

PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE, GENDER, AND THE SELECTION
OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE

by

PAULA SORENSON, B.S.

A THESIS

IN

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August, 1993

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to several people. First, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Katherine Hawkins, Dr. Bolanle Olaniran, and Dr. David Roach. They have been most helpful and patient during my thesis work. Their suggestions were invaluable to me and very insightful. I am especially grateful to Dr. Hawkins; I attribute much of the success of my thesis to her guidance.

I also wish to thank my husband, Dr. Ritch Sorenson for his work in collecting and coding the data. This study would not have been possible without his help and support. I wish to thank my children, Rebecca, Sarah, Garrett, Clayton, and Phillip. Their support of my efforts has been invaluable to me and much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank the Communications Studies Department of Texas Tech University. The faculty of that department are of the highest caliber. They provided high quality classes, and have helped to make my graduate experience rewarding and pleasant.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4
Psychological Type and Conflict Management Choice	4
Gender and Conflict Management Choice	8
III. METHODS	17
Subjects	17
Design	18
IV. RESULTS	21
V. DISCUSSION	23
REFERENCES	29
APPENDIX.....	34

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a situation in which individuals perceive that they have incompatible goals or interests and that others are a source of interference in achieving their goals (Hocker & Wilmot, 1985). It is a part of everyone's life. Most people stereotypically view conflict negatively as a shouting match or open competition where each party tries to defeat the other. However, conflict also yields positive outcomes. Positive change and growth often result from well managed conflict. For example, in business settings, new directions, better procedures, and greater efficiency can result from conflicts or problems that can be settled in creative integration rather than in competition between opposing parties which may escalate into destructive outcomes. It is important to learn to manage conflict to obtain optimal outcomes.

Managing conflict in the organizational setting is of particular importance to scholars. They discuss how conflict management affects decision-making procedures, group cohesion, organizational climate, and distribution power (e.g., Putnam, 1988). In fact, research shows that one of the principal roles of a manager is conflict management (Mintzberg, 1973). Obviously, then, organizations will be affected by how well their personnel, especially managers, handle conflict. Those managers who can guide superiors, subordinates, or co-workers through conflict lay the foundation for satisfactory solutions and productive working environments.

The focus of this study is how gender and psychological type influence conflict management choices for female and male managers. In general, research suggests that females are more cooperative than males and that males are more competitive and aggressive than females (Berryman-Fink & Brunner, 1987). In addition, research about psychological type suggests that women score higher than men in the feeling dimension and that men score higher than women in the thinking dimension (Myers, 1991). Combined, these findings indicate that inherent and enduring differences may exist between women and men that influence them to manage conflicts differently.

However, in spite of evidence about general psychological types for gender, not all males and females fit the prescribed behavior for their sex. In some cases, this may be explained by role theory which suggests that the behavior of managers, whether women or men, will be influenced by the demands of the position and expectations of individuals in organizations. Role expectations may differ for men and for women. Therefore, given the same organizational position, one's gender (or gender role expectation) may influence the way one enacts an organizational role, including the manner in which one handles conflict. The implication of these theories is that given the same position and expectations, women and men may handle conflict similarly.

This study examines whether differences exist in psychological type and conflict management choices for experienced female and

male managers. The findings of the study should shed light on whether characteristics of females and males are inherently different or whether they are shaped by the demands of the situation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The conflict choices of experienced female and male managers may be influenced by psychological type and by the roles managers are expected to play in their organizations. This chapter reviews research relevant to these issues and provides hypotheses.

Psychological Type and Conflict Management Choice

The effective management of conflict in organizations is a topic of concern to both researchers and practitioners. Some researchers have focused on personal styles for managing conflict. This approach attempts to discover if such styles are rooted in deeper human constructs such as personality or values which influence choice of conflict strategies. Identification of inherent predispositions toward conflict strategies seems a logical approach to conflict research if connections between such predispositions to conflict strategies inform us about the effective management of conflict in organizations.

Blake and Mouton (1964) first presented a concept for classifying styles of handling conflict into five types: problem-solving, smoothing, forcing, withdrawal, and sharing. Based on the early work of Blake and Mouton, Thomas (1976, 1979) described two dimensions underlying the five conflict handling styles. The first dimension is assertiveness, or concern for one's own needs; the second is cooperativeness, or concern for other's needs. This basic

framework, or others similar to it, provide the basis for much research about conflict.

However, while the basic framework provided above is intuitively appealing, research has not clearly established that concern for one's own needs and concern for other's needs drive conflict choices. Recent research examining psychological type provides inherent dimensions which may influence choice of conflict strategy. The predominant approach to examining psychological type is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers & Briggs, 1962). The Myers-Briggs approach is based on Jungian Psychology.

