary depending on the issue and conditions in the situation. Research including these factors would help in determining the effectiveness of a particular conflict behavior.

Finally, "it is apparent that the conflict parties themselves have their own set of objectives or criteria (Thomas, 1976, p.949)". An individual's choice of a particular behavior in a conflict situation would depend on what that individual's objectives were. This raises the question of whether the effectiveness or functionality of that behavior is to be evaluated according to the researcher's criteria, or the objectives of the individual. Research that fails to specify such criteria leaves us less able to interpret findings related to effectiveness.

Further examination of the literature focuses on identifying situations in which a given conflict-handling behavior is most functional. Conditions in these situations

that relate to the process or structural model are highlighted when possible.

Functionality of Conflict-Handling Behaviors

This section focuses on the behaviors that people use to deal with conflict, and the classification of those behaviors in terms of their effectiveness or functionality, as identified in the literature.

There is general agreement in recent conflict literature with the two-dimensional model of conflict developed originally by Blake and Mouton (1964) and later adapted by Hall (1969) and Thomas (1976). As presented earlier in Figure 2., Thomas' revised model separates two independent dimensions of behavior in conflict situations: 1) assertiveness, defined as a party's attempt to satisfy own concerns, and 2) cooperativeness, defined as attempts to satisfy the concerns of the other person. These two dimensions are used to identify five "conflict-handling modes": competing (assertive, uncooperative), avoiding (unassertive, uncooperative), accommodating (unassertive, cooperative), collaborating (assertive, cooperative), and compromising (intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperation). In contrast to the cooperation-competition dichotomy of earlier conflict literature, the

two-dimensional model suggests that cooperation is not the only alternative to competition, and vice-versa. A key implication of this model is the identification of collaboration, a mode which is both assertive and cooperative, as a viable behavior in conflict situations.

Ruble and Thomas' research (1976) provides some support for the two-dimensional model. In a simulated negotiation task, each subject rated another's use of five conflict-handling modes, and found the two dimensions of assertiveness and cooperativeness to be evident in these ratings. This research was the first to verify that the two dimensions of conflict behavior were meaningful to the subjects in the study. In other words, the raters used the concepts of assertiveness and cooperativeness to understand another's conflict-handling behavior. A later study, using an experimental game based on the five conflict-handling modes (the mode game), found that all five behaviors were chosen by the participants (Cosier & Ruble, 1981).

The two-dimensional model and the conflict-handling behaviors derived from it are referred to frequently in the literature, and used in a number of studies reviewed below. This section classifies the five conflict-handling behaviors in terms of their functionality, as discussed in the literature.

Competition. Competition is referred to in the literature by a number of different terms: power-orientation (Filley, 1978), forcing (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), and dominating (Peck, 1980) to name a few. Competitive behavior involves the use of various kinds of power in an attempt to gain an outcome in favor to oneself. As a mode of dealing with conflict, competition is seen as having functional as well as dysfunctional uses.

Competing or forcing is frequently cited as an ineffective way to deal with conflict. Use of this power-oriented mode can stifle dissent (Stanley, 1981) which may lead to the subversion of the organizational mission through acts of sabotage and non-compliance (Likert & Likert, 1976). Similarly, Robbins (1978) points out that use of authoritative command in dealing with conflict is ineffective because it does not necessarily bring agreement. The cause of the conflict is not addressed and resolution is temporary. Reliance on the competitive mode may also cause a displacement of goals when winning becomes more important than an organizational goal (Derr, 1978).

Competitive behaviors in response to conflict may be harmful to the individual as well as to the organization by unleashing aggressive behaviors and hostile feelings, and by blocking communication and interaction (Walton & Dutton,

1969). As Berlew (interviewed by Tavernier, 1980) points out, "it is quite possible that the more aggressive people win arguments although they are not right (p.23)". Power strategies usually result in winners and losers, with the losers having little commitment to solutions arrived at through their use (Jones, 1983; Labovitz, 1980). There is also the danger that losers may start looking for ways to retaliate (Hoh, 1981). Another difficulty with win/lose methods is that "the person with the power may not consider the alternatives and instead settle for the solution that meets his or her own needs (Hermone, 1983, p.33)".

On the other hand, a competing style is said to be useful in a number of situations: when "quick, decisive action is required, or when unpopular courses of action may be taken (Lippitt, 1982)"; "for settling questions of authority and power (Jones, 1983)"; when autonomy is the objective (Derr, 1978); to decrease vulnerability in competitive external environments (ibid.); and to resolve conflicts based on value differences (Robbins, 1978).

Avoidance. Avoidance is ineffective when the issue is important and there is a need to take a position. An avoider may then be seen as indifferent and willing to comply or conform (Lippitt, 1982). When dealing with serious issues, avoidance is only temporary. The issue is not

resolved and conflict is not eliminated (Robbins, 1978). In fact, the conflict may grow to the point where it becomes unmanageable (Labovitz, 1980).

Situations in which avoidance may be appropriate are when the issue is not that important or, "when the costs of winning outweigh any possible benefits (Hermone, 1983, p.33)". Avoidance is recommended when it is important to let others resolve the problem (Jones, 1983). Other situations in which avoidance may be functional are: one or both parties lack confrontation skills; the parties are not psychologically ready; the current time or place is not appropriate; time is needed to collect data, gain perspective, or reduce the "heat" (Stimac, 1982).

Accommodation. Accommodation, known also as smoothing or suppressing, focuses upon appeasement, satisfying the other's concerns at the sacrifice of one's own. This may be done generously, or with an element of self-sacrifice, for the sake of the relationship (Thomas, 1976). The indication is that accomodation can be effective or ineffective depending on the situation, although it receives little attention in the literature.

One of the main problems with accommodation is that it again results in a win/lose situation. The accommodator's views are not considered, limiting the possibility for a

creative solution (Jones, 1983). The accommodator may show little concern for personal goals, leading to lack of influence and recognition (Lippitt, 1982). "Differences are not confronted and remain under the surface (Robbins, 1978)".

"Smoothing may, however, be employed appropriately when it is more important to preserve a relationship than to deal with an insignificant issue through conflict (Labovitz, 1980, p.34)". In a similar vein, Jones (1983) sees accommodation as useful when preservation of harmony is important. Smoothing may be used as a strategy to keep work progressing, by de-emphasizing differences and emphasizing areas of agreement (Hermone, 1983). Lippitt (1982) cites additional uses for accommodation:

when a conflict issue is more important to the other person; when another style's disadvantages outweigh those of the accommodating style;... when it is advantageous to allow the other person to experience winning; and when an accommodating style on an issue may make the other person more receptive on another, more important issue (p.71)

Collaboration. Collaborating requires surfacing differences and working on problems until a mutually satisfying solution is reached. Collaboration "represents a desire to fully satisfy the concerns of both parties - to integrate their concerns (Thomas, 1976, p.901)". The tactics of collaboration are essentially problem-solving,

according to Thomas. Various writers refer to this approach as confronting (Blake & Mouton, 1978), integration or integrative (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969; Peck, 1980), or problem-solving (Filley, 1978). It should be pointed out that while definitions of the terms "integration" and "problem-solving" coincide with the definition of collaboration, Blake and Mouton's definition of the term "confrontation" differs slightly from what Thomas (1976) means by the term "collaboration" as a style descriptor. According to them,

Confrontation is a means of focusing on antagonisms that are created by strong win-lose kinds of disagreement, facing up to them, and bringing them out into the open where they can be resolved directly by those who are a party to them (p.104-105).

In contrast to collaboration, confrontation does not necessarily lead to a mutually satisfying solution. This difference, though seemingly slight, might make a critical difference in interpreting findings in studies using Blake and Mouton's scheme and style definitions.

The collaboration or confrontation style is viewed by the above authors as the "one best way" to manage conflict situations. Other authors advocate for a situational use of collaboration or problem-solving (Derr, 1978; Robbins, 1978; Thomas; 1978). This difference in view point regarding a single best alternative or a situational approach to

conflict is the focus of much of the debate in the conflict literature.

Robbins (1978) emphatically states that collaboration or problem-solving is "inappropriate for most noncommunicative conflicts, especially those based on different value systems (p.73)". He argues that

To use problem solving where conflicts are rooted in value differences only widens the differences and entrenches each of the participants deeper into his [sic] position - for all intents and purposes probably increasing, and certainly not lessening, the level of conflict.

The time, effort, and resources required to implement a collaborative or problem-solving mode may not make it useful or practical in every organizational conflict situation (Hoh, 1981; Jones, 1983). Derr (1978) contends that collaboration may not even be feasible (i.e. it won't work or would be too costly to be justifiable) under some organizational conditions, e.g. when there is no mutual benefit in solving the issue; when an imbalance of power restricts open interaction; when there is no stake in preserving the relationship; and when the parties lack problem-solving skills.

Strong arguments in favor of collaboration or problem-solving as the best or at least the preferred style to use in conflict situations are put forth by a number of

authors. Filley (1978), claims a preference for problem-solving and suggests

where cooperation between parties is necessary because of their mutual dependency, where the use of creative resources by the parties is important, and where support for and implementation of the agreement is necessary, problem-solving methods of conflict resolution appear to have advantages over power-oriented methods. (p.65)

Since the above authors are discussing the use of collaboration or problem-solving in different situations, it is not clear whether they would agree on the functionality of this conflict management style given the same situation.

Ace (1983) calls problem-solving the most constructive approach in that it "encourages an open and honest exchange of information about facts, needs and feelings (p.48)". This openness in dealing with differences is seen as encouraging a solution which provides the maximum satisfaction and gains for the parties involved (Blake & Mouton, 1978). They view it as the "one best way" to deal with conflict situations.

Other authors cite situational conditions when collaboration or problem-solving would be the most appropriate method to deal with conflict. Robbins (1978) views it as a natural remedy "where conflicts have arisen as a result of ambiguity, distortion, the inadequate passage of information, or channel overflow (p.74)". Phillips and

Cheston (1979) concur that problem-solving is likely to be most successful in settling conflict caused by communication difficulties.

This view appears to relate to the contention by a number of other authors (Cafferella, 1984; Filley, 1975; & Walton, 1969) that effective methods of managing conflict are based on whether the conflict arises from substantive or emotional issues. Their view is that substantive issues, based on logical, impersonal conditions such as disagreement over policy or misunderstandings, lend themselves to negotiating or problem-solving methods. Emotional issues, focused on feelings, may not be effectively worked out through these methods. The difficulty with using the substantive or affective nature of a conflict to determine an appropriate method to use in response, is that emotional conflict may be acted out around objective issues. In short, substantive conflict may create affective conflict and vice versa (Hill, 1977).

Confrontation. Since the use of "confrontation" as a descriptor of a conflict-handling style sometimes differs from collaboration, it is treated separately here.

In a discussion of confrontation as a conflict resolution strategy, Stepsis (1974) makes it clear that it can be functional or dysfunctional depending on the

confrontation mode used . She states that a power-oriented mode usually produces negative results.. It should be noted that Stepsis classifies conflict resolution strategies into only three categories: avoidance, delay, and confrontation. This classification would seem to include competitive or compromising styles in the confrontation category. Her concern with the use of power with the confrontation mode seems also to be relevant to collaboration as a conflict response, given that it is high on assertiveness as well as cooperation. Functionality might then depend on how well the dimensions of assertiveness and cooperation are balanced.

Compromise. Use of compromise requires each party to give up something of value. Also referred to as bargaining, and negotiation, compromise may include the use of a third party intervention. There is no clear winner or loser. As a method of dealing with conflict, compromise is consistent with democratic values (Robbins, 1978).

The main disadvantage to compromise is that neither party is fully satisfied. The danger is that the needs not met by compromising will not disappear, but may remain dormant, providing a fertile breeding ground for future conflict. Compromise "often creates new interpersonal organizational conflicts by virtue of the win-lose

strategies employed (Derr, 1978, p.81)". A compromiser "puts expediency above principle or ... seeks short-term solutions at the expense of long-term objectives (Lippit, 1982)". Labovitz (1980) names additional drawbacks from use of this mode:

Bargaining often causes both sides to assume an inflated position since they are aware that they are going to have to give a little and want to buffer the loss. The compromise solution may be so watered down or weakened that it will not be effective. There is often little real commitment by any of the parties to a compromise solution.

The compromise style is referred to as the "middle-of-the-road" approach by Blake and Mouton (1978, p.85) in their Conflict Grid, a model for managing conflict based on their leadership model, the Managerial Grid. They contend that a manager concerned with maintaining this approach, encourages an environment which produces mediocre results, both in terms of interpersonal relationships and productivity.

On the positive side, the strength and influence of each party is highlighted through the process of compromise, and a solution is agreed upon (Derr, 1978). Compromise is seen as the only method to deal with some of the realities of organizational life, e.g., scarcity of resources, insufficient time, incompatible goals (Labovitz, 1980; Hermone, 1983). This method may also be practical "when a

conflict is not important enough to either party to warrant the time and pshchological investment in one of the more assertive modes of conflict management (Lippitt, 1982)".

It is significant to point out here that some of the difference in opinion concerning the functionality of the various conflict-handling styles can be accounted for as differences in criteria used to determine effectiveness. Thomas (1976) and Pondy (1967) have both observed that any judgment of the functionality of a conflict-handling behavior depends upon the outcome criteria chosen. The difference in outcome criteria among the authors cited above, may be viewed as a difference in the primary beneficiary of a conflict management effort. Some authors seem to be determining functionality based on their concern for the organization as a whole; and others, on a concern for the welfare of the individual. Thomas, Jamieson and Moore (1978) claim that "the extent to which trade-offs between individual and organizational interests are necessary is a key empirical issue" in the field of conflict management (p.92). They stress that it is crucial for theorists and practitioners in the field to be explicit about their objectives when evaluating a given conflict mode.

In short, five different conflict-handling behaviors are described in the literature. There does not appear to be a simple relationship between types of conflict situations and effective methods of handling these situations. Although a few authors advocate collaboration or problem-solving as the best approach, others point out situations when that style would not be helpful or possible. A number of authors believe that whether a conflict is best resolved, stimulated or managed, depends on the situation. It appears that a contingency approach to managing conflict is called for.

Summary of Relevant Research on Conflict

There are two basic categories of research findings that are significant to the development of a contingency model of conflict management: 1) findings that indicate effectiveness or functionality of specific conflict-handling behaviors, and 2) findings that indicate factors or contingencies that influence choice of conflict behavior. Together these may provide information about situational conditions that aid in the effective management of conflict. A summary of these findings from a review of relevant research is presented in this section.

Factors Relating to Effectiveness of Conflict Behavior

Howat and London's (1980) study of conflict management strategies in supervisor-subordinate dyads reveals a relationship between certain conflict-handling styles and the frequency of conflict in the dyad. Each supervisor, and an immediate subordinate were asked to rate the frequency of conflict between them in separate questionnaires. The respondent was then asked to rate how the other member of the dyad behaved when resolving conflict between them. The instrument used in the questionnaire based this rating on Blake and Mouton's (1964) classification of conflict behaviors: confrontation, smoothing, compromise, forcing, and withdrawal. These terms parallel Thomas' terms for describing conflict-handling behaviors: collaboration, accommodation, compromise, competition, and avoidance.

Use of forcing and withdrawal, and avoidance of confrontation and compromise, were associated with high conflict frequency. Conflict frequency might be interpreted here as dysfunctional, as it was also negatively correlated with favorable interpersonal relations in the dyad. This interpretation would indicate that forcing and withdrawal are dysfunctional in terms of maintaining favorable relations. No other contingencies that relate to the

effectiveness of conflict behaviors were examined in this study.

In another study of superior-subordinate conflict (Burke, 1970), some conflict-handling behaviors were found to be more effective than others. Using Blake and Mouton's (1964) classifications, middle-level managers described how they and their supervisors dealt with conflicts between them. These reports found confrontation to be the most effective method for dealing with conflict. Smoothing was seen as less effective, withdrawal ineffective, and compromise unrelated to constructive conflict management. Implications for the use of forcing were perhaps the most significant.

The worst method of conflict resolution was forcing. This method accounted for 80% of the examples of ineffective conflict management and only 24% of the examples of effective conflict resolution. (p.405)

A second group of managers in Burke's study, described instances when they felt good or bad about how an interpersonal conflict was managed. These managers perceived the most effective method to be confrontation, forcing, and compromise, in that order. Interestingly, forcing was also reported to be the most common method used in the situations where conflict was badly handled. Further analysis revealed that managers who benefitted as a result of forcing were the ones who found it to be effective.

Those who were victims of forcing viewed it as ineffective. This finding appears to support the significance of outcome criteria in determining functionality of conflict management behaviors. No other situational factors that relate to the functionality of conflict behavior were examined in this study.

In an attempt to determine which method of conflict resolution works best, Phillips and Cheston (1979) studied twenty-five middle -level managers using the critical incident methodology. They classified the behaviors found in the data as forcing (use of power, authority), problem-solving (seeking a mutually acceptable solution), compromise (bargaining, negotiation), and avoidance (postponing or withholding expression of thoughts and feelings). The success or failure of each method was found to relate to the type of conflict: "problem-solving proved more sucessful in settling conflicts caused by communication difficulties, and forcing was the only method used with any success in conflicts of personal values or personality (p.77-78)".

Further analysis reveals patterns in the conflict situations which were related with the effective use of problem-solving and forcing. Problem-solving was successful in situations characterized by interdependence, awareness of

conflict, open-minded attitudes, willingness to ignore power issues, and existing problem-solving procedures. Managers who were successful in implementing problem-solving, had a desire to solve the problem, got an early start, and focused on the issue. Forcing was seen as successful when organizational goals and policies supported only one solution to the conflict, when the conflict was based on values, and when a history of conflict created mistrust and poor communication. Managers who used forcing successfully were fair, objective, confronted the issue, and used feedback and follow-up.

The finding of this study that is relevant here is that "it is the situation that determines whether forcing or problem-solving will be successful (p.78)". The identification of specific conditions in the situation that relate to the effectiveness of these conflict-handling styles, contributes to contingency management theory.

Two studies on conflict management in project teams are also of relevance here. They are particularly significant given the increased use of such teams by organizations today, in response to the increased complexity of organizational mission. Both of these studies relate conflict management behaviors to the performance of the

teams. This would seem to be a good indicator of the functionality of those behaviors.

Thamhain and Wilemon (1977) evaluated conflict management modes used by 100 project managers in technological organizations by correlating them with conflict causes and intensity. Data were collected by questionnaire and discussion, using Blake and Mouton's (1964) conflict behavior terms. Focusing on the more significant correlations, data indicate that:

conflict over schedules seems to increase the more project managers rely on compromise or withdrawal, while forcing seems to reduce this type of conflict. On the other hand,...forcing increases conflict intensity when dealing with manpower issues or technical opinions....conflict over project priorities seems to decrease if project managers rely on confrontation, smoothing or even forcing; but it increases with withdrawal (p.79)

These findings suggest that certain modes work better than others in reducing conflict over a given issue. Further research on these issues would help clarify this claim. However, it appears that the effectiveness of each conflict management is situational, with the cause of the conflict a significant factor.

Hill (1977) conducted in-depth interviews with managers of high and low-producing project teams, in an attempt to isolate characteristics of managerial style that result in effective conflict management. Although he did

not focus on any particular set of conflict management behaviors, two of his findings have relevance here. First, high-performing managers seemed to have a willingness to deal with conflict, in that they fostered open communication around conflict issues and were accepting of feelings related to these issues. Low-performing managers believed that conflict would go away if left unattended, and avoided dealing with it. Second, high-performing managers "reflected a much larger repertoire of responses. They simply had more ideas and choices about how to deal with conflict generally (p.52)".

The findings in these two studies offer support for a situational approach to conflict management, and emphasize the importance of flexibility in use of conflict handling styles. These findings are in contrast to the suggestions of several authors referred to earlier that there is one best way to manage conflict. Furthermore, the conflict research reviewed here does not appear to support numerous contentions by Blake and Mouton (1964; 1968; 1970; 1973; 1978; 1983), that the confrontation style is the best method for dealing with conflict situations. In fact, their grid theory was found to be a poor predictor of conflict resolution methods employed, or managerial effectiveness, despite their claims otherwise (Bernardin & Alvares, 1976).

In short, the indication from these studies is that there is no best way to manage a conflict situation. The effectiveness of the method used appears to be dependent on the situation. Specific conditions in conflict situations have been found to relate to the effectiveness or functionality of certain conflict-handling styles. Managers who seem to manage conflict effectively use a style that is appropriate to the conditions in the situation, and have a greater variety of behaviors to use. The question then becomes, what factors might influence an individual manager's choice or use of a style in response to a conflict situation?

Before addressing that question, Table 4. integrates and summarizes the factors identified as relating to the functionality or effectiveness of conflict-handling behavior in the research reviewed and in Thomas' conflict models (1976).

Table 4. Factors Relating to Functionality of Conflict-Handling Behavior.

Nature of the conflict

topic - source - substantive vs affective

Degree of conflict of interest

incompatability of goals - criticalness of issue -
power & authority differences - value differences
personality differences - scarcity of resources

Stakes in the Relationship

interdependence - need for harmony, cooperation -
need for preservation of relationship

Situational Needs

time - place - urgency - for creative solution &
innovation - for commitment to solution - for
agreement, resolution

Personal Factors

skills - style of implementation - attitudes
(trust, openness, willingness) - readiness

Evaluation Criteria

goals - beneficiary - costs of behavior

Findings Relating to Choice or Use of Conflict Behavior

This section focuses on research that examines conflict behavior. Of particular interest here are findings that might indicate factors that influence choice or use of conflict-handling behavior.

One study found a relationship between the use of five conflict resolution strategies (Blake & Mouton, 1964) and measures of employee commitment (London & Howat, 1978). Questionnaire data collected from supervisor-subordinate dyads in park and recreation organizations found that confrontation was more frequent when organizational commitment was high, but that confrontation was avoided by those who were committed to the profession or community. Causation cannot be determined from this study, but the findings offer the possibility that employee commitment might be a factor that influences choice of conflict-handling behavior.

Cosier and Ruble's experimental study (1981) using a laboratory game based on Thomas' five conflict-handling modes, is also relevant here. Given a choice of the five modes, players in this experimental game chose the same mode as their partner used, more than they chose a different mode. This appears to support the self-fulfilling prophecy as a psychological dynamic in the process of conflict,

according to Thomas' process model. In other words, the behavior of the other party in a conflict situation may influence an individual's choice of behavior in response.

In an attempt to predict the choice of conflict management strategies by subordinates in high-stakes conflicts, Musser (1982) has developed a decisional model based on Thomas' structural model of conflict. Although not tested through research, this model suggests factors that influence choice of behavior by a subordinate that may contribute to an understanding of effective conflict management.

According to this model: "the subordinate who has a strong desire to remain in the organization, and perceives a great deal of congruence between the attitudes and beliefs of the superior and his or her own beliefs", will be more likely to use problem-solving (p.263); bargaining or compromise is used only when there is perceived protection from arbitrary action by the superior; the subordinate accommodates (appeases) when there is a desire to remain in the organization, but a perception of a difference in attitudes and beliefs and no protection from arbitrary action; competing will not occur at all when these stakes are high, but may occur when they are low; and finally, when other stakes are high, but the desire to remain in the

organization is low, and there is incongruence between superior and subordinate attitudes and beliefs, a subordinate will simply withdraw, according to the model.

Although there is a need for testing of this model to conclude that these factors directly influence choice of conflict behavior by subordinates, the suggestions are interesting. They would appear to have implications for choice of behavior by superiors as well. In addition, the model reflects Thomas' theory (1976) concerning the importance of conceptualization in the process of responding to a conflict situation. According to Musser's decisional model, the perception of a superior's attitudes, beliefs, and ability to act arbitrarily in relation to the subordinate, would seem to contribute to how that subordinate conceptualizes the salient alternatives and their probable outcomes. In Thomas' process model of conflict, actual conflict behavior is dependent on this conceptualization.

Several studies by Renwick (1975a; 1975b; 1977), examine a number of other variables that may influence response patterns during a conflict episode. One study (1975a), using the Employee Conflict Inventory (Renwick, 1972), investigated interpersonal conflict in superior-subordinate dyads employed in an organization with a

consultative climate (Likert, 1967). Results indicated that:

dyad members held similar perceptions concerning the topic and sources of superior-subordinate conflict; technical and administrative issues were the most frequent topics, and differences in perception and knowledge were the primary reasons. Although perceptions of the other party's management of conflict were similar to the respondent's description of self, they differed significantly from the other's own self description. Conflict management was related to status as well as to attitudes toward conflict (p.444)

Although status differences did not affect the likelihood that all five methods of conflict resolution (Blake & Mouton, 1964) would be used, "supervisors were more likely to rely on confrontation, compromise and smoothing, ... while subordinates were more likely to use compromise, confrontation and forcing. (p.452)"

These findings appear to agree with what one would expect to find in an organization with a consultative climate. Consultative organizations, while valuing problem-solving, place considerable emphasis on positive human relations and harmony (Likert, 1967). There may be a relationship between the climate of this organization, and the reliance on compromise and smoothing found in this study. This interpretation would support Blake and Mouton's (1983) suggestion that organizational climate influences response to conflict.

A unique aspect of this study was that both the perceptions of the supervisor, and those of the subordinate concerning the behavior of each party, were examined. The fact that the other party's behavior was perceived to be similar to the respondent's own behavior, even when the other party perceived differently, might be explained by Thomas' (1976) notion of self-fulfilling prophecy, discussed earlier. For instance, an individual who expects a certain kind of behavior from the other party, may use tactics that encourage the other party to respond in similar fashion. A simpler explanation is that the respondent misperceived the other party's behavior. At any rate, it would appear that perception operates selectively during the conflict process.

Using the same method and population, Renwick (1975b) observed interactions between conflict-handling method, and the topic and source of disagreement. Findings indicate that to some extent, style of conflict management is influenced by the nature of the disagreement.

disagreements originating from substantive factors such as differences in knowledge or factual material, were more likely to elicit confrontation than any other method....compromise and smoothing were the methods most likely to be used with conflicts attributed to differences in personality, attitudes, or opinions. (p.423)

This finding lends support to Walton's (1969) observation that affective conflict is less acceptable in organizational settings, and therefore, is less likely to be confronted.

Correlational evidence from this study indicated that the same method of conflict resolution tended to be used by the same person in different situations. This suggests that people have preferences for certain response styles, and may be predisposed to use the same style in a variety of situations. This interpretation is in agreement with Blake and Mouton's (1964) and Thomas' theory that the preferred or dominant response is the one most likely to be used in a conflict situation. The notion of a predisposition to use the same conflict response style, regardless of the specific conflict conditions, does however raise problems, given that people are supposed to behave situationally in order to manage conflict effectively.

The importance of this interpretation, is that it points out a need to change behavioral predispositions. Increasing our understanding of the range of factors that influence behavior in response to conflict, may help in understanding how behavioral predispositions are formed. Individual motives, abilities, learning, etc., are all possible factors, to the extent that they help shape predisposition.

To summarize, the studies reviewed so far, based on questionnaires and laboratory experiment, show evidence of the recognition and use of all five conflict-handling behaviors. Each study focused on different variables, and indicated their relationship to the use of particular conflict response styles. One thing that stood out in each of these studies, was that the individual's perception plays an important role in determining subsequent conflict response.

A number of factors that might influence an individual's behavior in a conflict situation are suggested in the findings of the research reviewed here. These factors, and those suggested by Thomas' (1976) structural model are integrated and summarized in Table 5. This author proposes that the interaction of the factors that influence an individual's behavior, with those factors that determine the effectiveness or functionality of that behavior, provide a complex, comprehensive scheme for contingency conflict management.

Table 5. Factors Influencing Conflict-Handling Behavior

<u>Attitudinal</u>	<u>Perceptual/Conceptual</u>
commitment	conflict of interest
identification with self	stakes in relationship
identification with other	other's attitudes and beliefs
feelings about conflict	other's behavior and skills
own objectives	other's objectives
norms, social pressures	topic & source
<u>Conditional</u>	
topic & source	
behavioral predisposition	
climate	
status	
knowledge of tactics & skills	
rules & procedures	

Attitudinal factors in the above table, are those thoughts or feelings held by an individual in relation to a particular conflict situation. Perceptual/conceptual factors are an individual's understandings about certain

aspects of the conflict situation. Conditional factors are the relatively stable conditions that exist in the individual or the situation.

Gender in Relation to Conflict Management

A few studies examine sex differences in relation to conflict management (Howat & London, 1980; London & Howat, 1978; Renwick, 1977; Zammuto, London & Rowland, 1979), however only two reported any significant differences.

Zammuto et al.(1979) examined the relationship of sex, style of conflict resolution, and commitment with resident dormitory advisors in a university. Advisors rated themselves on commitment to the position and to the supervisor. Data reporting advisor's conflict response style was based on the perception of the supervisor. Data was analyzed for groups of males and of females reporting to females, and for males reporting to males. The group of females reporting to males was too small for analysis, and was dropped from the sample. Results showed that "males reporting to females used smoothing, compromise, and confrontation when they were committed to the position. Females reporting to females avoided these strategies when they were committed to the position (p.227)". In addition,

males reporting to males were more likely to withdraw than males or females reporting to females.

The question left unanswered by this study is whether subordinates are less likely to withdraw from female supervisors, or whether females perceive less withdrawal on the part of their subordinates than do male supervisors. Limitations of this study are that perceptions were only gathered from one member of the dyad, and that no data was available for females reporting to males. It might have been useful to gather data from the supervisors on their conflict response styles with their subordinate advisors, given that perceptions of the other party's behavior has been noted to influence one's own behavior in response (Thomas, 1976).

In Renwick's study, questionnaire data were collected from male and female managers, concerning how they and their immediate supervisor dealt with conflict. The respondents were divided into separate groups: females supervised by females, females supervised by males, and males supervised by males, and the data were analyzed for each group. (Only one male was supervised by a female, therefore his response was not included in the analysis.) Based on the same categories of conflict used in her previous research, Renwick found no difference "between the likelihood with

which male and female subordinates would use various methods" to deal with conflict (p.403). Other significant findings are summarized below.

In the group of males supervised by males, the subordinates saw their bosses as using all five conflict response styles, relying only slightly more on compromise and confrontation. In comparison to the men, women respondents perceived their male supervisors as "more likely to withdraw from conflicts, smooth over disagreements and compromise their differences (p.407)". This finding raises the question of whether this is a perceptual difference, or an indication that the male supervisors responded differently to female subordinates in conflict situations.

The latter possibility is in keeping with a research finding on sex-role stereotypes that indicates that male managers behave differently in their interactions with male and female employees (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974). In this case, male managers surveyed indicated they would make more exceptions and go to greater efforts to retain a male employee guilty of personal misconduct, than they would a female employee with equal qualifications in the same situation. Although this study describes a very specific conflict situation, it seems that these managers might respond differentially toward males and females in other

conflict situations as well. More research is needed that would examine conflict behaviors used in mixed-gender dyads in a variety of situations.

In Renwick's study, use of conflict style and perception of the constructive use of conflict did not correlate significantly in the male sample. A negative relationship was found between withdrawal and constructive use of differences for the males. In the female sample, positive attitudes toward conflict were associated with smoothing, confrontation, withdrawal, and compromise, in that order. The use of forcing was negatively related to the constructive management of differences for the women. These findings are consistent with stereotypes of women which label them as accommodating or withdrawing, rather than insisting on their own way and risking hurting others (Loring & Wells, 1972).

The major differences between males and females in this study, in relation to conflict management, appear to be perceptual and attitudinal. A question here is "whether one sex shades its judgments more than the other does (p.413)". Further research is needed to assess this.

It seems important to point out here, that in relation to the findings on the behavior of male supervisors, "there was a crucial difference in the kinds of conflicts described

by males and females. Whereas the males were reporting on conflicts between members of the same sex, the females were describing conflicts that involved a member of the opposite sex (p.412)". This factor could account for some of the differences found. One possibility is that the male subordinates had a different perception of their supervisor's behavior than did the female subordinates. Reports from the supervisors on their perceptions of their own behavior would help in making this distinction. This study does suggest that sex is a factor that could influence behavior in response to conflict. The next section of this paper will focus on other gender differences that might relate to conflict management.

Gender Differences - Implications for Conflict Management

This section focuses on gender differences in the literature on leader behavior, sex role and sex characteristic stereotypes. Research on these topics is briefly summarized and analyzed, drawing out gender differences that may have implications for conflict management. The term gender, rather than sex, is used here whenever possible to reflect a current trend in the literature, and a personal preference.

Gender differences may be a contributor to conflict in the organization. Gender has also been shown to have some bearing on conflict-handling behavior (Renwick, 1977; Zammuto et al., 1979), indicating that it is a variable that may need to be considered in defining effective conflict management.

Overwhelmingly, studies of dyadic conflict have been done with all men (e.g. Cosier & Ruble, 1981; Hunger & Stern, 1976), or with gender not reported. Even when gender is not reported, the description of the subjects would suggest that they probably were all male: mid-level managers in a large corporation (Burke, 1970), project managers in a technology related industry (Thamhain & Wilemon, 1977; Hill, 1977), Trappist monks and college students (Brown, Keller & Yelsma, 1981), university faculty members (Katz, 1977) business managers (Harrison, 1979), students in a university course in management (Ruble & Thomas, 1976). One part of Burke's study used all women, but this still fails to provide data on conflict across gender.

The few studies that included both males and females did not, however, report any data based on gender as a variable. Howat and London (1980) failed to find any significant differences in a study of perceptions and

attributions relating to conflict in supervisor-subordinate dyads composed of 27 women and 199 men. One study used indepth interviews with 25 male and female managers to examine their behavior in conflict situations, but did not report any data analyzed by gender (Phillips & Cheston, 1979).

The question is then, Is there evidence that gender may influence choice of conflict-handling behavior ? An examination of gender difference literature, with a view toward the conflict management contingencies that have been identified, may provide an answer.

Gender Difference in Stereotypes

The literature on sex role stereotypes (widely held beliefs concerning appropriate male and female behavior), and sex-characteristic stereotypes (widely held beliefs concerning sex differences on various personality traits) suggests ways in which gender differences could commonly be speculated to influence conflict management.

Research on sex-characteristic stereotypes found that there are certain characteristics attributed to males that differ from those attributed to females. According to these stereotypes, men are perceived as more aggressive, competitive, and independent than women, while women are seen

as more tactful, quiet and gentle than men (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman & Broverman, 1968). O'Leary (1981) terms the male sex stereotypes a "competency" cluster, since they include attributes such as problem-solving and decision-making ability. In contrast, female stereotypes compromise a "warmth-expressiveness" cluster, including characteristics like warmth and social skill.

These, and other numerous stereotypes are thought to act in two ways that may affect men and women in the process of conflict management. First, they may become self-fulfilling (Dipboye, 1975). The self-concepts of men and women were found to be very similar to their respective stereotypes (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968). The incorporation of female stereotypes into a woman's self-concept may cause her to be less inclined to behave in the more assertive, aggressive ways associated with stereotypical male behavior. Secondly, they may lead to the adoption of sex role stereotypes which view certain roles, and the behaviors associated with them as being more appropriate to one sex than the other. The existence of stereotypes then, may cause men and women to have different expectations for the ways they each may respond to conflict. For example, it may seem more appropriate, and therefore more acceptable for men to be more assertive and for women to be more accomodative

in conflict situations. Furthermore, stereotypes incorporated into the self-concept may cause men and women to actually behave differently in response to conflict, based on the same stereotypical ways they perceive themselves.

The remainder of this section examines research on gender differences, summarizes the findings, and analyzes them in relation to their relevance to conflict management.

Sex role stereotyping by male managers was found in a number of studies (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkranz, 1972; Gilmer, 1966; Schein, 1973). Schein found that "successful managers are perceived to possess those characteristics, attitudes and temperments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general (p.99)". In a sample of 200 MBA students and 300 executives, 84% of the college men and 63% of the business men believed that women did not belong in management because of their sex (Basil, 1972).

Laboratory studies show that these opinions have a detrimental affect on evaluations of women in selection decisions (Cecil, Paul & Olins, 1973; Shaw, 1972), in promotion decisions (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974), and performance ratings (Bartol & Butterfield, 1974). These findings suggest that women are viewed as ineffective leaders and that

evaluations of their competence may be influenced by held notions of sex role stereotypes. It would seem then, that men might mistrust and resent women in management or leadership positions, and that women might resent the barriers to their success that these stereotypes present. Sex role stereotypes may provide fertile ground for conflict between men and women in organizations, and influence conflict management styles and behaviors.

There are a number of studies reporting differences in organizational behaviors between males and females. These findings support and perhaps perpetuate sex-characteristic stereotypes.

For example, Bond and Vinacke (1961) in an experimental study of mixed-sex triads, used a task that required coalition formation for success. The findings indicated that males tended to use exploitative techniques, while females tended to use accomodative techniques to accomplish the task. In two studies by Exline (1962; 1963), women leader's messages to co-workers were found to be more person-oriented, and their interactions more frequent, than were those of their male counterparts. These three studies suggest that a concern for others might in some way influence the performance and behavior of women in organizations. For instance, a woman manager might put

another's needs ahead of her own needs in an effort to get a job done, or she might spend more time supporting others, than directing them to do a job. Basically, this research indicates a relationship-oriented leadership style for women, rather than a task-oriented style.

Examples of research examining gender-based characteristics can be found among the leadership studies. For instance, laboratory studies found that leader behavior descriptions were dependent on the sex of the leader (Bartol & Butterfield, 1974, Rosen & Jerdee, 1973). Differences in behavior were found in another study by Megargee (1969). In this study high and low dominance males and females were paired to complete a task. High dominance subjects were found to take a leadership role, regardless of sex, except for high dominance women paired with low dominance men. In this case, the high dominance women did not assume the leadership role.

The gender of the follower then, might influence the behavior of a woman in a leadership position. For instance, in the previous example of high dominance women and low dominance men, the assumption of the leadership role by the woman would have been inconsistent with the stereotype of the female sex-role. To the extent that a woman's self image incorporates the female sex-role stereotype, she might

suppress demonstrating leadership behaviors with male followers in order to maintain her "feminine" self-image.

A more recent laboratory study of leader behavior (Stitt, Schmidt, Price, & Kipnis, 1983), using instructions for leadership style, found that male and female leaders were equally able and willing to display a variety of leadership styles if so instructed. This would seem to indicate that differences in behavior found in earlier studies may not be attributable to real differences in characteristics or abilities between males and females. It seems more likely that there are situational contingencies that elicit differential leadership behaviors from males and females.

This last finding is more congruent with field studies of male and female leaders that have found no significant differences either in behavior or performance (Day & Stodgill, 1972), or in subordinate satisfaction (Bartol, 1974). While the collective results of the studies cited above are inconclusive in terms of differences in behavior between men and women, it would seem that any differences are based not on inherent characteristics, but on other situational factors.

To summarize, sex-based stereotypes have been shown to influence both the beliefs and behaviors of males and

females. Certain behaviors may be expected, and therefore more accepted from men than women, and vice versa. Research on gender differences in leader behavior has had inconsistent results. The indication is that differences might be accounted for by other factors in the situation, and not by a real difference in the characteristics of men and women. On the other hand, integration of stereotypical beliefs into the self concept may lead to actual differences in behavior.

Some inferences may be drawn from this discussion of sex-based stereotypes that relate to conflict management. Sex role stereotypes may lead us to view certain conflict-handling behaviors as appropriate, depending on the sex of the person exhibiting them. Based on what we know about the role that perception of the other party's behavior plays in a conflict episode (Thomas, 1976), sex-role stereotyping may be a factor in the process of conflict occurrence and management.

In relation to the behavioral phase of a conflict episode, use of inappropriate behaviors (i.e. behaviors that are inconsistent with a stereotypical sex-role) may bring disapproval or resentment. Inappropriate or uncharacteristic conflict-handling behaviors may be avoided by men and women who have incorporated these stereotypes

into their self-concepts. By the same token, stereotypical behaviors may become one's predominate style in response to conflict. In other words, when we have stereotypical beliefs about how people should behave, based on their gender, we tend to behave in accordance with these beliefs, and to judge other's behaviors based on these limiting views. The presence of stereotypical notions then, may be both a source of conflict, as well as an influence on conflict-handling behavior. Additionally, these beliefs have a negative influence on human development due to their restrictive nature.

Other Related Factors

Besides the articles above, which look at gender differences in organizational contexts, there are innumerable other sources for identifying gender differences that may relate to conflict management. The fields of psychology, sociology, human development, and management, contribute findings on gender differences. While a complete identification of all related differences is beyond the range of this paper, there are a few sources that point out significant differences of particular relevance to understanding conflict.

In an extensive review of the research on the psychology of sex differences, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) cite a number of findings that may provide insight into ways that men and women may respond to conflict. Drawing from research on self-concept development in children, these related findings are: that boys tend to see themselves as stronger, more dominant, and more powerful than girls; girls conform more readily to the demands of authority figures; boys are more dependent on a peer group for a system of values which includes cooperation and competition; girls reveal their thoughts and feelings to peers more readily than boys do.

All of these findings can be related to the process of socialization. Given that Maccoby and Jacklin's study was done ten years ago, changes in children's socialization processes since that time would probably be reflected in changes in these patterns of self-concept development as well. However, the implication is that these early beliefs, roles, and relationships serve as the basis for the development of the adult personality. The incorporation of these sort of beliefs into the personality would be likely to impact on behavioral predispositions, responses to social pressures, and emotional expressiveness in conflict situations.

Another relevant work is a study of women managers by Henning and Jardim (1976). This study could have been included in the earlier section on gender differences, but is viewed here because it also has a strong relationship with the psychological developmental nature of the literature being examined in this section. Henning and Jardim's study highlighted fundamental differences in perceptions held by women managers, compared to those held by men in management. Comparisons were based on indepth interviews with over one hundred experienced women managers, and questionnaire data from three thousand women and one thousand men in management. Two of the differences found in this study seem relevant here.

One is a difference in the way men and women view risk. "Men see risk as loss or gain; winning or losing; danger or opportunity....women see risk as entirely negative. It is loss, danger, injury, ruin, hurt. One avoids it as best one can (p.47)". To the extent that the manner in which conflict is dealt with poses a risk, this perception of risk taking may leave a woman more cautious in her approach to conflict than a man might be. On the other hand, "men see risk as affecting the future...women see risk as affecting the here and now (p.47)". This difference in perception might indicate that women would be more

preoccupied with the immediate implications when determining the stakes in a conflict situation.

Another significant difference in Henning and Jardim's study was found in the styles chosen by these women managers, compared to men managers, in their roles as subordinates. The men in the study had a tendency to adopt a style based on their bosses expectations of them, the women on their own concept of themselves. Women's responses as a subordinate then, "centering as they do on who one is" (p.51), place much less weight on the bosses expectations. In essence, the women's responses reflect an attitude of "'This is who I am -- like it or leave it'" (p.51). Henning and Jardim suggest that this makes it more difficult for the woman to distance herself from her boss and situations that might arise.

There is no sense of a game being played, of a temporary adoption of a different style for reasons of self-interest. It is all for real. The investment in oneself is specific, the vulnerability to criticism and to personal hurt is consequentially greater (p.51)

The implication that might be drawn here is that women may tend to personalize conflict situations with their superiors more than men do, affecting their perceptions of the reality of the situation. It also seems that men may adopt their style or role to fit their view of a conflict situation, while women may demonstrate less flexibility,

tending to remain themselves. These differences then, suggest possibilities for gender differences in response to conflict.

Further implications for gender differences in conflict management, can be drawn from the writing of Carol Gilligan (1982). Gilligan's work suggests that the process of conceptualization of an issue may be different for women than for men. In her theory of the moral and psychological development of women, she views women as operating more out of an obligation to responsibility in relationships, than from responsibility to self. Women's interactions with others are guided by an "ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility".

Gilligan's study of the process of moral judgment revealed that women define the moral problem as one of "obligation to exercise care and avoid hurt (p.73)". Whereas traditional (male) judgment rests on distancing oneself from the situation, viewing it objectively, and judging it by abstract rules, women tend to focus on the particular situation itself, and its special pattern of relationships and obligations. As Gilligan observes, "sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care, lead women to attend to

voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view (p.16)".

This difference in focal points in the process of judging seems to support an earlier interpretation of the findings in Renwick's study (1977). The speculation being that women may perceive conflict behavior based on their sense of these relationships and obligations to exercise care, whereas men are apt to be more objective in their perceptions.

Women's orientation to caring and responsibility for others in defining moral problems, suggests the possibility that this orientation may carry-over to the process of conceptualization in a conflict episode. As described by Thomas (1976) in the process model of conflict, this phase includes definition of the issue. The definition is based on the extent to which one views the issue in terms of self-interest, and in one's ability to see underlying concerns. Gilligan's work suggests that women may, in the early part of their development, be more likely to define an issue in terms of the other party's concerns, and would take underlying issues into consideration as well. These factors would presumeably effect the behavior of a woman in a conflict situation according to Thomas' (1976) theory that

identification with other may influence choice of conflict-handling behavior.

Summary

Gender is an important variable to consider in the process of conflict management in light of the increased number of women in the workforce and in management positions. Although gender has been relatively untreated in the research on conflict, a few studies have found gender differences in response to conflict.

The literature on sex-based stereotyping indicates that the existence of stereotypes may influence assumptions about what constitutes appropriate conflict-handling behavior for each sex. Additionally, actual behavior may be influenced by an integration of these stereotypes into the self-concept.

Leadership studies indicate that gender differences in leader behavior are best accounted for by situational factors other than leader gender, such as gender of the follower, socialization, prior learning, and the influence of stereotypes.

The socialization process is seen as influential in determining response to a variety of conflict-related situations. Difference in social and psychological

development between men and women, lead to differences in self-concept, personality, ability to express feelings, perception, social group identification, interpersonal style differences, and orientation to others. As these are all factors in managing conflict, gender differences may be an important variable to consider in a contingency view of conflict management.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter fully describes the research methods used in this study. Included here are descriptions of the design of the study, the subjects and the process of their selection, instrumentation, the procedures used to carry out the study, and the data collection and analyses that address the research questions concerning the relationship of gender to choice of conflict-handling behavior.

Design of the Study

Since this study is "concerned primarily with gaining a better understanding of complex behavior patterns," a correlational approach was indicated (Borg & Gall, 1983). The correlational method was used as the basic design for this research in order to study "the relationships between these patterns and the variables to which they are hypothesized to be causally related (ibid.)".

According to Borg and Gall (1983), "the first step in planning a relationship study is to identify specific variables that appear to be important determinants of the complex characteristic or behavior pattern being studied

(p.576)". The focus of this study was on choice of conflict-handling behavior in given situations. While the review of literature indicates a number of factors that may influence this behavior pattern, this study was concerned with how gender influences that choice.

This research then, was designed to examine the interaction of three variables: 1) the gender of the individual responding to the conflict situation; 2) the choice of conflict-handling behavior by that individual in a given situation; 3) the gender of the other party as described in the conflict situation.

Within the context of the correlational method, this study utilized a factorial design to allow for the testing of several hypotheses simultaneously (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). The advantage of this design as highlighted by Isaac (1977) is that it allows more than one factor to vary at a time. He states that in studying complex behavior, "factors influencing behavior frequently interact to produce differences that do not occur when only one factor is free to vary at a time Where interaction between two or more variables simultaneously makes a differences," a factorial design "reveals this difference (p.50)".

This study uses a 2 x 2 factorial design with one between and two within variables, as shown in Table 6. The

gender of the respondents to the instrument is the between subjects factor; the gender of the other party (given in each item) and the choice of conflict-handling behavior (in response to each item) are the within subjects factors.

Table 6 The 2 x 2 Factorial Design

Respondent Gender	Gender of Other Party	Male	Female
Male	Style of Conflict- Handling Behavior	1	1
		2	2
		3	3
		4	4
		5	5
Female		1	1
		2	2
		3	3
		4	4
		5	5

This factorial design (adapted from one found in Winer [1971, p.546]) allows for the measurement of each subject on the choice of five styles of conflict-handling behavior. This design can also be described as counterbalanced, since each subject is assigned to more than one treatment condition (with treatment condition here being the gender of the other party in each item). The main benefit of this aspect of the design is that "statistical analysis of the

data is more sensitive because each subject is 'matched' with himself across treatments (Borg & Gall, 1983)".

Subjects and Sample Size

The subjects for this study were 50 male and 50 female non-faculty professional staff at the University of Massachusetts. Their roles in the organization reflect the full spectrum of professional staff positions at the university, including department and unit administrators and managers; accountants and financial planners; academic advisors; counselors; program planners and coordinators; computer programmers and analysts; librarians and archivists; personnel and human resource development specialists; and health care providers and educators.

They were chosen from the same organization to assure a group of subjects who were reasonably homogeneous in terms of organizational socialization. The process by which an individual becomes socialized to an organization, may be seen as having an influence on how that person behaves in that organization. Having a group of subjects who have all been socialized into the same organization helps to limit these socialization effects .

Borg and Gall (1983) maintain that a reasonably homogeneous group is important in order to avoid obscuring relationships between variables "by the presence of subjects

who differ widely from each other (p.576)". Furthermore, selecting subjects from the same organization helps to control the effect of organizational climate on conflict behavior, suggested in the literature as a factor likely to influence such behavior (Blake & Mouton, 1983;) . For example, Renwick's (1975) study found that organizations with consultative climates tended to rely on compromise and smoothing to deal with conflicts. On the other hand, an organization with an authoritarian climate may use more forceful conflict management methods.

It is also reasoned that individuals in professional roles have a similarity of interpersonal work relationships and experiences, as well as similar educational backgrounds. In addition, these individuals may be viewed as being in positions where ability to handle conflict situations well, might be critical to their effectiveness in their roles.

The subjects ranged in age from twenty to sixty. Their cultural and educational backgrounds had some similarity in that they were all of Western culture, and had all attained some level of post-secondary education. Their educational degrees ranged from two-year Associates to Doctoral. While there is nothing specifically in the conflict literature to indicate that the variables reflected in these demographics are associated with differences in conflict-handling

behavior, it seems reasonable to assume that differences in these variables might influence behavior in general. An effort was made to maintain a reasonable degree of homogeneity on these variables in the subject group as a means of controlling the effects of these factors.

Selection of Sample

The subjects were chosen as a representative sample of the professional members at a similar level in the university. All subjects were members of PAUMA, an association which includes all professional staff at the university. With PAUMA then as the pool, subjects were selected using mailing lists generated by PAUMA. The mailing list for female subjects included 100 professional women staff who were also members of the University Women's Professional Network (UWPN). The male subject mailing list consisted of 137 professional male staff who serve on PAUMA boards and committees.

Procedures for Protection of Human Subjects

Persons agreeing to participate in this study were asked to sign a consent form (copy in Appendix A) giving their permission to use data from the completed Conflict Situations Inventory for research purposes. Since participation was sought by mail, all persons contacted

retained the right to refuse to participate, by simply choosing to disregard the request. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants in the consent form. The consent form also assured subjects that their individual conflict-handling behavior profile would not be used, and that only group data would be reported in the study. Means for obtaining a summary of research results was also specified.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through the use of the Conflict Situations Inventory, an instrument designed for the purposes of this study. The instrument is a self-report inventory in which respondents report only on their own anticipated conflict-handling behavior in a variety of situations.

Existing instruments measuring conflict behavior styles are general, rather than situational in context. These instruments focus on generic conflict situations, rather than describe the specific factors that exist in a particular situation. For example, in Thomas-Kilmann's Conflict Mode Instrument (1974), you are asked to "consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of another person." Given pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses to these

situations, you are then asked to choose which is most characteristic of your own behavior in these instances. While Hall's Conflict Management Survey (1969) provides some context for the conflict situation, the situation is broadly described by fitting it into one of four categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, or intergroup conflict. Items such as "In general, when you see a conflict arising in the group, what action do you normally take"? typify Hall's instrument.

No instrument exists that describes specific characteristics of the conflict situation. The need for an instrument, that takes into account more of the factors that may influence how one behaves in a conflict situation is called for in the literature (Thomas, 1978). Such an instrument is crucial in determining the extent to which gender influences behavior choice, as opposed to other factors in the situation.

Process of instrument construction and evaluation

The Conflict Situations Inventory was developed through a two-phase process. Phase One consisted of the construction of an initial forty-item prototype, and Phase Two was made up of four stages of revisions based on a series of evaluations. The process of instrument development is described in detail in Chapter Four. A copy

of the final twenty-item instrument used in the study can be found in Appendix B.

Procedures for carrying out the study

This study was carried out through the mail, using the PAUMA mailing lists referred to earlier. The 237 professional staff identified through these lists were mailed a copy of the Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI) with a cover letter requesting their participation in this study (see Appendix C). A self-addressed mailing label was included for the return of completed CSI profiles. These profiles were folded and sealed, with instructions not to open until completing the inventory. The consent form was sealed in a separate envelope, with similar instructions. A sample of the scoring profile is included in Appendix B as part of the CSI.

Data Analysis

The data consist of scores obtained from repeated measures of choice of conflict-handling behavior by the subjects in given situations in the Conflict Situations Inventory. The data were first organized into four groups: 1) males responding to females, 2) males responding to males, 3) females responding to females, and 4) females responding to males. Crosstabulation of the data was then

performed in order to examine the frequency distributions of scores in each of the four groups. This procedure was particularly useful in that it produced "tables that are the joint distribution of two or more variables (SPSS, 1986)". Thus we are able to examine the interaction of the choice of conflict-handling behavior together with the gender of the other party.

Next, the Wilcoxon matched-pairs ranked-signs test, a non-parametric test, was used in order to determine whether the distribution of scores in two samples differed significantly from each other when the scores of the samples are correlated through matching (Borg & Gall, 1983). In this case, the distribution of scores in group 1 (males responding to females) was paired with the distribution of scores in group 2 (males responding to males) to determine whether male subject's responses differed significantly based on the gender of the other party. The same pairing was done for female subject groups. The Wilcoxon test is described as being appropriate for "dependent samples" resulting from "obtaining repeated measures on the same subjects (Kirk, 1984, p.408)", as is the case here.

Differences in frequency distributions between the paired groups were then calculated and ranked based on their sign. This was done due to the fact that the Wilcoxon test

statistic "is based on the rank of the absolute difference between paired observations (p.409)".

"The Wilcoxon test is analogous to the t-test for correlated means except that it makes no assumptions regarding the shape of the score distribution or homogeneity of variance between the two sets of scores (Borg & Gall, 1983)". This makes it particularly suitable for use here, given that there is no basis for predicting direction of difference or pattern of variation in the data obtained in this study.

The final step in data analysis for this study was the use of the Mann-Whitney test (M-W) to determine whether the distribution of scores of two independent samples differ significantly from each other. In this case the sex-determined subject groups are the independent samples, and the M-W test is used to find whether the "bulk" of scores in the male subject group is statistically different from the "bulk" of scores in the female subject group (Borg & Gall, 1983). The M-W test statistic is based on the ranks of observations (Kirk, 1984), which were calculated here on the difference scores for each subject group regarding the gender of the other party. In other words the difference between how males scored in response to a female other, and how they scored in response to a male other, was compared to

how females scored along the same lines. This test served to discover whether men and women then, were affected differently in their choices based on the gender of the other party.

These methods of data analyses provided information on the extent to which the gender of the other party in a given conflict situation is related to the choice of conflict-handling behavior in that situation. The degree of the relationship between the gender of the other party, the choice of conflict-handling behavior, and the gender of the individual responding to the given conflict situation was determined through these analyses.

CHAPTER IV

Development of Instrument

Introduction

This chapter describes the development of the Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI) and the Conflict-Handling Style Profile, which together make up the instrument designed for the purposes of this study. The development of the instrument consisted of two parts : Phase I, which was the construction of the initial forty-item prototype, and Phase II, the evaluation and refinement of the instrument.

The chapter begins with a description of the instrument and how it is organized. The steps taken to construct the instrument in Phase One, and the stages of evaluation and refinement of the instrument in Phase Two follow. The final version of the instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Description and Organization of the Instrument

The Conflict Situations Inventory

The Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI) is a self-report inventory in which respondents report only their own anticipated conflict-handling behavior in a variety of

conflict situations. The inventory consists of twenty items, each describing a particular interpersonal conflict situation commonly found in the workplace. The gender of the other party in each conflict situation is indicated by the use of a proper name commonly associated with a particular sex. The gender of the other party is reinforced in each set of responses by the use of the corresponding personal pronoun. The use of the terms male and female was avoided, since they may be thought to be more "loaded" terms and therefore may provoke a stronger reaction than would the less obvious identification of gender by use of a first name.

Each conflict situation is followed by a list of five alternative responses to that particular conflict that reflect the five styles of conflict-handling behavior (i.e., competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, and compromising) as defined by Thomas and Kilmann (1974). One response in each set is designed to be the most "appropriate conflict-handling behavior" for that particular situation. The overall organization of the CSI is presented in Table 7., "Appropriate Response and Gender of Conflict Situations Inventory Items". Basically, the twenty item inventory is designed so there are four items in which a particular one of the five styles of conflict-handling

behavior is the most "appropriate" response in that situation. In other words, there are five sets of four items each, corresponding to the five different styles of conflict-handling behavior. In each set of four items, two of the items identify the other party as male, and two items identify the other party as female. The twenty items in the inventory are randomly ordered to avoid any style or gender pattern.

Table 7. Appropriate response and gender of conflict situations inventory items.

"Appropriate conflict-handling behavior" in given situation	Gender of other party	No. of situations (items)
Competing	Male	2
	Female	2
Accommodating	Male	2
	Female	2
Avoiding	Male	2
	Female	2
Collaborating	Male	2
	Female	2
Compromising	Male	2
	Female	2

Directions for completing the CSI ask the respondent to choose the conflict-handling style response he or she would be most likely to make in each situation given. Responses are recorded directly on the instrument and transferred to a scoring form, the Conflict-Handling Style Profile, after completing the twenty item inventory. The completed Conflict-Handling Style Profile provides scores for the total number of times each style of conflict-handling behavior is chosen, and indicates the number of "appropriate" choices made.

Conflict-Handling Style Profile

The Conflict-Handling Style Profile is organized into three parts: directions, a scoring grid, and interpretation section. The complete profile may be found in Appendix B.

The directions describe four specific steps for transferring responses from the CSI to the Conflict-Handling Style Profile, and for tabulating these responses to obtain scores in the categories on the scoring grid.

The scoring grid is divided into three sections. Block I reflects the responses chosen for conflict situations in which the gender of the other party was male. Scores here indicate the number of times each style of conflict-handling behavior was chosen, and the number of "most appropriate"

choices made. Block II provides the same information for choices made in which the other party was female. The third section provides the overall number of "most appropriate" choices made in the CSI.

The final part of the profile includes a very brief summary of contingency conflict management theory, and describes the organization of the scoring grid, so respondents can interpret their scores. These scores, while not definitive, provide a profile of an individuals conflict-handling behavior that reflects the following: 1. preference for or predominate use of certain conflict-handling styles; 2. avoidance or lack of use of certain styles; 3. ability to choose the response "most appropriate" in a given situation; and 4. the extent to which the individual's response to conflict may be affected by whether the other party is a male or female.

Phase I

Construction of the Initial Forty-Item Prototype

Overview of the Development Process

This section provides a brief overview of the process used to construct the initial forty-item prototype of the CSI. Greater detail about the assessment and revision of items appears in the sections that follow.

The construction of the CSI was based on steps recommended by Borg and Gall (1983, p.298) in the process of measurement development. Having defined the objectives of the study and the target population, related measures were reviewed for ideas on item types and formats (Hall, 1969; Hersey & Blanchard, 1973). Next an item pool of twice as many items as were needed in the final instrument was developed. A forty-item prototype of the instrument was prepared. Unsatisfactory items were eliminated through a process of item review and evaluation by a panel of nine judges, with expertise in the field of organizational behavior.

Development of the Forty-Item Prototype

An initial forty-item prototype of the CSI was developed to create a pool of items twice as large as the number needed for the final instrument. A copy of the forty-item prototype can be found in Appendix D.

The first step in the process of developing the prototype was to identify factors that may influence choice of conflict-handling behavior (see Chapter II, Table 5., "Factors Influencing Conflict Behavior") as suggested in the literature on conflict management. Steps were then taken to minimize the effect that these factors may have on choice of conflict behavior in response to the situations described in the CSI.