Jung (1923) indicates that an individual may come to a conclusion about data either by a logical, impersonal analysis (thinking) or by a subjective, personal valuative process (feeling). Jung believes that an individual tends to rely on one approach to decision making more than the other and cannot use both at the same time. In particular, the functions of thinking and feeling are of interest to psychologists who maintain that a "great deal of the variety in personality and interpersonal behavior is attributable to differences in cognitive-affective style" (Helson, 1982, p. 409).

Myers and Briggs (1962) operationalized the four Jungian dimensions of personality: sensation-intuition, thinking-feeling, judging-perceiving, and introversion-extroversion in developing the MBTI. Of interest in this study, the thinking psychological type is characterized by analytical logic and reasoning to reach conclusions. In contrast, the feeling psychological type attaches subjective,

personal value to an object or phenomenon as a guide in drawing conclusions.

Research examining psychological type indicates that the psychological, thinking-feeling dimension is the only dimension on which men and women significantly differ. In her summary of research, Myers (1991) indicates that researchers consistently find that women score higher in the feeling dimension and men score higher in the thinking dimension. In one study, for example, Seegmiller and Epperson (1987) found strong evidence that individual thinking-feeling preferences are related to gender. Males tended to be thinkers, while females were more often feelers.

In addition, other researchers have found that feeling persons, whether men or women, tend to be less assertive than thinking persons (e.g., Tucker 1990). Such research has influenced researchers to examine the relationship between psychological type and conflict strategies.

Kilmann and Thomas (1974) found that the Jungian dimensions were useful in predicting and explaining the effects of individual personality differences on interpersonal dynamics. In their study of 86 male students, Kilmann and Thomas (1975) found that those individuals scoring high on the feeling dimension tend to be relatively more giving than taking, less assertive, and more cooperative than individuals who score high on the thinking dimension of the MBTI. In examining specific conflict-handling strategies, they found that individuals who rely more strongly upon

feeling tend to be accommodating. They concluded that this emphasis on accommodation seems to be reflected in a tendency for feeling individuals to be less assertive, less willing to compete, and therefore more willing to pursue their own concerns without considering others' concerns (1975).

Mills, Robey and Smith (1985) also examined the relationships between conflict-handling and Jungian personality dimensions. Their study used a large sample of project management personnel from a number of different organizations. Similar to the findings of Kilmann and Thomas, there was a high positive correlation between the thinking scores and assertive, distributive, competitive conflict-handling approaches. In addition, there was a significant correlation between feeling scores and cooperativeness and accommodation.

These studies provide adequate evidence to support the claim that thinker types seem to be more aggressive and competitive in conflict-handling situations. Feelers are apparently more apt to avoid aggression and try to accommodate in conflict-handling situations. In a similar vein, but using Jackson's Personality Research Form (PRF) (Jackson, 1967), Utley, Richardson and Pilkington (1989) found that individuals with high needs for achievement, endurance, nurturance, and social desirability (the last three characteristics seem related to the feeling dimension of the MBTI), were likely to report frequent use of an integrating approach to resolving conflict. Those with high needs for dominance or understanding (satisfying intellectual curiosity and being logical, somewhat like the MBTI

dimension of thinking) were apt to report relatively frequent use of a dominating response to conflict.

When these studies are considered together, they point to a relationship between psychological type and conflict-handling styles. Thinkers use logic and reasoning, and seem to be competitive. Feelers are concerned about social relationships and seem to be cooperative or accommodative. Further, there is a tendency for females to be feeling types and males to be thinkers. When examined together, there seems to be sufficient evidence that both gender and psychological type influence conflict management choice.

Gender and Conflict Management Choice

Research can be found to support two arguments about gender. The first argument is that women and men have basic inherent differences that remain distinct across situations. The second argument, based on role theory, is that sociological forces within a situation influence both women and men to respond similarly given the same set of circumstances. The research about conflict summarized below provides support for both arguments.

With the increasing number of women in the workforce, many researchers have looked at the differences in management style and viewpoints they women and men to the workplace. It is possible that differences may be significant enough to influence organizational decision-making processes. In relation to conflict management, some researchers have suggested that women have a greater preference for integrative, compromising, and tactful

strategies than men (Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Miller, 1989; Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1984). These preferences are exhibited in behaviors that show concern about the interests of others. The same body of research indicates that men have greater preference for competitive, unyielding, and aggressive strategies than women. These preferences are expressed as concern about or protection of self at the expense of the partner.

Chusmir and Mills (1989) report that among managers of equally high status, women reported using less competitive strategies than men. Miller (1991) found that, when given a choice of response to an offense by an employee, women may more often choose on the basis of interpersonal obligations between offender and offended, whereas men may more often choose on the basis of the offended's personal rights. She surmised that men have a more independent criterion for managing conflict and women a more interdependent one.

Other researchers have found females base decisions on the situation and not always on relationships (Crow, Fok, Hartman, & Payne, 1991). Offerman and Beil (1992) found women managers to be highly achievement oriented; however, they received less satisfaction from competition than male managers. Their data indicates that female leaders view themselves as less interested in competition and in defeating others than male leaders. However, even though females may not enjoy it, Duane (1989) found that they do engage in competitive conflict resolution. He studied sex

differences in the conflict management styles of union/management officials actively involved in resolving employee grievances. Female officials were less inclined to avoid issues than their male peers. In addition, he found male grievance officials were more willing to accommodate their opponents' demands than were the female officials. Males and females did not differ on their use of collaborative or compromising modes of conflict management. It might be argued that grievance officials are required by their job to be more aggressive, but it is important to note that the females, even more than the males, did what was required by the role.

Rossi and Todd-Mancillas (1985) found American women managers prefer to use communication strategies to resolve disputes with employees but will use power to control or coerce in certain situations if using communication fails to resolve the conflict. Papa and Natalie (1989) also investigated conflict communication of dyads engaged in three episodes of conflict about an issue of significance to both partners. They found considerable support for gender stereotypes in the male/male dyads. Such dyads exhibited consistently high levels of assertiveness and reason across the three episodes while showing a shift away from bargaining at the end of their conflicts. Female/female dyads also displayed high levels of assertiveness and reason initially, but shifted to bargaining more than any other group in the third period of interaction. Male/female dyads displayed high levels of reason and bargaining throughout their interactions; high levels of assertiveness were used in the

second episode. Overall, these findings indicate females are quite capable of assertive conflict interaction, even with males. These authors suggest that past research had focused primarily on the primary stages of conflict or just one episode. They suggest that presenting a compromise at the beginning of a conflict to get a discussion started is not the same as compromising by sacrificing a personal goal at the end of an argument. The fact that women are especially assertive in the second episode of conflict with males suggests that they will be assertive to obtain goals. That women are more willing to bargain in the final episode might indicate that they recognize the utility in bargaining to influence decision outcomes. Moreover, results demonstrating that women displayed assertiveness suggests that women do more than collaborate or accommodate.

Sex of subject and target were considered in a study of interpersonal conflict by Berryman-Fink, Brunner, and Chandler (1987). They found that males reported significantly more frequent use of competing styles in conflict than females, and females reported more frequent use of compromising style. Accommodating styles were used more often by both male and females when the target person was female than if the target person was male. Males and females were reported to be strategic in conflict style with targets representing different levels of power. These studies indicate that while females may have a propensity to be less

assertive than men, they can be assertive and also strategic in their conflict choice.

Some preliminary conclusions may be drawn from this body of literature. Some research suggests that women may prefer a more cooperative style of conflict management. However, if cooperation fails or is not an available option, they are willing and able to choose other strategies, including aggression.

An article by Bormann, Pratt, and Putnam (1978) may provide some insight about varying approaches of women in conflict. This early study of sex and leadership found that males were uncomfortable with females as leaders. Females were often forced to use only subtle influence in groups because if they were openly aggressive in leadership, males became uncooperative. Owen (1986) found similar behavior in groups.

In another study of gender interactions in groups, each gender seemed to enact a gender-typical role. The authors described this behavior as role-lock, as each gender unwittingly became trapped into stereotypical roles (Gemmill & Schaible, 1991). Thus, the social roles that males and females have grown up with may have been acted out in organizational settings. However, this does not explain the case of females exhibiting behavior traditionally associated with masculinity.

The theory of roles and how we accept or reject a certain role may explain some of this behavior. Eagly and Johnson (1990) found that leaders of each sex emphasized task accomplishment when they

were in a role congruent with their gender, less so in non-gender-relevant roles. These findings suggest that being in a nongender-relevant role has its costs for leaders in terms of their ability to organize activities to accomplish relevant tasks. Female leaders tended to be more task-oriented than male leaders to the extent that a leadership role was congenial to women. Eagly and Johnson interpreted their findings to indicate that women may lose authority if they adopt distinctively feminine styles of leadership in extremely male-dominated roles. They suggest that women who survive in such roles probably have to adapt to the typical styles of male role occupants. This might explain why women are seen to be cooperative in some conflict situations and competitive in others. Perhaps the gender relevancy of the role prescribes behavior.

Hatcher (1991) noted that differences in male and female managers' behavior diminish over time. She suggests that women managers accommodate role expectations and urges further study to examine the interaction between personality traits and organizational experience over time for women and men. In support of that argument, a study by Anderson, Schultz, and Staley (1987) found that females who were given training in argumentativeness changed their conflict behavior dramatically. They did not adopt an argumentative style for every conflict, however; they were still able to enter into conflict situations strategically. In a related study, Chusmir and Mills (1989) found that managerial rank was a greater contributor to conflict resolution styles than gender. The higher the

management level attained, the more the propensity to compete in conflict situations. Men and women were both more likely to choose competing styles of resolving conflict at work and accommodating styles at home, but females who chose competition at work were more likely to choose it at home. Such an outcome may indicate that women do become inherently competitive as their managerial work requires it. Canary, Cunningham and Cody (1988) reported that in familiar situations, females become more aggressive. These studies suggest that over time women learn to be more competitive in managerial conflict resolution. In support of this position, Eagly and Wood (1988) indicate that:

Role theory would suggest when behavior will be a function of gender roles and when it will follow other roles. In natural settings, when men and woman are assigned the same normal role, role requirements other than gender roles are likely to be salient and the sexes may well behave similarly. For example, a man and a women who are managers at the same level in an organization may engage in similar behavior to carry out their jobs. (p.11)

In summarizing the literature reviewed, there seems to be good evidence for a gender-related difference in psychological type in the thinking-feeling dimension. However, whether those differences would dictate a conflict management style is an outcome more difficult to predict. Since results of existing studies about the conflict choices of female mangers are not consistent, there is not conclusive evidence that psychological type or the

demands of a particular role drives conflict choice. The results of this study should provide some enlightenment about these issues.

There are four potential outcomes in this study. First, the study may find that differences exist both on psychological type and conflict management choice, and that a high correlation exists between psychological type and conflict choices. Such a finding would support the argument that the differences between women and men are innate and are not influenced by the demands of their managerial role. Research by Myers (1980) would support this prediction.

Second, the study may find that differences exist for psychological type, but not for conflict management choice. Such an outcome could occur since some researchers argue that psychological type is a relatively enduring characteristic. In this case, if a correlation exists between psychological type and conflict management choice, it would probably be weak, not accounting for much variance. This outcome would suggest that though differences between men and women are enduring, demands of the role influence choices about conflict. Research by Eagly and Wood (1988) would support this prediction.

A third possible outcome is that no differences for psychological type or conflict management choice will be found according to gender. However, given the previous studies on the subject (e.g. Myers & Briggs, 1962; Tucker, 1990; Duane, 1989), it is highly probable that differences will be found.

The fourth outcome is that there will be differences in conflict choice according to gender, but not according to psychological type. But again, given the results of previous research (Papa & Natalie, 1989; Seegmiller & Epperson, 1987), this is not a likely outcome.

The foregoing discussion suggests the following hypotheses and research question:

- H1: A gender difference will exist in psychological type such that female managers will score higher on the feeling dimension than male managers.
- H2: A gender difference will exist in psychological type such that male managers will score higher on the thinking dimension than female managers.
- RQ: What role will gender and psychological type play in choice of conflict management strategy for experienced managers?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Hypotheses were tested by gathering data from managers about psychological type and conflict management choices made in response to a conflict scenario. This chapter summarizes the nature of the subjects who participated in the study and the design of the study which includes the scenario to which managers responded and the measures used to assess psychological type and conflict management style.

Subjects

The subjects were 135 first- to mid-level male and female managers from numerous southwestern business organizations. There were 78 males and 57 females. Experience levels ranged from less than 1 to 26 years of management experience. About half (64) had been in their current job for 5 years or less. They ranged in age from 23 to 62 with the average being 32 years of age. They were managers in a broad range of public and private organizations and performed a wide variety of tasks including engineering, production, sales, marketing, accounting, research and development, and maintenance.

Subjects were asked to complete questionnaires as part of regular training sessions and their permission was obtained to add their responses to a research data base. All 135 respondents agreed to complete the questionnaires.

Design

Three variables are of interest to this study: gender, psychological type, and conflict strategy. Subjects were asked to indicate their gender as part of demographic data obtained in questionnaires.

First, the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, Form G (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), a forced choice self-report measure, was used to assess psychological type. The MBTI has become the most widely used personality instrument for nonpsychiatric populations (DeVito, 1985). This study intended the MBTI to be an inventory of basic preferences rather than a measure of traits (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Form G, shorter than Form F, is currently the form used most frequently in research. The MBTI purports to generate preference scores that describe interaction in four interlocking dimensions. The four dimensions are: extroversion-introversion (E-I), sensation-intuition (S-N), thinking-feeling (T-F), judgment-perception (J-P). The reliability of the MBTI has been improved in recent years, particularly by improving internal consistency indices. The original reliability studies, reported in the Myers-Briggs Manual, yielded reliability commonly exceeding .80. More recent studies, including assessment of test-retest reliabilities, have yielded favorable scores (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Group differences and correlations are broadly supportive of the construct validity of the MBTI, indicating that the four scales measure important dimensions of personality and approximate those of Jung's typology theories (Coan, 1978).

Researchers testing the construct validity of the MBTI using analytic techniques found the MBTI to be both generalizable and accurate (Thompson & Borrello, 1986).

Second, an adapted version of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI II, see Appendix) was used to measure preferred conflict style. Rahim (1983) developed the ROCI II to measure the extent to which five conflict management strategies are differentiated and to determine the extent to which they are actually employed in interpersonal conflict situations. The five conflict management strategies are based on a conflict-management model first proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964). Rahim and Bonoma (1979) revised Blake and Mouton's model and posited two dimensions that influence the manner in which an individual might deal with an interpersonal conflict. The first, concern for self, reflects the extent to which the individual desires to fulfill his/her own needs. The second, concern for other, reflects the extent to which the individual desires to fulfill the needs of the other party.