First, since the research literature reviewed for this study indicates that the status of the other party may be a strong influence on conflict behavior, the majority of the situations describe conflict with a co-worker, eliminating status as a factor. Only four items in the prototype place the respondent in a position of responsibility or power over the other party. These status-related items are balanced across gender, but not conflict-handling style type.

Some other factors identified as possibly having influence on conflict-handling behavior were the stakes in the relationship, conflict of interest, rules and

procedures, and commitment (see Table 5., Chapter II for complete list). These were randomly distributed throughout the items in the instrument so that no one factor was included more frequently than another factor. It was hoped that this method would reduce the interaction of situational variables other than gender with choice of conflict-handling behavior.

The second step in the process of developing the prototype was to identify potential sources of conflict in work settings (see "Sources of Dyadic Conflict in Organizations", Table 3., Chapter II). Since the source of the conflict may also be a factor influencing conflict-handling behavior, an effort was made to write descriptions of conflict situations stemming from a variety of these sources, to minimize this effect.

In addition to the sources of conflict drawn from the literature, the target population was examined in order to identify conflict situations they might commonly encounter. The researcher drew on her experience conducting management training with the target population and with professionals from various other organizations, using examples of conflict situations offered by these workshop participants in the items written. The attempt here was to create items salient

to the respondents as a way to maintain their attention and interest in the instrument (Sudman & Bradburn, 1982, p.208).

The actual process of writing each item was based on a reverse-type thinking order. First, the conflict-handling style chosen to be the "most appropriate" in a particular item was identified. Then a situation was described to match that choice based on implications from the literature (see "Functionality of Conflict-Handling Behaviors", p. 58, Chapter II; and Table 4. " Factors Relating to Functionality of Conflict-Handling Behavior", Chapter II).

Five alternative responses to the conflict situation were written for each item, each one describing behavior that would be associated with one of the five styles of conflict-handling behavior. An effort was made to include all the forms that these styles may take as defined by Thomas and Kilmann (1974). These various forms of the styles are summarized in Table 8. The description of the behavior for the style intended to be the "most appropriate" response in each situation was based on the situation.

Table 8. Behavioral Forms of Conflict-Handling Styles.

<u>Conflict-Handling</u> <u>Styles</u>	<u>Behavioral Forms</u>
Competing	Using power to win (e.g. ability to argue, rank, economic sanctions)
Defending a position you believe is correct	Standing up for your rights
Accommodating	Trying to win
Yielding to another's point of view	Selfless generosity or charity
Avoiding	Obeying another's order when you would prefer not to
Collaborating	Diplomatically side-stepping an issue
Compromising	Postponing an issue until a better time
	Withdrawing from a threatening situation
	Exploring a disagreement to learn from each other
	Confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem
	Resolving a condition which causes competition for resources
	Splitting the difference
	Exchanging concessions
	Seeking a quick middle-ground position

Consideration was also given to reducing the effects of subtle gender bias by making an effort to avoid sex-role stereotyping in the situation described as well as in the

alternative responses for each item. Items were randomly ordered in regard to the gender of the other party as well, to lessen the development of a gender "mind set" by the respondent.

Finally, items and alternative responses were randomized to avoid any patterns of "most appropriate" choice or response styles.

Phase II

Evaluation and Refinement of the Instrument

The CSI was evaluated through the following four-stage process:

Stage One included a review of the forty-item prototype by eight expert judges, analysis of their responses, and revisions based on this analysis.

Stage Two included a review of the revised forty item prototype by a leading conflict management theorist; an analysis of his response; and revisions, including the elimination of ten items, based on this analysis.

Stage Three included a pilot test of the thirty-item prototype with twenty-two subjects; analysis of the data; and revisions to the Conflict-Handling Style Profile.

Stage Four included the elimination of an additional ten items, and minor revisions to the CSI based on the verbal responses of the pilot subjects, further analysis of the nine judges responses, and personal evaluation of the researcher.

Stage One

A panel of eight judges (four male and four female) with expertise in organizational behavior was selected to review and evaluate the forty-item prototype of the CSI. The panel consisted of four university faculty members, two doctoral candidates, and two post-doctoral professionals familiar with similar instrument design (Hersey & Blanchard, 1983). The judges were provided with the definitions and suggested uses of the five conflict-handling styles according to Thomas and Kilmann (1974).

The expert judges were asked to evaluate two aspects of the items according to the following criteria: 1) the accuracy of match between the description of each conflict situation and the style of conflict-handling behavior rated as "appropriate" in that situation; 2) the accuracy of fit of the description of behaviors related to each of the five styles of conflict-handling (as defined by Thomas and Kilmann, [1974]) that follow each item as a possible

response. General comments and suggestions regarding wording and meaning of the items were also requested. A copy of the cover letter to the judges is included in Appendix E.

In addition to the written evaluations, six of the judges followed up their review with verbal comments and specific suggestions regarding the design of the instrument, in the course of telephone or in-person interviews.

Analysis of judges responses: The accuracy of fit of the description of behaviors with the conflict-handling styles intended to be described in the responses that follow each item, was considered first in the analysis. The percentage of agreement between the researcher and the expert judges on the fit of each style with its behavioral description was as follows: competing style, 99.1% agreement; accomodating style, 90.3% agreement, avoiding style, 87.5% agreement; collaborating style, 98.4% agreement; compromising style, 90.3% agreement. Table 9. shows the exact number of occurences of agreement on each of the five response alternatives for all forty items in the prototype.

Reasons for the lower agreement rate for accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles were reflected in the judges comments. In general, the judges saw occassional similarities or overlap between these styles. For example, an avoiding style may serve to accommodate the other party,

Table 9. Occurrences of agreement between researcher and eight expert judges on fit of conflict-handling behavior descriptions with conflict-handling style in response alternatives. Note: 8 = 100% agreement between judges and this researcher.

<u>Conflict-Handling Styles - Response Alternatives</u>					
Item #	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
1	8	8	8	8	8
2	8	7	7	8	8
3	8	3	3	8	4
4	8	7	7	8	8
5	8	7	6	8	6
6	7	8	6	6	8
7	8	7	7	7	7
8	8	5	1	8	5
9	8	8	8	8	7
10	8	8	6	8	7.
11	8	8	7	8	8
12	8	8	8	8	8
13	8	7	6	7	8
14	8	5	6	8	8
15	8	8	8	7	7
16	8	7	5	8	4
17	8	8	8	8	8
18	8	8	8	8	8
19	8	8	8	8	8
20	8	8	8	8	8

Table 9. continued

<u>Conflict-Handling Styles - Response Alternatives</u>					
Item #	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
21	8	8	8	8	8
22	8	8	8	8	8
23	7	7	7	8	8
24	8	8	8	8	7
25	8	6	6	8	8
26	8	7	7	8	7
27	8	6	6	8	8
28	8	7	8	8	8
29	8	8	8	8	7
30	7	6	5	8	8
31	8	8	8	8	6
32	8	7	7	8	8
33	8	8	8	8	8
34	8	8	8	8	8
35	8	8	8	8	8
36	8	8	8	8	8
37	8	8	8	8	7
38	8	8	8	8	8
39	8	4	8	8	8
40	8	8	7	8	3
					5

or an accommodating action may result in a compromise. Specific examples of problems and revisions made based on judges comments are provided in the next section.

Agreement on the other aspect of each item, the accuracy of match between the description of each conflict situation and the style of conflict-handling behavior rated as "appropriate" in that situation, was not as high. Overall percentages of agreement for each style intended as "appropriate" were: competing, 64.3%; accomodating, 50%; avoiding, 51.8%; collaborating, 64,3%; compromising, 51.8%. These percentages are based on ratings of only seven judges, since one failed to complete this aspect of the instrument evaluation. Table 10. shows the exact number of judges agreeing with the researcher on "appropriate" response for each of the forty items, and also indicates the response they chose when in disagreement. Note that this table reflects the occasional omission by a judge, of a choice for a particular item.

Reasons for judges disagreement here were in part due to the problems previously indicated with the descriptions of the response styles. In general, judges comments regarding which response they felt "appropriate" in each situation indicated a lack of clarity or a lack of information in the description of the situation. Other

Table 10. Comparison of choice of "most appropriate" conflict-handling style between researcher and expert judges. Note: * represents the response seen as "most appropriate" by the researcher and highlights the number of judges who agreed.

<u>"Most Appropriate" Conflict-Handling Style</u>					
<u>Number of Items Where Agreement Occured</u>					
Item #	Compet-	Accomm-	Avoid-	Collab-	Compro-
1	4			2*	1
2			1	6*	
3	3		2*	2	
4				5	2*
5	7*				
6			6*		1
7		5*	1		1
8	2		5*		
9	5*			2	
10				6*	1
11				3	4*
12		2*		2	3
13				6*	1
14	6*				
15			1	1	5*
16		2	3*	2	
17		6*		1	
18	3*				4
19	3	1			3*
20		2*		4	1

Table 10. continued

<u>"Most Appropriate" Conflict-Handling Style</u>					
<u>Number of Items Where Agreement Occured</u>					
Item #	Compet-	Accomm-	Avoid-	Collab-	Compro-
21	1				
22	2			3*	3
23			4*	1	
24			2	3*	2
25			1	5*	1
26		5*		2	
27	3*		3	1	
28	1				6*
29	1	1	3*	1	1
30		3*		2	2
31	4*			1	1
32				2	5*
33	1		1	5*	
34	5*		4*	2	
35					2
36				5*	2
37	3*			3	1
38		4*		2	1
39	1			3	3*
40	1	1*			5
			2*		4

possible reasons for the low agreement rate are implied in judges comments ranging from "so enmeshed in a similar situation in real life that choice is greatly influenced by personal factors" to "none of the choices seem appropriate". General examples of problems indicated by judges and a summary of the revisions are included in the next section.

Revisions: This section provides a general description of the types of revisions made in the forty item prototype based on analysis of the evaluations of the expert judges. For more detailed, representative examples of specific changes made based on the expert judges evaluations, see Appendix F.

Alternative Responses. In regard to the CSI alternative responses, the judges comments indicated an occasional lack of distinction between conflict- handling styles. In some instances this seemed to be due to a confounding phrase. In other cases, the language or tone used seemed to convey a different style then the one intended. Revisions were made to the alternative responses in question, that provided a clearer distinction between styles. Confounding phrases were eliminated, language and tone were made more congruent with conflict-handling style, and more specific behavioral descriptions, ones that might

be more closely associated with a particular style, were written.

Conflict Situations. In general, there were two kinds of problems found in the conflict situation descriptions according to the judges evaluations. The first was an occasional lack of clarity concerning the situational factor linked to the choice of "appropriate" response intended. Revisions here consisted of adding key words or phrases that would make this factor more clearly evident.

The second type of problem emerging from a review of the judges evaluations, was a concern for possible gender bias in a few situations. In these instances, questions were raised regarding either potential negative stereotyping of women, or sex-typed role descriptions. Revisions were made in an attempt to lessen effects of gender bias. Possible negative sex-stereotypical behavior was eliminated in some cases, and in others, the gender of the "other party" was changed to compensate for the sex-typing of role descriptions.

In summary, the evaluations of the eight expert judges were reviewed and analyzed in Stage One. Based on their ratings of the CSI according to accuracy of match between the conflict situations and the intended "appropriate" response, and the accuracy of fit of the alternative

responses with the related conflict- handling styles, changes were made. Additional revisions were made based on the judges comments at this stage. These included clarification of the distinction between alternative responses; clarification of factors related to "appropriate" response in a conflict situation; and the reduction of potential gender biases. The revised version of the forty-item prototype appears in Appendix G.

Stage Two

At this point, the researcher's confidence in the accuracy of fit of the description of behaviors related to each of the five styles of conflict-handling was great, given the high rate of agreement from the expert judges, and the subsequent revisions made. However, in view of the relatively low agreement from these judges on the accuracy of match between the description of each conflict situation and the "appropriate" response style, the need for a second stage in the evaluation process was determined.

Further evaluation was needed at this point for two reasons. First of all, the forty item prototype had been significantly revised, and evaluation based on the revised form was necessary. Secondly, since the original eight judges were individuals with backgrounds in organizational

behavior, but not necessarily in conflict management, it was felt by the researcher that more specialized expertise would be helpful at this point. Given that the instrument is based on contingency conflict management theory, it was thought that a person with a thorough understanding of this theory would be better able to judge the accuracy of match between the conflict situation descriptions and the "appropriate" response style in the CSI.

Kenneth Thomas, whose conflict management theory underlies the CSI, was contacted at the University of Pittsburgh, where he is a professor in the Graduate School of Business. He agreed to review and evaluate the instrument. A copy of the revised forty-item prototype, to be evaluated based on the same criteria used by the eight expert judges in Stage One of the evaluation process, was sent to him. Analysis of his evaluation and general comments provide the basis for the revisions made in Stage Two of the process of instrument evaluation.

Analysis of Thomas' response: This analysis focuses on Kenneth Thomas' actual ratings of the CSI according to the established criteria, as well as his general comments about the instrument. A general description of revisions based on this analysis are included in the next section.

In relation to the fit of the behavioral descriptions in the response alternatives with the conflict-handling styles, Thomas agreed with the researcher in all but three instances. This represents a 98.5% agreement rate on this aspect of the instrument. While this is a considerably high rate of agreement, he identified a few problems regarding the response style descriptions that indicated a need for some additional revisions in this stage.

According to Thomas' written comments, he found "occasional trouble with compromise and avoiding items". Specific examples cited by Thomas and the revisions made are detailed in the next section.

Regarding the "most appropriate" response to the conflict situations described in the CSI, Thomas agreed with the researcher on 34 out of 40 items, an agreement rate of 85%. On several items he felt that "a number of responses seemed possible" and that "more information would have helped me to be more certain about one over the others".

Revisions: Overall Thomas' response was analyzed and compared, rating for rating, with those of the eight expert judges, in order to weed out the ten most problematic items. His comments regarding response style and situation descriptions were used to revise the thirty items remaining. The following is an explanation of the item elimination

process and general revisions made. Specific revisions made at this stage can be found in Appendix H.

Item elimination. Ten items needed to be eliminated in this stage of item evaluation, in order to have a thirty item prototype ready for pilot testing in the final stage. Consideration of the structural design of the instrument dictated that two items relating to each style of conflict-handling as "appropriate" be eliminated, one each for each category of gender indicated as the other party.

The researcher's first concern in eliminating items was around the match of "appropriate" response to the conflict situations described in the instrument. It seemed to make sense to eliminate those items that had no or low agreement on this dimension. The evaluations of all the judges were used here, with more weight being given to Thomas' evaluation as the "expert" in this regard.

First the six items where there was no agreement from Thomas on "appropriate" response (items 3, 14, 19, 23, 28, and 31), and those where he indicated some question about "appropriate" response (items 10, 21, 34, and 36) were reviewed for possible elimination. While it was of particular interest to the researcher that these were all items in which the other party was female, this posed a structural problem in regard to eliminating them. The items

in question were then compared with the ratings of the other judges. Three of these, items 3, 19, and 23, were also found to have low agreement from the judges on this dimension, and were eliminated. Items 10 and 14 had high agreement from the other eight judges and were retained.

Items 18, 20 and 24 received low agreement from the judges on "appropriate" response and were eliminated in spite of agreement from Thomas on this aspect of the item. The judges had raised a number of concerns about these situations that seemed significant enough to determine their elimination at this point.

Criteria for further eliminations were based on a combination of several factors: 1) Structural considerations for the overall design of the instrument; 2) an analysis of the combined evaluations of all the judges; and 3) the researchers subjective analysis of the suitability of each item. A number of examples of items eliminated according to this process appear here.

In a closer examination of item 31, which was intended to have a compromise response as most "appropriate", it became apparent that the collaborative style chosen by Thomas was preferable in this situation. This conflict situation did not lend itself to a rewriting that would make

it more appropriately a compromise situation, and was therefore eliminated.

Items were then reviewed in sets, according to style and gender, in order to eliminate the least suitable item in each category. Since two compromise situations involving females had already been eliminated, the gender of the other party in a remaining compromise situation (item 38) was changed from male to female to accomodate this structural demand. Item elimination in other sets was based on an analysis of the evaluations of the items in the set.

In item 34, Thomas pointed out that the avoiding response given is the "equivalent of competing ... at least in terms of outcome". Since this was intended to be a competing situation this problem seemed to considerably weaken the strength of the match here, and the item was eliminated.

The final two items eliminated, 6 and 35, were identified by the researcher as the weakest in their category in terms of salience for the respondent and strength of match of "appropriate" style. These eliminations completed the first part of the revision process at this stage of evaluation of the instrument. The thirty items remaining were then revised for use in the pilot stage.

Alternative Response Revisions. Thomas pointed out a few problems with the behavioral descriptions in the response alternatives. One of these problems was with responses in which part of the action taken would result in an outcome associated with a different conflict-handling style than the one intended, lessening the fit of the response. In these cases phrases were eliminated or added in an effort to make a stronger connection between the behavioral description in the response and the style intended.

Another problem with one response revealed in Thomas' comments was that the language used was not representative of the style intended. Here a revision was made changing the language to better fit the style.

The only other problem that Thomas indicated was that in one response, there was little reason given for it to be a likely choice. Since this response was intended to be the "most appropriate" one here, it was rewritten to provide better rationale for choosing it.

Conflict Situation Revisions. Thomas suggested in his comments that there was a need to clarify a few of the conflict situation descriptions in order to be more certain of the "most appropriate" response. In these cases, additional information regarding situational factors

associated with the response intended to be "most appropriate" was written into the situation descriptions. The changes here were on the same order as the ones made in Stage One, based on the initial judges evaluations, although these particular cases had not been previously identified as problematic. These further revisions were thought to improve the match between the conflict situations and their related responses.

In summary, ten items were eliminated and the thirty remaining items in the CSI revised during Stage Two. Eliminations here were based both on the structural demands of the instrument, and on further analysis of the initial judges evaluations weighed against that of Kenneth Thomas, the expert judge used in Stage Two of the process of instrument evaluation.

Revisions to the thirty remaining items reflect Thomas' knowledge and insight in the area of contingency conflict management. These revisions included changes that seemed to strengthen the fit of the alternative responses with the corresponding conflict-handling styles, as well as the match between the conflict situations and the response intended to be "appropriate" in each case. More specific descriptions of the revisions made during this stage appear in Appendix H.

It is the researcher's belief that the CSI was significantly refined during this stage, and was ready for pilot testing. The thirty item prototype (see Appendix I for copy) was reprinted for use with the pilot subjects. Occasional re-ordering of items and alternative responses was also done here to eliminate some patterns that had resulted from revising the original prototype.

Stage Three

Stage three in the process of evaluating the CSI consisted of a pilot test of the thirty-item prototype with twenty-two subjects from the target population. The Conflict-Handling Scoring Profile (described earlier) was developed at this point for use in the pilot test. This section describes first the pilot test, and then the revisions made to the scoring profile before being printed in its final form. The initial version of the scoring profile can be found in Appendix J.

Pilot Test: A thirty-item prototype of the CSI was piloted with a group of twenty-two subjects from the target population. These subjects were voluntary participants in a staff development workshop in management, conducted by the researcher. The CSI was administered at the start of the

workshop, before any other material was presented, to avoid contamination. Permission to use data from participant's scoring profiles for the purposes of this study was sought after completion of the CSI for the same reason. The option to retain individual scoring profiles was made available. Willing participants were asked to sign a human subject consent form.

Following a theory presentation on contingency conflict management, participants analyzed their scores obtained from the Conflict-Handling Style Profile, in order to better understand their own style of dealing with conflict in the workplace. Comments and suggestions concerning the design and clarity of the CSI, and the style profile were then solicited from the participants. Their responses were used to make a few minor revisions to the scoring profile.

Data Analysis: Analysis of the data from the pilot test was used here only to describe the data, in order to identify response patterns that might be a problem. Given the small number of subjects in the pilot group, it was not felt that statistical testing of the hypothesis would be valuable at this point.

Appendix K contains a summary of the pilot test data. Included here are response frequencies for the eleven male and eleven female pilot subjects for the thirty items in the

CSI prototype. Note that Block I responses represent those fifteen items in which the other party was male, as described in the situation. Block II are those where the other party was female. These data did not significantly bear on future decisions to eliminate or revise items, and so do not appear in the text of this chapter.

Revisions : The only revisions to the CSI made during Stage Three, were minor ones to the Conflict-Handling Style Profile. The pilot subjects were the first persons to review the scoring profile, and as the first actual respondents to the CSI, their reactions to scoring and interpreting it were of significant concern here.

Feedback from the pilot subject's on the Conflict-Handling Style Profile indicated some problems concerning the clarity of the instructions for scoring and interpreting the instrument. Minor revisions were made here to reduce these problems. The final version of the scoring profile can be found in Appendix B.

Conflict-Handling Style Profile Revisions. In regard to the directions for scoring the CSI, using the profile, Steps 3 and 4 were reversed, based on feedback from the pilot subjects regarding logical sequencing. Additional phrases were also added to these steps for clarification.

Finally, the use of the term "Overall Totals" was introduced here to better distinguish this section from the "Totals" section on the scoring form.

This new term was carried over to the actual scoring grid, where responses chosen on the CSI are transferred. A suggestion from the pilot subjects, to add the names of the five conflict-handling styles beneath the respective columns recording the choice of these styles, was also used here. This was suggested as a means of aiding in the interpretation of the profile.

Finally, the guidelines for interpreting the Conflict-Handling Style Profile were revised to reflect the changes that had been made in the scoring form. Two phrases were also added here to clarify the interpretation of a score obtained from the CSI. The various sections of the profile were then arranged on one page so that the sections could be divided by folding the form into thirds.

In summary, Stage Three consisted of a pilot test of the thirty-item prototype of the CSI with twenty-two male and female subjects from the target group. Their comments and suggestions were used to make revisions to the Conflict-Handling Scoring Profile constructed during this stage. A summary of the pilot data appears in Appendix K.

Stage Four

The final stage in the process of evaluating and refining the CSI consisted of the elimination of an additional ten items, and the formatting and printing of the final twenty-item instrument. Elimination decisions at this stage were based on a qualitative item analysis integrating the responses of the pilot subjects with the evaluations of the expert judges and the researcher. The next section contains a description of this analysis and the items eliminated.

Item Elimination

The main criteria used to determine the final ten items to be eliminated from the CSI in Stage Three was "suitability", determined by a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the items. Items that were found to be the least suitable, based on the responses of the expert judges in Stages One and Two, combined with the data from the pilot test and the researcher's own judgment, were eliminated. "Suitability" here refers to a relatively high rate of agreement between the expert judges and the researcher on the aspects of the item under review, as well as the absence of problems that may have been identified in any of the previous stages. Given that the data from the pilot test

were only descriptive, no conclusions could be drawn from it regarding the suitability of items. These data therefore, were not used as the sole criterion for retaining or rejecting items in Stage Four.

The elimination process at this stage consisted of a review by the researcher of each set of three items, (grouped according to conflict-handling style and gender of the other party), in order to determine the least suitable item from each set for elimination. Since only one item was identified by the pilot subjects as problematic (item 13), this review was mostly focused on a second analysis of the evaluations of the expert judges, combined with that of the researcher.

Items that had been considered for elimination in Stage Two, were re-examined at this point. Items chosen for elimination in Stage Four were essentially those that had been identified as the second "least suitable" item in each item set in the previous stage. In some instances, all the items in a particular set seemed equally suitable based on the judges evaluations. Here, elimination of an item was based on the researcher's evaluation in regard to salience of the item for the target population. On occasion, verbal feedback from pilot subjects was considered in order to identify any problems that might lend additional weight to

the decision to eliminate an item from a set, when no other criteria were found. Examples of items eliminated by these methods are described below.

Examples. Item 13 was considered first here for possible elimination based on verbal comments raised during the pilot test. One subject pointed out that compromising (the intended "appropriate response" here) was unrealistic, given that it seemed to be a win/lose situation. The compromise offered as an alternative response for this situation allows one party to get her way this year, and the other party "wins" the following year. No realistic compromise could be found for this situation, and it was eliminated.

Item 9 was selected as the "weakest" compromising situation with a male as the other party, for reasons similar to those in item 13. Although it was not identified by judges or pilot subjects as problematic, it too, seemed to be a win/lose situation, difficult to compromise. The compromising response offered as an alternative, also seemed to fit into the category of an integrative solution, identified earlier by Kenneth Thomas as possibly confounding. These factors made item 9 seem weaker than others in this item set, determining its elimination.

Item 14 was eliminated based on a combination of low agreement from the expert judges on "appropriate" response in Stage One, and the researcher's sense that the affective, rather than substantive nature of the conflict described here might be unclear and confusing to the reader. Other items in this set were determined to be stronger than item 14, an additional factor in its elimination.

Item 24 seemed less salient for the target population than others in its item set. The conflict situation described here involved being in a position to make a hiring decision. Since this might be an unlikely position for many of the target subjects themselves to be in, it was thought that it may be hard for the subjects to identify with. The item, therefore, was eliminated.

In some item sets, the only items that stood out as potential problems were those with low agreement from the expert judges on "appropriate" response in Stage One. Items 10, 16, 21, 26 and 29 were eliminated based on this criteria. This item was also viewed by the researcher as less salient for the target subjects.

The final item eliminated in Stage Four was item 4. The determining factor here was that this situation might be construed as sex role-typed, given that it describes a male maintenance worker. The situation also may imply that the

respondent is in a position of status higher than the other party, which may affect the match of the "appropriate" response intended. The other items in this set were found to stronger in comparison, and item 4 was eliminated.

Revisions

There were no further revisions made to CSI items during Stage Four of the evaluation and refinement process. Any problems mentioned by the pilot subjects concerning conflict situation descriptions or response alternatives were addressed in the elimination process.

Summary

Stage Four of the evaluation process of the CSI consisted of the elimination of an additional ten items and the preparation of the final form of the twenty-item instrument. The elimination process in this stage was based on a qualitative analysis of the responses of the expert judges in Stages One and Two, combined with the researcher's evaluation and feedback from the pilot subjects. The CSI was then formatted, professionally printed, and readied for use as the research instrument in the study being undertaken here.

C H A P T E R V

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the results of the study which was designed to ascertain the moderating effects of gender on an individual's reported conflict-handling behavior in selected written hypothetical situations. A discussion of the findings follows each section of results.

Chapter V begins with a general examination of the patterns in the data collected with the Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI), (the instrument designed for this study), from 100 professional staff at a large university. Next, results of the significance tests performed on these data are reported. Finally, consideration is given to future development of the instrument, based on the results of its use in this study. This chapter, then, contains four main sections: 1) Overview of the data (an examination of frequency ranges in CSI responses); 2) Results and discussion of the hypothesis testing (Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Ranked-Signs test to determine significance regarding difference relating to gender of the other party); 3) Results and discussion of the Mann-Whitney test to determine

significance regarding differences between subject groups (males vs. females); and 4) Discussion of the instrument.

Overview of the Data

Crosstabulation of the three variables focused on in this study, choice of conflict-handling behavior; sex of subject; and gender of the other party, was performed to examine their interaction. Interest here was not in finding significant correlation among these variables, only to identify CSI response patterns. Since the Wilcoxon test for significance is not an indicator of direction, crosstabulation was necessary to identify the direction of differences found. Crosstabulation of data is presented in this chapter then, only to supplement Wilcoxon findings that prove to be significant. Complete crosstabulation data is summarized for reference in Tables 11. and 12..

Before examining Wilcoxon results, this next section is presented to provide an initial overview of the data, namely the range of frequency of choices made by subjects in response to the CSI. A brief glance at Table 11. reveals some interesting patterns regarding this. Note that Block I refers to style choices for the ten items in which the other party was male; Block II choices are for the ten items in which the other party was female. Note also that, according

Table 11. Frequency of style choices by female (n=50) and male (n=50) subjects compared across blocks.

	Block I		Block II	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
no. of times chosen				
	Competing			
0	13n (26%)	13n (26%)	2n (4%)	3n (6%)
1	14n (28%)	18n (36%)	15n (30%)	14n (28%)
2	11n (22%)	7n (14%)	29n (58%)	26n (52%)
3	10n (20%)	6n (12%)	4n (8%)	5n (10%)
4	2n (4%)	6n (12%)	0	2n (4%)
	Accommodating			
0	15n (30%)	16n (32%)	5n (10%)	7n (14%)
1	22n (44%)	24n (48%)	15n (30%)	12n (24%)
2	11n (22%)	8n (16%)	23n (46%)	25n (50%)
3	2n (4%)	2n (4%)	7n (14%)	4n (8%)
4	0	0	0	2n (4%)
	Avoiding			
0	2n (4%)	3n (6%)	15n (30%)	25n (50%)
1	8n (16%)	9n (18%)	19n (38%)	12n (24%)
2	36n (72%)	33n (66%)	10n (20%)	9n (18%)
3	3n (6%)	5n (10%)	5n (10%)	2n (4%)
4	0	0	1n (2%)	1n (2%)
5	1n (2%)	0	0	1n (2%)

Table 11. continued

	Block I		Block II	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
no. of times chosen				
	Collaborating			
0	0	2n (4%)	0	2n (4%)
1	5n (10%)	4n (8%)	4n (8%)	1n (2%)
2	13n (26%)	10n (20%)	4n (8%)	5n (10%)
3	12n (24%)	10n (20%)	13n (26%)	11n (22%)
4	9n (18%)	7n (14%)	16n (32%)	12n (24%)
5	8n (16%)	7n (14%)	9n (18%)	6n (12%)
6	2n (4%)	5n (10%)	3n (6%)	7n (14%)
7	1n (2%)	3n (6%)	1n (2%)	4n (8%)
8	0	1n (2%)	0	0
9	0	1n (2%)	0	1n (2%)
10	0	0	0	1n (2%)
	Compromising			
0	1n (2%)	5n (10%)	5n (10%)	10n (20%)
1	12n (24%)	16n (32%)	14n (28%)	20n (40%)
2	13n (26%)	11n (22%)	20n (40%)	9n (18%)
3	15n (30%)	8n (16%)	8n (16%)	9n (18%)
4	7n (14%)	7n (14%)	3n (6%)	2n (4%)
5	2n (4%)	3n (6%)	0	0

Table 12. Frequency of "appropriate" ("APP") style choices by female (n=50) and male (n=50) subjects compared across blocks.

no. of "APP" choices	Block I		Block II	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Competing				
0	16n (32%)	18n (36%)	5n (10%)	6n (12%)
1	21n (42%)	18n (36%)	15n (30%)	19n (38%)
2	13n (26%)	14n (28%)	30n (60%)	25n (50%)
Accommodating				
0	15n (30%)	18n (36%)	7n (14%)	8n (16%)
1	23n (46%)	23n (46%)	14n (28%)	16n (32%)
2	12n (24%)	9n (18%)	29n (58%)	26n (52%)
Avoiding				
0	2n (4%)	3n (6%)	22n (44%)	29n (58%)
1	11n (22%)	16n (32%)	22n (44%)	18n (36%)
2	37n (74%)	31n (62%)	6n (12%)	3n (6%)
Collaborating				
0	5n (10%)	7n (14%)	4n (8%)	7n (14%)
1	27n (54%)	20n (40%)	10n (20%)	12n (24%)
2	18n (36%)	23n (46%)	36n (72%)	31n (62%)
Compromising				
0	1n (2%)	9n (18%)	24n (48%)	27n (54%)
1	31n (62%)	21n (42%)	23n (46%)	21n (42%)
2	18n (36%)	20n (40%)	3n (6%)	2n (4%)

to the design of the CSI, each conflict-handling style is viewed as the "most appropriate" choice in only two of the ten items in each block.