When these two dimensions are displayed along two orthogonal axes, they produce five primary methods of handling interpersonal conflict. The five methods are *integrating*—high concern for self and high concern for others, *dominating*—high concern for self and a low concern for other, *obliging*—low concern for self and high concern for other, *avoiding*—low concern for self and other, and *compromising*—intermediate levels of concern for both self and other (see Hammock, Richardson, Pilkington & Utley, 1990).

The ROCI II consists of 35 items to which subjects respond on a 5-point Likert scale. Scores for each of the subscales are obtained by averaging the six items for addressing each conflict dimension. A high score represents a greater preference for the strategy in question. Rahim (1983) conducted factor analyses on data collected from a large sample of executives who completed the questionnaire with reference to conflicts with a boss, a peer, and a subordinate. These five factors did clearly reflect the five methods proposed by the model. The study reported relatively high reliability estimates (Cronbach Alpha > .70) for each of the subscales representing the five methods of handling conflict. He concluded, "As it stands now, the scales can be used in basic research, teaching, and in the diagnosis of styles of handling interpersonal conflict among members of a organization" (Rahim, 1983, p. 375).

Items in the original ROCI II addressed subjects average or general style. This study is interested in how subjects would respond to a specific scenario. Therefore, questions in the ROCI II were altered to address the specific scenario (see Appendix). The subjects first read the scenario and then completed the ROCI II.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using one-way and multivariate analyses of variance. The level for statistical significance was set at standard .05.

The first hypothesis predicted that females would score higher on the feeling dimension than males. Results of one-way analyses of variance supported this hypothesis [$F(1,125) = 10.86, p = .001$]. Females scored significantly higher on the feeling dimension ($M = 8.00, SD = 4.19$) than men ($M = 5.82, SD = 3.26$).

The second hypothesis stated that males would score higher than females on the thinking dimension. This hypothesis was also supported [$F(1,133) = 11.98, p < .001$]. Males scored significantly higher on the thinking dimension ($M = 16.72, SD = 6.26$) than females ($M = 12.84, SD = 6.63$).

The research question asked what role gender and psychological type would play in choice of conflict strategy. It was tested by performing a 2 X 2 multivariate analysis of variance. The two factors for the analysis were sex and psychological type. Individuals who scored higher on thinking than feeling were assigned to the thinking category. Individuals who scored higher on feeling than thinking were assigned to the feeling category. Thus the two factors were (1) female-male and (2) feeling-thinking. The dependent variables for this analysis were the five dimensions measured by the ROCI-II.

Results of the MANOVA showed significant differences existed for both gender [$F(5,127) = 2.39, p = .04$] and psychological type [$F(5,127) = 2.29, p = .05$]. However, no significant interaction between gender and psychological type emerged [$F(5,127) = 1.33, p = .25$].

Univariate analyses of variance were conducted for each dependent variable to determine where significant differences existed. No significant differences were found for *dominating* for either gender [$F(1,133) = 2.75, p = .10$] or for psychological type [$F(1,133) = 2.29, p = .13$]; for *compromising* for either gender [$F(1,131) = .83, p = .37$] or for psychological type [$F(1,131) = .02, p = .87$]; for *avoiding* for either gender [$F(1,131) = .01, p = .98$] or for psychological type [$F(1,131) = 1.18, p = .27$]; or for *integrating* for gender [$F(1,131) = .25, p = .62$] or for psychological type [$F(1,131) = 3.15, p = .08$].

However, significant differences were found between females and males for *obliging*. [$F(1,131) = 7.17, p = .008$] and between feelers and thinkers for *obliging* [$F(1,131) = 5.58, p = .02$]. Males scored higher ($M = 19.7, SD = 4.17$) than females ($M = 18.8, SD = 3.32$). Feelers scored higher ($M = 20.5, SD = 3.69$) than thinkers ($M = 18.89, SD = 3.82$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide some support for both arguments presented earlier in this paper. First, consistent with other studies of psychological type, there seems to be a fairly persistent difference between females and males on psychological type: males are predominantly thinkers and females are predominantly feelers. Moreover, consistent with previous research on psychological type, feeling was significantly associated with an obliging strategy.

Second, it appears that role demands influence females and males to choose similar strategies when confronted with the same conflict scenario. For four out of the five conflict strategies, there was no significant difference between females and males. For the strategy in which there was a significant difference, men had a higher obliging score than women. This finding contradicts much of the research described earlier in the paper which suggested that women would be more likely to be obliging than men. However, a similar outcome was found by Duane (1989). Studying grievance officers, he found men to be more willing to accommodate than their female peers. Accommodating is the equivalent to the obliging mode in the Kilmann and Thomas (1975) conflict measure used by Duane. Three potential explanations are offered for this contradictory finding. The first is that, given the nature of the scenario, an obliging

response may have been the best strategic response. An obliging response may result in short-term losses, but would maintain the relationship for potential long-term gains. Such an explanation is consistent with other results in the study. Male subjects obtained higher scores on thinking than females. As was indicated in the literature review, thinking has been associated with competition and assertiveness and feeling has been associated with obliging behavior. It seems unlikely, therefore, that males, which had higher scores on thinking, would choose an obliging response unless it was to their strategic advantage. It is unlikely that male subject's motivation was simply to maintain positive feelings.

A second explanation is that role demands of management may influence managers to be obliging to others in some situations. If the actions of a manager make a relationship more negative than described in the experimental scenario, it may result in negative nonworkable relationships. It may be more important to work on building a relationship than on winning this negotiation.

The third explanation is that women managers may feel more confident about handling a potentially negative relationship situation while, at the same time, pursuing substantive goals, an explanation which is somewhat consistent with Papa and Natalie's (1989) findings that in multiple episode negotiations women were very assertive and, in the final episode, willing to bargain. Papa and Natalie found that negotiation behavior differed depending upon the gender make-up of dyads. In the current study, Terry, the target in

the experimental scenario, was male. Papa and Natalie found that male/male dyads were aggressive throughout and unwilling to bargain at the end of their interactions, and female/female or female/male dyads were more willing to bargain throughout. However, in this study, males were more willing than females to oblige. A difference in this study is that the relationship with Terry was described as being negative. Males may not be as willing to compete when the relationship is already negative. In addition, there is a possibility in this study that a female character in place of a male character would have caused different responses from subjects.

The results of this study particularly contradict research conducted with students, but also some studies of managers, which suggested that men are competitive and women are cooperative or accommodative. Unlike some of these other studies, this study suggest few differences exist for experienced managers. When confronted with the same situation, experienced managers, both male and female, choose similar strategies.

Three explanations are offered for these findings. First, cultural norms have changed within the last few years. The public in general is increasingly accepting of women as managers and expecting them to take on a managerial role. Second, women managers may have more experience in managerial roles than they did a few years ago when similar research was conducted. Third, the demands of the role develop similar responses from men and

women. It does appear that even though females differ from males in basic psychological types, and may have inherent predispositions to be less aggressive in conflict, they can assume the more aggressive role when the situation demands it. This study indicates that for conflict management choice, there is very little difference between experienced men and women managers. Based on these results, it seems that business organizations can be confident in promoting women to managerial positions.

An interesting question raised by this research is whether men become less competitive and aggressive with conflict management experience. Perhaps both men and women become more strategic over time and develop a repertoire of conflict management behaviors that enable them to be more strategic in each conflict situation rather than having to rely on psychological predispositions.

Every study has limitations, and this one is no exception. While the subjects were experienced managers, the scenario that they were given was hypothetical. The response given was therefore, also hypothetical, although supposedly reporting typical tendencies for that situation. It is possible that observing real conflict situations may have produced different results. It is also possible that subjects reported how they think the conflict scenario should be handled; but, of course in real situations, behavior choice is not always optimal.

Another limitation associated with this study is the use of self-report data. All data were obtained from questionnaires completed by the subjects. The study could be strengthened by gathering

information from other sources such as the respondent's subordinates or superiors or through direct observation of the respondent's behavior. In addition, this approach would provide a triangulated picture of conflict management.

Finally, another shortcoming of this study was the years-of-experience data. Although all subjects had at least some experience, the question addressing experience focused on how long managers had held their current position. Future research could address the issue of role demands by asking for total years of management experience and exploring relationships between years of experience and both conflict choice and psychological type to see how these factors interact over time.

In addition, similar studies using a variety of scenarios might give a more accurate profile of conflict handling strategies used in various situations. For example, a scenario in which the actor was female as opposed to male as was the case in this study. Also, if varying levels of power were assigned to the characters in the scenarios, a more informative picture of how different conflicts modes are employed might be produced. In the case of obliging behavior, perhaps some explanation of male's unexpected use of that conflict-handling mode could be discovered.

In summary, the results of this study suggest that psychological type for thinking and feeling are related to gender. However, this study does not support a broad based generalization that experienced female managers approach conflict differently

because of psychological type or gender. Rather, there was support for the theory that the role or the situation prescribes manager behavior in conflict situations.