The first point of interest is that, with the exception of female subjects choosing collaborating, each of the remaining styles was never chosen by some individual subjects. In other words, some subjects chose certain styles of conflict-handling more frequently than other styles, failing to choose certain styles at all.

Another obvious pattern in these data is that the collaborating style had a considerably higher frequency range than the other four styles. With the highest possible frequency of style choice in each block being 10, (and in only 2 of those 10 times would it be the "appropriate" choice), the high end of the frequency range for collaborating was between 7 and 10. This demonstrates a tendency for some subjects to choose collaborating, in response to the CSI, much more frequently than other styles, and than theory would say is correct.

One interpretation of this trend is that their heavy choice of collaboration as a way to respond to conflict situations, may be reflective of a norm that reflects the climate of the organization, at least for professional staff at this one institution. This trend might also relate to

the fact that these subjects have all had a minimum of two years of college education, and are currently working in an institution of higher education. Their work environment may include frequent exposure to learning theories and practices which emphasize a high degree of interpersonal involvement, characteristic of the collaborative style.

Along these same lines, we might also be seeing the effects of a current trend in management in general, toward a collaborative work ethic. If this is the case, then repetition of this study with subjects from a variety of organizations would result in a similar pattern. Speculatively, if this study were done twenty or thirty years ago, the trend may have been toward a more competing, or possibly avoiding style, depending on whether we focused on managers or workers. Data gathering in multiple sites now, would help us understand whether the response pattern was due to time period or organizational culture.

Further examination of crosstabulation data is reserved as supplement to significance tests performed on these data. The next sections refer to crosstabulated data in Tables 11. and 12. as an indicator of the direction of significant findings.

Results of the Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: Choice of Style

In order to investigate whether the gender of the other party in a given conflict situation affected choice of conflict-handling behavior, the Wilcoxon matched-pairs ranked-signs test was performed. The Wilcoxon is a non-parametric test that analyzes the differences between paired observations (in this case, subject's responses on Block I paired with subject's responses on Block II on the CSI), and determines the magnitude of the difference. A test statistic Z was performed based on ranks of positive and negative sums. The Wilcoxon test was based on data in Table 11.

"The hypothesis tested by the Wilcoxon test is that the two populations represented by the respective members of matched pairs are identical (Hays,1981, p.590). In other words, in regard to this study, the Wilcoxon test was applied to the null hypothesis that the distribution of response types for Block I (male other party) and Block II (female other party) on the CSI are identical.

The Wilcoxon results presented here are organized according to their respective hypotheses being tested in this study. The statistical hypotheses are stated in the

null form. Results are first summarized in tables, then discussed in regard to their significance.

Differences in Distribution of Response Types

Comparing subject responses to CSI items in which the other party was male, with responses to those in which the other party was female, we find some significant differences. The difference between the distributions of response types in Block I (situations with male others) and Block II (situations with female others) on the CSI is examined first in relation to choice of conflict-handling style in general, and then for "appropriate" choice.

Conflict-Handling Style Choice

Original Hypothesis 1. There will be a significant relationship between gender of the other party and choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation.

Hypothesis 1. was translated into the null (Ho) form for statistical purposes. Tables 13. and 14. summarize the results of the Wilcoxon tests performed on this hypothesis.

Statistical Hypothesis 1.

Ho: The distribution of response types in Block I will be identical to the distribution of response types in Block II.

Table 13. Wilcoxon statistics pairing style choices
(response types) in Block I (B1) with Block II
(B2), for female subjects.

Female Subjects (n =50)						
Style Choices - B1 with B2						
Style Choice	-Ranks (Mean)	+Ranks (Mean)		Z	2-tailed P	
Competing						
	12	16.08	20	16.75	-1.33	.184
Accommodating						
	7	20.07	32	19.98	-3.48	.000 *
Avoiding						
	33	20.15	7	22.14	-3.43	.001 *
Collaborating						
	13	17.19	24	19.98	-1.93	.053
Compromising						
	28	20.45	10	16.85	-2.93	.003 *

* significant at the .05 level

Table 14. Wilcoxon statistics pairing style choices
(response types) in Block I (B1) with Block II
(B2), for male subjects.

Male Subjects (n=50)						
Style Choices - B1 with B2						
Style Choice	-Ranks (Mean)	+Ranks (Mean)	Z	2-tailed P		
Competing						
	12	22.33	26	18.19	-1.49	.137
Accommodating						
	4	18.25	29	16.83	-3.71	.000 *
Avoiding						
	35	20.69	6	22.83	-3.80	.000 *
Collaborating						
	17	18.15	25	23.78	-1.79	.074
Compromising						
	29	21.93	12	18.75	-2.66	.008 *

* significant at the .05 level

Findings

Since the Wilcoxon tests were performed on non-directional hypotheses, no direction is indicated by these results. Information regarding direction of these differences can be found in the relevant crosstabulation data presented below.

According to these results, female subject's choice of the accommodating, avoiding and compromising styles when the other party was male, differed significantly (at the .05 level) from their choices of these styles when the other party was female. Difference in choice of competing and collaborating styles was not significant between blocks (although collaborating approached significance for both subject groups).

Interestingly, the same results were true for male subjects. The null hypothesis is thus rejected in regard to the accommodating, avoiding and compromising styles, and accepted in regard to the competing and collaborating styles.

In regard to the significant findings for choice of accommodating, avoiding and compromising styles, crosstabulation data reveals how the gender of the other party relates to these differences. Specifically, Table 11. indicates that in ten given conflict situations with males,

74 - 80% of the subjects never or only once chose an accommodating style. When the gender of the other was female in ten given situations, nearly 60% of the subjects chose accommodating two or three times. Combining this information with the Wilcoxon results, we find that both male and female subjects chose accommodating significantly more often when the other party was female, than they did when the other party was male.

The opposite is seen to be true for the choice of avoiding and compromising styles however. Table 11. reveals that more than 65% of both subject groups never or only once chose avoiding with female others, while with males, more than 75% of both groups chose it two or three times. Choice of compromising reveals a similar pattern. Considered together with the Wilcoxon results, the finding here is that these professional staff chose avoiding and compromising with significantly greater frequency when the other party was male, rather than female.

Differences in choice of competing and collaborating which can be seen in the crosstabulated data, were not found to be significant in the Wilcoxon test.

Discussion

It appears, according to these findings, that both men and women were likely to vary their use of accommodating,

avoiding and compromising styles in response to given conflict situations, depending on the gender of the other party. Their use of competing and collaborating styles however, was relatively similar, whether the other party was male or female.

It is interesting to note that the two styles that showed no significant difference in their use, regardless of the gender of the other party (competing and collaborating), are the two styles that are high on the assertive dimension of behavior in conflict situations, according to Thomas' model (1976). It seems then, that the gender of the other party in the conflict situation, has no significant bearing on whether a response is chosen that requires the use of assertiveness . Use of responses lacking assertiveness (accommodating, avoiding and compromising), but high on cooperativeness, according to Thomas' model, seems to be affected by the other party's gender, however.

Hypothesis Two: "Appropriate Conflict-Handling Style Choice

Changing the focus now to CSI responses that were theoretically "most appropriate" to the given situation (according to literature on contingency conflict management), we again find significant differences. The

hypotheses that formed the basis for the Wilcoxon test relating to the "appropriateness" variable are stated below.

Original Hypothesis 2. There will be a significant relationship between gender of the other party and choice of "appropriate" conflict-handling behavior in a given situation.

Statistical Hypothesis 2.

Ho: The distributions of "appropriate" responses in Block I and in Block II will be identical.

Hypothesis 2. was also translated into the null form for statistical purposes. Tables 15. and 16. summarize the results of the Wilcoxon tests performed on this hypothesis.

Table 15. Wilcoxon statistics pairing "appropriate" responses ("APP") in Block I (B1) with Block II (B2) by style, for female subjects.

Female Subjects (n=50)						
"Appropriate" Responses - B1 with B2						
"APP" Style	-Ranks	(Mean)	+Ranks	(Mean)	Z	2-tailed P
Competing	8	28.69	51	30.21	-4.95	.000 *
Accommodating	9	15.00	27	19.67	-3.11	.002 *
Avoiding	42	22.96	3	23.50	-5.05	.000 *
Collaborating	9	19.00	27	18.33	-2.55	.011 *
Compromising	33	17.59	1	14.50	-4.84	.000 *

* significant at the .05 level

Table 16. Wilcoxon statistics pairing "appropriate" responses ("APP") in Block I (B1) with Block II (B2) by style, for male subjects.

Male Subjects (n=50)						
"Appropriate" Responses - B1 with B2						
"APP" Style	-Ranks	(Mean)	+Ranks	(Mean)	Z	2-tailed P
Competing	6	14.00	25	16.48	-3.21	.001 *
Accommodating	3	16.83	26	14.79	-3.61	.000 *
Avoiding	39	21.44	2	12.50	-5.26	.000 *
Collaborating	10	11.50	15	14.00	-1.28	.201
Compromising	30	18.50	5	15.00	-3.93	.000 *

* significant at the .05 level

Findings

These results show that there were also significant differences regarding choices of "appropriate" response types (conflict-handling styles) across blocks on the CSI. Specifically, female subjects had a significant difference in their frequency of "appropriate" response in one block, compared to the other, for each of the five styles of conflict-handling behavior. Male subjects showed this same difference in relation to all but one of the styles, collaborating. The null hypothesis is rejected accordingly.

In other words, when it came to choosing the "most appropriate" response to a given situation, female subjects differed significantly in doing so, depending on the gender of the other party. This was true for all five of the categories of conflict-handling styles. Male subjects had a significant variation in their choice of "appropriate" style depending on whether the situation involved a male or female other, for all but the collaborating style. There was no significant difference in the frequency of their "appropriate" choice of collaborating with male others as compared to female others.

Again, these Wilcoxon results, while significant, are non-directional. Further examination of the crosstabulation data is needed to identify how these differences relate to

the gender of the party. For example, Table 12. reveals that when competing was intended as the "appropriate" response in situations involving male others, over 30% of both male and female others never chose it. In contrast, only about 10% of both male and female subjects never chose competing in situations with female others each time it was "appropriate".

On the other hand, at least 50% of both subject groups chose competing each time it was "appropriate" (twice) with female others, whereas this was true for less than 30% of both subject groups with male others. Similar statistical patterns are true for the accommodating style. This crosstabulation data, together with the Wilcoxon results, indicates that subjects chose competing and accommodating when it was intended to be the most "appropriate" choice, more often in situations where the other party was female, rather than male.

"Appropriate" choice of the avoiding style was just the opposite. Table 12. shows that over 60% of both male and female subjects always chose it when "appropriate" in situations with male others. On the other hand, 12% or less of both subject groups always chose avoiding "appropriately" when the other party was female.

"Appropriate" choice of compromising reveals a pattern in the same direction. Here we find that only three female and two male subjects chose it "appropriately" both times with female others. Nearly half of both subject groups never chose it correctly in these cases. On the other hand, over 80% of both subject groups chose compromising "appropriately" at least half the time with male others.

In light of the Wilcoxon results, the significant findings here, are that both subject groups chose avoiding and compromising "appropriately" more often with male others, than with females.

Wilcoxon results indicate a significant difference in the "appropriate" choice of collaborating in relation to the gender of the other party, for women subjects only. Table 12. shows that in this case, women subjects had a significantly higher rate of choosing collaborating "appropriately" with female, rather than male others.

Another way to analyze these data is to examine the distribution of response types over "item sets" (the two items associated with each style as "appropriate" response). This view (see Tables 17. and 18.) focuses on choice of style (response type) for male and female subjects in each block. In each "item set", we can observe frequency of choice of "appropriate" style, as well as what styles were

chosen when the "appropriate" one was not selected. Note that "item sets" are labeled in these tables by the name of the "appropriate" style of response for each set. Also note that again, asterisks (*) indicate "appropriate" style responses for each item set (and appear across from the name of the style associated with that set).

Table 17. Distribution of response styles over "item sets" for male subjects.

Male Subjects (n=50)					
Block I					
Conflict-Handling Style Responses					
Response Style of "Item Set"	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
Compet	46*	2	1	39	12
Accomm	3	41*	4	38	14
Avoid	0	2	77*	14	7
Collab	19	1	3	66*	11
Compro	7	1	4	28	60*
Block II					
Compet	70*	2	11	17	0
Accomm	2	67*	2	23	5
Avoid	2	6	23*	35	34
Collab	12	2	2	74*	10
Compro	3	4	6	63	24*

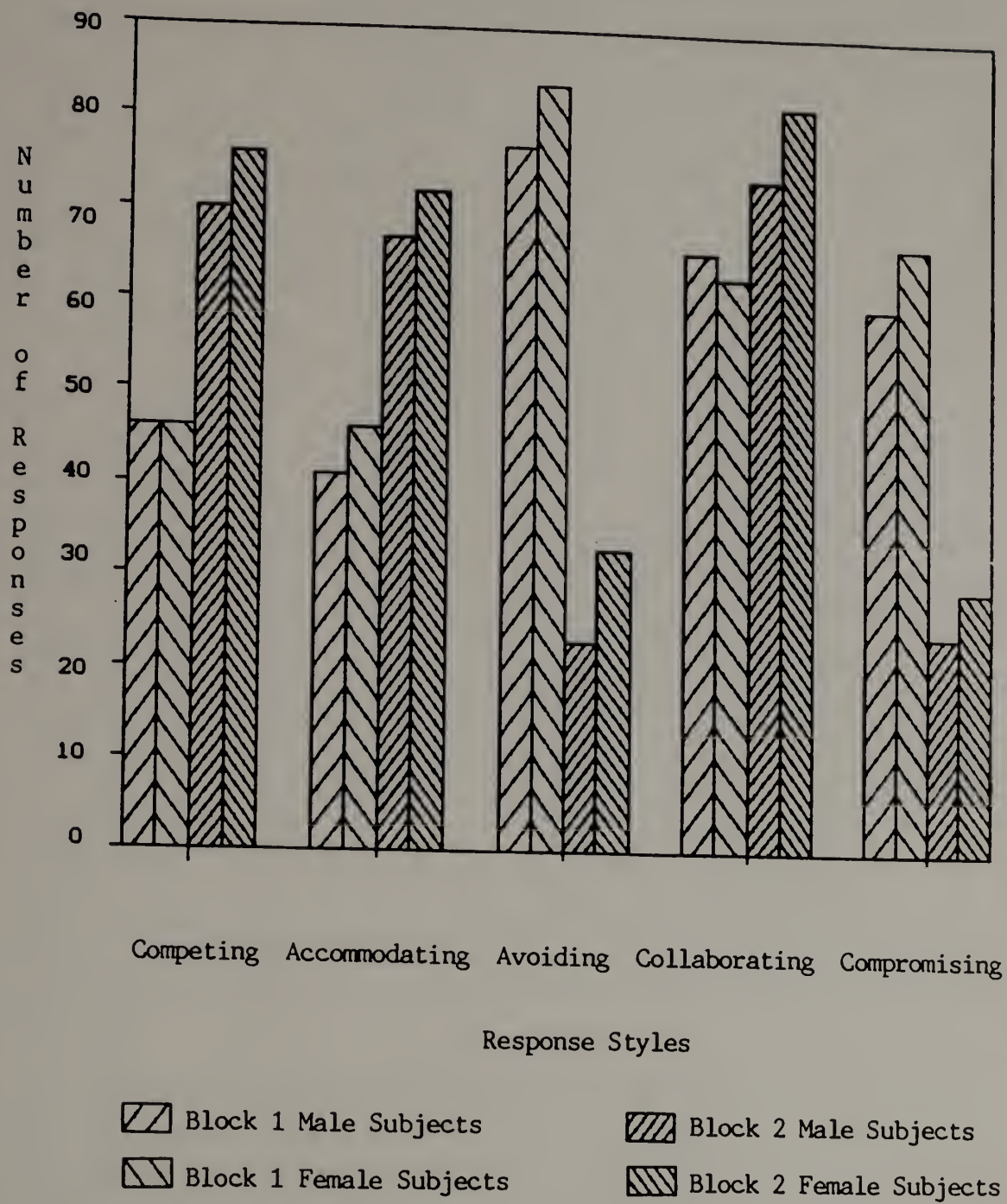
Table 18. Distribution of response styles over "item sets" for female subjects.

Female Subjects (n=50)					
Block I					
Conflict-Handling Style Responses					
Response Style of "Item Set"	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
Compet	46*	1	2	36	15
Accomm	1	46*	3	35	15
Avoid	0	1	84*	6	9
Collab	18	0	4	63*	15
Compro	8	1	2	22	67*
Block II					
Compet	76*	2	9	11	2
Accomm	0	72*	5	17	6
Avoid	3	6	33*	20	38
Collab	3	0	0	82*	15
Compro	3	2	8	58	29*

Here we can see even more distinctly, the trend toward frequent choice of the collaborating style. In fact, when it was not even intended as the "appropriate" response, it was usually the second most frequently chosen style. Also apparent here is the trend toward a relatively high rate of choice of "appropriate" responses, as discussed earlier.

Tables 17. and 18. also provide another way of viewing data examined previously by crosstabulation. Using occurrences by "item set", here we again see that female subjects had a slightly higher frequency of "appropriate" choice than did males. Similarly, we re-examine data concerning "appropriate" choice of style in relation to the gender of the other party. Again we see that competing and accommodating were chosen "appropriately" more often with female, rather than male others, by both subject groups. Avoiding was just the opposite, with "appropriate" choices occurring more often when the other was male. "Appropriate" choice of collaborating, shows only a slightly higher trend with female others, while compromising is considerably higher with males. Figure 4. provides a graphic view of these statistics.

Figure . "Appropriate" responses by response style.



This completes the supplementary analysis of the data by crosstabulation of choice of conflict-handling style, by sex of subject and gender of the other party. CSI "item sets" have also been reviewed according to these variables. These analyses provide indication of the way in which gender of the other party affected choice of conflict-handling behavior as found in the Wilcoxon test.

Discussion

It is interesting to note here, that even though Wilcoxon results show that competing and collaborating styles were used by men and women with similar frequency, regardless of the gender of the other party, they were not used "appropriately" with the same frequency. Women-subject results show a distinct variation in "appropriate" choice of these styles depending on whether the other party is male or female. (e. g., at least twice as many women chose competing and collaborating each time it was "appropriate" with female others as with male others). This difference is in spite of the fact that they tended to choose competing and collaborating relatively as often with male others, as they did with female others. Male subject results show a similar pattern for their choice of competing, whereas there was no significance for collaborating in either case.

It appears then, that even though men and women subjects are just as likely to choose competing in response to a given situation, regardless of whether the other person involved is a male or a female, they don't choose it when it is "appropriate" with males, as often as they do with females. The same is true for women subjects in regard to choice of collaborating.

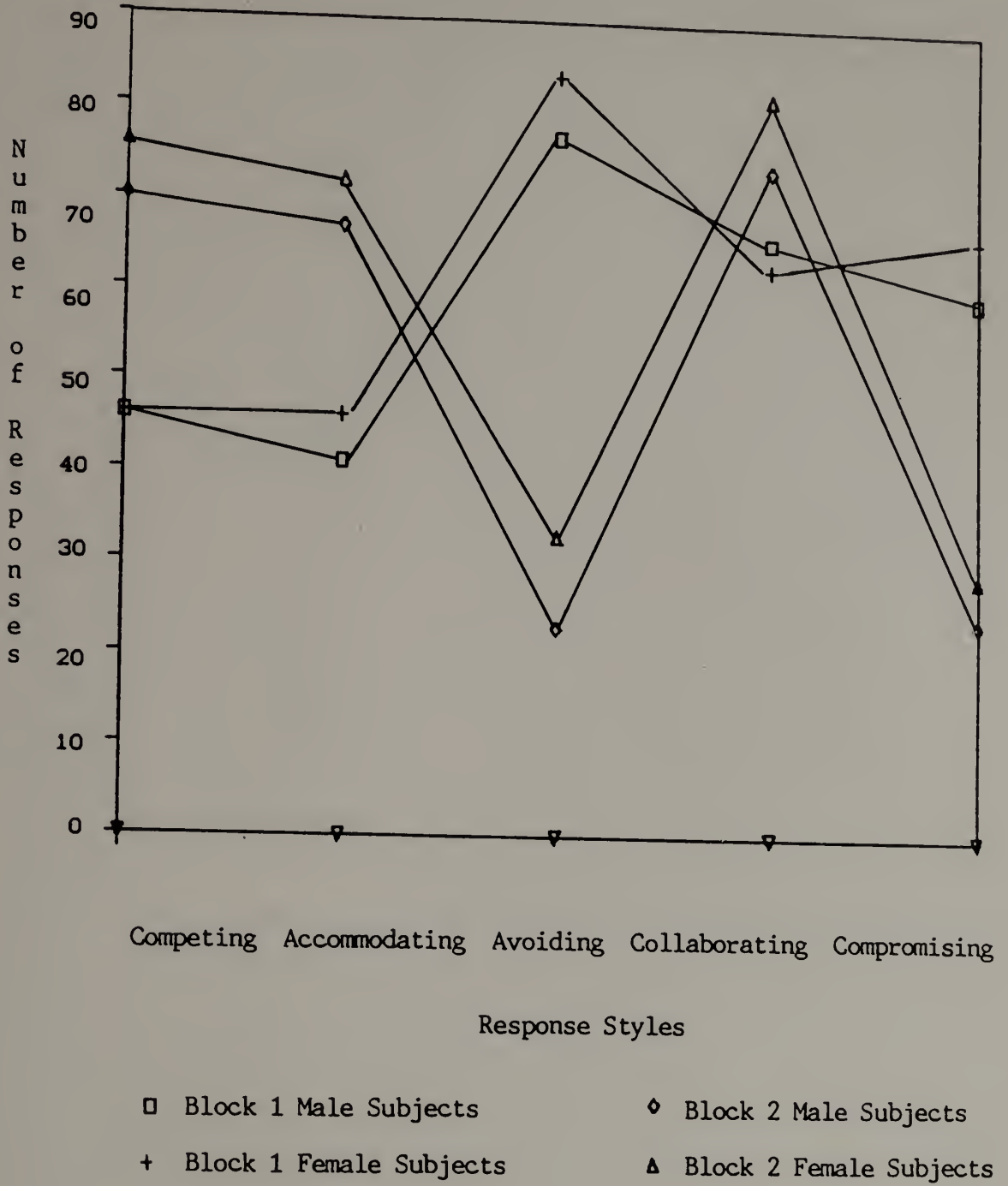
Also of interest here is that in many situations, nearly half (or better than half) of both male and female subjects reported that they would use the so-called "most appropriate" style, according to contingency conflict management theory. There are several ways to interpret this. First, it may reflect some response bias, in that individuals may choose the style that they think would be appropriate, rather than the one they would be most likely to use (in spite of instructions to the contrary). On the other hand, it may be related to the educational level and professional status of the subjects, i.e. they may have had some exposure to management theory, and/or experience in dealing with conflict situations in the workplace. Either way, this number of "appropriate" style choices may indicate an awareness of conflict management on the part of subjects.

Other interpretations of this slight trend toward accuracy in CSI responses, include those that relate to

organizational climate, work group and professional staff norms, etc. Although the trend is noteworthy, it seems not to be sufficiently strong to warrant further analysis. In fact, we could be concerned that in many situations, nearly half or more of both male and female subjects failed to report that they would use the so-called "most appropriate" style according to the literature. Is this due to lack of knowledge and/or training in conflict management, a trend that contradicts current theory, a manifestation of gender prejudice, or personality characteristics overriding theory? We can only speculate.

At this point, the distributions of response styles are examined graphically in order to provide visual perspective on the results of the study (see Figure 5.). Here we see superimposed graphs for the distribution of "appropriate" style responses for male and female subjects. The difference between "appropriate" responses with male and female others is strikingly depicted in these graphs.

Figure . Distribution of "appropriate" responses by response style.



The Wilcoxon results presented here, determined that there were significant differences in choice of conflict-handling behavior on the CSI, in relation to the gender of the other party. A determination of whether there were significant differences for male and female subjects in terms of their responses to male and female others, is revealed in the results of the Mann-Whitney test, reported in the next section.

Results of the Mann-Whitney Test

The Mann-Whitney test (M-W) was performed to investigate whether there were any significant differences between male and female subjects in their Block I responses (situations with male others) vs, their Block II responses (situations with female others) on the CSI. This investigation relates to the third and final hypothesis identified for this study.

Original Hypothesis 3. There will be a significant relationship between gender of the other party, choice of conflict-handling behavior, and gender of the individual responding to a given situation.

Statistical Hypothesis 3.

Ho: Difference score distributions for male and female subject groups are identical for each block.

The M-W is a non-parametric test used to compare independent samples (in this case, subject groups based on sex). It is used to test the null hypothesis that the two population distributions are identical (Kirk, 1984).

Before performing the M-W, difference scores were first calculated between Block I and Block II for each of the five conflict-handling styles for both male and female subjects. These difference scores provided the basis for the M-W.

A Z test statistic was computed as part of the M-W. This Z statistic and its 2-tailed probability are reported here. Results of the M-W test are summarized in Tables 19. and 20., followed by discussion. The results are presented first in relation to difference scores on style choices in general, then difference scores for "appropriate" choice.

M-W Results - Distribution of Difference Scores

Table 19. summarizes the results of the M-W performed on the difference scores (between B1 and B2) for male and female subject groups on their choice of conflict-handling style. No significant differences were found.

Table 19. M-W statistics pairing difference scores for male and female subjects by choice of conflict-handling style.

Style Choice	Z	2-tailed P
Competing	.490	.624
Accommodating	.102	.919
Avoiding	-1.179	.238
Collaborating	.217	.829
Compromising	-.003	.997

Table 20. summarizes the results of the M-W performed on the difference scores (between B1 and B2) for male and female subject groups on their choice of "appropriate" conflict- handling style. Again, as can be seen in the table, no significant differences were found.

Table 20. M-W statistics pairing difference scores for male and female subjects by choice of "appropriate" ("APP") conflict-handling style.

"APP" Style Choice	Z	2-tailed P
Competing	-.592	.554
Accommodating	.150	.881
Avoiding	-.286	.775
Collaborating	-1.664	.096
Compromising	0	1.000

Findings

According to the M-W, there were no significant (at the .05 level) differences between male and female subject groups in their choice of any of the five conflict-handling styles across blocks on the CSI. The null hypothesis, therefore, cannot be rejected. These results lend support to the previous Wilcoxon findings that male and female subject groups showed similar differences across blocks in regard to the same style categories. In other words, where male subjects chose competing differently in situations with male others as compared to female others, so did female subjects, and so forth. The Wilcoxon showed the

"appropriate" choice of collaborating as the only instance in which male and female subjects differed in relation to the gender of the other party. Not surprisingly then, the "appropriate" choice of collaborating is the only difference score that comes close (.096) to significance.

Basically, the Mann-Whitney findings indicate that men and women subjects had similar patterns in how they differed in their choice of a particular style, in regard to the gender of the other party. The Wilcoxon results, reviewed earlier, showed that both men and women subjects did differ significantly in their choice of certain styles, depending on the gender of the other party. Men and women subjects did not differ from each other in this regard however.

Summary

The Wilcoxon findings suggest that definite relationships exist between choice of certain (but not all) conflict-handling styles and gender of the other party. Mann-Whitney findings indicate that the sex of the subject is not related to choice of conflict-handling style and gender of the other party. Thus, an individual may use competing or collaborating in response to a given conflict situation with equal frequency, regardless of the gender of the other party. Frequency of the use of accommodating, avoiding and compromising does seem to vary however,

depending on the other party's gender. The sex of the individual responding to a given conflict situation though, seems to have no bearing on whether a particular style is used in relation to either a male, or female, in the given situation.

In relation to those styles found to have significant differences in use, depending on the other party's gender, crosstabulation of the data reveals the direction of that difference. Specifically, accommodating was used more often with female, rather than male others, while avoiding and compromising were used less often when the other was female.

On the surface, these statistics, while interesting, offer little meaning. Weighed in the light of contingency conflict management theory though, they may suggest closer examination to determine their relevance. Viewing the theory to be valid, findings in this study would indicate that perhaps avoiding and compromising styles are not used frequently enough in conflict situations with women. In the same vein, accommodating may be used too infrequently with men.

These conclusions, however would be based on a belief that contingency conflict management theory is "correct". Given the recent writings on gender differences (e.g. Gilligan, 1982, and Miller, 1976), there may be cause to

question the relevancy of this male-authored conflict management theory to both sexes. For instance, maybe avoiding and compromising are chosen less often with females because these styles have proven not to be as effective with females. Many other interpretations could be offered here as well. Additional research is needed to further examine the implications of this type of questioning.

A look at the statistics from this study, regarding the so-called "appropriate" use of conflict-handling styles according to the literature, is also of interest. In these cases, Wilcoxon results indicate that in regard to women subject's "appropriate" choice of each of the five conflict-handling styles, there is a definite relationship with the gender of the other party. The same relationship is also true for male subjects, in all but the collaborating style. Mann-Whitney results again point out that the sex of the respondent to the given conflict situation has no relationship with "appropriate" style choice and the other party's gender, however. Thus, it may be unlikely that an individual (male or female) uses the "most appropriate" style of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation, regardless of the gender of the other party.

Wilcoxon findings, supported by crosstabulation data, then, would seem to indicate that individuals may be failing

to choose avoiding and compromising when it is viewed as "appropriate" in conflict situations involving a woman as the other party. Likewise, the same may be true for the choice of accommodating with male others. Again, interpretation here depends on one's view of the relevance of contingency conflict management theory.

Discussion of Instrument

This section focuses on responses to each item of the CSI in order identify any patterns that may indicate areas of concern for further development. The construction and use of the instrument in this study, is viewed in part, as an opportunity to evaluate and refine it for future use in research and training. This examination of responses by item also provides us with a broader perspective of the data presented in previous sections.

Distribution of Style Choices Over Items

An overview of the distribution of response types (style choices) by sex of subject and gender of the other party (indicated by block number) can be seen in Tables 21. through 24., and forms the basis for this discussion. Note that the asterisk (*) indicates "appropriate" choice for each item. The distribution of responses over items

displayed in these tables, allows us to see which conflict-handling style was chosen when the one intended as "appropriate" was not selected. Consistent with what was identified in earlier sections, we see here that certain styles were never chosen in response to some situations.

Table 21. Distribution of response styles over Block I items for male subjects. * = "appropriate"

Block I					
Male Subjects (n=50)					
Conflict-Handling Style Responses					
Item No.	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
1	8	1	0	31*	10
4	0	1	43*	5	1
5	23*	2	0	21	4
8	23*	0	1	18	8
9	1	27*	0	15	7
11	2	0	3	18	27*
13	5	1	1	10	33*
14	2	14*	4	23	7
16	0	1	34*	9	6
17	11	0	3	35*	1

Table 22. Distribution of response styles over Block II items for male subjects.

Block II					
Male Subjects (n=50)					
Conflict-Handling Style Responses					
	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
<u>Item No.</u>					
2	3	4	6	33	4*
3	2	31*	1	13	3
6	5	1	2	40*	2
7	7	1	0	34*	8
10	0	1	6*	20	23
12	34*	0	7	9	0
15	36*	2	4	8	0
18	1	36*	1	10	2
19	0	0	0	30	20*
20	2	5	17*	15	11

Table 23. Distribution of response styles over Block I items for female subjects.

Block I					
Female Subjects (n=50)					
Conflict-Handling Style Responses					
Item No.	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
1	6	0	0	32*	12
4	0	0	46*	3	1
5	21*	1	1	24	3
8	25*	0	1	12	12
9	0	32*	3	8	7
11	1	1	2	19	27*
13	7	0	0	3	40*
14	1	14*	0	27	8
16	0	1	38*	3	8
17	12	0	4	31*	3

Table 24. Distribution of response styles over Block II items for female subjects.

Block II					
Female Subjects (n=50)					
Conflict-Handling Style Responses					
	Compet- ing	Accomm- odating	Avoid- ing	Collab- orating	Compro- mising
<u>Item No.</u>					
2	2	2	8	29	9*
3	0	36*	0	10	4
6	1	0	0	44*	5
7	2	0	0	38*	10
10	1	0	10*	12	27
12	40*	0	3	7	0
15	36*	2	6	4	2
18	0	36*	5	7	2
19	1	0	0	29	20*
20	2	6	23*	8	11

This examination of distribution of response styles over items, focuses on any patterns that may raise questions regarding the design of the instrument. One particular pattern of response distributions noted here, may suggest an area of concern for the further development of the CSI.

Focusing on "item sets" in each block (the two items associated with each style as "appropriate" response), those "sets" with a great discrepancy in frequency of choice between their two items, may indicate some problem with an item. Specifically, items 2 and 19 (compromising), items 9 and 14 (accommodating), and items 10 and 20 (avoiding), show a spread of more than ten occurrences of choice between them in both subject groups. In addition, items 2, 10 and 14 have occurrences of less than fifteen each, for each subject group. Further development of the CSI should include a careful examination and testing of these items, both the situation descriptions and the responses.

Conclusions

The findings reported in this chapter support the notion that the gender of the other party in a given conflict situation does affect an individual's choice of conflict-handling behavior. The fact that subjects (regardless of their gender) had similar patterns of responses with male and female others, also contributes to

this notion. Significant differences, then, in choice of conflict-handling style, are attributable in this study to whether the other party in the conflict situation was a man or a woman. Implications of these findings and recommendations for future research are provided in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The major purpose of this study was to investigate same and cross-gender conflict in an attempt to determine whether the gender of the other party is related to the choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation. Within the context of multiple-choice responses to given conflict situations in a constructed instrument, this study examined the interaction of three variables: 1) the gender of the individual responding to the conflict situation; 2) the choice of conflict-handling behavior by that individual in a given situation; and 3) the gender of the other party as described in the conflict situation. The added dimension of the appropriateness (according to contingency conflict management theory) of the conflict-handling behavior chosen in response to the situation given, was also examined.

This chapter reviews the procedures used in this study; summarizes the findings; provides conclusions drawn from these findings; and finally, based on the implications of this research, presents recommendations for future study.

Methodology

Data were collected using the Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI), an instrument specially designed for this study. The twenty-item instrument provided respondents the opportunity to choose one of five conflict-handling styles for each item. The items described conflict situations. In half the items (10), the other party described in the conflict was a female and in half male.

The target population for this study consisted of professional, non-faculty staff from a large university. Fifty women and fifty men completed and returned the instrument and consent forms.

The Wilcoxon matched-pairs ranked-signs test and the Mann-Whitney (M-W) were performed on data collected to determine whether there were significant differences, relating to gender, and conflict-handling style choice.

Summary of the Findings

Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Ranked-Signs Test

The Wilcoxon test determined that both male and female subjects differed significantly (at the .05 level) in their choice of the accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles depending on the gender of the other party. The competing and collaborating styles however, showed no significant differences based on this variable.

In regard to "appropriate" choice, Wilcoxon findings showed significant differences for female subjects, depending on whether the situation involved a male or female other, for all five of the conflict-handling style categories. The same was true for male subjects in all but the collaborating category.

Mann-Whitney Test (M-W)

The Mann-Whitney test determined that there were no significant differences between male and female subject groups in their difference scores between "female other" versus "male other" situations. In other words, men and women subjects were similar in how they differed in their choice of a particular style, based on the gender of the other party.

These findings are in basic agreement with the Wilcoxon findings showing similar patterns for male and female choices across blocks. The only difference between male and female subject groups that appeared in the Wilcoxon, regarding "appropriate" choice of collaborating, proved not to be significant on the Mann-Whitney.

In short, both the Wilcoxon and M-W show that women and men subjects were similarly affected by whether the other party was male or female, in their choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given conflict situation. Crosstabulation data reveal the direction of differences in these findings.

Crosstabulation

In regard to significant findings in the Wilcoxon, crosstabulation data showed that in general, subjects chose an accommodating style of conflict-handling behavior more often in response to female others, then to male others. Avoiding and compromising were chosen more often with male others.

In the case of significant differences in "appropriate" choice of style, crosstabulation indicates that competing and accommodating were chosen more often with female others, and avoiding and compromising were chosen more often with males. Collaborating was the style with the highest rate of

"appropriate" choice (over 85% of the subjects chose it appropriately at least half of the time it was intended). Here we find women choosing this style more often with other women, while men chose collaborating with similar frequency, regardless of whether the other was male or female.

Overall, crosstabulation revealed that women subjects chose "appropriately" more often than did male subjects. Also, "appropriate" choices were made more frequently in situations where the other party was male rather than female. Although these overall categories of data were not tested for statistical significance, these findings give us an interesting picture of results in general.

Overview of the Results

These results fall into two categories: those that relate to the gender of the other party, and those that relate to the sex of the respondent to a conflict situation. Given the nature of the study, i.e. that the results obtained were in the context of small sample responses to a newly constructed instrument, these conclusions are presented as tentative.

Gender of the Other Party. First of all, it would seem that the gender of the other party does have a moderating effect on an individual's choice of conflict-handling

behavior, especially their so-called "appropriate" choice, given the situation. Furthermore, there may be a tendency to choose a certain style of conflict-handling behavior more often with women (viz. accommodating), and other styles more often with men (viz. avoiding and compromising). On the other hand, some styles are chosen with relatively equal frequency, regardless of the other party's gender (viz. competing and collaborating).

These findings lend support to the research done by Zammuto et al. (1979). There it was found that males were less likely to withdraw from female supervisors in conflict situations, but tended to do so with male supervisors. While their study had the added variable of status, it is one of the only previous studies that considered the gender of the other party, making it an interesting comparison here. Combining that finding with the results of this study, may indicate that there is a tendency to avoid (or withdraw from) conflict with males more than with females.

"Appropriate" choice of all five styles seems also to depend on whether the other party is male or female. The only exception is for men choosing the collaborating style. In this case, the gender of the other party seems to have no bearing. More specifically, results of this study indicate that there may be a tendency to choose avoiding and

compromising with males, when it is "most appropriate" given the situation, but not with females. In the same vein, competing and accommodating are more likely to be chosen "appropriately" with women, but not with men. Collaborating seems to be chosen when "appropriate" more often by women with other women. Men, however, don't seem to vary their use of this style with the gender of the other party.

These tentative conclusions all relate to the effects of the gender of the other party on one's choice of conflict-handling behavior. The next set of conclusions focuses on the role that one's own sex plays in this interaction.

Sex of the Respondent. Based on the results of this study, there is nothing to support the notion that men and women are affected differently by the other party's gender in their choice of conflict-handling behavior. For example, where men tend to choose a certain style more frequently with males than with females, so do women; and so forth. This seems to be true for choice of style of conflict-handling behavior in general, as well as for choice of the "most appropriate" style given the situation. We might conclude then, that while individuals are affected by the other party's gender in their choice of conflict-handling behavior in a given situation, the sex of the individual

responding to the situation does not contribute toward that interaction of variables. The gender of the other party appears here to be the major variable influencing choice of conflict-handling style in relation to the gender of the other party, rather than one's own sex.

This last conclusion is in keeping with the results of several leadership studies finding "no difference" between male and female leaders in either behavior, performance or leadership style (Stitt et al., 1983; Day & Stodgill, 1972, etc.). Viewing conflict management as a dimension of leader behavior, it is not surprising then that this study found no significant differences in male and female behaviors based on their sex. Further implications of the conclusions drawn tentatively here, and recommendations for future study, are discussed in the next section.

Recommendations

Recommendations presented here for future study are based on the implications that this study has for conflict management theory and training, and for the understanding of gender-related differences. These implications are outlined here first, followed by the recommendations developed by the researcher to address them.

Implications for Conflict Management

One implication of this study that relates to conflict management, is that, at least for this sample of university employees, there seems to be a trend toward collaborating as the primary mode used to deal with conflict situations in the workplace. Given contingency conflict management theory, the implication here is that collaborating may be over-used, or used in situations for which it is not called. Subsequently, other styles may not be used when they may be more appropriate, given the situation.

As discussed earlier, this phenomena may be tied to the current trend toward participative management, or to the nature of the organization under study here. In either case, individuals in organizations may need training in both contingency theory, and the skills needed to utilize the full range of conflict-handling styles, in order to manage conflict situations effectively. Training of this sort would contribute to the valuing of styles other than collaborating as effective and acceptable ways of dealing with conflict.

Another explanation may be that the contingency theory is wrong in some of its assumptions, and that collaborating is actually effective in a greater number of situations than the theory would now predict. Without field research

assessing effectiveness of styles, we can not determine whether the problem lies with the theory, or manager's behavior.

It is also possible that the high rate of collaborating responses is a reflection of the limits of self-report instruments. Namely, there may be an element of misperception in subjects understanding of their behavior in conflict situations. This could result in individuals choosing what they believe "looks like" what they would do, when in fact their actual behavior is different. Here again, field research would provide greater evidence.

Implications for Gender Differences

The fact that men and women participating in this study did not differ significantly from each other in their choice of conflict-handling styles, implies that there are no inherent characteristics that distinguish males and females from each other in this area. Differences in choice of conflict styles in this study are clearly related to the gender of the other party. Both men and women then, seem to be similarly influenced by this factor when faced with a conflict situation.

The major implication of this study therefore, is that individuals may vary in their use of particular conflict-handling styles, based on the gender of the other party.

These variations in use of style based on gender, may have further implications for understanding gender-related differences. Specifically, there was a tendency, shown in this study, to choose avoiding and compromising "appropriately" more often with males. This may imply that males are perceived as individuals not to be bothered with unnecessary involvement in minor or clearcut conflict situations. In these situations with males, the conflict is either ignored, or a bargain is struck. When the situation involves a female however, this is not the case. Does this imply that one does not feel the need to overlook minor conflicts with women, or strike bargains with them, or that one feels safer in pursuing conflict with women? We can only speculate here. The difference is notable and does raise questions about how men and women are responded to here.

Along the same lines, the more frequent choice of competing and accommodating styles with females when "appropriate" raises other questions. Is the implication here that individuals either do all they can to get "their own way" in conflict situations with women, or else give in and let her have "her way" ? The fact that these two styles utilize the opposite behavioral extremes, is interesting to note. Again interpretation can only be speculative.

Perhaps women are perceived as accommodative, rather than as likely to insist on their own way, as suggested in the literature (Loring & Wells, 1972). This perception may lead one to either use this as an opportunity to "win", or to "give in", in order to compensate for the expected accommodative tone. For an example of the latter, an individual, perceiving a woman as trying to take care of the needs and concerns of others, may be likely in a conflict situation to be sure that, this time, her needs and concerns are addressed.

The preceding interpretations are tied to the role that "perception of the other party" plays in a conflict episode. As reviewed in Chapter II, this factor is described by Thomas (1976) as having a primary influence on one's choice of behavior in response to that episode. Given the relevance then, of how we perceive the other, it is important to consider how stereotypical notions regarding gender may color those perceptions. If, for instance, one believed the stereotype that "men are aggressive and competitive" (Roesenkrantz et al., 1968), would that contribute to an avoiding or compromising response to a conflict situation with a male? This study, and the tentative conclusions drawn from it, can only raise questions like these. One implication of this study is that

"how men and women are perceived in conflict situations", may lead to differences in choice of response style. Further research would be needed to examine these effects.

Another implication that this study may have for the understanding of gender differences is related to the literature regarding the moral, social and psychological development of women (Gilligan, 1982; Josefowitz, 1980; Miller, 1976;). As discussed earlier, this literature theorizes that women, as a result of differences in their development, may differ from men in certain characteristics. Namely, women may be marked by having a high degree of concern for others, and may draw a good deal of their identity from relationships with others. If this is true, then it would seem that this may affect women's behavior in conflict situations with others.

While this study found no significant differences between men and women in response to given conflict situations, there were some general ways that these theories may be evidenced in this study. For example, the fact that women subjects had a higher rate of "appropriate" choices, may be due to the serious consideration they give to interpersonal events, trying to do what is "best". In a similar vein, the high use here of collaborating (characterized by open interaction) by women with other

women, may be tied to their strong orientation to relationships. Again, this study can only raise questions that may have implications for future study.

Recommendations

The recommendations for future study presented here are based on the results of this study and some of the implications drawn from it. Given that some of the findings here may be an artifact of the instrument used, (the CSI), the first recommendations are based on further use and refinement of this instrument. Secondly, suggestions are made for research that would address some of the questions raised by this study regarding the role of gender in conflict management.

There are a number of ways that the CSI could be further tested in an attempt to verify the findings in this study. One is that it could be used with a similar population in a variety of organizations. This may reveal the extent to which organizational climate effects the results. Another is that a second form of the instrument could be developed, changing the gender of the other party described in each situation. The subjects could then be divided into two groups, each group receiving a different form of the CSI. Differences then may be related with greater certainty to gender, rather than the nature of a

particular situation description. This second form could also be tested with the same subjects used here, at a determined interval in time, for the same purpose.

Finally, based on questions raised in this study regarding the role of perception of the other party in choice of conflict behavior, a need is indicated for further research that examines that role. For example, qualitative analysis of written or verbal descriptions of how the other party is perceived in real or hypothetical conflict situations, may provide some enlightenment here. The influence of sex-based stereotypes could also be found in this type of study. Similar methodology could be used to examine moral and psychological factors in the decision-making process regarding choice of response to conflict. This may reveal information regarding gender differences in that choice.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that gender is a factor to be considered in understanding contingency conflict management theory. The implications of this study suggest a need for further research to examine the role of gender in conflict.

A P P E N D I X A
Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

1. I agree to participate in a study entitled "The Moderating Effects Of Gender On An Individual's Conflict-Handling Behavior In A Given Situation" conducted by Diane Plunkett Flaherty, a doctoral candidate, as part of her research at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I understand that the major objective of this study is to determine whether the gender of the other party is related to the choice of conflict-handling behavior. I understand my role in this research involves my completion of a questionnaire entitled "Conflict Situations Inventory", requiring approximately one half hour.
2. I understand that data generated from my participation will be used initially to prepare a written doctoral dissertation. These same data may be used at a later date in further written articles. I also understand that Diane Plunkett Flaherty is available to answer questions I may have regarding the purposes, procedures, and uses of this research.
3. I understand and agree with the following conditions regarding the compilation and safeguarding of data collected by this study:
 - a. There is no anticipated risk or discomfort by my participation.
 - b. The questionnaire will be completed anonymously. Only group aggregate data will be compiled and reported. No individual data will be reported. Confidentiality is assured.
 - c. My participation in this study is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any point.
 - d. There will be no monetary compensation for my participation.
4. I understand that results of the research will be made available to me.
5. Should I develop any questions about this study in the future, I may obtain more information by calling Diane Plunkett Flaherty at 413-549-3889.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A P P E N D I X B
CONFLICT-SITUATIONS INVENTORY
and
CONFLICT-HANDLING STYLE PROFILE

CONFLICT SITUATIONS INVENTORY

Instructions: The items in this inventory describe conflict situations commonly encountered in work settings. Each situation is followed by a list of five alternative responses to that particular conflict. Read each item carefully and circle the response you would be most likely to make in that situation. Be careful not to choose the response you think you should make. An honest response, based on how you think you would be most likely to respond, is best.

1. Your co-worker, John, continually "borrows" materials from your supply, rather than make out a purchase order to obtain his own. Your supplies are being rapidly depleted due to his regular use of them, causing you to need to re-order frequently. In this situation you would most likely ...

A. Say nothing to John. Bringing this issue up would only be disruptive to your relationship.

B. Suggest to John that you'll order enough supplies for both of you this month, if he'll do the ordering next month.

C. Let John know how the situation is affecting you, and try to work out a solution together.

D. Tell John to order his own supplies from now on.

E. Order sufficient materials for both of you, so that you can continue to help John out.

2. Your office sharing arrangement with Nancy is working very well except for one problem. You like to use your morning time for thinking and writing, and Nancy often chooses to make important phone calls during this time. Her conversations are disturbing your work. In this situation you would most likely ...

A. Ask Nancy to make her phone calls from another phone so that you can have the quiet you need to do your work.

B. Try harder to ignore the disturbance.

- C. Change your morning work routines so that Nancy can continue to make calls when she chooses to.
- D. Do a thorough analysis of your individual needs with Nancy and try to arrive at a joint solution.
- E. Suggest that Nancy set aside part of the morning for quiet work, and make phone calls during the remainder of the time.

3. Dorothy, a new employee, has been assigned to work with you on a project of your own design. She is eager to learn, but most of her suggestions have been off target and you've had to reject them. You sense her discouragement, but she lacks experience in this area. Now she is suggesting using an experimental method that might reduce project time significantly. You have little faith in her idea, although it wouldn't interfere with the project. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Thank Dorothy for her suggestion and proceed as planned.
- B. Give Dorothy a chance to try out her idea. It will give her some hands on experience from which she might learn a lot.
- C. Let Dorothy know that this is your design and that you're not interested in experimenting with it.
- D. Have a discussion with Dorothy, fully exploring all proposed methods, in an effort to come to an agreement.
- E. Suggest that Dorothy be allowed to experiment with her method in a less important project.

4. You have just returned from a two week vacation and discovered that your co-worker Bob made some changes in the work schedules. You're not sure why the changes were made, and think that the original schedule was perfectly fine. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Bob know immediately that you have no intention of working according to this new schedule.

- B. Propose that some aspects of the old schedule be retained.
- C. Agree to go along with Bob's new plans since you weren't here at the time they were implemented.
- D. Call for a meeting of everyone affected by the new plans, including Bob, to examine the issue from all sides and arrive at a mutually satisfying solution.
- E. Try to find out the reason for the changes Bob made before you decide what to do.

5. David is your work group's representative at weekly management meetings. He is responsible for reporting on your group's progress and relaying communications back to your group. It appears that he has been repeatedly taking credit for the accomplishments of other group members in these meetings. David has denied any such charges made by group members. This week he was cited in the company newsletter for a recent breakthrough in developing a system that was really your design. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Not bother to confront David, the issue is in the past, and little can be done about it now.
- B. Ask David to give you credit the next time you develop something innovative.
- C. Congratulate David on his award. He seems to need the attention.
- D. Set up a time to talk with David about your concerns and hear his views in order to resolve the difficulty.
- E. Let David know that you expect to be fully credited for the accomplishment, and that you will be sending reports documenting your work to the management team.

6. You and Sheryl are coordinating the work of a task group around a new assignment. Although your backgrounds are very different, you each have skills and experience crucial to the success of this work. Sheryl's perspective on this new

assignment is totally opposite from yours, and so far you have not agreed on anything. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Suggest that you and Sheryl are each in charge of different areas.
- B. Try to ignore the differences and maintain harmony. It is important for you and Sheryl to get along well together.
- C. Set aside some time for you and Sheryl to spend listening to each other's perspectives in an effort to merge your insights around the new assignment.
- D. Be flexible and let Sheryl have her way.
- E. Clearly articulate your perspective to Sheryl in an effort to "win her over".

7. You've recently been assigned to work with Irene, one of the most highly skilled people in your area. You're very excited about having an opportunity to learn from her, but for weeks now, she hasn't responded positively to any of your questions or suggestions. You feel discouraged by the continual rejection of your ideas. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Hold off on making suggestions for the time being, and just try to get Irene to respond to the questions you have.
- B. Say nothing. You don't want to risk doing anything that may damage your relationship with Irene at this point.
- C. Be more assertive and defend your suggestions.
- D. Let Irene know that you really want to learn from her, and that you value discussing your ideas with her as a way of testing your assumptions and understanding her views.
- E. Let Irene know that you accept her point of view. She knows more about this than you do.

8. Your work on a new assignment is dependent on a written report from Tom. Tom agreed to provide the report in time for you to start your work, but it is now two weeks overdue. You have approached Tom twice about this and each time he made excuses, and promised to get you the report right away. Now he is out each time you call, and hasn't responded to any messages you've left. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Inform Tom that you need the report and will have to go "over his head" if necessary to obtain it.
- B. Wait awhile longer. It might be held up in delivery.
- C. Give Tom an extension on getting the report completed. He seems to have a lot to do right now.
- D. Try to set up a meeting with Tom to explore both of your situations and come to an agreeable solution.
- E. Ask Tom to just give you an outline of the report for now.

9. Your co-worker Ed, has been wanting to try out a new evaluation method for determining the effectiveness of the work you have been doing together. You have been strongly opposed to this method based on your belief that it may not be an accurate measurement. You and Ed have had several heated disagreements about this issue. Just now you come across a report which indicates that Ed's method has proven very useful in cases similar to the work you are doing. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to ignore the whole issue. Maybe Ed will let it drop.
- B. Tell Ed that you'd be willing to go along with the new method. It looks like it might work after all.
- C. Work hard to convince Ed that your position is right.
- D. Let Ed try the new method out on a part of your work that isn't very crucial.

- E. Try to thoughtfully examine the issue with Ed from both sides in order to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.

10. You and Ruth have been working together steadily for two weeks to meet a deadline on an important job. At the last minute a number of things are going wrong, increasing the pressure to be finished on time. Now Ruth is saying that the problems are the result of your poor planning. You think the plan is fine, it just requires a little more effort to implement then Ruth is willing to make. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Ruth she needs to put in more effort to get done on time.
- B. Try to come up with a simpler plan that Ruth would be happier working with.
- C. Tell Ruth that you are willing to put in a little more effort to finish on time if she will too.
- D. Try not to get into a disagreement with Ruth at this point. Ignore the issue for now and focus on getting the job done.
- E. Explore the problem fully with Ruth, trying to get down to the real issue in order to resolve it.

11. A new secretary has been hired and assigned to work half time for your department and half time for Peter's office in another department. Peter is insisting that the secretary be based in his department, with your work delivered by courier. You would rather have the secretary based in your own department. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to convince Peter to go along with your idea.
- B. Try to get Peter to agree to an equal sharing arrangement. It's better than no secretary.
- C. Try to avoid a confrontation with Peter. Wait and see what happens after the secretary begins work.

- D. Go along with Peter's idea and try to make the most of it.
- E. Clearly state your views on the matter and get Peter to explain his in an effort to settle things.

12. Your organization has just instituted a mandatory performance review system for all employees, to be instituted twice a year. Lisa, an employee working under you, has made it clear that she disagrees with this policy and will not comply. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ignore Lisa's statement. Wait and see what happens when it comes time for the review.
- B. Ask Lisa if she would agree to just one review yearly.
- C. Tell Lisa that this is a mandatory review, and that she must participate in it as part of her job.
- D. Get together with Lisa to try and work out an arrangement that would satisfy everyone concerned.
- E. Exempt Lisa from the new policy. There's no way you're going to change her mind on this.

13. You and Fred frequently travel out of town together for work related meetings. You have use of the company car, but Fred usually asks you to drive so he can catch up on his reading during the trip. You find driving quite tiring, and you really could use the chance to catch up on your own work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Share your concerns with Fred and listen to his in an effort to come to an agreement that would meet both your needs.
- B. Continue to do the driving so that Fred can get his reading done. You don't mind driving that much.
- C. Suggest that you split the driving equally so that you each have some time to read.

- D. Tell Fred that you want to catch up on your work and ask him to drive this time.
- E. Try not to make an issue of it. Maybe if you hint that you're behind in your work too, Fred will offer to drive.

14. Recently your boss told you that your co-workers have been complaining about your lack of flexibility. Currently you're working with a team to produce a new training manual. So far there have been no problems, but now you and Joe strongly disagree on the printing format to be used. Although it won't make a critical difference, you would rather have it your way. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask your boss to decide to avoid a confrontation with Joe.
- B. Go along with Joe's ideas this time to show that you can be reasonable.
- C. Try to be more persuasive in convincing Joe that your way will be better.
- D. Offer to make a few concessions if Joe will too.
- E. Share your perspective with Joe and ask for his in an effort to work out this difference.

15. Your job entails working with confidential information. You have just become aware that Kathy, your co-worker, has been revealing this information outside the office. Your department is aware of a leak and is investigating. People in your office are becoming suspicious and distrustful. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Kathy that you know but won't report her.
- B. Tell Kathy that it must stop.
- C. Caution Kathy not to divulge too much.
- D. Try to stay out of it. This could get messy.

- E. Arrange a meeting with Kathy in order to try to understand her position and express your views.

16. Jack, a co-worker, really irritates you with his corny jokes. He monopolizes every coffee break with these jokes, keeping everyone in stitches. You don't find them amusing, and in fact are sick of hearing them. When you complain about them, Jack just teases you about not having a sense of humor. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Jack to cut out the jokes. You don't appreciate his sense of humor.
- B. Try to be a good sport and laugh at Jack's jokes.
- C. Find a different place to enjoy your coffee breaks.
- D. Explain your feelings to Jack and try to work out the difficulty between you.
- E. Ask Jack to limit his joke telling so that others can have time to talk too.

17. Your co-worker, Mike, has been complaining lately that he has been doing most of the work on a project you are working on together. It seems to you that he is doing more complaining than working. You feel you're doing more than your share. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Talk with Mike about the concerns you both have and try to work through these hard feelings.

- B. Tell Mike that you don't agree with him, and that he should spend less time complaining and more time working.

- C. Try not to take Mike's complaining too seriously. Something else is probably bothering him right now.

- D. Let Mike know that you'll do more work if he thinks you haven't been doing your share.

- E. Suggest to Mike that you both work hard on the project today, and take tomorrow off.

18. You and Norma have co-chaired a committee at work for two years. The arrangement has worked very well. Norma readily takes over your responsibilities on the numerous occasions when you can't be present. Now Norma is asking you to make the annual presentation to the board of directors next week by yourself because she will be out of town at an important meeting. You dread these presentations and were hoping to get out of it altogether. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to do it alone this time if Norma will do it by herself next year.
- B. Tell Norma that you can't possibly handle it by yourself.
- C. Tell Norma that you'll think about it and let her know.
- D. Examine the problem with Norma and try to come up with a solution.
- E. Agree to make the presentation alone. It's nice to be able to help Norma after all the help she's given you.

19. You and Barbara have just been given a budget increase for a project you have been working on together. There are no restrictions on spending it, and no timeline for project completion. Barbara feels strongly about using the additional money to upgrade the remaining materials that are needed. You are convinced that it is more important to hire extra help to get the work done sooner. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Go along with Barbara's request. It's important to preserve harmony in your relationship.
- B. Suggest that you spend some of the additional money on better materials, and some on more help.
- C. Tell Barbara that the materials you've been using are fine, and convince her that extra help is more important now.
- D. Try to postpone making a decision. Eventually Barbara will realize that you need more help.

- E. Work out a complete budget and needs analysis with Barbara so that you can resolve this disagreement.

20. Your co-worker Betty's style really bothers you. It takes her forever to answer a question or explain things; she talks slowly and frequently repeats herself. Watching her work is even worse. She is overly cautious and methodical, checking everything she does for mistakes as she goes along. Her constant worrying is getting on your nerves. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try not to let Betty's behavior get to you. Her personality is probably not going to change much.
- B. Tell Betty that this behavior is really bothering you.
- C. Talk the problem out with Betty and try to work out a solution together.
- D. Spend more time listening to Betty and reassuring her.
- E. Tell Betty that you'll try to be more patient if she'll try to stop worrying so much.

CONFLICT-HANDLING STYLE PROFILE

Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI) Scoring Directions:

1. Record your answers from the CSI to the five columns labeled Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives. For each conflict situation (1-20), circle the letter which corresponds to your answer in Block I & II.
2. Add the number of circled letters in each of the five columns in both blocks and enter the sums in the boxes marked Totals.
3. Add the number of circled letters marked with an asterisk (*) in Block I and in Block II, and circle the number that corresponds with each sum on the Effectiveness Scale below each block.
4. Add the total from each column in Block I with the total from each column in Block II and enter the sums in the boxes marked Overall Totals.

BLOCK I

Situations	Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	D	E	A	C *	B
4	A	C	E *	D	B
5	E *	C	A	D	B
8	B *	A	D	E	C
9	C	B *	A	E	D
11	A	D	C	E	B *
13	D	B	E	A	C *
14	C	B *	A	E	D
16	A	B	C *	D	E
17	B	D	C	A *	E
Totals					

EFFECTIVENESS SCALE										1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

BLOCK II

Situations	Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives				
	1	2	3	4	5
2	A	C	B	D	E *
3	C	B *	A	D	E
6	E	D	B	C *	A
7	C	E	B	D *	A
10	A	B	D *	E	C
12	C *	E	A	D	B
15	A *	C	B	D	E
18	B	E *	C	D	A
19	C	A	D	E	B *
20	B	D	A *	C	E
Totals					

EFFECTIVENESS SCALE										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Overall Totals	Conflict-Handling Styles				
	compet-ing	accomo-dating	avoid-ing	collab-orating	compro-mising

INTERPRETATION OF THE CONFLICT-HANDLING STYLE PROFILE

Conflict Management theory suggests that there is no one best way to manage conflict. The most appropriate response depends on a variety of situational factors. Your ability to manage conflict effectively depends on your ability to determine the best response in each situation.

What Your Score Means:

The column numbers 1 through 5 under the heading "Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives" correspond with the Conflict-Handling Styles listed below each column.

Your responses in Block I represent the conflict-handling style you chose in situations in which a female was the other party. Your responses in Block II refer to the conflict situations in which a female was the other party. Your Total score in each Block represents the extent to which you chose each style in conflict situations with either men or women. Your Overall Total score indicates your use of each style in the conflict situations overall.

The Effectiveness Rating refers to the number of times you chose the "most appropriate" conflict-handling response in a given situation, as suggested by experts on conflict management.

A P P E N D I X C

Copies of Letters of Requests
to Participate



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AT AMHERST

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 25, 1986

To: University Women's Professional Network Members

From: Diane Flaherty, Asst. Manager, Staff Training and Development

Subject: Conflict Situations Inventory

Being successful as professional women includes being able to interact effectively with the people we work with. Situations that involve interpersonal conflict are often the most difficult to handle well. I am interested in learning how professional women handle conflict situations occurring on the job. I have recently designed a Conflict Situations Inventory and Conflict-Handling Style Profile as part of my doctoral research. It is my intention to use the responses of professional staff to this inventory as part of this study. The results will help to determine the need and direction for Staff Training and Development workshops focusing on managing conflict.

With the permission of your organization's steering committee, I am asking you to complete the enclosed inventory. All responses will be strictly confidential, and the results will be used on an aggregate basis only. I will present the results at a UWPN luncheon meeting. This will also provide you with an opportunity to discuss your Conflict-Handling Style Profile as it relates to your professional development.

I would greatly appreciate your help with this study. To facilitate the process, I am providing you with a self-addressed mailing label that can be placed directly on the envelope in which you received the inventory. Please return your Conflict-Handling Style Profile in this same envelope by July 11, 1986. In addition, please sign the Participant Consent Form to be found in the enclosed, self-addressed, sealed envelope, only after you have completed the inventory. To assure anonymity, re-seal this form in the envelope and return it separately.

Thank you very much.



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AT AMHERST

Whitmore Administration Building
Amherst, MA 01003

July 11, 1986

Dear Colleague,

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Thank you very much.

Diane Flaherty
Assistant Manager
Staff Training and Development
Goodell 404

A P P E N D I X D
Conflict Situations Inventory
Initial Forty-Item Prototype

CONFLICT SITUATIONS INVENTORY

Instructions: The items in this inventory describe conflict situations commonly encountered in work settings. Each situation is followed by a list of five alternative responses to that particular conflict. Read each item carefully and circle the response you would be most likely to make in that situation. Be careful not to choose the response you think you should make. An honest response, based on how you think you would be most likely to respond, is best.

1. Your co-worker, John, continually "borrows" materials from your supply, rather than make out a purchase order to obtain his own. Your supplies are being rapidly depleted due to his regular use of them, causing you to need to re-order frequently. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Say nothing to John. Bringing this issue up would only be disruptive to your relationship.
- B. Suggest to John that you'll order enough supplies for both of you this month, if he'll do the ordering next month.
- C. Tell John how the situation is affecting you, and ask for his suggestions on resolving the problem.
- D. Speak to John immediately and ask him to begin ordering his own supplies.
- E. Order sufficient materials for both of you, so that you can continue to help John out.

2. Your co-worker, Mary, has been complaining lately that she has been doing most of the work on a project you are working on together. It seems to you that she is doing more complaining than working. You feel you're doing more than your share. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Talk with Mary about the concerns you both have and try to work through these hard feelings.
- B. Tell Mary that you don't agree with her, and that she should spend less time complaining and more time working.

- C. Try not to take Mary's complaining too seriously. Something else is probably bothering her right now.
- D. Try to do a little more work on the project right now so that Mary won't continue to feel this way.
- E. Suggest to Mary that you both work hard on the project today, and take tomorrow off.

3. You have recently been named project coordinator for an exciting, top-priority project. Susan, your co-worker, had always coordinated these projects in the past. She expressed surprise that someone with your "limited experience" was given such a high level assignment. After a week, she returned your memo with projected time lines for her work on the project, declaring them totally unrealistic. You amended them according to her suggestions. Yesterday she failed to show up for the first team meeting. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Suggest that Susan attend only one meeting a month so she would at least have some contact with others working on the project.
- B. Tell Susan that team meetings are required for everyone, including her.
- C. Refuse to get into a disagreement with her around this issue since you suspect that it is not the real issue between you. Let Susan know that her input was missed at the meeting, and inform her of the time and place of the next one.
- D. Excuse Susan from attending team meetings, after all her pride has been damaged enough.
- E. Try to work through this meeting attendance problem now with Susan. Clearly express your views about team meeting attendance, and solicit hers, in an attempt to come to a mutual resolution of the current problem.

4. Your office sharing arrangement with Nancy is working very well except for one problem. You like to use your morning time for thinking and writing, and Nancy prefers

to make important phone calls during this time. Her conversations are disturbing your work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask Nancy to make her phone calls from another phone so that you can have the quiet you need to do your work.
- B. Take your work to a quieter place.
- C. Change your morning work routines to activities that won't be disturbed by Nancy's phone conversations.
- D. Try to negotiate a joint solution with Nancy through a thorough analysis of your individual needs.
- E. See if Nancy would be willing to set aside part of the morning for quiet work, and make phone calls during the remainder of the time.

5. A piece of equipment in your unit has been malfunctioning for over a year, and has recently seriously injured two workers. Al, the chief of maintenance, has been personally working on repairing this equipment for the past year. You want the faulty equipment replaced at this point, but Al insists that it can be repaired and that replacement is an unnecessary expense. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Leave the decision up to Al since he is the expert in this area.
- B. Give Al another chance to repair the equipment. You don't want to risk losing his services in the future.
- C. Insist to Al that the equipment be replaced. the safety of the workers is at stake here.
- D. Invite Al to a meeting with personnel who use this equipment to see if both sides of the issue can be explored and the problem resolved.
- E. Suggest that Al replace some of the parts of the equipment, saving the expense of total replacement.

6. Your work group has only one hour to meet and decide on several important issues. At the start of the meeting, Jim brings up the question of whether to throw a victory party to celebrate the softball team's championship season, or use the team's money to buy new uniforms. There is much disagreement and now Jim, the team captain, is arguing for new uniforms. You agree with those who want a party, but as the group leader you are also concerned with moving through the agenda in the time remaining. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask Jim to discuss this after the meeting, so that the group can deal with the more pressing issues on the agenda.
- B. Facilitate a problem solving discussion with Jim and the others so that satisfactory solution can be reached.
- C. As leader, make a decision in favor of the party.
- D. Suggest to Jim that some of the money be used to buy new shirts for the team, and the remainder be spent on a modest party.
- E. Give Jim the floor to make his pitch. He obviously needs to deal with this now.

7. Dorothy, a new employee, has been assigned to work with you on a project of your own design. She is eager to learn, but most of her suggestions have been off target and you've had to reject them. You sense her discouragement, but it's clear she doesn't have much experience in this area. Now she is suggesting using an experimental method that might reduce project time significantly. You have little faith in her idea, although it wouldn't interfere with the project. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Thank Dorothy for her suggestion and proceed as planned.
- B. Give Dorothy a chance to experiment with her idea. It will give her some hands on experience from which she might learn a lot.
- C. Let Dorothy know that this is your design and that you know best what will and won't work here.

- D. Have a discussion with Dorothy, fully exploring all proposed methods, in an effort to come to an agreement.
- E. Suggest that Dorothy be allowed to try her method out on a less important project.

8. You have just returned from a two week vacation and discovered that your co-worker Bob made some changes in the work schedules. The changes don't make much sense to you and seem unfair in terms of your own work load. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Bob know immediately that you have no intention of working according to this new schedule.
- B. Send Bob a memo suggesting that the changes be modified.
- C. Go along with Bob's new plans since you weren't here at the time they were implemented.
- D. Call for a meeting of everyone affected by the new plans, including Bob, to examine the issue from all sides and be sure that everyone is satisfied.
- E. Try to find out the reason for the changes Bob made before you decide how you feel about them.

9. David is your work group's representative at weekly management meetings. He is responsible for reporting on your group's progress and relaying communications back to your group. There have been indications that he has been taking credit for the accomplishments of other group members in these meetings. David has denied any such charges made by group members. This week he was cited in the company newsletter for a recent breakthrough in developing a system that was really your design. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Not bother to confront David, he would only deny it.
- B. Ask David to give you some credit for developing the system at the next management meeting.

- C. Congratulate David on his award. He seems to need the attention.
- D. Set up a time to talk with David about your concerns and hear his views in order to resolve the difficulty.
- E. Let David know that you expect to be fully credited for the accomplishment, and that you will be sending written reports documenting your own work for him to read to those at the next management meetings.

10. You and Sheryl are coordinating the work of a task group around a new assignment. Your backgrounds are very different, but you both have a lot of experience in your areas. Sheryl's perspective on this new assignment is totally opposite from yours, and so far you have not agreed on anything. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Divide the responsibility so that you and Sheryl are each in charge of different areas.
- B. Try to ignore the differences and maintain harmony. It is important for you and Sheryl to get along well together.
- C. Set aside some time for you and Sheryl to spend listening to each other's perspectives in an effort to merge your insights around the new assignment.
- D. Try to be flexible and go along with Sheryl's ideas.
- E. Clearly articulate your perspective to Sheryl in an effort to "win her over."

11. It is necessary for you to coordinate your vacation time with your co-worker, Don. It is crucial that one of you be on the job at all times. This hasn't posed a problem in the past, but this year you both want the same two weeks. Neither of you could easily change your vacation plans. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Put in your request and leave it up to your boss to decide.

- B. Let Don have the time. You don't want to be selfish about it.
- C. Stand firm. You've made plans already and there is no way they can be changed at this point.
- D. Try to work out some kind of compromise with Don, so that you each get one of these weeks off.
- E. Sit down with Don and look at the problem from all sides to see if there is a way for you to both get what you want.

12. You are making short presentation with Margaret at a training session next weeks. Margaret is very excited about some new visual materials she has designed and wants to use them in the presentation. You don't think that visuals are really necessary in such a brief presentation, and that organizing the equipment will take too much time. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Margaret use them. She obviously went to a lot of work to prepare them and she's so excited about them.
- B. Tell Margaret that you don't think visuals are needed and would prefer not using them.
- C. Suggest that Margaret only use a few of them.
- D. Ignore Margaret's suggestion. Maybe she'll drop it.
- E. Work with Margaret to define the objectives of the presentation and examine the issue of whether or not to use the visuals, hoping to come to an agreement.

13. You've recently been assigned to work with Ken, one of the most highly skilled people in your area. You're very excited about having an opportunity to learn from him, but so far he hasn't responded positively to any of your questions or suggestions. You feel discouraged by the continual rejection of your ideas. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Be more assertive and tell Ken that you expect more from him.

- B. Say nothing. You don't want to risk doing anything that may damage your relationship with Ken at this point.
- C. See if Ken would be willing to meet with you for an hour a week to address questions that you have.
- D. Let Ken know that you really want to learn from him, and that you value discussing your ideas with him as a way of testing your assumptions and understanding his views.
- E. Accept Ken's point of view. He probably knows more about this stuff than you do.

14. Your job entails working with top-secret information. Strict confidentiality is vital to the company's welfare. It has just gotten back to you that Kathy, your co-worker has been divulging this information to a competitor. Your department will be held accountable for this leak. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Do nothing. Kathy might lose her job if you bring this up.
- B. Tell Kathy that it must stop and that you will be forced to report her if it happens again.
- C. Caution Kathy not to divulge too much.
- D. Try to stay out of it. This could get messy.
- E. Arrange a meeting with Kathy in order to try to understand her views and express yours.

15. There is an opportunity for one person from your department to present at a national conference each year. You and Helen are the only ones interested in making the presentation this year. It would be critical for both your careers at this point, and neither wants to miss this opportunity. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Helen go. You don't want to be stubborn about it.
- B. Tell Helen that it is more important to your career at this time, and that she should let you go.

- C. Try to work out a compromise with Helen that would give you both an opportunity to enhance your careers.
- D. Ask your boss to decide.
- E. Spend some time with Helen trying to understand both points of view in order to resolve the situation.

16. Bill, an accountant from the finance department, has just stormed into your office demanding to know where the reports are that he requested from you last week. After complaining angrily about how "no one around here does anything right," he asks when you are going to get around to the report. You have had a good relationship with Bill in the past, and have never seen him this upset. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Bill that you have been very busy and will not be able to complete the report until your other work is done.
- B. Tell Bill that you are very busy, but will try to get him a first draft this afternoon.
- C. Ask Bill to stay and discuss the situation further with you so that you can work things through together.
- D. Tell Bill that you will get to work on the report right away.
- E. Try to avoid getting into a disagreement with Bill now when he is so angry. Tell him calmly when you expect to have the report completed and delivered to him.

17. Your co-worker Ed, has been wanting to try out a new evaluation method for determining the effectiveness of the work you have been doing together. You have been strongly opposed to this method based on your belief that it is not an accurate measurement. You and Ed have had several heated disagreements about this issue. Just now you come across a report which indicates that Ed's method has proven very useful in cases similar to yours. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to ignore the whole issue. Maybe Ed will let it drop.
- B. Tell Ed that you'd be willing to go along with the new method. Looks like it might work after all.
- C. Work hard to convince Ed that your position is right.
- D. Let Ed try the new method out on one part of your work that isn't very crucial.
- E. Try to thoroughly examine the issue with Ed from both sides in order to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.

18. As chief purchaser for your department, you have to approve purchase orders before sending them to the purchasing department. Recent administrative budget cuts have imposed serious restrictions on spending for your department. you have just had to reject George's requisition for new carpeting for his office. Now he's on the phone disagreeing with your decision, saying that his old carpet hasn't been replaced in ten years and is a mess. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell George that there is no way that you can approve his purchase request at this time because of the budget cuts.
- B. Suggest that George request having the carpet steam-cleaned instead.
- C. Refer George to the purchasing department head with his concern.
- D. Get together with George to fully explore the issue in an effort to work out a solution.
- E. Approve George's request. It sounds like he really needs a new carpet.

19. Barbara usually stops by your desk during the morning to talk at length about her work. You recently explained to her that this has been interfering with your own work, and asked her not to interrupt you during the morning. You suggested the end of the day as a better time for you

to take a break. Now this morning she comes by, bursting with excitement about a new breakthrough she has just made. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Barbara that you're in the middle of some important work and can't talk with her now.
- B. Discuss your problem with Barbara again to try and work out an agreeable solution for both of you.
- C. Excuse yourself as soon as possible for an "important meeting."
- D. Suggest that Barbara join you for a ten minute coffee break to tell you a little about it now, and fill you in on the details later.
- E. Stop what you were doing to listen to her news. This must be very important to her.

20. Ray, a specialist from the planning department, has recommended a reorganization of your unit, based on a year long study. Although you have no background in this area, you are not very happy about the idea of reorganizing. You have just voiced your disagreement with the new plan at a department meeting. Ray is called on to justify his plan and responds with some very impressive statistics. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to get people to see your point of view by arguing against Ray's plan.
- B. Initiate a discussion with Ray of both sides of the issue so that all the underlying concerns are aired in an effort to resolve the matter.
- C. Go along with Ray's plan at this point since he seems to know what he is talking about.
- D. Suggest that Ray modify the plan so that the reorganization is not so drastic.
- E. Refrain from further comments to avoid being difficult.

21. Arlene is the coordinator of an in-house training program specifically designed for employees in your department. You are responsible for selecting and scheduling people to participate. Arlene is just come to you complaining that too many of these people cancel at the last minute due to crises on the job. These crises demand the full attention of all your people when they occur. Arlene insists that she must have a guaranteed number of participants in order for her program to continue. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Arlene know that your first concern is getting the job done, and you can't make her any promises.
- B. Tell Arlene that you'll try to give her a little more notice when people have to cancel.
- C. Promise Arlene that you'll try to be sure that everyone assigned attends in the future.
- D. Suggest that Arlene bring the issue up with your boss.
- E. Try to explore the problem more fully with Arlene, trying to come up with an agreeable solution.

22. You and Ruth have been working together steadily for two weeks to meet a deadline on an important job. At the last minute a number of things are going wrong, increasing the pressure to be finished on time. Now Ruth is saying that the problems are the result of your poor planning. You think the plan is fine, it just requires a little more effort to implement than Ruth is willing to make. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Confront Ruth with what you think the real problem is.
- B. Try to come up with a simpler plan that Ruth would be happier working with.
- C. Suggest that you follow through on the rest of the plan, and Ruth write up the report when the job is complete.
- D. Try not to get into a disagreement with Ruth at this point. Ignore the issue and focus on getting the job done.

- E. Discuss both sides of the issue with Ruth and try to work out a solution.

23. Your work group is about to undertake a very challenging, long term project. During the planning sessions, Donna, a technical specialist, continuously finds fault with people's ideas, and raises numerous concerns about the project. So far the group has made little progress, and a final plan is due soon. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Work with Donna in the group to come up with a plan that satisfies her concerns and that everyone can agree to.
- B. Ignore Donna's concerns at this point and push to get a plan that you think is best for the project.
- C. Adapt some of the plan to suit Donna, and try to get her to agree to go along with the rest.
- D. Try to keep the focus off Donna's issues and emphasize the more positive input from others.
- E. Let Donna propose a plan that she thinks would be suitable.

24. A new secretary has been hired and assigned to work half time in your department and half time in Peter's office in another department. Peter is insisting that the secretary be based in his department, with your work delivered by courier. You would rather have the secretary based in your own department. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to convince Peter to go along with your idea.
- B. Suggest that the secretary alternate bases periodically.
- C. Try to avoid a confrontation with Peter. Wait and see what happens after the secretary begins work.
- D. Go along with Peter's idea and try to make the most of it.

- E. Meet with Peter and attempt to figure out a way for you to both get what you want.

25. You have been working with a task force for the past year on developing a new evaluation system. There has been considerable conflict and antagonism among the task force members during this time, but finally you have worked through these issues and are nearing agreement. Now Alice, a task force member, is suggesting some details that you think are totally unnecessary. When you questioned her about this, Alice became very angry and others began taking sides. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Clarify your questions for Alice and attempt to get her to see your point of view.
- B. Back off from questioning Alice and hope that things settle down.
- C. Suggest that Alice modify these details somewhat.
- D. Make an effort to explore all sides of the issue and work through this conflict with Alice.
- E. Go along with Alice's ideas. It's not worth disrupting progress over.

26. Your organization has just instituted a mandatory performance review system for all employees, to be instituted twice a year. Lisa, an employee working under you, has made it clear that she disagrees with this policy and will not comply. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ignore Lisa's statement. Send her a memo to notify her of her review appointment when it is scheduled.
- B. Let Lisa devise her own system for evaluating her performance.
- C. Tell Lisa that this is a mandatory review, and that she must participate in it as part of her job.

- D. Get together with Lisa to try and work out an arrangement that would satisfy everyone concerned.
- E. Ask Lisa if she would agree to just one review yearly.

27. You and Fred frequently travel out of town together for work related meetings. You have use of the company car, but Fred usually asks you to drive so he can catch up on his reading during the trip. You don't mind driving, but you really could use the chance to catch up on your own work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Fred that you want to catch up on your work and ask him to drive the next time.
- B. Continue to do the driving so that Fred can get his reading done. You don't mind driving that much.
- C. Suggest that you split the driving equally so that you each have some time to read.
- D. Share your concerns with Fred and listen to his in an effort to come to an agreement that would meet both your needs.
- E. Try not to make an issue of it. Keep driving, but maybe hint that you're behind in your work too and see if Fred offers to drive.

28. Karen is in a position to advocate for your future promotion to a higher position. Although she works in a different area, you often send her samples of your work for her feedback. Lately she has been making comments and suggestions about your work that you think are out of her area of expertise. She discovered that you haven't followed her suggestions and is confronting you about it. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Karen the reasons why you feel her suggestions were inappropriate.
- B. Tell Karen that you are going to be following up on her suggestions as soon as possible.

- C. Discuss your concerns about the suggestions with Karen, trying to work out any disagreement between you.
- D. Try to diplomatically sidestep the issue, letting Karen know that you appreciated her suggestions.
- E. Tell Karen that you will try to include a few of her suggestions in your next piece of work.

29. Recently your boss told you that your co-workers have been complaining about your lack of flexibility. Currently you're working with a team to produce a new training manual. So far there have been no problems, but now you and Joe strongly disagree on the printing format to be used. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask your boss to decide to avoid a confrontation with Joe.
- B. Go along with Joe's ideas this time to show that you can be reasonable.
- C. Try to be more persuasive in convincing Joe that your way will be better.
- D. Suggest that you use a format that combines some of your ideas as well as Joe's.
- E. Share your perspective with Joe and ask for his in an effort to work out this difference.

30. Your work on a new assignment is dependent on a written report from Tom. Tom agreed to provide the report in time for you to start your work, but it is now two weeks overdue. You have approached Tom twice about this and each time he offered lengthy excuses about things that have gone wrong, promising to get you the report right away. Now he is out each time you call, and hasn't responded to any messages you've left. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Go to Tom's boss with the problem.
- B. Try to be patient and wait for Tom to get around to the report.

- C. Give Tom an extension on getting the report completed. It seems he has enough to worry about right now.
- D. Try to set up a meeting with Tom to explore both of your situations and come to an agreeable solution.
- E. Ask Tom to just give you an outline of the report for now.

31. Jane has just been assigned to work as a consultant to your department. She wants to meet for an hour with each member of your staff, and for two hours with the entire staff weekly. You are way behind work schedules already and you don't want people taking time away from their jobs for these meetings. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Jane there is no way people can take time from work for these meetings right now.
- B. Continue with work as usual. Jane will soon see what the situation is around here.
- C. Give Jane the meeting time she is requesting. She is being paid to consult with your department.
- D. Set up some time to talk with Jane and fully explore the issue in order to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.
- E. Explain the situation to Jane and propose fewer or shorter meetings.

32. You and Roger share responsibility for hiring a new person to work in your unit. You have a difference of opinion about the final two candidates. Roger is in favor of one candidate because she went to a prestigious college. You feel the other candidate is much better qualified for the job. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Roger that you insist on hiring the better qualified person.
- B. Go through a thorough analysis of the situation with Roger attempting to come to an agreement.

- C. Suggest that you flip a coin.
- D. Go along with Roger. You'll never change that kind of an attitude.
- E. Propose to Roger that the job be split between the two candidates.

33. Jack, a co-worker, really irritates you with his jokes. He monopolizes every coffee break with these jokes, keeping everyone in stitches. You don't find them amusing, and in fact are sick of hearing them. When you complain about them, Jack just teases you about not having a sense of humor. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Jack that you don't appreciate his sense of humor and would prefer that he cut out the jokes.
- B. Try to be a good sport and laugh at Jack's jokes.
- C. Find a different place to enjoy your coffee breaks.
- D. Explain your feelings to Jack and try to work out the difficulty between you.
- E. Ask Jack to tell only one joke at a time so that you don't get so overloaded.

34. Martha often drops by your office and asks you to do a "favor" for her. At first you didn't mind and wanted to be helpful, but now you're winding up doing a good deal of menial work for her; copying, stamping, filing, and running errands. Martha hasn't gotten your hints that you already have a lot of work to do. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Martha that you can no longer do these kinds of favors for her. You have your own work to do.
- B. Make up an excuse each time Martha asks you to do one of these favors.
- C. Continue to help Martha. You'd rather cooperate than have a confrontation.

- D. Spend some time with Martha exploring the problem and trying to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution.
- E. Tell Martha that you don't mind helping her out with copying, if she would run errands for you sometimes.

35. You and Richard had an argument at work two weeks ago and haven't spoken to each other since then. You still feel that you were right and that Richard behaved badly. There is a lot of tension at work between you and people are beginning to notice it. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Richard that you really believe that you were right, and didn't like his behavior.
- B. Tell Richard that you're willing to back down if he will too.
- C. Try to talk with Richard about the situation and see if the two of you can work things through.
- D. Apologize to Richard for arguing with him.
- E. Give it some more time. It'll probably blow over.

36. Linda is one of your best workers, but she has been coming in a very late for the past few months. When you mentioned this to her, she said that as long as she got all her work done each day it didn't make any difference what time she arrived. She does do all her work very well, but others are getting resentful of her lateness. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let it go. If people don't like it they should talk to Linda.
- B. Adjust Linda's starting time to allow for her later arrival.
- C. Tell Linda that she can start an hour later if she will stay an hour later at the end of the day.

- D. Tell Linda that her lateness is affecting others' morale and that everyone must be on time.
- E. Have a meeting with Linda to discuss the problem from both sides and try to resolve it.

37. You and Norma have co-chaired a committee at work for two years. The arrangement has worked very well allowing you to miss meetings when you have other appointments. Norma readily takes over your responsibilities when you can't be present. Now Norma is asking you to make the annual presentation to the board of directors next week by yourself because she will be out of town. You dread these presentations and were planning on asking Norma to do it alone. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to do it alone this time if Norma will do it by herself next year.
- B. Tell Norma that you can't possibly handle it by yourself.
- C. Tell Norma that you'll think about it and let her know.
- D. Examine the problem with Norma and try to come up with a solution.
- E. Agree to make the presentation alone. It's nice to be able to help Norma after all the help she's given you.

38. You and Mark have just been given a budget increase to complete a project you have been working on together. Mark feels strongly about using the additional money to upgrade the remaining materials that are needed. You are convinced that it is more important to hire extra help to get the work done sooner. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Go along with Mark's request. It's important to preserve harmony in your relationship.
- B. Suggest that you spend some of the additional money on better materials, and some on more help.

- C. Tell Mark that the materials you've been using are fine, and that extra help is more important now.
- D. Try to postpone making a decision. Eventually Mark will realize that you need more help.
- E. Work out a complete budget and needs analysis with Mark so that you can resolve this disagreement.

39. You have been training Steve, a new employee, to operate some technical equipment in your department. He has been learning quickly and can perform most functions on his own. Your rule is that he only operate this equipment when you are around, so that you can monitor his work. He is very frustrated with this arrangement because it limits his practice time. He feels that he doesn't need supervision at this point. You think that he still has more to learn. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to be available a little more often to supervise Steve.
- B. Tell Steve that you will continue to supervise his work until he has mastered the equipment.
- C. Ask your boss to clarify the rule for Steve.
- D. Let Steve practice the functions he can perform on the equipment when you're not around.
- E. Talk with Steve about the whole issue trying to work things out between you.

40. Your co-worker Betty's style really bothers you. It takes her forever to answer a question or explain things; she talks slowly and frequently repeats herself. Watching her work is even worse. She is overly cautious and methodical, checking everything she does for mistakes as she goes along. Her constant worrying is getting on your nerves. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to ignore Betty's behavior.

- B. Tell Betty that this behavior is really bothering you.
- C. Talk the problem out with Betty and try to work out a solution together.
- D. Give Betty a little more of your time for listening.
- E. Arrange to spend some time away from Betty each day.

A P P E N D I X E

Copy of Letter to Expert Judges

72 Pine Street
Amherst, MA, 01002

Dear ,

I am writing to request your professional assistance in reviewing an instrument dealing with conflict management contingencies I have designed. This instrument is part of my doctoral research at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Developing the instrument for this study includes the selection of twenty inventory items from a pool of forty. Selection will be based on review and evaluation by a panel of judges who have expertise in the field of organizational behavior.

Rating this instrument will take approximately one hour. The process will consist of reading the items and evaluating them according to specific criteria. Each item is a short description of a conflict situation likely to occur at work with another person, followed by a choice of conflict behaviors related to five pre-defined styles of conflict-handling behavior. Using a simple check form for rating, you will be asked to indicate the response that seems most appropriate in each situation and also the style of conflict-handling behavior being described in each of the five possible responses. You will be provided with definitions of the five styles of conflict-handling behavior and a brief outline of the appropriate uses for each style. A two-item sample is attached as an example.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my request for assistance. I recognize that an agreement to review this instrument means a commitment of time and effort on your part. I will be happy to share the results of my study with you, and trust that they will be useful to you in your work. I will be contacting you by telephone in one week to verify arrangements for forwarding the instrument for your review.

Sincerely,
Diane F. Lakerty

A P P E N D I X F

Examples of Stage One Revisions

Examples of Revisions - Stage One

The following are representative revisions made in the forty-item prototype based on the evaluations of the expert judges. The section deals first with the alternative response descriptions, then with the conflict situation descriptions.

Alternative responses. In a number of items (e.g.#'s 2,4,5,10,14,25,27,32,&40) there seemed to be a lack of distinction between the responses used to describe the accomodating and avoiding styles. One judge pointed out a problem with the language used to describe these styles. For instance, in item 10, response D, "Try to be flexible and go along with Sheryl's ideas" is intended to describe an accomodating style, but the language is so passive it might suggest avoiding. This response was changed to "Be flexible and let Sheryl have her own way". Other accomodating responses were rewritten to describe more overt or intentional behavior, in an effort to prevent confusion with the more passive response of avoiding.

In other instances, the language used to describe a response alternative was too strong to realistically fit the style intended (e.g. 7,C; 8,B; 35,A;). For example, in item 7, response C, "Let Dorothy know that this is your design and that you know best what will and won't work here" may

sound a little to hostile to be chosen by anyone as a competing response to the situation. Changed to "Let Dorothy know that this is your design and that you're not interested in experimenting with it" this alternative response is slightly toned down and perhaps a more likely option in the situation.

Another example of the same problem was in item 8, response B. Here "Send Bob a memo suggesting that the changes be modified", although intended to be a compromise, may sound a bit forceful and be mistaken for a competing response. While the use of the term "suggesting" is indicative of the compromise mode, memos are more likely to be used when we intend to be more assertive in order to get our way. Rewritten as "Propose that some aspects of the old schedule be retained" makes this response more clearly compromising. Item 26, response A, had a similar problem and was changed accordingly.

A number of response alternatives used to describe a collaborating style (e.g. 21,E; 22,E; 24,E;) were too general. These were revised so as to relate more specifically to the situation. For example, item 21, response E, "Try to explore the problem more fully with Arlene trying to come up with an agreeable solution" was changed to "Arrange a meeting with Arlene to try to identify

some way of insuring her of sufficient participants while allowing your people some flexibility".

Another way in which a general, rather than specific behavior description caused a problem according to the expert judges, is seen in item 30, response A. Here the description of a competing style as "Go to Tom's boss with the problem" may be interpreted as avoiding to deal with the situation directly. One judge suggested that a clear statement of need would make this a "cleaner" competing response. With this in mind, the response was revised to read "Inform Tom that you need the report and will have to go 'over his head' if necessary to obtain it".

In other cases, some response alternatives were confusing because of the use of a word or phrase associated with a different style than the one being described. For example, item 23, response B, "Ignore Donna's concerns at this point and push to get a plan that you think is best for the project" is more clearly a competing style when the first phrase, which may be viewed as avoiding, is eliminated. Another example can be found in item 27, response E: "Try not to make an issue of it. Keep driving, but maybe hint that you're behind in your work too and see if Fred offers to drive". The use here of the phrase "keep driving" describes an accommodation of the other party, when

the response was intended to be avoiding. Again, simply eliminating the phrase leaves the style description less confounded.

Although compromise responses were the most difficult to write (not all conflict situations lend themselves to compromise) the only one of these challenged by a judge was response E, item 40. As originally written, "Arrange to spend some time away from Betty each day" there is little sense of the "give up something to get something" that is associated with compromise. "Tell Betty that you'll try to be more patient if she'll try to stop worrying so much" is intended to reflect this aspect of compromise more clearly.

To summarize, a number of CSI responses were revised based both on the ratings and general comments of the panel of eight judges. These revisions included clearer distinctions between styles, elimination of confounding phrases, changes in language and tone to be more congruent with conflict-handling style, and to provide more specific descriptions of behaviors associated with particular styles.

Conflict situations. Basically, there were two types of revisions made in the descriptions of the conflict situations in response to the comments and evaluations of the judges. One was to make the situation clearer by adding a key word or phrase that would describe more exactly a

factor in the situation linked to the choice of "appropriate" response intended. The other was to lessen the effects of gender bias by either reducing the amount of sex- stereotypical behavior exhibited by the other party, or by changing the gender of the other party in the situation.

The following examples show how revisions were made to clarify situational factors in certain items. In item 3, the description of the conflict situation was intended to convey high stakes in the project as well as in the relationship, i.e. "You have recently been named project coordinator for an exciting, top-priority project". The phrase "what you think is" was added to describe the "exciting, top-priority project" in a way that clearly indicates a high degree of personal as well as organizational value. Without this information, it might be a situation in which less concern is given to the conflict that arises. Item 31 was revised in much the same way, adding the phrase "a very important aspect of your department's goals" to emphasize the stakes in the situation.

The situation described in item 10 reflects a similar problem. Again, an indication of high stakes in both task and relationship were crucial factors in the situation. These were better emphasized in the revision which describes

the extent of the skills and experiences of both parties as linked to the success of the task. The clarification of this factor provides a stronger indicator of the need for a collaborative response here.

Another example of a need to clarify situational factors is found in item 12. Given that the "appropriate" response here was to be an accomodating one, it was important to emphasize that the respondent did not have sole responsibility for the presentation, and that the issue was not very serious. The addition of "jointly" in regard to making the presentation, and the explanation that "organizing the equipment will take too much time" as the reason for an objection to the use of visuals, provides needed clarification.

In item 18 one judge pointed out a need to identify the status of the other party in order to determine the "most appropriate" response. Given that the respondent is described as a chief purchaser, adding the information that the other party is "a supervisor in your department" leaves more options for responses than if one concluded that the other party might have a higher position. The intended competing response might be viewed as less appropriate with the possibility existing that the other party ranks way

above the respondent in the organizational hierarchy. Item 35 was revised on the same basis.

Similarly, item 23 was seen to be lacking clarity of the roles and relationships of the individuals described in the conflict situation. Several judges questioned who was in charge, and the need for collaboration here was not as evident as it needed to be. Adding the sentence "All members will be interdependent, and equally responsible for coordination." makes a stronger case for the need to collaborate here.

In another situation, one judge commented that the phrase "seriously injured two workers" in item 5 might be a bit strong, leaving little room for ambiguity. The intent of the researcher was to indicate a situation where the topic was very critical, but the result was a situation so "loaded" that no other response would be likely to be considered. The revision describing "minor injuries" and concern about more serious ones leaves the possibility for alternative responses more open.

More specific information regarding the nature of the jokes being told by the other party in item 33 was requested by several judges. As one judge put it "I would be much more assertive if they were racist jokes than if they were elephant jokes!" Identifying them as corny jokes made

avoiding seem like a more reasonable "appropriate" response in this situation.

Item 36 required the addition of information regarding climate as a conditional factor in the situation. Adding the phrase "the norm in the office is to be on time" makes it more likely that the other party's behavior would be taken in a serious light. Without this phrase, avoiding or accomodating may be more appropriate here, rather than the competing response intended to be "most appropriate" in dealing with the other party's pattern of lateness.

The final example of a revision made to clarify a situational factor is in item 39. Here the reason for wanting to continue to monitor the other party's work was not given, making it uncertain whether stopping would be a potential danger. The intended accomodating response might be seen as less appropriate if this risk were involved. Revising the situation to indicate that the need is only a personal one for assurance of proper performance, presents a situation in which it might be more appropriate to give in.

The other main type of revisions made to situation descriptions in this stage were regarding possible gender biases. These were based primarily on the feedback of one female judge whose awareness to instances of gender bias is

keen. Having been asked particularly to provide feedback on this aspect of the CSI, her comments seemed significant.

There were two main concerns regarding gender bias mentioned by this particular judge in her comments. The first was that there seemed to be an abundance of "overtalkative and acting-out women" described in the conflict situations. The example she gave of this was that in several items women were described as complaining about something or spending time chatting with co-workers. In reviewing the instrument, only two items, 2 and 19 fit this category. In both, the gender of the other party was changed to male in an attempt to compensate for the seemingly negative stereotyping of women here.

Another concern voiced here was that "there seem to be more examples of women in yucky roles". This comment was presented as "an impression", no examples were identified. The items were then scrutinized for this possible tendency, but not one example could be found. Considerable care had been taken originally to describe women in a variety of non sex-typed roles, e.g. "technical specialist", "consultant", training "coordinator", "committee co-chair", "one of your best workers", and "in a position to advocate for your future promotion". The number of important or influential male roles described were actually fewer than for females.

In spite of this though, item number 13 was revised to describe a female, rather than a male, as "one of the most highly skilled people in your area". It is hoped that this helps to reduce the impression of women in lesser roles, that someone who is sensitive to this issue, might gather from a reading of the instrument.

In summary, revisions were made to the conflict situation descriptions in order to clarify factors linked to the "appropriate" response in a particular situation, or to minimize potential gender bias. Overall, the forty item prototype was reviewed and revised based on an analysis of the evaluations and comments of eight expert judges in this first stage of instrument evaluation.

A P P E N D I X G
Conflict Situations Inventory
Revised Forty-Item Prototype

CONFLICT SITUATIONS INVENTORY

Instructions: The items in this inventory describe conflict situations commonly encountered in work settings. Each situation is followed by a list of five alternative responses to that particular conflict. Read each item carefully and circle the response you would be most likely to make in that situation. Be careful not to choose the response you think you should make. An honest response, based on how you think you would be most likely to respond, is best.

1. Your co-worker, John, continually "borrows" materials from your supply, rather than make out a purchase order to obtain his own. Your supplies are being rapidly depleted due to his regular use of them, causing you to need to re-order frequently. In this situation you would most likely ...

A. Say nothing to John. Bringing this issue up would only be disruptive to your relationship.

B. Suggest to John that you'll order enough supplies for both of you this month, if he'll do the ordering next month.

C. Let John know how the situation is affecting you, and try to work out a solution together.

D. Tell John to order his own supplies from now on.

E. Order sufficient materials for both of you, so that you can continue to help John out.

2. Your co-worker, Mike, has been complaining lately that he has been doing most of the work on a project you are working on together. It seems to you that he is doing more complaining than working. You feel you're doing more than your share. In this situation you would most likely ...

A. Talk with Mike about the concerns you both have and try to work through these hard feelings.

B. Tell Mike that you don't agree with him, and that he should spend less time complaining and more time working.

C. Try not to take Mike's complaining too seriously. Something else is probably bothering him right now.

D. Let Mike know that you'll do more work if he thinks you haven't been doing your share.

E. Suggest to Mike that you both work hard on the project today, and take tomorrow off.

3. You have recently been named project coordinator for what you think is an exciting, top-priority project. Susan, your co-worker, had always coordinated these projects in the past. She expressed surprise that someone with your "limited experience" was given such a high level assignment. After a week, she returned your memo with projected time lines for her work on the project, declaring them totally unrealistic. You amended them according to her suggestions. Yesterday she failed to show up for the first team meeting. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Suggest that Susan attend only one meeting a month.
- B. Tell Susan that team meetings are required for everyone, including her.
- C. Refuse to get into a disagreement with Susan around this issue. Let the incident pass, but continue to inform her of where and when future meetings will be held.
- D. Tell Susan she is excused from attending team meetings.
- E. Try to work through this meeting attendance problem now with Susan. Clearly express your views about team meeting attendance, and solicit hers, in an attempt to come to a mutual resolution of the current problem.

4. Your office sharing arrangement with Nancy is working very well except for one problem. You like to use your morning time for thinking and writing, and Nancy often chooses to make important phone calls during this time. Her conversations are disturbing your work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask Nancy to make her phone calls from another phone so that you can have the quiet you need to do your work.
- B. Take your work to a quieter place.
- C. Change your morning work routines so that Nancy can continue to make calls when she chooses to.
- D. Suggest to Nancy that you do a thorough analysis of your individual needs and try to arrive at a joint solution.
- E. See if Nancy would be willing to set aside part of the morning for quiet work, and make phone calls during the remainder of the time.

5. A piece of equipment in your unit has been malfunctioning for over a year. Recently two workers received minor injuries when using this equipment, and you're concerned that someone may be seriously injured. Al, the chief of maintenance, has been personally working on repairing this equipment for the past year. You want the faulty equipment replaced at this point, but Al insists that it can be repaired and that replacement is an unnecessary expense. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Leave the decision up to Al since he is the expert in this area.
- B. Agree to let Al repair the equipment again. You don't want to risk losing his services in the future.
- C. Insist to Al that the equipment be replaced. The safety of the workers is at stake here.
- D. Invite Al to a meeting with personnel who use this equipment to see if both sides of the issue can be explored and the problem resolved.
- E. Try to get Al to agree to replace the equipment if it breaks again after the new repairs.

6. Your work group has only one hour to meet and decide on several important issues. At the start of the meeting, Jim

brings up the question of whether to throw a victory party to celebrate the softball team's championship season, or use the team's money to buy new uniforms. There is much disagreement and now Jim, the team captain, is arguing for new uniforms. You agree with those who want a party, but as the group leader you are also concerned with moving through the agenda in the time remaining. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to skirt the issue for now, so that the group can deal with the more pressing business on the agenda.
- B. Facilitate a problem solving discussion with Jim and the others so that a satisfactory solution can be reached.
- C. As leader, make a decision in favor of the party.
- D. Suggest to Jim that some of the money be used to buy new shirts for the team, and the remainder be spent on a modest party.
- E. Give Jim the floor to make his pitch. He obviously needs to deal with this now.

7. Dorothy, a new employee, has been assigned to work with you on a project of your own design. She is eager to learn, but most of her suggestions have been off target and you've had to reject them. You sense her discouragement, but she lacks experience in this area. Now she is suggesting using an experimental method that might reduce project time significantly. You have little faith in her idea, although it wouldn't interfere with the project. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Thank Dorothy for her suggestion and proceed as planned.
- B. Give Dorothy a chance to experiment with her idea. It will give her some hands on experience from which she might learn a lot.
- C. Let Dorothy know that this is your design and that you're not interested in experimenting with it.

- D. Have a discussion with Dorothy, fully exploring all proposed methods, in an effort to come to an agreement.
- E. Suggest that Dorothy be allowed to try her method out on a less important project.

8. You have just returned from a two week vacation and discovered that your co-worker Bob made some changes in the work schedules. You're not sure why the changes were made, and think that the original schedule was perfectly fine. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Bob know immediately that you have no intention of working according to this new schedule.
- B. Propose that some aspects of the old schedule be retained.
- C. Agree to go along with Bob's new plans since you weren't here at the time they were implemented.
- D. Call for a meeting of everyone affected by the new plans, including Bob, to examine the issue from all sides and be sure that everyone is satisfied.
- E. Try to find out the reason for the changes Bob made before you decide what to do.

9. David is your work group's representative at weekly management meetings. He is responsible for reporting on your group's progress and relaying communications back to your group. It appears that he has been repeatedly taking credit for the accomplishments of other group members in these meetings. David has denied any such charges made by group members. This week he was cited in the company newsletter for a recent breakthrough in developing a system that was really your design. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Not bother to confront David, the issue is in the past, and little can be done about it now.
- B. Ask David to give you credit the next time you develop something innovative.

- C. Congratulate David on his award. He seems to need the attention.
- D. Set up a time to talk with David about your concerns and hear his views in order to resolve the difficulty.
- E. Let David know that you expect to be fully credited for the accomplishment, and that you will be sending reports documenting your work to the management team.

10. You and Sheryl are coordinating the work of a task group around a new assignment. Although your backgrounds are very different, you each have skills and experience crucial to the success of this work. Sheryl's perspective on this new assignment is totally opposite from yours, and so far you have not agreed on anything. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Divide the responsibility so that you and Sheryl are each in charge of different areas.
- B. Try to ignore the differences and maintain harmony. It is important for you and Sheryl to get along well together.
- C. Set aside some time for you and Sheryl to spend listening to each other's perspectives in an effort to merge your insights around the new assignment.
- D. Be flexible and let Sheryl have her way.
- E. Clearly articulate your perspective to Sheryl in an effort to "win her over".

11. It is necessary for you to coordinate your vacation time with your co-worker, Don. It is crucial that one of you be on the job at all times. This hasn't posed a problem in the past, but this year you both want the same two weeks. Neither of you could easily change your vacation plans. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Leave it up to your boss to decide.

- B. Let Don have the time. You don't want to be selfish about it.
- C. Stand firm. You've made plans already and there is no way they can be changed at this point.
- D. Try to work out a compromise with Don, so that you each get one of these weeks off.
- E. Sit down with Don and look at the problem from all sides trying to see if there is a way to solve it.

12. You are making a short presentation jointly with Margaret at a training session next week. Margaret is very excited about some new visual materials she has designed and wants to use them in the presentation. You don't think that visuals are really necessary in such a brief presentation, and would prefer leaving them out. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Margaret use them. She obviously went to a lot of work to prepare them and she's so excited about them.
- B. Tell Margaret that you don't think visuals are needed and would prefer not using them.
- C. Suggest that Margaret only use a few of them.
- D. Ignore Margaret's suggestion. Maybe she'll drop it.
- E. Work with Margaret to define the objectives of the presentation and examine the issue of whether or not to use the visuals, hoping to come to an agreement.

13. You've recently been assigned to work with Irene, one of the most highly skilled people in your area. You're very excited about having an opportunity to learn from her, but so far she hasn't responded positively to any of your questions or suggestions. You feel discouraged by the continual rejection of your ideas. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Be more assertive and defend your suggestions.

- B. Say nothing. You don't want to risk doing anything that may damage your relationship with Irene at this point.
- C. Hold off on making suggestions for the time being, and just try to get Irene to respond to the questions you have.
- D. Let Irene know that you really want to learn from her, and that you value discussing your ideas with her as a way of testing your assumptions and understanding her views.
- E. Let Irene know that you accept her point of view when she rejects your ideas. She knows more about this stuff than you do.

14. Your job entails working with confidential information. You have just become aware that Kathy, your co-worker has been revealing this information outside the office. Your department is aware of a leak and is investigating. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Kathy that you know but won't report her. She might lose her job if you did.
- B. Tell Kathy that it must stop and that you will be forced to report her if it happens again.
- C. Caution Kathy not to divulge too much.
- D. Try to stay out of it. This could get messy.
- E. Arrange a meeting with Kathy in order to try to understand her position and express your views.

15. There is an opportunity for one person from your department to present at a national conference each year. You and Helen are the only ones interested in making the presentation this year. It would be critical for both your careers at this point, and neither wants to miss this opportunity. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Helen go. You don't want to be stubborn about it.
- B. Tell Helen that it is more important to your career at this time, and that she should let you go.

- C. Agree to let Helen make the presentation next year if you can do it this year.
- D. Ask your boss to decide.
- E. Spend some time with Helen trying to understand both points of view in order to resolve the situation.

16. Bill, an accountant from the finance department, has just stormed into your office demanding to know where the reports are that he requested from you last week. After complaining angrily about how "no one around here does anything right", he asks when you are going to get around to the report. You suspect that the report is not the real cause of Bill's anger. It's been a tough week at work for everyone. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Bill that you have been very busy and will not be able to complete the report until your other work is done.
- B. Ask Bill if he would settle for a rough draft today if you can have an extension for the final report.
- C. Ask Bill to stay and discuss the situation further with you so that you can work things through together.
- D. Tell Bill that you will get to work on the report right away.
- E. Try to avoid getting into a disagreement with Bill now when he is so angry. Tell him calmly when you expect to have the report completed.

17. Your co-worker Ed, has been wanting to try out a new evaluation method for determining the effectiveness of the work you have been doing together. You have been strongly opposed to this method based on your belief that it may not be an accurate measurement. You and Ed have had several heated disagreements about this issue. Just now you come across a report which indicates that Ed's method has proven very useful in cases similar to the work you are doing. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to ignore the whole issue. Maybe Ed will let it drop.

- B. Tell Ed that you'd be willing to go along with the new method. It looks like it might work after all.
- C. Work hard to convince Ed that your position is right.
- D. Let Ed try the new method out on a part of your work that isn't very crucial.
- E. Try to thoughtfully examine the issue with Ed from both sides in order to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.

18. As chief purchaser for your department, you have to approve purchase orders before sending them to the purchasing department. Recent administrative budget cuts have imposed serious restrictions on spending for your department. You have just had to reject a request from George, a supervisor in your department, for new carpeting for his office. Now he's on the phone disagreeing with your decision, saying that his old carpet hasn't been replaced in ten years and is a mess. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell George that there is no way that you can approve his purchase request at this time because of the budget cuts.
- B. Suggest that if George can wait another year, you'll consider a request for carpet and other redecorating needed.
- C. Refer George to the purchasing department head with his concern.
- D. Get together with George to fully explore the issue in an effort to work out a solution.
- E. Approve George's request. It sounds like he really needs a new carpet.

19. Mark usually stops by your desk during the morning to talk at length about his work. You recently explained to him that this has been interfering with your own work, and asked him not to interrupt you during the morning. You suggested the end of the day as a better time for you to take a break. Now this morning he comes by, bursting with excitement about a new breakthrough he has just made. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Mark that you're busy and can't talk with him now.
- B. Discuss your problem with Mark again to try and work out an agreeable solution for both of you.
- C. Excuse yourself as soon as possible for an "important meeting".
- D. Tell Mark that you can only take a few minutes to hear about his news now, and suggest that he come back later to fill you in on the details.
- E. Stop what you were doing to listen to his news. This must be very important to him.

20. Ray, a specialist from the planning department, has recommended a reorganization of your unit, based on a year long study. Although you have no background or experience in this area, you are not very happy about the idea of reorganizing. You have just opposed the new plan at a department meeting. Ray is called on to justify his plan and responds with some very impressive statistics. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to get people to see your point of view by arguing against Ray's plan.
- B. Initiate a private discussion with Ray to examine all aspects of the plan and clarify your concerns.
- C. Go along with Ray's plan at this point since he is the expert in this area and seems to have it well thought out.
- D. Suggest that Ray modify the plan so that the reorganization is not so drastic.
- E. Refrain from further comments to avoid being difficult.

21. Arlene is the coordinator of an in-house training program specifically designed for employees in your department. You are responsible for selecting and scheduling people to participate. Arlene has just come to you complaining that too many of these people cancel at the last minute due to crises on the job. These crises demand the full attention of all your people when they occur. Arlene insists that she must have a guaranteed number of

participants in order for her program to continue. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Arlene know that your first concern is getting the job done, and you can't make her any promises.
- B. Tell Arlene that you'll try to give her a little more notice when people have to cancel.
- C. Promise Arlene that you'll make sure that everyone assigned attends in the future.
- D. Suggest that Arlene bring the issue up with your boss.
- E. Arrange a meeting with Arlene to try to identify some way of insuring her of sufficient participants while allowing your people some flexibility.

22. You and Ruth have been working together steadily for two weeks to meet a deadline on an important job. At the last minute a number of things are going wrong, increasing the pressure to be finished on time. Now Ruth is saying that the problems are the result of your poor planning. You think the plan is fine, it just requires a little more effort to implement than Ruth is willing to make. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Confront Ruth with what you think the real problem is.
- B. Try to come up with a simpler plan that Ruth would be happier working with.
- C. Suggest that you follow through on the rest of the plan, and Ruth write up the report when the job is complete.
- D. Try not to get into a disagreement with Ruth at this point. Ignore the issue for now and focus on getting the job done.
- E. Explore the problem fully with Ruth, trying to get down to the real issue in order to resolve it.

23. Your work group is about to undertake a very challenging, long term project. All members will be interdependent, and equally responsible for coordination. During the planning sessions, Donna, a technical specialist,

points out the flaws in most suggestions, and raises numerous concerns about the project. So far the group has made little progress, and a final plan is due soon. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Work with Donna in the group to come up with a plan that satisfies her concerns and that everyone can agree to.
- B. Push to get a plan that you think is best for the project.
- C. Try to get Donna to give up some of her concerns and agree to go along with some of the suggestions.
- D. Try to keep the focus off Donna's issues and make an effort to maintain harmony in the group.
- E. Try to get the group to go along with Donna's ideas.

24. A new secretary has been hired and assigned to work half time for your department and half time for Peter's office in another department. Peter is insisting that the secretary be based in his department, with your work delivered by courier. You would rather have the secretary based in your own department. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to convince Peter to go along with your idea.
- B. Try to get Peter to agree to an equal sharing arrangement. It's better than no secretary.
- C. Try to avoid a confrontation with Peter. Wait and see what happens after the secretary begins work.
- D. Go along with Peter's idea and try to make the most of it.
- E. Clearly state your views on the matter and get Peter to explain his in an effort to settle things.

25. You have been working with a task force for the past year on developing a new evaluation system. There has been considerable conflict and antagonism among the task force members during this time, but finally you have worked through these issues and are nearing agreement. Now Alice, a task force member, is suggesting some minor details that

you think aren't really necessary. When you questioned her about this, Alice became very angry and others began taking sides. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Clarify your questions for Alice and attempt to get her to see your point of view.
- B. Back off the issue and hope that things settle down.
- C. Give in on one or two of the details and try to get Alice to drop the others.
- D. Make an effort to explore all sides of the issue and work through this conflict with Alice.
- E. Agree to include Alice's details in the new system. It's not worth disrupting progress over.

26. Your organization has just instituted a mandatory performance review system for all employees, to be instituted twice a year. Lisa, an employee working under you, has made it clear that she disagrees with this policy and will not comply. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ignore Lisa's statement. Wait and see what happens when it comes time for the review.
- B. Exempt Lisa from the new policy. There's no way you're going to change her mind on this.
- C. Tell Lisa that this is a mandatory review, and that she must participate in it as part of her job.
- D. Get together with Lisa to try and work out an arrangement that would satisfy everyone concerned.
- E. Ask Lisa if she would agree to just one review yearly.

27. You and Fred frequently travel out of town together for work related meetings. You have use of the company car, but Fred usually asks you to drive so he can catch up on his reading during the trip. You don't mind driving, but you really could use the chance to catch up on your own work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Fred that you want to catch up on your work and ask him to drive the next time.
- B. Continue to do the driving so that Fred can get his reading done. You don't mind driving that much.
- C. Suggest that you split the driving equally so that you each have some time to read.
- D. Share your concerns with Fred and listen to his in an effort to come to an agreement that would meet both your needs.
- E. Try not to make an issue of it. Maybe if you hint that you're behind in your work too, Fred will offer to drive.

28. Karen is in a position to advocate for your future promotion in the department. Although she works in a different area, you often send her samples of your work for her feedback. Lately she has been making comments and suggestions about your work that you think are out of her area of expertise. She discovered that you haven't followed her suggestions and is confronting you about it. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Karen the reasons why you feel her suggestions were inappropriate.
- B. Tell Karen that you are going to be following up on her suggestions right away.
- C. Discuss your concerns about the suggestions with Karen, trying to work out any disagreement between you.
- D. Try to diplomatically sidestep the issue, letting Karen know that you appreciated her suggestions.
- E. Tell Karen that although you were unable to put her previous suggestions to use, you will try to find some way of using them in the future.

29. Recently your boss told you that your co-workers have been complaining about your lack of flexibility. Currently you're working with a team to produce a new training manual. So far there have been no problems, but now you and Joe strongly disagree on the printing format to be used. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask your boss to decide to avoid a confrontation with Joe.
- B. Go along with Joe's ideas this time to show that you can be reasonable.
- C. Try to be more persuasive in convincing Joe that your way will be better.
- D. Offer to make a few concessions if Joe will too.
- E. Share your perspective with Joe and ask for his in an effort to work out this difference.

30. Your work on a new assignment is dependent on a written report from Tom. Tom agreed to provide the report in time for you to start your work, but it is now two weeks overdue. You have approached Tom twice about this and each time he made excuses, and promised to get you the report right away. Now he is out each time you call, and hasn't responded to any messages you've left. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Inform Tom that you need the report and will have to go "over his head" if necessary to obtain it.
- B. Try to be patient. Tom's probably working on it.
- C. Give Tom an extension on getting the report completed. He seems to have a lot to do right now.
- D. Try to set up a meeting with Tom to explore both of your situations and come to an agreeable solution.
- E. Ask Tom to just give you an outline of the report for now.

31. Jane has just been assigned to work as a consultant on a very important aspect of your department's goals. She wants to meet for an hour with each member of your staff, and for two hours with the entire staff weekly. You are way behind work schedules already and you don't want people taking time away from their jobs for these meetings. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Jane there is no way people can take time from work for these meetings right now.

- B. Continue with work as usual. Jane will soon see what the situation is around here.
- C. Give Jane the meeting time she is requesting. She is being paid to consult with your department.
- D. Set up some time to talk with Jane and fully explore the issue in order to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.
- E. Explain the situation to Jane and propose fewer or shorter meetings.

32. You and Roger are in the process of hiring a new person to work in an area you share responsibility for. You have a difference of opinion about the final two candidates. Roger is in favor of one candidate because she went to a prestigious college. You feel the other candidate is much better qualified for the job. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Roger that you insist on hiring the better qualified person.
- B. Go through a thorough analysis of the situation with Roger attempting to come to an agreement.
- C. Try to find a third party to make the decision.
- D. Go along with Roger. You'll never change that kind of an attitude.
- E. Propose to Roger that the job be split between the two candidates.

33. Jack, a co-worker, really irritates you with his corny jokes. He monopolizes every coffee break with these jokes, keeping everyone in stitches. You don't find them amusing, and in fact are sick of hearing them. When you complain about them, Jack just teases you about not having a sense of humor. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Jack to cut out the jokes. You don't appreciate his sense of humor.
- B. Try to be a good sport and laugh at Jack's jokes.
- C. Find a different place to enjoy your coffee breaks.

- D. Explain your feelings to Jack and try to work out the difficulty between you.
- E. Ask Jack to limit his joke telling so that others can have time to talk too..

34. Martha often drops by your office and asks you to do a "favor" for her. At first you didn't mind and wanted to be helpful, but now you're winding up doing a good deal of menial work for her; copying, stamping, filing, and running errands. Martha hasn't gotten your hints that you already have a lot of work to do. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Martha that you can no longer do these kind of favors for her. You have your own work to do.
- B. Make up an excuse each time Martha asks you to do one of these favors.
- C. Continue to help Martha. You'd rather cooperate than have a confrontation.
- D. Spend some time with Martha exploring the problem and trying to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution.
- E. Try to get Martha to do a few favors for you in return for helping her out.

35. You and Richard, a co-worker, had an argument at work two weeks ago and haven't spoken to each other since then. You still feel that you were right and that Richard behaved badly. There is a lot of tension at work between you and people are beginning to notice it. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Richard that you really believe that you were right, and didn't like the way he handled the situation.
- B. Tell Richard that you're willing to back down if he will too.
- C. Try to talk with Richard about the situation and see if the two of you can work things through.
- D. Apologize to Richard for arguing with him.

E. Give it some more time. It'll probably blow over.

36. Linda is one of your best workers, but she has been coming in very late for the past few months. When you mentioned this to her, she said that as long as she got all her work done each day it didn't make any difference what time she arrived. The norm in the office is to be on time, and others are getting resentful of her lateness. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let it go. If people don't like it they should talk to Linda.
- B. Adjust Linda's starting time to allow for her later arrival.
- C. Tell Linda that she can start an hour later if she will stay an hour later at the end of the day.
- D. Tell Linda that her lateness is affecting others morale and that everyone must be on time.
- E. Explain your point of view to Linda and try to understand hers, hoping to come to some agreement.

37. You and Norma have co-chaired a committee at work for two years. The arrangement has worked very well. Norma readily takes over your responsibilities on the numerous occasions when you can't be present. Now Norma is asking you to make the annual presentation to the board of directors next week by yourself because she will be out of town at an important meeting. You dread these presentations and were hoping to get out of it altogether. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to do it alone this time if Norma will do it by herself next year.
- B. Tell Norma that you can't possibly handle it by yourself.
- C. Tell Norma that you'll think about it and let her know.
- D. Examine the problem with Norma and try to come up with a solution.

- E. Agree to make the presentation alone. It's nice to be able to help Norma after all the help she's given you.

38. You and Barbara have just been given a budget increase for a project you have been working on together. There are no restrictions on spending it, and no timeline for project completion. Barbara feels strongly about using the additional money to upgrade the remaining materials that are needed. You are convinced that it is more important to hire extra help to get the work done sooner. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Go along with Barbara's request. It's important to preserve harmony in your relationship.
- B. Suggest that you spend some of the additional money on better materials, and some on more help.
- C. Tell Barbara that the materials you've been using are fine, and convince her that extra help is more important now.
- D. Try to postpone making a decision. Eventually Barbara will realize that you need more help.
- E. Work out a complete budget and needs analysis with Barbara so that you can resolve this disagreement.

39. You have been training Steve, a new employee, to operate some technical equipment in your department. He has been learning quickly and can perform most functions on his own. Your rule is that he only operate this equipment when you are around, so that you can be sure he is performing properly. He is very frustrated with this arrangement because it limits his practice time. He feels that he doesn't need supervision at this point. You think that he still has more to learn. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to be available a little more often to supervise Steve.
- B. Tell Steve that you will continue to supervise his work until he has mastered the equipment.
- C. Ask your boss to clarify the rule for Steve.

- D. Let Steve practice on his own. He can probably learn a lot this way too.
- E. Talk with Steve about the whole issue trying to work things out between you.

40. Your co-worker Betty's style really bothers you. It takes her forever to answer a question or explain things; she talks slowly and frequently repeats herself. Watching her work is even worse. She is overly cautious and methodical, checking everything she does for mistakes as she goes along. Her constant worrying is getting on your nerves. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try not to let Betty's behavior get to you. Her personality is probably not going to change much.
- B. Tell Betty that this behavior is really bothering you.
- C. Talk the problem out with Betty and try to work out a solution together.
- D. Give Betty a little more of your time for listening.
- E. Tell Betty that you'll try to be more patient if she'll try to stop worrying so much.

A P P E N D I X H

Examples of Stage Two Revisions

Examples of Revisions - Stage Two

Alternative response revisions. The problems with the behavioral descriptions in the response alternatives were addressed first. One problem seemed to be that some avoiding responses still served to accomodate the other party. For instance in item 4, response B, "Take your work to a quieter place" may indicate to the other party that you are willing to go out of your way to let her continue to meet her own needs. By changing this avoiding response to "Try harder to ignore the disturbance", the indication is that you are avoiding making an issue of the conflict, but not taking any action to accomodate the other. Similarly, Item 5, response A, "Leave the decision up to Al since he is the expert in this area" serves to let Al have his own way. Rewritten as "Wait and hope that someone gets Al to change his mind" describes a passive, avoiding style without indicating what the outcome will be. Other avoiding responses with this problem (e.g. 30, B; 32, C; 36, A) were also revised accordingly.

Another example of a response in which part of the action taken can indicate a style different from the one intended is item 10, response A. "Divide the responsibility so that you and Sheryl are each in charge of different areas", while meant to describe a compromise, may seem

assertive enough to be competing. When phrased as "Suggest that you and Sheryl are each in charge of different areas" it it seems a more tentative bid for a compromise.

Thomas also pointed out that a few of the avoiding items concern referring the issue to a superior. He claimed that this description is especially hard to classify because this "action is certainly a form of passing the buck, but it isn't inaction, either, in the sense that it seeks a ruling. Blake and Mouton [1964] placed this sort of behavior in their 'S,S', [compromise or 'splitting the difference' style] - presumably because it gives each party a so/so chance of winning".

Item 11, response A is an example of this problem. Here, "Leave it up to your boss to decide." has that sense of seeking a ruling, which lessens its being clearly avoiding. "Wait and hope that Don backs down.", the revised response, is intended to describe "pure" avoidance. Other responses of this type (e.g. 15, D; 21, D) were similarly revised.

In other instances, the language used to describe a response was found to weaken the accuracy of its fit with the intended style. For example, in item 12, response B, "Tell Margaret that you don't think visuals are needed and would prefer not using them.", while recognized by Thomas as

competing, was criticized as being a weak example of the style. Thomas stated that this could be seen as simply "sharing info" rather than competing. The revision here, "Try to convince Margaret that visuals are unnecessary.", seems like a more assertive, competing response.

Another problem with the response descriptions indicated in Thomas' comments, was that "some of the compromise items sound like proposing integrative solutions" (e.g. 22, C; 36,B). Item 22, response C is presented here as an example of a revision made to correct this problem. Written originally as "Suggest that you follow through on the rest of the plan, and Ruth write up the report when the job is complete", this response sounds more like the outcome of a collaborative effort. "Tell Ruth that you are willing to put in a little more effort to finish on time if she will too", describes an attempt at a more general type of compromise.

Several of Thomas' comments concerned minor points in the response descriptions. Although these revisions were simple, they seem to improve the clarity of the response. For instance, the second sentence in response E of item 16 was eliminated based on Thomas' view of it as unnecessary (response D in item 28 was modified in the same way). In the second sentence in response D, item 39, Thomas suggested

a rephrasing to indicate how the other party would "learn a lot this way". The rewritten sentence clearly states that "It will give him a chance to learn from his mistakes", making it seem a bit more realistic.

A few other minor revisions were made based on Thomas' feedback. In response A, item 27, the term "the next time" was changed to "this time" to make it more immediately a competing response, rather than a postponement which seems more like a compromise. Also, the phrase "Give Betty a little more of your time" in item 40, response D, was changed to "Spend more time listening to Betty" in order to make this response seem like more an accomodation and less like a compromise.

These last few examples complete the revisions made to the behavioral descriptions of the various styles of handling conflict based on the comments and suggestions of Kenneth Thomas. Although some are relatively minor, they reflect a very high level of analysis and critique on his part, and are believed to significantly improve the credibility of these response style descriptions.

Conflict situation revisions. There were only four conflict situation descriptions (items 13,21,29,& 32) that were identified by Thomas as needing clarification. In each case minor revisions were made based on his comments. In

the first case, item 13, Thomas asked for clarification on "how long?" was meant by the use of the term "so far". Since this was a situation intended to describe an important concern, worthy of a collaborative approach, this clarification was important. The revision states that "for weeks now" the other party hasn't responded positively, indicating the seriousness of the concern at this point.

Thomas claimed that his choice of response to item 21 would depend on how important the issue was to the other party or to the organization, information that was not given here. The original situation had been designed to clearly indicate only that the respondent had high stakes in the issue. Stating in the revised situation that the program in question is mandated by the organization, and will fail unless the other party has her concern met, provides the information necessary to make this a situation in which collaborating is a more "appropriate" choice.

Thomas agreed with accomodating as the "appropriate" choice for situation 29, only if the type of printing format used, (the issue here), is not important. The addition of the phrase "it won't make a critical difference" in regard to this issue provides the needed distinction.

Finally, the "appropriate" choice in situation 32 regarding the hiring of a new person, "Depends on

assumptions about how closely matched candidates are", according to Thomas. As originally stated, the other party's reason for favoring one candidate was less significant than the respondent's. This was changed to describe two more equally important qualifications, education and experience, making it less certain who was the most qualified candidate. It is thought that this situation now becomes a better match with a collaborating response.

A P P E N D I X I

Conflict Situations Inventory

Revised Thirty-Item Prototype

CONFLICT SITUATIONS INVENTORY

Instructions: The items in this inventory describe conflict situations commonly encountered in work settings. Each situation is followed by a list of five alternative responses to that particular conflict. Read each item carefully and circle the response you would be most likely to make in that situation. Be careful not to choose the response you think you should make. An honest response, based on how you think you would be most likely to respond, is best.

1. Your co-worker, John, continually "borrows" materials from your supply, rather than make out a purchase order to obtain his own. Your supplies are being rapidly depleted due to his regular use of them, causing you to need to re-order frequently. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Say nothing to John. Bringing this issue up would only be disruptive to your relationship.
- B. Suggest to John that you'll order enough supplies for both of you this month, if he'll do the ordering next month.
- C. Let John know how the situation is affecting you, and try to work out a solution together.
- D. Tell John to order his own supplies from now on.
- E. Order sufficient materials for both of you, so that you can continue to help John out.

2. Your co-worker, Mike, has been complaining lately that he has been doing most of the work on a project you are working on together. It seems to you that he is doing more complaining than working. You feel you're doing more than your share. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Talk with Mike about the concerns you both have and try to work through these hard feelings.
- B. Tell Mike that you don't agree with him, and that he should spend less time complaining and more time working.

- C. Try not to take Mike's complaining too seriously. Something else is probably bothering him right now.
- D. Let Mike know that you'll do more work if he thinks you haven't been doing your share.
- E. Suggest to Mike that you both work hard on the project today, and take tomorrow off.

3. Your office sharing arrangement with Nancy is working very well except for one problem. You like to use your morning time for thinking and writing, and Nancy often chooses to make important phone calls during this time. Her conversations are disturbing your work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask Nancy to make her phone calls from another phone so that you can have the quiet you need to do your work.
- B. Try harder to ignore the disturbance.
- C. Change your morning work routines so that Nancy can continue to make calls when she chooses to.
- D. Do a thorough analysis of your individual needs with Nancy and try to arrive at a joint solution.
- E. Suggest that Nancy set aside part of the morning for quiet work, and make phone calls during the remainder of the time.

4. A piece of equipment in your unit has been malfunctioning for over a year. Recently two workers received minor injuries when using this equipment, and you're concerned that someone may be seriously injured. Al, the chief of maintenance, has been personally working on repairing this equipment for the past year. You want the faulty equipment replaced at this point, but Al insists that it can be repaired and that replacement is an unnecessary expense. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Wait and hope that someone gets Al to change his mind.

- B. Agree to let Al repair the equipment again. You don't want to risk losing his services in the future.
- C. Insist to Al that the equipment be replaced. The safety of the workers is at stake here.
- D. Invite Al to a meeting with personnel who use this equipment to see if both sides of the issue can be explored and the problem resolved.
- E. Try to get Al to agree to replace the equipment if it breaks again after the new repairs.

5. Dorothy, a new employee, has been assigned to work with you on a project of your own design. She is eager to learn, but most of her suggestions have been off target and you've had to reject them. You sense her discouragement, but she lacks experience in this area. Now she is suggesting using an experimental method that might reduce project time significantly. You have little faith in her idea, although it wouldn't interfere with the project. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Thank Dorothy for her suggestion and proceed as planned.
- B. Give Dorothy a chance to try out her idea. It will give her some hands on experience from which she might learn a lot.
- C. Let Dorothy know that this is your design and that you're not interested in experimenting with it.
- D. Have a discussion with Dorothy, fully exploring all proposed methods, in an effort to come to an agreement.
- E. Suggest that Dorothy be allowed to experiment with her method in a less important project.

6. You have just returned from a two week vacation and discovered that your co-worker Bob made some changes in the work schedules. You're not sure why the changes were made, and think that the original schedule was perfectly fine. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Bob know immediately that you have no intention of working according to this new schedule.
- B. Propose that some aspects of the old schedule be retained.
- C. Agree to go along with Bob's new plans since you weren't here at the time they were implemented.
- D. Call for a meeting of everyone affected by the new plans, including Bob, to examine the issue from all sides and arrive at a mutually satisfying solution.
- E. Try to find out the reason for the changes Bob made before you decide what to do.

7. David is your work group's representative at weekly management meetings. He is responsible for reporting on your group's progress and relaying communications back to your group. It appears that he has been repeatedly taking credit for the accomplishments of other group members in these meetings. David has denied any such charges made by group members. This week he was cited in the company newsletter for a recent breakthrough in developing a system that was really your design. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Not bother to confront David, the issue is in the past, and little can be done about it now.
- B. Ask David to give you credit the next time you develop something innovative.
- C. Congratulate David on his award. He seems to need the attention.
- D. Set up a time to talk with David about your concerns and hear his views in order to resolve the difficulty.
- E. Let David know that you expect to be fully credited for the accomplishment, and that you will be sending reports documenting your work to the management team.

8. You and Sheryl are coordinating the work of a task group around a new assignment. Although your backgrounds are very different, you each have skills and experience crucial to the success of this work. Sheryl's perspective on this new assignment is totally opposite from yours, and so far you have not agreed on anything. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Suggest that you and Sheryl are each in charge of different areas.
- B. Try to ignore the differences and maintain harmony. It is important for you and Sheryl to get along well together.
- C. Set aside some time for you and Sheryl to spend listening to each other's perspectives in an effort to merge your insights around the new assignment.
- D. Be flexible and let Sheryl have her way.
- E. Clearly articulate your perspective to Sheryl in an effort to "win her over".

9. It is necessary for you to coordinate your vacation time with your co-worker, Don. It is crucial that one of you be on the job at all times. This hasn't posed a problem in the past, but this year you both want the same two weeks. Neither of you could easily change your vacation plans. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Wait and hope Don backs down.
- B. Let Don have the time. You don't want to be selfish about it.
- C. Stand firm. You've made plans already and there is no way they can be changed at this point.
- D. Try to work out a compromise with Don, so that you each get one of these weeks off.
- E. Sit down with Don and look at the problem from all sides trying to see if there is a way to solve it.

10. You are making a short presentation jointly with Margaret at a training session next week. Margaret is very excited about some new visual materials she has designed and wants to use them in the presentation. You don't think that visuals are really necessary in such a brief presentation, and would prefer leaving them out. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Margaret use them. She obviously went to a lot of work to prepare them and she's so excited about them.
- B. Try to convince Margaret that visuals are unnecessary.
- C. Suggest that Margaret only use a few of them.
- D. Ignore Margaret's suggestion. Maybe she'll drop it.
- E. Work with Margaret to define the objectives of the presentation and examine the issue of whether or not to use the visuals, hoping to come to an agreement.

11. You've recently been assigned to work with Irene, one of the most highly skilled people in your area. You're very excited about having an opportunity to learn from her, but for weeks now, she hasn't responded positively to any of your questions or suggestions. You feel discouraged by the continual rejection of your ideas. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Hold off on making suggestions for the time being, and just try to get Irene to respond to the questions you have.
- B. Say nothing. You don't want to risk doing anything that may damage your relationship with Irene at this point.
- C. Be more assertive and defend your suggestions.
- D. Let Irene know that you really want to learn from her, and that you value discussing your ideas with

her as a way of testing your assumptions and understanding her views.

- E. Let Irene know that you accept her point of view. She knows more about this than you do.

12. Your work on a new assignment is dependent on a written report from Tom. Tom agreed to provide the report in time for you to start your work, but it is now two weeks overdue. You have approached Tom twice about this and each time he made excuses, and promised to get you the report right away. Now he is out each time you call, and hasn't responded to any messages you've left. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Inform Tom that you need the report and will have to go "over his head" if necessary to obtain it.
- B. Wait awhile longer. It might be held up in delivery.
- C. Give Tom an extension on getting the report completed. He seems to have a lot to do right now.
- D. Try to set up a meeting with Tom to explore both of your situations and come to an agreeable solution.
- E. Ask Tom to just give you an outline of the report for now.

13. There is an opportunity for one person from your department to present at a national conference each year. You and Helen are the only ones interested in making the presentation this year. It would be critical for both your careers at this point, and neither wants to miss this opportunity. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let Helen go. You don't want to be stubborn about it.
- B. Spend some time with Helen trying to understand both points of view in order to resolve the situation.
- C. Agree to let Helen make the presentation next year if you can do it this year.

- D. Try to steer clear of a disagreement with Helen. If you're lucky you'll get to go.
- E. Tell Helen that it is more important to your career at this time, and that she should let you go.

14. Bill, an accountant from the finance department, has just stormed into your office demanding to know where the reports are that he requested from you last week. After complaining angrily about how "no one around here does anything right", he asks when you are going to get around to the report. You suspect that the report is not the real cause of Bill's anger. It's been a tough week at work for everyone. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Bill that you have been very busy and will not be able to complete the report until your other work is done.
- B. Ask Bill if he would settle for a rough draft today and wait a few days for the final report.
- C. Ask Bill to stay and discuss the situation further with you so that you can work things through together.
- D. Tell Bill that you will get to work on the report right away.
- E. Try to avoid getting into a disagreement with Bill now when he is so angry.

15. Your co-worker Ed, has been wanting to try out a new evaluation method for determining the effectiveness of the work you have been doing together. You have been strongly opposed to this method based on your belief that it may not be an accurate measurement. You and Ed have had several heated disagreements about this issue. Just now you come across a report which indicates that Ed's method has proven very useful in cases similar to the work you are doing. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to ignore the whole issue. Maybe Ed will let it drop.

- B. Tell Ed that you'd be willing to go along with the new method. It looks like it might work after all.
- C. Work hard to convince Ed that your position is right.
- D. Let Ed try the new method out on a part of your work that isn't very crucial.
- E. Try to thoughtfully examine the issue with Ed from both sides in order to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.

16. Arlene is the coordinator of a mandatory in-house training program specifically designed for employees in your department. You are responsible for selecting and scheduling people to participate. Arlene has just come to you complaining that too many of these people cancel at the last minute due to crises on the job. These crises demand the full attention of all your people when they occur. Arlene insists that she must have a guaranteed number of participants in order for her program to succeed. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Suggest that Arlene discuss her problem at a department meeting.
- B. Tell Arlene that you'll try to give her a little more notice when people have to cancel.
- C. Promise Arlene that you'll make sure that everyone assigned attends in the future.
- D. Let Arlene know that your first concern is getting the job done, and you can't make her any promises.
- E. Arrange a meeting with Arlene to try to identify some way of insuring her of sufficient participants while allowing your people some flexibility.

17. You and Ruth have been working together steadily for two weeks to meet a deadline on an important job. At the last minute a number of things are going wrong, increasing the pressure to be finished on time. Now Ruth is saying that the problems are the result of your poor planning. You think the plan is fine, it just requires a little more

effort to implement then Ruth is willing to make. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Ruth she needs to put in more effort to get done on time.
- B. Try to come up with a simpler plan that Ruth would be happier working with.
- C. Tell Ruth that you are willing to put in a little more effort to finish on time if she will too.
- D. Try not to get into a disagreement with Ruth at this point. Ignore the issue for now and focus on getting the job done.
- E. Explore the problem fully with Ruth, trying to get down to the real issue in order to resolve it.

18. A new secretary has been hired and assigned to work half time for your department and half time for Peter's office in another department. Peter is insisting that the secretary be based in his department, with your work delivered by courier. You would rather have the secretary based in your own department. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try to convince Peter to go along with your idea.
- B. Try to get Peter to agree to an equal sharing arrangement. It's better than no secretary.
- C. Try to avoid a confrontation with Peter. Wait and see what happens after the secretary begins work.
- D. Go along with Peter's idea and try to make the most of it.
- E. Clearly state your views on the matter and get Peter to explain his in an effort to settle things.

19. Your organization has just instituted a mandatory performance review system for all employees, to be instituted twice a year. Lisa, an employee working under you, has made it clear that she disagrees with this policy

and will not comply. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ignore Lisa's statement. Wait and see what happens when it comes time for the review.
- B. Ask Lisa if she would agree to just one review yearly.
- C. Tell Lisa that this is a mandatory review, and that she must participate in it as part of her job.
- D. Get together with Lisa to try and work out an arrangement that would satisfy everyone concerned.
- E. Exempt Lisa from the new policy. There's no way you're going to change her mind on this.

20. You and Fred frequently travel out of town together for work related meetings. You have use of the company car, but Fred usually asks you to drive so he can catch up on his reading during the trip. You find driving quite tiring, and you really could use the chance to catch up on your own work. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Share your concerns with Fred and listen to his in an effort to come to an agreement that would meet both your needs.
- B. Continue to do the driving so that Fred can get his reading done. You don't mind driving that much.
- C. Suggest that you split the driving equally so that you each have some time to read.
- D. Tell Fred that you want to catch up on your work and ask him to drive this time.
- E. Try not to make an issue of it. Maybe if you hint that you're behind in your work too, Fred will offer to drive.

21. Karen is in a position to advocate for your future promotion in the department. Although she works in a different area, you often send her samples of your work for her feedback. Lately she has been making comments and

suggestions about your work that you think are out of her area of expertise. She discovered that you haven't followed her suggestions and is confronting you about it. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Karen that you are not able to use all of her suggestions, but will try to use a few.
- B. Tell Karen that you are going to be following up on her suggestions right away.
- C. Discuss your concerns about the suggestions with Karen, trying to work out any disagreement between you.
- D. Try to diplomatically sidestep the issue.
- E. Tell Karen the reasons why you feel her suggestions were inappropriate.

22. Recently your boss told you that your co-workers have been complaining about your lack of flexibility. Currently you're working with a team to produce a new training manual. So far there have been no problems, but now you and Joe strongly disagree on the printing format to be used. Although it won't make a critical difference, you would rather have it your way. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Ask your boss to decide to avoid a confrontation with Joe.
- B. Go along with Joe's ideas this time to show that you can be reasonable.
- C. Try to be more persuasive in convincing Joe that your way will be better.
- D. Offer to make a few concessions if Joe will too.
- E. Share your perspective with Joe and ask for his in an effort to work out this difference.

23. Your job entails working with confidential information. You have just become aware that Kathy, your co-worker, has been revealing this information outside the office. Your

department is aware of a leak and is investigating. People in your office are becoming suspicious and distrustful. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Kathy that you know but won't report her.
- B. Tell Kathy that it must stop and that you will be forced to report her if it happens again.
- C. Caution Kathy not to divulge too much.
- D. Try to stay out of it. This could get messy.
- E. Arrange a meeting with Kathy in order to try to understand her position and express your views.

24. You and Roger are in the process of hiring a new person to work in an area you share responsibility for. You have a difference of opinion about the final two candidates. Roger is in favor of one candidate because she has more experience. You feel the other candidate has better educational qualifications. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Propose to Roger that the job be split between the two candidates.
- B. Go through a thorough analysis of the situation with Roger attempting to come to an agreement.
- C. Wait and see what happens. It's not worth an argument.
- D. Go along with Roger. You'll never change that kind of an attitude.
- E. Tell Roger that you insist on hiring the better qualified person.

25. Jack, a co-worker, really irritates you with his corny jokes. He monopolizes every coffee break with these jokes, keeping everyone in stitches. You don't find them amusing, and in fact are sick of hearing them. When you complain about them, Jack just teases you about not having a sense of humor. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Tell Jack to cut out the jokes. You don't appreciate his sense of humor.
- B. Try to be a good sport and laugh at Jack's jokes.
- C. Find a different place to enjoy your coffee breaks.
- D. Explain your feelings to Jack and try to work out the difficulty between you.
- E. Ask Jack to limit his joke telling so that others can have time to talk too.

26. Linda is one of your best workers, but she has been coming in very late for the past few months. When you mentioned this to her, she said that as long as she got all her work done each day it didn't make any difference what time she arrived. The norm in the office is to be on time, and others are getting resentful of her lateness. You're very concerned about morale. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Let it go. Maybe she'll realize the others resent it and try to be on time.
- B. Allow Linda to come in late. After all, she does get her work done.
- C. Suggest that Linda work a little extra time in exchange for the time in the morning she is not working.
- D. Tell Linda that it's not fair to others and that she must be on time. That's the norm here.
- E. Explain your point of view to Linda and try to understand hers, hoping to come to some agreement.

27. You and Norma have co-chaired a committee at work for two years. The arrangement has worked very well. Norma readily takes over your responsibilities on the numerous occasions when you can't be present. Now Norma is asking you to make the annual presentation to the board of directors next week by yourself because she will be out of town at an important meeting. You dread these presentations

and were hoping to get out of it altogether. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to do it alone this time if Norma will do it by herself next year.
- B. Tell Norma that you can't possibly handle it by yourself.
- C. Tell Norma that you'll think about it and let her know.
- D. Examine the problem with Norma and try to come up with a solution.
- E. Agree to make the presentation alone. It's nice to be able to help Norma after all the help she's given you.

28. You and Barbara have just been given a budget increase for a project you have been working on together. There are no restrictions on spending it, and no timeline for project completion. Barbara feels strongly about using the additional money to upgrade the remaining materials that are needed. You are convinced that it is more important to hire extra help to get the work done sooner. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Go along with Barbara's request. It's important to preserve harmony in your relationship.
- B. Suggest that you spend some of the additional money on better materials, and some on more help.
- C. Tell Barbara that the materials you've been using are fine, and convince her that extra help is more important now.
- D. Try to postpone making a decision. Eventually Barbara will realize that you need more help.
- E. Work out a complete budget and needs analysis with Barbara so that you can resolve this disagreement.

29. You have been training Steve, a new employee, to operate some technical equipment in your department. He has

been learning quickly and can perform most functions on his own. Your rule is that he only operate this equipment when you are around, so that you can be sure he is performing properly. He is very frustrated with this arrangement because it limits his practice time. He feels that he doesn't need supervision at this point. You think that he still has more to learn. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Offer to be available a little more often to supervise Steve.
- B. Tell Steve that you will continue to supervise his work until he has mastered the equipment.
- C. Ask your boss to clarify the rule for Steve.
- D. Let Steve practice on his own. It will give him a chance to learn from his mistakes.
- E. Talk with Steve about the whole issue trying to work things out between you.

30. Your co-worker Betty's style really bothers you. It takes her forever to answer a question or explain things; she talks slowly and frequently repeats herself. Watching her work is even worse. She is overly cautious and methodical, checking everything she does for mistakes as she goes along. Her constant worrying is getting on your nerves. In this situation you would most likely ...

- A. Try not to let Betty's behavior get to you. Her personality is probably not going to change much.
- B. Tell Betty that this behavior is really bothering you.
- C. Talk the problem out with Betty and try to work out a solution together.
- D. Spend more time listening to Betty and reassuring her.
- E. Tell Betty that you'll try to be more patient if she'll try to stop worrying so much.

A P P E N D I X J

Initial Conflict-Handling Style Profile

CONFLICT-HANDLING STYLE PROFILE

Conflict Situations Inventory (CSI) Scoring Directions:

1. Record your answers from the CSI to the five columns labeled Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives. For each conflict situation, circle the letter which corresponds to your answer in Block I & II below.
2. Add the number of circled letters in each of the five columns in both blocks and enter the sums in the boxes marked Totals.
3. Add the totals from Blocks I and II and enter the sums in the boxes marked Totals Block I & II.
4. Add the number of circled letters marked with an asterisk (*) in Block I & II and circle the number that corresponds with each sum on the Effectiveness Scale below each block.

BLOCK I

Situations	Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	D	E	A	C *	B
2	B	D	C	A *	E
4	C *	B	A	D	E
6	A	C	E *	D	B
7	E *	C	A	D	B
9	C	B	A	E	D *
12	B *	A	D	E	C
14	A	D	E *	C	B
15	C	B *	A	E	D
18	A	D	C	E	B *
20	D	B	E	A	C *
22	C	B *	A	E	D
24	E	D	C	B *	A
25	A	B	C *	D	E
29	B	D *	C	E	A
Totals					
Effectiveness Scale					
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15					

BLOCK II

Situations	Conflict-Handling Style Alternatives				
	1	2	3	4	5
3	A	C	B	D	E *
5	C	B *	A	D	E
8	E	D	B	C *	A
10	B	A *	D	E	C
11	C	E	B	D *	A
13	E	A	D	B	C *
16	D	C	A	E *	B
17	A	B	D *	E	C
19	C *	E	A	D	B
21	E	B	D *	C	A
23	A *	C	B	D	E
26	D *	B	A	E	C
27	B	E *	C	D	A
28	C	A	D	E	B *
30	B	D	A *	C	E
Totals					
Effectiveness Scale					
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15					

A P P E N D I X K

Summary of Pilot Test Data

Summary of Pilot Test Data
(n=22)

Response Frequencies

Male Subjects Female Subjects
(n=11) (n=11)

Style of Response
Alternatives

		Block I	
Competing	21		10
Accommodating	30		31
Avoiding	27		24
Collaborating	44		64
Compromising	43		35
		Block II	
Competing	35		24
Accommodating	32		32
Avoiding	18		38
Collaborating	45		58
Compromising	36		19

"Appropriate" Response Frequencies

		Block I	
Competing	11		2
Accommodating	21		20
Avoiding	12		13
Collaborating	15		17
Compromising	23		12
		Block II	
Competing	18		19
Accommodating	6		10
Avoiding	12		24
Collaborating	14		20
Compromising	7		5

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