The growing body of evidence that women are capable of being aggressive and competitive when necessary may suggest that the time has come to forego casting certain managerial behaviors as masculine or feminine and to simply evaluate what is optimal management behavior and promote such behavior for all managers, male and female alike. As women prove themselves to be capable managers, there seems less need to differentiate gender behavior, focusing instead on what is effective management behavior and what is not.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J., Schultz, B., & Staley, C.C. (1987). Training in argumentativeness: New Hope for nonassertive women. *Women's Studies in Communication, 10*, 58-66.
- Bell, E. C., & Blakeney, R. N. (1977). Personality correlates of conflict resolution modes. *Human Relations, 30*, (9), 849-857.
- Berryman-Fink, C., & Brunner, C.C. (1987). The effects of sex of source and target on interpersonal conflict management styles. *Southern Speech Communication Journal, 53*, 38-48.
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1964). *The Managerial Grid*. Houston: Gulf Publishers.
- Bormann, E. G., Pratt, J., & Putnam, L (1978). Power, authority , and sex: Male response to female leadership. *Communication Monographs, 45*, 120-162.
- Canary, D. J., Cunningham, E. M., & Cody, M.J. (1988). Goal types, gender, and locus of control in managing interpersonal conflict. *Communication Research, 15*(4), 426-446.
- Chusmir, L. H., & Mills, J. (1989). Gender differences in conflict resolution styles of managers: At work and at home. *Sex Roles, 20*, 149-163
- Coan, R. W. (1978). Review of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. In O.K. Buros (Ed.), *The Eight Mental Measurements Yearbook, 1*, 973-975. Highland Park, NJ: Gryphon Press.
- Crow, S. N., Fok, L. Y., Hartman, S. J., & Payne, D. M. (1991). Gender and values: What is the impact on decision making? *Sex Roles, 25*, 255-268.
- Davis, D. L., Grove, S. J. & Knowles (1990). An Experimental application of Personality type as an analog for decision-making style. *Psychological Reports, 66*, 167-175.

- DeVito, A.J. (1985). Review of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. In J.V. Mitchell, Jr. (Ed.), *Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook, 2*, 1030-1032. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Duane, M. J. (1989). Sex differences in styles of conflict management. *Psychological Reports, 65*, 1033-1034.
- Eagly, A. H. & Johnson, B. T. (1990) Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 2*, 233-256.
- Eagly, A. H. & Wood, W.(1988). Explaining sex differences in social behavior: a meta-analytic perspective. paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association (96th, Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 12-16, 1988).
- Fitzpatrick, M. A., & Winke, J (1979). You always hurt the one you love: Strategies and tactics in interpersonal conflict, *Communication Quarterly, 27*, 3-11.
- Gemmill, G., & Schaible, L. Z. (1991). The psychodynamics of female/male role differentiation within small groups. *Small Group Research, 22*(2), 220-239.
- Hammock, G. S., Richardson, D. R., Pilkington, C. J., & Utley, M. (1990). Measurement of conflict in social relationships. *Personality and Individual Differences, 11*(6), 577-583.
- Hatcher, M. A. (1991). The corporate woman of the 1990s. *Psychology of Woman Quarterly, 15*, 251-259.
- Helson, R. (1982). Critics and their texts,: An approach to Jung's theory of cognition and personality. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology, 43* 409-418.
- Hocker, J. L., & Wilmot, W. W. (1985). *Interpersonal conflict*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Jackson, D. N. (1967). *Personality Research Form Manual*. Research Psychologist Press, New York: Goshen.

- Jones, R. E., & Melcher, B. H. (1982). Personality and the preference for modes of conflict resolution. *Human Relations* 35,(8) 649-658).
- Jung, C. G. (1923). *Psychological Types*. London: Routedledge & Kegan Paul.
- Kilmann, R. H., & Thomas, K. W. (1974) A contingency approach to laboratory learning: Psychological types versus experimental norms. *Human Relations*, 27, 891-909.
- Kilmann, R. H., & Thomas, K. W. (1975). Interpersonal conflict-handling behavior as reflects of Jungian personality dimensions. *Psychological Reports*, 37, 971-980
- Kimmel, M. J., Pruitt, D. G., & Magenau, J. M., Konar-Goldband, E., & Carnevale, P. J. D. (1980). Effects of trust, aspiration, and gender in negotiation tactics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38, 9-22.
- Miller, J. B. (1989). Memories of peer relations and styles of conflict management. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 487-504.
- Miller, J. B. (1991). Women's and men's scripts for interpersonal conflict. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15, 15-29.
- Mills, J., Robey, D., & Smith, L. (1985). Conflict-handling and personality dimensions of project-management personnel. *Psychological Reports*, 57, 1135-1143.
- Mintzberg, H. (1973). *The nature of managerial work*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Myers, I. G., & Briggs, K. C. (1962). *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Myers, I. B., with Myers, P. B. (1991) *Gifts differing*. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.

- Myers, I. B., & McCaulley, M.H. (1985). *Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Offerman, L. R., & Beil, C. (1992). Achievement styles of women leaders and their peers. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 16, 37-56.
- Owen, W. F. (1986). Rhetorical themes of emergent female leaders. *Small Group Behavior*, 17(4), 475-486.
- Papa, M. J., & Natalle, E. J. (1989). Gender, strategy selection, and discussions satisfaction in interpersonal conflict. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 53, 260-272.
- Putnam, L. (Ed.) (1988). Communication and conflict styles in organizations [Special issue]. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1(3).
- Rahim, M. A. (1983) A measure of styles of Handling conflict. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26, 368-376.
- Rahim, M. A., & Bonoma, T. V. (1979). Managing organizational conflict: A model for diagnosis and Intervention. *Psychological Reports*, 44, 1323-1344.
- Seegmiller, R. A., & Epperson, D. L. (1987). Distinguishing thinking-feeling preferences through the content analysis of natural language. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 51(1) 42-52.
- Shockley-Zalabak, P. (1981). The effects of sex differences on the preference for utilization of conflict styles of managers in a work setting: An exploratory study. *Public Personnel Management Journal*, 10, 534-550.
- Thomas, K. W. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Chicago: Rand-McNally, 889-935.

Thomas, K. W. (1979). *Organizational Conflict*. In S. Kerr (Ed.). *Organizational Behavior*. Columbus, OH: Grid 151-181.

Tucker, I. F. (1991). Predicting scores on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule from Myers-Briggs Type Indicator categories. *Psychological Report, 69*, 571-576.

Utley, M. E., Richardson, D. R., & Pilkington, C. J. (1989). Personality and interpersonal conflict management. *Personality and Individual Differences, 10*(3), 287-293.

APPENDIX

CONFLICT QUESTIONNAIRE:

CONFLICT SCENARIO AND

ADAPTED ROCI II MEASURE

Name _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Consider the following situation in which your wishes differ from the wishes of another person. How would you respond in this situation?

Windows and More

You work for a small company that manufactures, sells, and install windows. The company is experiencing the effects of an economic recession. You have a meeting today to talk with Terry, one of your coworkers. You have come to really dislike Terry. He was pushy before the recession. Now, he seems unbearable. You have had a number of confrontations and tend to avoid one another. Your job would be pretty pleasant if not for Terry.

You are the manager in charge of marketing, customer relations, and special orders. Due to the recession, your staff has been cut from seven to five people. Because demands in your office have not decreased, you see no way to stay on top of the work load without updating the computers in your office. Currently, you use four IBM 286 compatible computers. If you could upgrade to 386 computers with more internal memory, you could obtain (1) engineering software that would drastically reduce time needed to create window drawings and specifications, (2) table-top publishing software that would revolutionize production of marketing materials and cut hours of work, and (3) Windows, a program that simplifies and speeds computer processing. Although obtaining the upgrades and software were not in your budget, neither was the cutback in personnel; you need the enhancements to do your job. You must get approval from Terry for the purchase.

Terry is the manager in charge of finance, accounting, and budget for the organization. His office handles both external and internal finance including billing, collections, and payroll. His office staff has also been reduced. The CEO has placed the organization's budget in Terry's hands. Terry recently notified everyone that, in an effort to keep the organization afloat, he has decided that the company cannot afford investing in new equipment right now and has cancelled purchases for his department. He says the only way to be fair to everyone is not to allow new equipment purchases by anyone.

You and Terry have been with the company for about five years and have about the same clout with the CEO.

You have an appointment with Terry about your proposal. You have a good idea of how he will respond and have decided how you will handle the situation.

On the following pages are several statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each statement, please circle the response "1" through "5" which would be most characteristic of your own behavior in the above situation using the following scale.

Please indicate which of these responses would be more typical of your behavior in the situation described above.

- 1. Definitely Would Not Exhibit Behavior
- 2. Probably Would Not Exhibit Behavior
- 3. May/May Not Exhibit Behavior
- 4. Probably Would Exhibit Behavior
- 5. Definitely Would Exhibit Behavior

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I would try to investigate the issue with Terry to find a solution acceptable to both of us. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I would generally try to satisfy the needs of Terry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I would attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with Terry to myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I would try to integrate my ideas with those of Terry to come up with a decision jointly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I would give some to get some. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I would work with Terry to find solutions to the problem which satisfy our expectations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I would avoid open discussion of my differences with Terry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I would hold on to my solution to the problem. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I would try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I would use my influence to get my ideas accepted. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I would use my authority to make the decision in my favor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I would accommodate the wishes of Terry . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I would give in to the wishes of Terry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I would win some and I would lose some. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. I would exchange accurate information with Terry to solve the problem together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I would help Terry make the decision in his favor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I would allow concessions to Terry . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I would argue my case with Terry to show the merits of my position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I would try to play down our differences to reach a compromise. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I would propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I would negotiate with Terry so that a compromise could be reached. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I would try to stay away from disagreement with Terry . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I would avoid an encounter with Terry . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I would use my expertise to make the decision in my favor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I would go along with the suggestions of Terry . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I would use "give and take" so that a compromise was made. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I would be firm in pursuing my side of the issue. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I would try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues could be resolved in the best possible way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I would collaborate with Terry to come up with decisions acceptable to us. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. I would try to satisfy the expectations of Terry . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. I would use my power to win. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. I would try to keep my disagreement with Terry to myself in order to avoid hard feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. I would try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with Terry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. I would avoid an argument with Terry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. I would try to work with Terry for a proper understanding of the problem. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |