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The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

Department of Speech Communication

AN ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL WORK-RELATED

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A Thesis in
Speech Communication

by

Salifou Siddo

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 1996

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated conflict management strategy and factors that contribute to strategy choice in work-related conflicts involving people from different cultural backgrounds groups. Using both quantitative (the OCCI, Putnam & Wilson, 1982) and qualitative (Open-ended questions and follow-up interviews) methods, the study determined whether African-American and European-American respondents varied their choice of conflict management strategy on the basis of the cultural background of the other person involved in the conflict. The study also identified factors respondents felt contributed to their choice of conflict strategy.

While the quantitative data analysis failed to uncover any statistically significant differences between African-American and European-American respondents in their use of conflict management strategy, the qualitative data analysis provided rich information on intercultural work-related conflict behavior.

The analysis of the factors that determined strategy choice revealed two types of factors: task-related factors and target-related factors. The task-related factors included (1) the consequences of the solution favored by the other person, (2) the best interest of the company, and (3) the time available to make a decision. The target-related factors included (1) cultural differences between the

parties to the conflict and (2) the interpersonal skills of the other party to the conflict.

Suggestions regarding cultural barriers as a factor that determines conflict strategy choice were presented, and the implications of these findings with respect to conflict communication in the culturally diverse workplace were discussed.

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This work is dedicated to the memory of my father Siddo Azeimata (1912-1984).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"Diversity" has become a buzz word in the 1990s,
and organizations (e.g., universities, businesses, and
government agencies) are taking steps to put in place
mechanisms that allow employees and employers alike to
become more aware of the commonalties and differences
among members of varying cultural background. Those
responsible hope that increasing members' awareness of
their commonalities and differences will create a more
harmonious and stable workplace atmosphere for all. The
creation of such an atmosphere appears to be a condition
necessary for attainment of organizational goals. In
fact, many organizations have come to consider diversity
"a strategic imperative."[1]

A number of the Fortune 500 corporations, such as
American Express, Digital Equipment, Pacific Bell, and
Xerox, and even some federal agencies consider diversity
to be of "strategic value" (see Jackson & Alvarez,
1992). As a result, human resources executives
increasingly are under pressure to devise and implement
training programs that foster understanding of and

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[1] It is important to note that the concept of diversity is drastically different from that
of programs such as Affirmative Action or Equal Employment Opportunity in the sense that the
latter are implemented in response to federal laws intended to protect minority groups from
discrimination. The concept of diversity is considered a business imperative to stay ahead of the
competition, and many visionary business leaders are setting up aggressive human ressources
programs to recruit, train, and retain workers from minority groups. For an excellent discussion
of how Diversity is different from AA or EEO, see Gottfredson (1992).

respect for individual needs and the diverse cultural backgrounds of employees and to fuse such understanding and respect into the goals of the organization. Regardless of how these training programs are labeled (e.g., sensitivity training and/or diversity training), the primary objective is to make the workplace an environment wherein individual differences are viewed in a positive vein. Even traditionally conservative organizations, such as various branches of the military, are under pressure today to create workplace environments that allow members freer expression of their individual differences. Take, for example, the "Do not ask. Do not tell" policy concerning gays and lesbians in the military. This policy allows gays and lesbians to hide their sexual orientation so that they can stay in the armed forces instead of being automatically discharged, as they would have been under the previous policy on sexual orientation.

Background and Statement of the Problem

A brief account of some of the elements that have fostered greater consciousness of the concept of workforce diversity should help establish a context for this study. That the American workforce is becoming increasingly diverse was brought home to corporate

America in the Hudson Institute's seminal reports
entitled Workforce 2000 (Johnston & Packer, 1987) and
Opportunity 2000 (Bolick & Nestleroth, 1988). The
report, Workforce 2000, for example, noted that by the
end of the 1990s, only 58% of new entrants into the
labor force would come from the "majority" population of
white native-born Americans, whereas 22% of new entrants
were expected to be immigrants, with the remainder
comprised mostly of African-Americans and Hispanic-
Americans.

According to Jackson and Alvarez (1992), these
figures contrast sharply with those for 1985, a year in
which 83% of the workforce consisted of white native-
born Americans. By the end of this decade, European-
Americans, or native whites, as Jackson and Alvarez
refer to them, will be only 75% of the workforce. Even
this figure may be an overestimation, because as Jackson
and Alvarez (1992) note:

> Use of broad labels such as immigrants, native
> white, African-American, Hispanic-American, and
> Asian-American conceals part of the story also, for
> within each of these broad categories hide many
> distinct ethnic cultures and subcultures. For
> example, the 1980 U.S. Census included 10 different
> categories for Asian-American respondents to use to
> describe their ancestry, 4 categories for native
> respondents of Spanish origin, 16 categories for
> white native respondents. (p. 22)

The question facing most organizations today is how
to create workplace environments that, while promoting
the achievement of organizational goals in an optimal

manner, also allow the individual worker to affirm
his/her cultural/ethnic identity. In other words, the
main challenge facing corporate America today is
determining how to convert the cultural richness of the
workforce into a competitive advantage. Organizations
are struggling to meet this challenge because one of the
consequences of workforce diversity is that it brings
together people with different perspectives and world
views, which can be a significant asset in shaping the
performance of organizations. The gathering of people of
diverse backgrounds, however, also creates an
environment in which interpersonal conflicts and
misunderstandings can, and often do, occur. Jackson and
Alvarez (1992) note perceptively:

> When people with different habits and world views
> come together in the workplace, misunderstandings
> and conflicts inevitably occur as a result of
> dissimilar expectations and norms. Employees who
> behave according to the cultural adage that "the
> squeaky wheel gets the grease" may be viewed as
> offensive and undesirable teammates by employees
> who were taught that "the nail that sticks out gets
> hammered down." Employees behaving according to the
> latter adage may be viewed as ineffective by the
> former group of employees. Such misunderstandings
> can mean that valuable feedback about problems and
> successes is poorly transmitted or never becomes
> available for the organization's use and
> improvement. (p. 23)

The prevention and management of problems created
by diversity in workforces poses significant
communication challenges. According to Gudykunst (1985),
"[T]he majority of the interactions that take place in

modern organizations are a function of social group

memberships, rather than the individual characteristics

of the communicator. That is, the interaction [among

workers] is influenced mainly by the person's

occupational group, sex, class, race, or ethnic group"

(p. 155). Furthermore, communication researchers (e.g.,

Kochman, 1981; Ting-Toomey, 1985) have determined that

the communication construct of conflict management

strategy is related to an individual's cultural

background.[2] However, there is a paucity of research

investigating the relationship between cultural

background and the management of interpersonal conflict

in the workplace. In light of the trend toward

increasing diversity of the workforce in the United

States, it is of vital importance that scholars and

practitioners of organizational communication learn more

about the management of intercultural conflict in

organizations.

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[2] Many writers would use the phrase "conflict management style" instead of "conflict management strategy" to describe the behavior(s) people display in a conflict situation. The appropriateness of the term "style" is debatable. The phrase "conflict managment style" would be appropriate if individuals display the same conflict management behavior regardless of the nature of the conflict. However, we know that that is not the case. The behaviors people in a conflict situation display vary according to the conflict situation. In fact, early research by Schelling discovered that "participants [in a conflict] make choices about alternative behaviors by considering their own goals and the anticipated goals of the other person" (cited in Putnam and Wilson, 1982, p. 633). The term "strategy", as defined by Putnam and Wilson (1982), describes more accurately the behaviors people in a conflict situation display. Strategy refers to "planned action" and these authors define conflict management behavior as "strategic or planned interaction". I will therefore use the phrase "conflict management strategy" through out this dissertation to refer to the behaviors people in a conflict situation display.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the way people in a workplace characterized as ethnically diverse approach work-related conflict situations. More specifically, this study investigated the relationship between the ethnic background of conflict partners and their conflict management strategies. In particular, the study sought to determine whether, for a given hypothetical work-related conflict situation, workers in a culturally diverse workplace prefer a conflict management strategy that is constant regardless of the ethnic background of the person with whom they are in conflict, or whether, when the conflict issue is held constant, the reported conflict management strategy is a function of the ethnic background of the other party to the conflict. Stated otherwise, the researcher sought to determine (1)whether people in a culturally diverse workplace vary in their approaches to work-related conflict on the basis of the ethnic background of the party with whom they are asked to imagine themselves in conflict or (2) whether they take the same approach regardless of the background of the other party. The study also sought to determine factors that contribute to the adoption of a given conflict management strategy.

Conceptual Framework

A detailed discussion of the concepts of cultural background, communication, conflict, and conflict management strategy will help clarify the conceptual framework of this study.

Cultural Background

Cultural diversity in the workplace is a reflection of the racial and ethnic composition of American society. For the purposes of this study, it is important to distinguish among the concepts of race, ethnicity, and social group. Race is a biological construct (Tajfel, 1981). Ethnicity, on the other hand, can be defined as the characteristics shared by groups of people (e.g., language, heritage, and traditions) who view themselves as different from the other groups in a given country. That is, members of an ethnic group perceive themselves as having their own cultural identity, regardless of the country in which they may reside.

Ethnicity, according to Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau (1993), serves a dual function in the way in which a group defines itself. It provides a psychological basis for interpreting "self' and "others" and influences one's social behavior. In other words, one's self-

identification is enacted through social behavior. An American of Irish or Italian descent might choose to identify himself or herself as Irish-American or Italian-American as a way of expressing his/her ethnic identity. In this respect, then, in the United States, many people identify themselves with reference to others of similar heritage or national origin. For example, even within the dominant European-American group, many identify themselves as Italian-American, Irish-American, German-American, or English-American (see Emmison & Western, 1990; Garza & Herringer, 1987; Gordon, 1968; Tajfel, 1981).

Ethnic self-identification is enacted through social behaviors (i.e., through religious rituals, customs, and traditions) considered proper and customary to such groups. However, some ethnic groups may feel less strongly about their identities than others. According to Alba, for example, more and more European-Americans claim an identity that makes little reference to ancestry in specific countries. For many European-Americans, ethnic identity is "based on ancestry from *anywhere* on the European continent" (Alba, cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 1992, p. 71). In fact, ethnic identity for many European-Americans is merely nominal.

On the other hand, some ethnic groups, especially those ethnic groups labeled "minority groups," tend to

have a strong sense of identity and attach some

importance to the labels they use to define themselves.

Research by Hecht and Ribeau (cited in Gudykunst & Kim,

1992), for example, revealed the importance of labels

among Americans of African descent and the way these

labels influence self-image.

> Blacks report being willing to talk, being verbally
> aggressive, and using slang. Blacks also describe
> themselves as patriotic, accepting of the status
> quo, and attempting to assimilate into the larger
> culture. Individuals who use the label "Black
> Americans," in contrast, gain their ethnic identity
> from being both black and American. Like blacks,
> Black-Americans attempt to assimilate into the
> larger culture. Black Americans' communication
> style, however, is characterized by the use of
> dialect and code-switching. Afro-Americans also
> derive their identity from being black and
> American, but they do not want to assimilate into
> the larger society, only succeed in it. Afro-
> Americans report that their communication style is
> distinguished by the use of ethnic forms of
> nonverbal communication and the use of black
> dialect. (pp. 72-73)

In sum, ethnicity functions as a way for groups of

people to identify and distinguish themselves from

others. Furthermore, the labels ethnic groups use to

identify themselves influence their social behaviors,

including their communication with other ethnic groups

within the larger culture.[3]

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[3] For further discussion of awareness of identity and the degree or potency of such awareness, see Burke & Tully (1977), Collier & Thomas (1988), Giles & Johnson (1981), Tajfel (1981). Also, because of the differences among the constructs of race, ethnicity, and social group, researchers make distinctions among intercultural communication, cross-cultural communication, interracial communication, and interethnic communication. According to Gudykunst and Kim (1992) "intercultural communication is a transactional, symbolic process involving the attribution of meaning between people from different cultures" (pp. 13-14). Cross-cultural communication refers to the comparison of some communicative phenomena across cultures. According to Dodd (1995), interracial communication is communication between people from different racial backgrounds, while interethnic communication implies communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles & Byrne, 1982) and Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) are two theories that have been used to explore interethnic communicative behavior. Speech Accommodation Theory, for example, contends that divergence away from the majority language by a minority group is likely to occur when members of the minority group "identify strongly with their ethnic group and perceive the in-group language as an important dimension of their cultural identity" (Garrett, Giles, Coupeland, 1989, p. 203). Uncertainty Reduction Theory conceives of interethnic interaction as a situation that may cause participants to feel anxious because they may not know how to behave appropriately in such a situation.

The construct of "ethnicity" also differs from that of a "social group." Tajfel (cited in Gudykunst, 1985) states that:

> We can conceptualize a group ... as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership in it. (p.156)

On the basis of Tajfel's definition, one can think of social groups as social categories determined by such factors as education, economic status, and occupation. Like that of ethnic group, the concept of the social group has a perceptual basis (Tajfel, 1981). A person's

identification with a given social group constitutes a
tool that he or she uses to order his/her social
environment in meaningful ways. Once individuals become
aware of the social group(s) to which they belong, they
start identifying themselves as members of those groups
(Gudykunst, 1985).

According to Tajfel (cited in Gudykunst, 1985),
social identity can be defined as "that part of an
individual's self-concept which derives from his [sic]
knowledge of his [sic] membership in a social group (or
groups) together with the value and emotional
significance attached to that membership" (p. 156). In
this respect, two people from completely different
ethnic or racial backgrounds may belong to the same
social group. Consider, for example, the social group,
blue collar workers, or the social group, professional
engineers.

In this study, cultural background was
operationalized in terms of Hofstede's (1980) framework
of cultural variability. Hofstede's study of more than
40 national cultures revealed that cultures tend to vary
along four dimensions: individualism-collectivism,
power-distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-
femininity. "Individualism-collectivism" refers to how
individuals in a given society relate to each other. In
an individualistic culture, such as that characterizing

the United States, interpersonal ties are very loose,
and people tend to watch after their own interests.
However, in a collectivistic culture, such as Japan, the
interests of the group supersede those of the
individual. "Power distance" refers broadly to the
perceived inequalities between people and the means
people use to manage such inequalities. "Uncertainty
avoidance" refers to the means people use to cope with
the environment in which they live. A culture in which
members accept uncertainty, risk, and behavior different
from their own is low on the uncertainy avoidance
dimension. Nonacceptance places a culture high on the
uncertainty avoidance dimension. The "masculine-
feminine" dimension refers to the division of roles
along the gender line. A masculine culture tends to
value money, assertiveness, and disregard for others.
Feminine cultures value cooperation among people,
conservation of the environment, and the importance of
the quality of life (see Hofstede, 1980).

Hofstede's study was a landmark in the area of
cross-cultural communication, and many researchers used
the individualistic-collectivistic dimension as a
grounding for their investigations of conflict
management styles across cultures (e.g., Chua &
Gudykunst 1987; Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Cushman &
King, 1985; Leung & Iwawaki, 1988; Leung, 1988).

However, the individualistic-collectivistic dimension is also useful in investigating cultural differences among different ethnic groups residing in a particular country. In fact, Ting-Toomey (1991) states that:

> It must be noted that individualism-collectivism does not apply only to national cultures, it also applies to different ethnic groups within national cultures. For example, while Euro-Americans in the United States would tend to retain individualistic values and beliefs, first generation immigrant groups such as Mexican-Americans and Asian-Americans newly residing in the United States would tend to retain group-oriented values. (p. 277)

Researchers, such as Cox, Lobel, and McLeod (1991), have used the individualism-collectivistic framework to investigate the effects of ethnic group cultural differences on cooperative and competitive behavior in the performance of a group task in American organizations and found that Hispanic and Asian minorities in the United States tend to be collectivistic in their approach. These authors also state that "values linked to [the] definition of collectivism have been reported for Black Americans" (p. 829). The individualism-collectivism dimension of culture, then, can be used as a broad theoretical framework for investigating intercultural conflict management strategy in American organizations.

Conflict and Conflict Strategy

Conflict has been viewed from many different

perspectives. These include the "biological perspective" (Schellenberg, 1982), the "socio-economic perspective" (Coser, 1967), the "managerial" perspective (Blake & Mouton, 1964), and the "communication perspective" (Frost & Wilmot, 1978), to mention a few. An examination of scholarly literature on conflict also reveals that it can occur within an individual (intrapersonal conflict), between two people (interpersonal conflict), between groups (intergroup conflict), within a society (social conflict), and between/among nations (international conflict). But what exactly is conflict? How do we define it? Which of the many definitions captures the essence of conflict as it relates to the purpose of this study?

Perhaps the most comprehensive and relevant definition of conflict is that of Frost and Wilmot (1978). These authors define conflict as an "expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals" (p. 18). The notion of "expressed struggle" suggests that conflict is a communicative event. In an interpersonal context, for a struggle to constitute conflict, it must be expressed verbally or nonverbally by the parties involved. In other words, the parties must be aware that they are in conflict. Communication,

whether verbal or nonverbal in form, brings the conflict situation into the open. If only one party is aware, then the situation cannot be called a conflict.

The idea of a struggle also implies an attempt to exert effort and/or influence, or at least a desire, to obtain something at the expense of the other party. The parties to conflict so conceived can achieve their goals only if those to whom they are competitively linked fail to achieve theirs, unless, of course, the only objective of one is to eliminate the conflict or escape the situation.

The notion of interdependent parties is also an important assumption made in the definition. Parties to a conflict must be interdependent; in other words, they must be in a relationship in which the action of one party affects the other party. The nature of the relationship may take different forms in respect to levels of personalness, intimacy, and formality, such as husband-wife, employee-employer, or parent-child.

The requirement that parties in conflict perceive incompatible goals is central to the concept. Goals are desires or expectations that people would like to see fulfilled. The perception of incompatibility leads to actions aimed at achievement of one's own goals. Perception is the important factor. Even if goals are not in fact incompatible, the perception that they are

will drive behavior.

The concepts of perceived scarce resources, scarce rewards, and interference by the other party further suggest that conflict is a competition to secure something valuable or deemed so. Some examples are to ensure the continuous flow of cheap oil to the United States, in the case of the Gulf War; to win a gold medal, in the case of the Olympics; or to achieve the "Employee of the Month" award, in the case of the workplace. In these situations, one party must win at the expense of the other(s). "Interference" refers to the fact that each party in a conflict situation perceives the other to be an obstacle to achieving a desired resource, reward, or recognition.

Even though the definition of conflict proposed by Wilmot and Frost seems to capture the essence of the phenomenon, it does cast it as a condition that inevitably leads to hostility, blaming, and hard feelings in terms of its resolution. This definition is consistent with early views of conflict as a disruptive and undesirable phenomenon that should be avoided. However, it is widely accepted today that conflict is not necessarily negative (see Lippitt, 1982). Therefore, the orientation to conflict management adopted in a given case should be a function of the situational variables specific to that case.

The Role of Communication in Conflict

In light of the considerations above, the role played by communication in conflict will help shed light on its management. Communication is a key element because for conflict to take place, it has to be communicated. This communication may be verbal or non-verbal. Pace and Faules (1989) state that "conflicts may be expressed in different ways; from very subtle nonverbal movements to all-out physical brawling, from subtle sarcasm to all-out verbal attack" (p. 218). Even though human communication itself may not be the triggering agent of conflict, it is, nonetheless, the medium through which conflict comes into the open. Conflict communication has certain features, such as an increase in the rate of disagreements among members of a group, an unfriendly tone, sighs, and curt verbal utterances (Pace & Faules, 1989). Not only does communication allow conflict to come into the open, it also determines its course. Communication plays a role in the escalation or de-escalation of a conflict, and hence determines how the conflict will be resolved, or even whether it will be resolved.

Communicative behaviors not only reveal the degree of importance attached to the issue leading to the conflict, but also the parties' preferred ways of approaching it. These preferred ways of dealing with

conflict, labeled personal conflict styles (Blake &
Mouton, 1970; Hall, 1969; Kilmann & Thomas, 1975),
reflect individual differences. Subsequent studies
investigated these conflict styles among African-
Americans and European-Americans (Kochman, 1981; Ting-
Toomey, 1986). These studies are reviewed in Chapter 2.

Early research on conflict in organizations divided
conflict management strategies along an assertiveness-
cooperativeness dimension (See Blake & Mouton, 1961;
Deutsch, 1973; Sherif, 1966). However, researchers soon
realized that this dichotomy fails to capture the full
range of strategies used by participants to a conflict.
Blake and Mouton (1964), for example, found that if the
two dimensions (competitiveness and cooperativeness) are
graphed into a two-dimension matrix, they result in five
conflict management strategies: (1) competing; (2)
accommodating; (3) avoiding; (4) collaborating; and (5)
compromising. Putnam and Wilson (1982) developed an
instrument based on Blake and Mouton's (1964) work and
identified three main conflict management strategies: a
control strategy, a solution-oriented strategy, and a
nonconfrontational (avoidance) strategy. Putnam and
Wilson's (1982) instrument is discussed at greater
length in chapter two of this study. Personal conflict
management strategies, expressed through verbal and/or
nonverbal communication, often determine the outcome of

a conflict. The outcome may be positive or negative for the parties involved.

<div align="center">Research Hypotheses and Questions</div>

The following overarching research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: In a hypothetical work-related conflict scenario, African-American respondents will differ in their reported likelihood use of conflict management strategies (control, solution-orientation, nonconfrontational) as a function of the ethnic background of the other party involved.

H2: In a a hypothetical work-related conflict scenario, European-American repondents will differ in their reported likelihood use of conflict management strategies (control, solution-orientation, nonconfrontational) as a function of the ethnic background of the other party involved.

In addition to these overarching hypotheses, two research questions designed to probe additional conflict strategies and factors that contribute to strategy choice were posed:

RQ1: What conflict management strategies do people in work-related conflicts involving someone from a different ethnic background use?

RQ2: What factors determine choice of conflict management strategy(ies) in work-related conflicts involving people from different ethnic backgrounds?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study investigated conflict management
communication strategies in the culturally diverse
workplace. This chapter analyzes the present state of
knowledge about conflict management in the culturally
diverse workplace by reviewing studies on "problematic
communication issues" (Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989)
and communication norms (Waters, 1992) that frequently
contribute to or provoke conflict among organizational
members. This chapter also reviews the relevant
literature on intercultural conflict management
strategies and introduces the various conflict
management instruments used in research on conflict in
organizations.

Problematic Communication Issues in the Culturally Diverse Workplace

Traditionally, organizational communication
scholars have accorded very little interest to exploring
ethnic or cultural issues in domestic organizational
settings (Allen, 1995). Most of the research on cultural
differences among employees as they relate to
organizational processes was done in overseas branches

of U.S. corporations in an effort to maximize organizational outcomes in those settings (Adler, 1983, 1984). However, with the recent change in the demographic make-up of domestic organizations, culture and ethnicity have become critical issues in organizational communication (Mumby, 1993), and scholars have started to take a closer look at the challenges involved in functioning in a culturally diverse workplace (Cox et al., 1991; Folb, 1994; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Martin, Hecht, & Larkey, 1994; Waters, 1994).

In an effort to understand interethnic communication, Hecht et al. (1989), for example, conducted a study that identified the issues of acceptance, expressiveness, authenticity, stereotyping, understanding, goal attainment, and powerlessness as seven important communication issues that influence interaction between African-Americans and European-Americans. The following sections analyze these issues and comment on the way they relate to conflict management in the culturally diverse workplace.

Acceptance

Acceptance as a communication issue refers to having one's opinions accepted, confirmed, and respected by one's conversational partner (Hecht et al., 1989).

The African-Americans who participated in this study reported that acceptance is an important communication issue, because African-Americans, generally, do not feel that their opinions are accepted and appreciated by European-Americans. The implication of the acceptance issue to interaction in a workplace characterized as culturally diverse is that, for members of an organization to feel that they are valued members of that organization, they have to feel that their opinions about and contributions in matters regarding the well being of the organization are just as valuable as anyone else's. African-Americans need their ideas about organizational matters to be given the same attention as those of other members of the organizations. In this respect, then, it is not surprising to see that "acceptance" in terms of showing respect and valuing the ideas of the other has become one of the primary goals of most diversity training programs (see Loden & Rosener, 1991; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1992).

Expressiveness

Expressiveness refers to the ability to express freely one's thoughts and feelings in a conversation. According to Hecht et al. (1989), African-Americans report that they do not feel free to express their thoughts and feelings in a spontaneous manner in

conversations with European-Americans. It could be argued that lack of freedom to express one's thoughts and ideas in a spontaneous manner may have a negative impact on the development of interpersonal relationships among members of these two groups (Miller, 1990).

Expressiveness as a communication issue refers to the feeling that the nature and the range of thoughts and ideas African-Americans and European-Americans can discuss together are somehow restricted. This is not really surprising because it is common knowledge that neither group feels comfortable discussing social issues considered "touchy" or "taboo" (consider the stir caused among academics by the recently published book The Bell Curve, or the agitation created by the revisionist view of the Holocaust).

Most of the time, the social norm is that certain issues regarding race and ethnicity are only discussed among members of the same race or ethnic group, never in the public arena. An example of punishment for violating this social norm regarding interethnic communication is the flap created by the European-American president of a large university in the northeastern United States for his mispeech about African-Americans in higher education. Expressiveness can indeed be a serious issue in a workplace characterized as culturally diverse.

Authenticity

Authenticity is equated with genuineness in the presentation of self. Authenticity, for both African-Americans and European-Americans, is conveyed by being honest and truthful in the expression of one's ideas and feelings. Deductively, one can expect lack of authenticity in African-American and European-American communication to follow from the fact that expressiveness is a problematic communication issue. It could be logically argued that if African-Americans and European-Americans are not sure what kinds of topics they can freely and spontaneously talk about when interacting with each other, they may approach such communication situations with caution.

Authenticity constitutes a major factor that can positively or negatively affect workplace atmosphere. Honesty and truthfulness are core values that contribute to positive relational development among members of an organization, and the emergence of a harmonious, culturally diverse workplace will depend, to a large extent, on members' feeling that they are free to be honest and truthful with each other.

Understanding

Understanding in interethnic communication is defined as "a mutual perception that meaning is

successfully conveyed" (Martin et al., 1994, p. 239).

Understanding can be problematic because communication

is symbolic. The way interactants assign meanings to

symbols is determined by their frames of reference, and

successful sharing of meaning between interactants may

be attributed, to a large extent, to similarity of those

frames of reference. Lucas (1989) states:

> Everything a speaker says is filtered through a
> listener's *frame of reference* [italics his], the
> total of his or her knowledge, experience, goals,
> values, and attitudes. Because a speaker and a
> listener are different people, they can never have
> the exactly the same frame of reference. And
> because a listener's frame of reference can never
> be the same as a speaker's, the meaning of a
> message will never be exactly the same to a
> listener as to a speaker. (p. 17)

Even when speaker and listener share similar frames

of reference, misunderstanding can occur. And in a

culturally diverse workplace, the differences in frames

of reference are even greater, which makes understanding

even more problematic. There is a host of factors that

can combine to impede successful occurrence of

understanding in a culturally diverse work setting

(Asante & Davis, 1989). Asante and Davis (1989), for

example, state that "situational modalities converge

with cultural modalities to create either understanding

or misunderstanding in the workplace among culturally

dissimilar employees and employers" (p. 376). In sum,

the lack of understanding may be a major source of

conflict in diverse workplaces.

Goal Attainment

Goal attainment is the perception that both parties have successfully achieved their communicative goals. Martin et al. (1994) describe "goal attainment" as "the mutual realization of objectives through learning or listening, or obtaining desired ends from the communication effort" (p. 239). Goal attainment may be a problematic issue in a communicative situation where interactants realize that the habitual communicative strategies they would normally use in any given interactional situation are no longer effective in achieving their communicative goals. Given the premise that, in Western societies, every communicative act has an expected outcome (that is, communication is purposeful) and that interactants use the communicative strategies that allow them maximum goal attainment, frustration and confusion may follow when the habitual strategies fail to produce the expected outcome or fulfill the purpose of the communication.

In an organizational setting, communicative goal attainment might be problematic if members have drastically different approaches regarding a given communicative event. An example will help illustrate this point. A performance appraisal is a routine communicative event that provides an employee feedback on the way he or she is doing his/her job. From the

employer's perspective, the goal of a performance appraisal is to praise an employee for things he/she does well and to provide advice on how to improve that which he/she does not do so well. The idea is that the employee will learn from this performance review. However, the extent to which employees respond to performance appraisals is culturally relative. In collectivistic cultures, such as Japan, for example, employees do not like to be praised individually. Rather, employees tend to give credit for good performance to the entire work group rather than an individual (Nakane, 1972; Ohmae, 1982). In these same cultures, managers are reluctant to give negative feedback to their employees because negative feedback may cause an employee to lose face (Ting-Toomey, 1985). In a culturally diverse workplace, a performance appraisal may fail to achieve its goals because of interactants' cultural predispositions regarding this communicative event.

Powerlessness

Another communication issue identified by Hecht et al. (1989) is the feeling of powerlessness reported by African-Americans during interaction with European-Americans. In this study, African-Americans reported feeling that European-Americans try to control

interaction by taking charge of the conversation. African-Americans also reported being frustrated by the constant interruptions by European-Americans.

Powerlessness as an issue in interethnic communication raises the question of the distribution of power in society in general, and in organizations in particular. Folb (1994) remarks that "within the United States, those most likely to hold and control positions of real, not token, power and those who have the greatest potential ease of access to power and high status are still generally white, male, able-bodied, heterosexual, and youthful in appearance if not in age" (p. 123). The situation is not any different in business organizations. Therefore, organizational members from minority groups, African-Americans, for example, may look at the issue of powerlessness at "sharing control" or "jointly controlling" interethnic interaction as a reflection of the distribution of power in society at large (see Otto & Featherman, 1975; Martineau, 1976).

Unequal power in interaction in the ethnically diverse workplace might create a workplace atmosphere where antagonism, passive rebellion, coalition formations, factions, and mistrust might be the guiding principles of communication. Therefore, resolution of the issue of conversational dominance in interpersonal or group interaction is important in fostering effective

communication in a culturally diverse organizational
setting.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping refers to the use of general labels to
characterize a person. For example, African-Americans,
according to the Hecht et al. study, feel that European-
Americans do not treat them as individuals but rather as
members of a specific ethnic group. Stereotyping
misrepresents a person's individual characteristics and
occurs in many different (sometimes subtle) ways. An
example of stereotyping identified by Hecht et al.
(1989) is the introduction of conversational topics
perceived to be of particular interest to the ethnic
group of the conversational partner, such as sports with
African-Americans, or politics or business with
European-Americans. Stereotyping may have a negative
impact in a workplace characterized as culturally
diverse because not *all* African-Americans or *all*
European-Americans are interested in sports or politics
or business.

Stereotyping and its implications for communication
in the workplace were the central focus of an essay by
Waters (1992). This author attempts to explain how
preconceived ideas about people from other groups might
affect communication among organizational members and

contends that "the attitudes and beliefs that individuals bring to the workplace are in part a function of preconceived notions that they may have about minorities in general and about race-related matters overall" (p. 440).

The beliefs and attitudes that individuals bring to the workplace are based on such factors as their level of knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of the other people in the workplace. My personal experience is that sometimes people engage in "careless" stereotyping; that is, they fail to foresee that their communicative behavior might be insensitive to their conversational partner. As an African in the United States, I have been asked certain questions about life in Africa that I found very stereotypical and downright insulting. Questions, such as. "Is it true that people live in trees in Africa?," or the belief that "all African countries are like Somalia or Rwanda" reflect a low level of knowledge about Africa and Africans. This situation leads to hightened anxiety in interpersonal encounters because I always find myself trying to explain that people should not believe everything they see or read about in the media.

Stereotyping in a diverse organizational setting might also stem from members' perspectives on organizational issues, such as affirmative action.

Waters (1992) maintains that the stigma surrounding affirmative action (the controversial contention that affirmative action brings in people who are not qualified or that it is a form of reverse discrimination) may contribute to the prevalence of preconceived ideas about minorities in the workplace. Waters concludes that, when brought into the arena of social interaction, stereotypes can and do cause conflict.

The seven issues described above are important in the sense that they decrease the effectiveness of communication and, hence impair relationships, in a workplace characterized as ethnically diverse. These issues can also guide research and practice in effective intercultural conflict management in organizations. In fact, Hecht, Larkey, and Johnson (1992) attempted to identify which of the seven communication issues are most relevant to effective communication between African-Americans and European-Americans. These authors argue that interethnic communication is problematic because "one cannot assume that all interactants share a similar definition of the situation, messages, conversational rules, and so on" (p. 210). They also argue that, despite the increased contact between African-Americans and European-Americans in many spheres of American life (business, politics, education),

effective communication between the two groups remains a challenge for both theorists and practitioners in intercultural communication.

Hecht et al. (1992) used the constructs of communication satisfaction (Hecht & Ribeau, 1984), ethnic identity salience (Hecht & Ribeau, 1987; White, 1989) and relationship intimacy (Burgoon & Hale, 1987) to investigate the way the problematic communication issues described above affect effective interaction between African-Americans and European-Americans.

Using a questionnaire, Hecht et al. (1992) asked African-American and European-American respondents to "recall either a satisfying or dissatisfying social conversation (one whose primary goal was enjoyment) with a member of the other ethnic group during the past [two] weeks" (p. 220). The measure of communication satisfaction consisted of ten "items that were validated for both African-Americans and European-Americans in a previous study" (Hecht et al., 1992, p. 220). The ethnic identity salience variable was constructed from ten items that measured the social identity ("Being Black [White] is how I define myself") and political identity ("It is important the Blacks [Whites] be political leaders in local government") of the respondents. Relationship intimacy (High-Low) was measured using a five-item scale.

For African-Americans, the study revealed that "overall satisfaction is positively associated with understanding, authenticity, shared worldview, and acceptance and negatively associated with powerlessness and relaxation" (p. 224). On the relationship intimacy measure, for African-Americans, "powerlessness is the primary issue in more intimate relationships, whereas understanding, acceptance, stereotyping, and shared worldview are more salient in less intimate relationships" (p. 224).

For European-Americans, the study suggested that "overall satisfaction is positively associated with relational solidarity, goal attainment, understanding, acceptance, and authenticity and negatively associated with identity salience" (p. 225). On the relational intimacy, "goal attainment, relaxation, and shared world view are more salient in more intimate relationships, whereas authenticity, acceptance, and relational solidarity are more important in less intimate relationships" (p. 225).

The implication of these findings for interaction in culturally diverse organizations is that members should be made aware of the fact that they possess, to a certain degree, a shared sense of what constitutes a satisfying interethnic communication. Emphasizing what dimensions of communication people desire in common may

be a good way of getting them to analyze behavior critically and to change accordingly. The fact that organizational members do not accord the same degree of importance to certain issues (for example, the understanding issue is very important to African-Americans, but unimportant to European-Americans) may cause frustration and further complicate interaction between the two groups. However, if both groups are educated on the significance of these issues, they may be able to devise a way of dealing with these issues in a constructive manner.

Communication Norms

Other problematic communication issues in the culturally diverse workplace include factors that are directly linked to verbal communication norms. Waters (1992) states that differences in conversational norms, degree of eye contact during interaction, and speaking style can cause friction when African-Americans and European-Americans interact. For example:

> For whites, paying attention in a conversational episode usually involves several different but distinct behaviors. Typically, white listeners will demonstrate attention by looking at the speaker, nodding occasionally (which is generally a sign of agreement), and making little noises that indicate that they are paying attention. For some urban blacks who are familiar with one another, these typical conversational feedback mechanisms may be completely absent. That is, these individuals don't particularly feel the need to look at one another while conversing. Second, the use of the

conversational nod can indicate something quite
different in the black conversation. Among blacks,
the nod can also serve as a catalyst for
conversation. That is, it is a way of encouraging
speakers to continue with their argument or point.
(pp. 444-445)

The second element that may cause conflict between

African-Americans and European-Americans is the cultural

norms governing degree of eye contact during

interaction. It is a documentated fact that African-

Americans, in general, avoid making direct eye contact,

especially when interacting with someone in a position

of authority (Poter & Samovar, 1994). However, in

European-American culture, the degree of eye contact in

and of itself is a nonverbal communication of

trustworthiness, sincerity, and directness. Waters

maintains that interaction between the groups could

suffer from this difference in the meaning attributed to

eye contact. A European-American engaged in a

conversation with an African-American who does not

maintain direct eye contact might think that his/her

conversational partner is untrustworthy or has something

to hide. Similarly, an African-American might find a

European-American who insists on establishing and

maintaining eye contact rude and disrespectful.

Waters's model also indicates the way speaking

style might cause conflict in interaction between

African-Americans and European-Americans. Speaking style

refers to the way we use language to express ourselves.

The distinctiveness of a speaking style derives from its grammatical or phonological structure (see, Chomsky, 1965; Smitherman, 1994). A good example of this is the use of the copula ¦be¦ among African-Americans. An African-American using what is wrongly termed Black Vernacular English (BVE) would, for example, say "I ain't going" instead of the "standard" form "I am not going." Of course, the conditions under which people exhibit different styles depend on the situational context of discourse (Chomsky, 1965; Ellis, 1985; Smitherman, 1994).

The importance of speaking style as an issue in organizational settings lies in the fact that our speaking styles influence the way others perceive us. Language is rule-governed and the extent to which one's speaking style adheres to the rules of the language determines our membership in the given linguistic community. The point here is that, because language similarity determines social group membership, differences in speaking styles may imply differences in beliefs and values, which is a major source of conflict. Overall, Waters's model provides a framework that allows theorists and practitioners to investigate communication elements that may cause conflict in the culturally diverse organization.

In summary, the studies reviewed above constitute a

partial inventory of issues that have the potential for
being problematic in a culturally diverse workplace.
Even though these issues are sometimes nothing more than
deeply rooted misconceptions or lack of knowledge about
one another, the problem is compounded by lack of
knowledge about how to prevent these issues from causing
conflict or what strategy to use in dealing with them
once they have come to cause open conflict. The next
section surveys the current state of our knowlegde about
intercultural conflict management strategies.

Studies of Conflict Management Strategy

Research investigating intercultural conflict
management strategy is sparse at best. In fact, the
majority of the studies found in the literature on
intercultural conflict management strategy are cross-
cultural comparative studies (e.g., Chua & Gudykunst
1987; Cushman & King, 1985; Leung 1988; Leung & Iwawaki,
1988). Only a few studies have investigated conflict
management strategies among the various cultural groups
in the United States (Kochman, 1981; Ting-Toomey, 1986;
Martin et al., 1994). A review of these studies, as well
as the cross-cultural ones, establishes the need for the
present study, which examined the use of conflict
management strategies in a culturally diverse workplace.

Domestic Studies

Investigating the ways in which African-Americans and European-Americans handle conflict, Kochman (1981) carried out a study of conflict styles in the African-American and European-American cultures. Using participant-observation techniques to study conflict strategies in both black and white communities, Kochman found that African-Americans and European-Americans have different ways of handling interpersonal conflict. The African-American mode, for example, is "high-keyed: animated, interpersonal, and confrontational," whereas European-Americans in a conflict situation are "relatively low-keyed: dispassionate, impersonal, and non-challenging" (cited in Ting-Toomey, 1986, p. 78). The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

> While Blacks tend to use more emotionally expressive and involving modes of conflict management strategies, Whites tend to engage in more emotionally self-restrained discussions and attempt to understate and diffuse the unpleasant, intense situation. While Blacks are more affectively direct in confronting the conflict, Whites prefer to assume a cool, logical stance in seeking for an active closure to the conflict episode. (p. 78)

It is important to note that while the Kochman study was ostensibly cross-cultural, it had some methodological shortcomings that leave unclear the influence of culture as opposed to other factors. The samples of African-Americans and European-Americans were not equivalent in the sense that they came from

different socio-economic groups. The African-American sample consisted of people living in ghettos, whereas the European-American sample represented middle-class people.

Following in Kochman's steps, Ting-Toomey (1986) investigated the differences in conflict management styles among African-Americans and European-Americans. Her survey of 318 male and female participants indicated that "Blacks used significantly more controlling strategies than Whites. Conversely, Whites used significantly more solution-orientation strategies than Blacks" (p. 83). In terms of gender, Ting-Toomey (1986) found that males, both African-American and European-American, tended to adopt "more nonconfrontational style of conflict than females. Conversely, females tended to use slightly more solution-orientation style than males" (p. 83).

Even though, the Ting-Toomey study was an improvement on the Kochman study (in the sense that it used equivalent samples and included gender as a variable), it was, methodologically speaking, less of an intercultural than an intracultural study of conflict management strategy. In effect, the "majority of the participants (89% Blacks, 92% Whites) indicated that their conflict partners were from the same ethnic background" (Ting-Toomey, 1986, p. 82).

Another interethnic communication variable that has received attention is conversational improvement strategies, which are defined as the manner in which conversational partners adjust or accommodate their behaviors to achieve satisfactory interaction when problematic conversation or "failure events" occur (p. 239). Hecht and Ribeau (1987) identified seven strategies that could be used to improve both satisfying and dissatisfying conversation between African-Americans and European-Americans. Three improvement strategies are used to improve dissatisfying conversation:

> "Asserting a point of view" is expressing disagreement, arguing one's point of view, being more persuasive...."Openmindedness" is being less judgmental, not dismissing ideas or opinions too quickly, letting other explain his/her opinion.... "Avoidance" is not bringing up a particular topic, ignoring unpleasant remarks, not arguing one's position, or simply terminating the conversation. (p. 240)

Two strategies are used to "stabilize" dissatisfying conversation, that is, to prevent the conversational situation from becoming worse. These strategies are "nothing can be done," which indicates that there is little either interactant can do to improve the conversation, and "give in," which implies that the other person should apologize, agree, or go along with what is happening.

Finally, two strategies are described as making satisfying conversation even more satisfying.

"Interaction management" is defined as more talking, listening, turn taking, questioning, and exploring topics on the part of both interactants, while "other orientation" involves the other person more in the conversation (asking about other's opinions and desires) and having patience with other, that is, a focus on the other person.

Building on Hecht et al.'s (1992) study, Martin et al. (1994) sought "to explore the relationship between conversational improvement strategies and communication issues, to discover what specific strategies are used to deal with specific communication issues, and to understand whether the use of these strategies varies according to relational intimacy" (p. 242). Relational intimacy, Martin et al. (1994) contend, is a variable that determines appropriate use of conversational improvement strategies. Their study concludes that African-Americans and European-Americans use different conversational strategies to improve problematic communication. More specifically, the researchers suggest that:

> Conversational improvement strategies differ in locus of responsibility (in whether responsibility for strategy lies with self, other, or a combined effort of the two) and in level of activity (whether active or passive). African-Americans are more likely to use active and mutual conversational improvement strategies (i.e., Avoidance, Other orientation), whereas European-Americans use passive, individual strategies (i.e., Give In). (p. 252)

To date, the studies reviewed above are the only studies that have investigated conflict management or interaction improvement strategy among African-Americans and European-Americans. This author is unaware of any other research and shares the concern of Ting-Toomey (1986), who observed that "in the context of interethnic communication studies in North America, there is a dearth of research that systematically compares and contrasts conflict interaction styles across either ethnic groups boundaries or within individual ethnic group systems" (p. 75).

Cross-Cultural Studies

Other comparative studies of conflict management style in the United States and other countries have been conducted using the individualistic-collectivistic framework. Kagan, Knight, and Martinez-Romero (1982) compared the conflict behaviors of Mexican town children to those of Mexican-American and Anglo-American children living in a town in the United States. Participants were asked questions "which would assess [their] responses to aggression and to competition for an unsharable reward" (Kagan et al., 1982, p. 46). The study revealed that Mexican children (who are perceived to be from a collectivistic culture) tended to use more passive, avoidance of conflict strategies than the Anglo-American

or Mexican-American children. Anglo-American and Mexican-American children, on the other hand, tended to use more active confrontational strategies.

Using a national culture approach, Cushman and King (1985) investigated the differences in conflict resolution styles in the United States, Japan, and the former Yugoslavia. Analyzing the role of cultural myths, rituals, and social dramas in interorganizational conflict resolution in the three countries, they discovered that the Japanese preferred to use a collaborative style of conflict management, whereas Yugoslavians preferred to use a compromising style to resolve conflict. Americans, according to the study, preferred to use a competing conflict management style.

Another study of Americans and Chinese from Hong-Kong by Leung (1988) showed that the Americans tended to use a direct conflict communication style and solution-orientated style, whereas the Chinese tended to use an indirect conflict management style and a conflict-avoidance style.

The studies reviewed above were cross-cultural in nature; that is, they investigated conflict management behavior in different cultures. Hence, they offer little information about intercultural conflict management strategy. In addition, some of these studies suffered from methodological shortcomings, such as the use of

nonequivalent samples (see Kochman, 1981). Therefore, studies that systematically investigate conflict management strategy in a conflict situation involving two parties from two different ethnic backgrounds are sorely needed. In light of the trend toward increasing cultural diversity in the workplace, organizational communication research today should devote more attention to intercultural conflict communication.

This research probed the ways in which people from diverse cultural backgrounds manage work-related intercultural conflict in the workplace should be managed, and the reasons they provide for doing so. Such understanding will be useful to organizations struggling to create and manage diverse work environments.

Conflict Management Assessment Instruments

Over the last two decades, there has been a wealth of research in interpersonal and organizational conflict using various research methodologies and instruments. The most widely used instruments include: Blake and Mouton's (1969) Managerial Grid, Hall's (1969) Conflict Management Survey, Kilman-Thomas's (1977) MODE Survey, Putnam & Wilson's (1982) OCCI (Organizational Conflict Communication Instrument), Ross & DeWine's (1982) CMMS (Conflict Management Message Style), Rahim's (1983)

Organizational Conflict Inventory-II. These instruments reflect "different assumptions about effectiveness and about the situational nature of conflict management preferences" (Womack, 1988, p. 438). Following is a critique of the intruments mentioned above. The OCCI, however, is more thoroughly analyzed as it was used to collect data for the present study.

Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid

This instrument was the first to conceptualize conflict management as a five-category scheme. Using the dimensions of concern for self and concern for the other, Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed "forcing," "confronting," "smoothing" (also called accommodating), "avoiding" (also called "withdrawal"), and "compromising" as the five styles individuals use to manage conflict. "Forcing" refers to the use of competitive behaviors (including expert or legitimate power) to win one's position. "Confronting" is "facing a conflict directly, evaluating causes, and examining possible solutions" (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 631). "Smoothing" encompasses behaviors that play down the importance of the issues and emphasize common interests. "Avoiding" is the tendency to withdraw from conflict. "Compromising" is the tendency to look for middle-ground solutions to a conflict situation.

The Managerial Grid was very useful a conceptual tool for understanding and dealing with conflict in organizations. It generated a lot of research activity that attempted to identify which styles are most effective in organizational situations (Burke, 1970; Lawrence & Lorch, 1967). One weakness of this instrument is that it does not focus on communication and, therefore, may be of limited use in communication research.

Hall's Conflict Management Survey

This intrument, which is heavily influenced by Blake and Mouton (1964), assumes that conflict management behavior is a function of the situation in which conflict arises (e. g., interpersonal conflict, conflict within groups, conflict between groups). The instrument also assumes that there is a single best way of dealing with conflict in the context in which it occurs (see Womack, 1988). Even though this instrument is popular with trainers, it has been criticized for its high social desirability, its low reliability, and questionable validity (see Womack, 1988; Shockley-Zalabak, 1988).

The MODE Intrument

Like Hall's Conflict Management Survey, the Thomas-

Kilman (1977) Conflict Management-of-Differences or MODE
instrument is influenced by Blake and Mouton's
Managerial Grid (1964). The instrument used the
assertiveness-cooperativeness dichotomy to find out ways
individuals manage conflict. Like Blake and Mouton's
Conflict Management Grid, the MODE instrument posits
five modes of handling conflict: "collaborating,"
"compromising," "competing," "accommodating," and
"avoiding". These modes, according to the authors, are
flexible, and individuals are capable of using all five
modes (see Womack, 1988).

The validity of the MODE instrument is questionable
(see Table 2.1). Womack (1988) states that "no factor
analysis has been reported for either the MODE or CMS
instruments, so there is no way of knowing whether they
measure five independent factors" (p. 439). Because the
MODE instrument relies on ipsative data (data that may
not lend themselves to statistical treament) and because
it does not focus on communication, its usefulness for
research in general, and communication research in
particular, is limited (Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Ross &
DeWine, 1982).

<u>Ross and DeWine's CMMS</u>

The novelty of the Conflict Management Message
Style resides in the fact that "it relies on messages as

the primary mode for assessing interchanges in conflict and asserts that conflict management style can, and should be, addressed with message-oriented behaviors" (Ross & DeWine, 1988, p. 390). The authors propose this instrument as a viable research tool in light of the dubious validity and reliability of the early conflict instruments, and their lack of focus on communication.

Even though the CMMS has been shown to be a valid and reliable instrument of conflict communication (Ross & DeWine, cited in Womack, 1988), the psychometric properties were established with data from student samples. This may be a limitation with regard to the general utility of the instrument in organizational settings.

The ROCI-II

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (Rahim, 1983) focuses on individual predispositions to conflict and seeks to link such predispositions to the seriousness of conflict at the intrapersonal, intragroup, or intergroup levels. This instrument views communication as a set of strategies individuals in conflict situations use to manage these situations and achieve their personal goals (Weider-Hatfield, 1988). Like the instrument based on Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid, the ROCI-II identified five conflict

management styles charted along the dimensions of
"concern for self" and "concern for the other". These
five styles are: "integrating," "obliging,"
"dominating," "avoiding," and "compromising." The
implicit assumption of this instrument is that by
analyzing the ways organizational members use these
styles, researchers can determine the effectiveness of
each style for a given conflict situation (Weider-
Hatfield, 1988; Rahim, 1986).

The ROCI-II is generally felt to be valid and
reliable, even though it has not been widely tested (see
Table 2.1). Weider-Hatfield (1988), however, remarks
that "the general pattern of interscale correlations,
plus inconsistent patterns of factor structure, suggest
that the ROCI-II might be assessing three, not five,
conflict management styles" (p. 361).

The OCCI

The Organizational Conflict Communication
Instrument (OCCI) is a self-report instrument developed
by Putnam and Wilson (1982). These authors conducted a
critical analysis of previous conflict scales and found
that they presented many deficiencies. Some of the
deficiencies include "failure to measure psychometric
properties of the scales, low internal reliability and
unstable scores for some of the five styles,

inconsistencies in defining the smoothing mode, and potential social desirability effects for all scales" (p. 634). The OCCI was developed to solve those conceptual and methodological problems and proved itself a better instrument in many respects.

One remarkable aspect of the OCCI is that, unlike earlier instruments that indicate five conflict management styles, it indicates three conflict management strategies: control, solution-orientation, and nonconfrontational strategies. The control strategy encompasses attempts to communicate directly about the disagreement by arguing persistently for one's position. A person who uses this strategy also attempts to take control of the interaction and advocates his or her position. The control strategy is a combination of high assertiveness and low cooperativeness.

The solution-orientation strategy represents attempts to communicate directly about the conflict in order to find a solution that integrates the needs of both parties. A person who uses this strategy is willing to give in or compromise on issues.

The nonconfrontational strategy reflects attempts to use indirect means for managing conflicts. An individual who use this strategy avoids or withdraws from a disagreement. This individual may also engage in communicative behaviors, such as silence, glossing over

differences, and canceling ill feelings.

In addition to positing a three-factor conflict management strategy, the OCCI has three other characteristics that set it apart from earlier conflict instruments. The first characteristic of the OCCI is its focus on communication. It assumes that conflict management behaviors "are those communicative behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal,·that provide a means for handling conflict" (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 633). The authors argue that, in a conflict situation, parties engage in "strategic or planned interaction" (p. 633); therefore, "unlike previous questionnaires, the OCCI was constructed to measure communicative choices in the management of organizational conflict" (p. 635). This makes the OCCI the only conflict management instrument (excluding, perhaps, the Ross-DeWine CMMS) with a clear communication focus.

The second characteristic of the OCCI is that it measures the management of conflicts that are "content-oriented" (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 633). Specifically, the OCCI was developed to reveal how people handle disagreements. The authors state that "disagreements, while similar to misunderstandings, entail deep-seated latent differences rather than surface misinterpretations or semantic quibbles" (p. 633). This characteristic is very important in the sense that in a

culturally diverse workplace individuals may view their own culturally biased ways of doing things as *the only way.* They may, therefore, tend to disagree with ways of doing things that may differ from their own. This phenomenon is known as ethnocentrism, and, if unchecked, may lead to disagreements that can undermine the performance of a culturally diverse group.

The third characteristic of the OCCI is that it constitutes a major departure from the "style" orientation to conflict management so pervasive in previous intruments to the idea of "strategy." Conflict management represents a behavioral choice (a strategy) rather than a person's characteristic style. Conflict management behavior is, then, situational. Early researchers (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Hall, 1969) assumed that conflict management behavior is an invariable individual trait; that is, individuals have a single characteristic, habitual, or stable approach to conflict: a style. However, more recent research suggests that conflict management behaviors may be, and often are, situational because they vary across different situations (see Rakim & Bonoma, 1979). Different conflict situations call for different conflict management approaches. Putnam and Wilson (1982) take this perspective and note that "the decision to use a particular conflict strategy is largely governed by

situational rather than personality constraints, particularly ... the nature of the relationship between participants (role specialization and position), organizational structure (differentiation and integration) and environmental factors" (p. 633).

In addition to its conceptual sophistication, the OCCI also meets established psychometric standards for research instruments (Nunnally, 1978). The OCCI grew out of the concern that none of the previous conflict measurement instruments (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Hall, 1969; Kilman & Thomas, 1977) met satisfactory psychometric standards of reliability and validity. The standard average reliability alpha coefficients are .80 for basic research and .90 for applied research (Nunnally, 1978). The OCCI meets those standards (see Table 2.1).

Also, on the basis of three studies of the predictive validity of the instrument, the authors report that "as a whole, reliability and validity research on the OCCI demonstrate that the instrument has high discrimanatory power, moderate construct validity, and strong predictive validity" (p. 649). For these reasons, as well as its conceptual focus, it was an appropriate instrument for the present study, which investigated the communicative choices that individuals from different ethnic backgrounds make when in conflict.

Table 2.1

Comparison of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients Across

Scales (From Womack, 1988)

	Instruments					
	Blake & Mouton	Thomas-Kilman	Hall	Rahim	Putnam-Wilson	Ross-DeWine
(9, 9) Confrontation	.65	.73	.77	.85	.78
(5, 5) Compromise	.58	.45	.72	.92	-
(9, 1) Forcing	.71	.61	.72	.85	.76
(1, 9) Smoothing	.43	.55	.72	.94	.73
(1, 1) Withdrawal	.62	.39	.75	.88	-
Overall Means	.60	.55	.74	.89	.76
	N=76	N=76	N=1219	N=360	N=123

Summary

This chapter reviewed the state of our current knowledge about conflict in the culturally diverse workplace. Several issues were identified as problematic for effective communication in a culturally diverse environment (Hecht et al., 1989) and were, therefore, analyzed in terms of their relevance to this study. The chapter also reviewed a theoretical model of interaction that analyzes the relationship between race, culture, and interpersonal conflict (Waters, 1992).

Another aim of this chapter was to review past studies that investigated conflict management strategies from an intercultural communication perspective. Such studies are sparse at best, and some of them suffer from methodological shortcomings that make their findings difficult to interpret (Kochman, 1981; Ting-Toomey, 1986). In the light of the trend toward increasing cultural diversity in the workplace, rigorous studies of conflict interactions involving individuals of different cultural backgrounds are needed. The present study was a step in that direction.

This chapter also reviewed the instruments most widely used in research on conflict behavior. Most of these instruments do not focus on communication as a central element in conflict behavior. In addition, most

of them have failed to reach the average psychometric standards for reliability. One exception is the OCCI (Putnam & Wilson, 1982), which focuses on communication and has been shown to be valid and reliable. In addition, the OCCI has specific characteristics that made it particularly appropriate to this study. It was, therefore, selected to investigate conflict management strategies in a culturally diverse workplace.

Chapter 3

METHODS

This study investigated work-related conflict management strategy and factors contributing to strategy choice in the culturally diverse workplace. This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology. It describes the operationalization of the variables in the study, and the instrumentation used. The chapter also describes the sampling of data collection procedures.

Variables

Independent Variables

The independent variables were the ethnic backgrounds of the study participants (described as "respondents") and their conflict partners (described as "targets"). The independent variable "respondent" had two levels: African-American (A-A) and European-American (E-A). Similarly, "target" has two levels: African-American (A-A) and European-American (E-A).

Dependent Variables

As noted in Chapter 2, three conflict management strategies were posited as dependent measures: (1) control strategy, (2) solution-orientation strategy, and (3) nonconfrontational strategy. These strategies are

described as follows:

1. Control strategy: A person who uses this strategy attempts to communicate directly about the conflict, and argues persistently for his or her position. The person also attempts to take control of the interaction by advocating his or her position.

2. Solution-orientation strategy: A person who uses this strategy communicates directly about the conflict in order to find a solution that integrates the needs of both parties. This person is also willing to give in or compromise on issues.

3. Nonconfrontational strategy: A person who uses this strategy uses indirect strategies for handling a conflict. He or she chooses to avoid or withdraw from a disagreement. This person may also engage in communicative behaviors, such as silence, glossing over differences, and canceling ill feelings.

Instrumentation

This section discusses the development of the conflict stimulus and the task requirement.

Conflict Scenarios

Two work-related conflict scenarios were created for the purposes of this study. The two scenarios were

strictly equivalent in the sense that their

informational content was the same. Both conflict

scenarios were work-related, and both involved two

individuals with very similar professional backgrounds

who had a limited amount of time to deal with an

assignment whose outcome has implications for the

organization. The two conflict situations are described

as follows:

Computer System Scenario

Imagine that you and a colleague are involved

in a work-related project that requires an equal

amount of input and dedication from each of you.

The project, which consists of deciding on what

computer system is most suitable to replace the

current system, has been assigned to you by the

Head of the department in which you are employed.

The present information system is outdated and can

no longer handle efficiently the volume of work in

the department. Upgrading the system is an

imperative, and your boss made it clear that you

are both responsible for the timely completion of

the upgrading, at which time, each one of you will

get a raise.

You, and your colleague John Williams, a 28-

year old [African-American, European-American] just

like yourself, are highly qualified to work on this

project because you have similar professional
backgrounds. You both hold M.B.A. degrees, and were
hired into this company at about roughly the same
time. However, despite your dedication and
enthusiasm, things are not progressing at the pace
they should if the project is to be completed as
scheduled. This lack of progress is mainly due to
the fact that you and your colleague cannot agree
on what kind of system to install. Even though the
company can afford the latest system on the market,
you are unable to reach a decision on which system
to buy. You favor one system and your colleague
favors another. You are running out of time. Using
the attached questionnaire, indicate what you would
do.

Healthcare Policy Plan

Imagine that you and a colleague are involved
in a work-related project that requires an equal
amount of input and dedication from each of you.
The project, which consists of deciding on which
Employee Healthcare Plan is most suitable to
replace the current plan, has been assigned to you
by the Head of the department in which you are
employed. The present Employee Healthcare Plan is
outdated and can no longer meet the needs of the
employees in the organization. Identifying a plan

better suited to the needs of the employees in this organization is a pressing issue, and your boss made it clear that you are both responsible for the timely completion of this project, at which time you will both get a raise.

You, and your colleague Chris Johnson, a 28-year old [European-American, African-American] are highly qualified to work on this project, because you have similar professional backgrounds. You both hold M.B.A. degrees with emphasis in Human Resource Management, and were hired into this company at about roughly the same time. However, despite your dedication and enthusiasm, things are not progressing at the pace they should if the project is to be completed as scheduled. This lack of progress is mainly due to the fact that you and your colleague cannot agree on a decision. Even though the company can afford either one of two plans, you are unable to reach a decision on which plan to buy. You favor one plan and your colleague favors another. You are running out of time. Using the attached questionnaire, indicate what you would do.

Design

Four different forms of the same survey were designed to minimize threats, such as the effects of the presentation and order of both the targets and the scenarios (see Appendices A and B for samples of survey construction). For example, to avoid the order effects of the targets, half of the respondents dealt with people from their own ethnic background first, then with people from a different ethnic group, while the other half dealt with people from a different ethnic background first, then people from the same ethnic background as themselves. Similarly, to avoid the potential presentation effects of the scenarios, they were crossed so that half of respondents dealt with the healthcare scenario first, then the computer scenario, while the other half dealt with the computer scenario first, then the healthcare scenario. Figure 1 represents the configuration of the four conflict situations. The overall design of the study was a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 respondent (2) by target (2) by scenario (2) by time (2) mixed repeated measure. However, scenario and time were not the main variables to be studied. They were used to control for effects that might be attributable to the content of a particular conflict or to the order in which these scenarios were presented.

Table 3.1

Configuration of the Four Conflict Situations Used for

Data Collection.

	Respondents	Targets	Scenario
Time 1:	A-A	A-A	CS
	A-A	E-A	HCP
	E-A	E-A	CS
	E-A	A-A	HCP
Time 2:	A-A	E-A	HCP
	A-A	A-A	CS
	E-A	A-A	HCP
	E-A	E-A	CS

Note. Respondents = Those who were asked to fill out the questionnaire; Targets = Those described in the conflict scenarios; A-A = African-American; E-A = European-American; CS = Computer system scenario; HCP = Healthcare policy scenario.

The Modified OCCI Instrument

Data for this study were collected using a modified version of the Organizational Conflict Communication Instrument (OCCI) developed by Putnam and Wilson (1982). The modifications to the OCCI were mainly syntactic. For example, all the statements in the original version were in the present tense (e.g., "I sidestep disagreement when they arise" or "I ease conflict by claiming our differences are trivial"). For the purposes of the present study, the tense of the statements was changed to the conditional tense to fit the scenarios (e.g., "I would sidestep the disagreement with my colleague" or "I would ease conflict by claiming our differences are trivial"). Another modification was that the original OCCI did not include an open-ended section.

The modified version of the OCCI has four sections (see Appendices A and B). Section 1 collected demographic data about respondents. Section 2 described a conflict situation and invited participants to respond to it by completing a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with completely disagree (1), disagree somewhat (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree somewhat (4), and completely agree (5). Section 3 is similar to Section 2, except that the content of the conflict and the ethnic background of the other party to the conflict were changed. Again, respondents were

invited to indicate the way they would deal with the
situation by filling out the same questionnaire, except
that this time, the sequencing of the questionnaire
items was altered to prevent respondents from simply
referring to Section 2 for answers.

In both Sections 2 and 3, respondents' reported use
of the conflict management strategies being investigated
(the control strategy, the solution-orientation
strategy, the nonconfrontational strategy) was
identified as follows:

The control strategy was identified when respondents
selected the strategies listed below as their response
to the conflict situation.

1. I would dominate arguments until my colleague
   understood my position.

2. I would argue persistently for my position.

3. I would assert my opinion forcefully.

4. I would raise my voice when trying to get my
   colleague to accept my position.

5. I would insist that my colleague accept my
   position during the discussion of our
   disagreement.

6. I would stand firm in my views during the
   discussion of our disagreement.

7. I would make my opinions about the
   disagreement known to my colleague.

The solution-orientation strategy was identified when
respondents selected the strategies listed below as
responses they would make to the conflict situation.

1. I would meet my colleague at a midpoint of our differences.

2. I would try to use my colleague's ideas to generate solutions to our disagreements.

3. I would suggest solutions that combine viewpoints from both of us.

4. I would frequently give in a little if my colleague would meet me halfway.

5. I would suggest that my colleague and I work together to create solutions to our disagreements.

6. I would go fifty-fifty to reach a solution that is acceptable to both of us.

7. I would offer a creative solution to our disagreement.

8. I would integrate arguments into a new solution from issues raised in the discussion of our disagreement.

9. I would give in a little on my ideas when my colleague would also give in.

10. I would offer tradeoffs to reach a solution to our disagreement

11. I would blend my ideas with my colleague's to create new alternative for resolving our disagreement.

The nonconfrontational strategy was identified when respondents selected the strategies listed below as responses they would make to the conflict situation.

1. I would sidestep the disagreement with my colleague.

2. I would shy away from the topic that is the source of our disagreement.

3. I would keep quiet about my views in order to avoid the disagreement between us.

4. I would ease the disagreement by claiming that

the differences between my colleague and me
are trivial.

5.   I would steer clear of the disagreeable topic.

6.   I would avoid my colleague.

7.   I would withdraw when my colleague confronts
me about the issue causing the disagreement.

8.   I would try to smooth over our disagreement by
making it appear unimportant.

9.   I would make our differences on the issue seem
less serious.

10. 1 would hold my tongue rather than argue with
my colleague.

11. I would downplay the importance of the
disagreement with my colleague.

12. I would reduce conflict by saying that our
disagreement is insignificant.

For each of the strategies described above, the
scores on the items used to operationalize that strategy
were summed and divided by the number of items to find
the mean score for the reported use of that strategy.
The results of the analysis of these quantitative data
are presented in the first part of Chapter 4.

Section 4 of the instrument was construed as a
triangulation of the research design (Denzin, 1978) to
make up for the inherent weaknesses of self-report data
(see Appendix E). This section included five open-ended
questions and collected qualitative data that probed
factors that influenced the respondents' answers to the
questionnaire items. The data in this section were used
to develop an interview protocol designed to clarify and

gain a better understanding of the results of the study.
The results of the qualitative data analysis are
discussed at greater length in Chapter 5.

Sampling

African-American and European-American students at
the Pennsylvania State University and Howard University
in Washington, D.C. participated in this study. The
choice of African-Americans and European-Americans as
research participants was justified because they
represent, numerically, the two main ethnic groups
represented in the United States workforce (Johnson &
Packer, 1987). Culturally, African-Americans and
European-Americans are two different and distinctive
entities and are often perceived to be at opposite ends
of the individualistic-collectivistic continuum
(Hofstede, 1980).

Even though the importance of gender as a variable
in communication research has been questionned recently
(see Canary & Hause, 1993), only male students were
included in the sample for this study to avoid gender-
induced effects on the variables being studied. Another
justification for the sampling of respondents is that
gender communication is a well established area of
inquiry in communication research, and there is every

indication that gender is an important variable that should be controlled for communication (see Tannen, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1986).

In total, 80 male students (39 African-Americans and 41 European-Americans) from 11 intact classes (six undergraduate speech communication classes at Penn State and five undergraduate architecture classes at Howard University) participated in this study. The choice of two sites was dictated by the compelling fact that it turned out to be extremely difficult to find enough African-American respondents at The Pennsylvania State University to participate in this study. Table 3.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study.

Table 3.2

Frequency of Respondents by Ethnic Group

Respondents	N	%
African-Americans	39	49
European-Americans	41	51
Total	80	100

Table 3.3

Frequency of Respondents by Semester Standing

Semester Standing	N	%
Freshmen	5	6
Sophomore	24	30
Junior	23	29
Senior	28	35
Total	80	100

Table 3.4

Frequency of Respondents by Socio-Economic Status of

Family of Origin

	N	%
Working Class	16	20
Middle Class	57	71
Upper Class	7	9
Total	80	100

Table 3.5

<u>Frequency of Respondents by Amount of Work Experience</u>

Job Experience	$\underline{N}$	%
None	10	13
up to 2 years	19	24
More than 2 years but less than 4	18	23
From 4 to 6 years	19	24
Over 6 years	13	16
Total	79	100

<u>Note</u>. One respondent did not report his work experience.

Table 3.6

Frequency of Respondents by Job Classification

Job Classification	$\underline{N}$	%
Administrative	9	15
Professional	10	16
Technical	11	18
Service	26	43
Clerical	4	6
Military	1	2
Total	61	100

Note. Nineteen respondents did not report their job classifications.

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving approval from The Pennsylvania State University Office of Regulatory Compliance, data were collected at The Pennsylvania State University and Howard University in Washington, DC. At both institutions, the researcher obtained permission from instructors to visit their classes to invite students to participate in the project. In each class, the researcher first explained the goals of the project and then randomly distributed the informed consent form (see Appendix C) and the appropriate forms of the 12-page survey as a single package (see Appendices A and B). Participants were invited to take the survey home, complete it at their earliest convenient time, and return it to their instructors for collection by the researcher.

Data Analyses

The quantitative analyses obtained both descriptive and inferential statistics. Correlational analyses were used to establish the interrelatedness of the measures. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to investigate the main and interaction effects of the model. The results of the data analyses are presented in

the next chapter.

Chapter 4

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The aim of this study was to investigate conflict management strategies in work-related conflicts involving people from different ethnic backgrounds. A modified version of the OCCI was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the survey data. The results of the analysis of the data collected through open-ended questions and interviews are presented in Chapter 5.

This study investigated the relationship between the ethnic background of respondents and their approaches to work-related conflict situations involving someone from a different ethnic background. The study sought to determine whether respondents would use a conflict management strategy that is constant, regardless of the ethnic background of the person with whom they are in conflict (the target). Two conflict scenarios were used to control for effects that could be associated with the content of a particular conflict. Three conflict management strategies (control, solution-orientation, and nonconfrontation) were investigated by means of a modified version of the OCCI, a 30-item quantitatively-based questionnaire. The mean score for

each of these strategies was computed by summing and dividing across the number of items that represented that strategy. For example, the score for the control strategy was the mean score of the 7 items on the questionnaire that represented that strategy. The score for the solution-orientation strategy was determined by the mean score of the 11 items that represented that strategy, and the score for the nonconfrontation strategy was the average of the 12 items that represented the nonconfrontational strategy. The General Linear Models Procedure of the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used.

Correlation Analysis

The first statistical analysis involved determining whether the three conflict management strategies were related to one another. Correlation analyses were conducted on the three conflict management strategies when respondents were in conflict with (a) targets from their ethnic background and (b) targets from a different ethnic background.

Table 4.1 shows that, for African-American respondents in conflict with European-American targets, there is a positive and significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy

($\underline{r}$ = .51, $\underline{p}$ < .01). This table also shows negative, but not significant, correlations between the control strategy and the solution-orientation strategy ($\underline{r}$ = -.27, $\underline{p}$ < .08) and between the solution-orientation and the nonconfrontational strategy ($\underline{r}$ = -.18, $\underline{p}$ < .26).

Table 4.1 also shows that the correlations among the three measures do not change dramatically when the African-American respondents are in conflict with European-American targets. There is a positive and significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy ($\underline{r}$ = .54, $\underline{p}$ < .01). The table shows negative, but not significant, correlations between the control strategy and the solution-orientation strategy ($\underline{r}$ = -.18, $\underline{p}$ < .26) and between the solution-orientation and the nonconfrontational strategy ($\underline{r}$ = -.23, $\underline{p}$ < .14).

Table 4.1

<u>Intercorrelations Among the Conflict Management</u>

<u>Strategies for African-American Respondents</u>

<u>African-American Targets</u>

Strategy	1	2	3
1. Control	-	-.27	.51**
2. Solution-Orientation		-	-.18
3. Nonconfrontation			-

<u>European-American Targets</u>

Strategy	1	2	3
1. Control	-	-.18	.54**
2. Solution-Orientation		-	-.23
3. Nonconfrontation			-

<u>Note.</u> <u>N</u> = 39.

**p < 0.01

The three conflict management strategies were also correlated for European-American respondents. Table 4.2 shows that, for European-American respondents in conflict with European-American targets, there is a negative and significant correlation between the control and solution-orientation strategies (r = -.51, p < .01). The control strategy is negatively, but not significantly, correlated with the nonconfrontational strategy (r = -.07, p < .6), which is also negatively, but not significantly, correlated with the solution-orientation strategy (r = -.22, p < .1).

As Table 4.2 shows, these results do not change dramatically when European-American respondents are in conflict with African-American targets. There is a negative and significant correlation between the control strategy and the solution-orientation strategy (r = -.31, p < .04). The table also shows negative, but not significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy (r = -.23, p < .13), or between the solution-orientation strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy (r = -.13, p < .3).

Table 4.2

Intercorrelations Among the Conflict Management

Strategies for European-American Respondents (N = 41)

European-American Targets

Strategy	1	2	3
1. Control	-	-.51**	-.07
2. Solution-Orientation		-	-.22
3. Nonconfrontation			-

African-American Targets

Strategy	1	2	3
1. Control	-	-.31*	-.23
2. Solution-Orientation		-	-.13
3. Nonconfrontation			-

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.04

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Because the three dependent measures were interrelated, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test was conducted to investigate the effects of ethnicity on conflict management strategy. The MANOVA tested for both main and interaction effects. It should be noted that, in addition to the ethnicity of "Respondents" and "Targets," the variables "Scenario" and "Time" were also included in the MANOVA model. Scenario was included in the MANOVA model because two content-equivalent conflict scenarios were used in an attempt to control for effects that could be attributable to a particular conflict scenario. Time was included in the model because each respondent responded to two versions of the same survey. This first MANOVA failed to detect any significant main or interaction effects in the model.

Because "Scenario" and "Time" were not the main variables being studied, they were dropped from the model. While the second MANOVA also failed to detect any significant main or interaction effects in the model, an examination of the source revealed a "close to significant" main effect for "Respondents" (F (1, 156) = 3.80, p < .053). Because the design is unbalanced (N = 39 for African-Americans, N = 41 for European-

Americans), Type III values were reported.

Table 4.3

Summary of the Results of the MANOVA for the Three

Conflict Management Strategies

Source	df	F		
		Cont.	Sol-Or.	Nconft.
Between Subjects	3	1.45	0.51	0.39
Respondents	1	3.80*	0.24	1.11
Targets	1	0.54	1.28	0.01
R X T	1	0.00	0.00	0.05
Within Subj. Error	156	(0.52)	(0.31)	(0.46)

Note. Values enclosed in parenthesis represent mean

square errors. Cont. = control strategy; Sol-Or. =

solution-orientation strategy; Nconft. =

nonconfrontation strategy; R X T = Respondents by

Targets.

*p < .053

Hypothesis Testing

The aim of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance was to test the following overarching hypotheses:

1. In a hypothetical work-related conflict scenario, African-American and European-American respondents will differ in their reported likelihood to use conflict management strategies (control, solution-orientation, nonconfrontational) as a function of the background of the other party involved.

2. In a hypothetical work-related conflict scenario, African-American and European-American respondents will differ in their reported likelihood to use conflict management strategies (control, solution-orientation, nonconfrontational) as a function of the ethnic background of the other party involved.

Given that no main or interaction effects were detected for the MANOVA model (see Table 4.3), both hypotheses were rejected. The researcher concluded that the ethnic background of respondents (and that of the targets with whom they were in conflict) has no significant effects on the reported use of conflict management strategies. However, the difference between African-American and European-American respondents on the control strategy was close to significance (F (1, 156) = 3.80; p < .053).

Means and Standard Deviations

Since no main or interaction effects were detected by the Multivariate Analysis of Variance, the means and standard deviations for the three conflict managment strategies were examined to see if trends could be reported. This examination revealed the following trends. African-American respondents tended to report more use of control strategy when dealing with a work-related conflict involving European-American targets (M = 2.70, SD = .65) than when dealing with a work-related conflict involving their fellow African-Americans (M = 2.62, SD = .65). Similarly, African-American respondents reported more use of solution-orientation strategy when dealing with African-American targets (M = 4.12, SD = .49) than when dealing with European-American targets (M = 4.02, SD = .62). African-American respondents also reported more use of nonconfrontational strategy when dealing with European-American targets (M = 1.76, SD = .63) than when dealing with African-American targets (M = 1.74, SD = .62).

For European-American respondents, the following trends were observed: European-American respondents tended more toward control strategy when dealing with European-American targets (M = 2.94, SD = .79) than when dealing with African-American targets (M = 2.84, SD

.75). However, European-American respondents tended more toward solution-orientation strategy with African-American targets (M = 4.08, SD = .58) than when dealing with European-American targets (M = 3.97, SD = .67). European-American respondents also tended more toward nonconfrontational strategy with African-Americans targets (M = 1.88, SD = .75) than with European-American targets (M = 1.85, SD = .69). Table 4.4 presents the means and standard deviations for the three conflict management strategies.

Table 4.4

Means and Standard Deviations for Conflict Strategies by
Ethnicity of Respondents and Targets

			Conflict Management Strategies					
			Cont.		Sol-or.		Nconft.	
Resp.	Targ.	N	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
A-A	A-A	39	2.62	.68	4.12	.49	1.74	.62
A-A	E-A	39	2.70	.65	4.02	.62	1.76	.63
	Grand Means		2.66		4.07		1.75	
E-A	A-A	41	2.84	.75	4.08	.58	1.88	.69
E-A	E-A	41	2.93	.79	3.97	.67	1.85	.69
	Grand Means		2.88		4.02		1.86	

Note. Resp. = respondents; Targ. = targets; Cont. =
control strategy; Sol-or. = solution-orientation
strategy; Nconft. = nonconfrontational strategy; A-A =
African-Americans; E-A = European-Americans.

Summary

Correlation analyses established the interrelatedness of the three conflict management strategies being investigated. These analyses revealed that for African-American respondents in conflict with European-American targets, there was (a) a positive and significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy, (b) a negative, but not significant, correlation between the control strategy and the solution-orientation strategy, and (c) a negative, but not significant relationship between the solution-orientation and the nonconfrontational strategy. The analysis also revealed that when the African-American respondents were in conflict with European-American targets there was: (a) a positive and significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy, (b) a negative, but not significant, correlation between the control strategy and the solution-orientation strategy, and (c) a negative, but not significant correlation between the solution-orientation and the nonconfrontational strategy.

For European-American respondents, the analysis revealed the following correlations between the three conflict management strategies. When European-American

respondents were in conflict with European-American targets, there was: (a) a negative and significant correlation between the control and solution-orientation strategies, (b) a negative, but not significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy, and (c) a negative, but not significant correlation between the nonconfrontational and the solution-orientation strategies.

When European-American respondents were in conflict with African-Americans, there was: (a) a negative, but significant correlation between the control strategy and the solution-orientation strategy, (b) a negative, but not significant correlation between the control strategy and the nonconfrontational strategy, and (c) a negative, but not significant correlation between the solution-orientation and the nonconfrontational strategies.

An examination of the means for the three dependent measures (the control strategy, the solution-orientation strategy, and the nonconfrontational strategy) showed that African-American respondents tended more toward control strategy when dealing with a work-related conflict involving European-American targets than when dealing with a work-related conflict involving their fellow African-Americans. In addition, African-American respondents tended more toward solution-orientation strategy when dealing with African-American targets than

when dealing with European-American targets. Finally, African-American respondents reported a greater tendency to use nonconfrontational strategy when dealing with European-American targets than when dealing with African-American targets.

European-American respondents tended more toward control strategy when dealing with European-American targets than when dealing with African-American targets. Contrary to African-American respondents who used more solution-orientation strategy when dealing with conflict involving someone from their own ethnic group, European-American respondents reported a greater likelihood of using a solution-orientation strategy when dealing with African-American targets than when dealing with European-American targets. European-American respondents also tended more toward nonconfrontational strategy with African-Americans targets than with European-American targets.

When these means were submitted to a multivariate analysis of variance, the results were not significant; therefore, the null hypotheses could not be rejected. The implication for theory and research in interethnic communication of this failure to reject the null hypotheses are discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW DATA

Triangulated methodology, one which combines several approaches to data gathering and analysis (Denzin, 1978), is perhaps best suited to intercultural communication research. By combining both a quantitative and a qualitative methodology, a researcher can uncover aspects of a phenomenon a single methodology may not be able to reveal. Orbe (1995) cautions that, in investigating African-American communication, "studies which exclusively utilize one methodological stance may compromise the completeness of the information" (p. 68). Therefore, in order to obtain a more complete picture of work-related conflict management strategy in the culturally diverse workplace, this study collected both quantitative and qualitative data from participants. While the previous chapter presented the results of the analysis of the survey data, the aim of this chapter is to present the results of the qualitative data analysis.

The Open-Ended Questions

Data were collected for five open-ended questions on the questionnaire. Table 5.1 presents the frequency and rate of the responses to these questions.

Table 5.1

Frequency and Rate of the Responses to the Open-Ended

Questions

Question	A-A[a]		E-A[b]	
	N	Rate	N	Rate
Q1: What issues came to your mind as you were recording your answers	23	59%	33	80%
Q2a: Have you ever been in a work-related conflict with someone from your own ethnic group?	30	77%	33	80%
Q2b: If you ever found your in a work-related conflict with someone from your own ethnic, what issues would influence the way you would handle the situation?	30	77%	33	80%
Q3a: Have you ever been in a work-related conflict with someone from an ethnic group different than your own?	26	67%	29	71%
Q3b: If you ever found your in a work-related conflict with someone from your own ethnic, what issues would influence the way you would handle the situation?	26	67%	29	71%

[a] African-American. N = 39

[b] European-American. N = 41

In general, more European-American participants responded to the open-ended questions than did African-Americans.

Content Analysis

The primary purpose of this part of the study was to investigate the conflict management strategies respondents reported they would use in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group, and to isolate the factors that determine strategy choice in such a situation. Two research questions were posed to guide the investigation: (a) What specific (if any) conflict management strategy(ies) do African-American and European-American respondents report they would use in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group? (b) What factors do respondents report as determinants of conflict management strategy(ies) choice in a work-related conflict involving people from different cultural backgrounds?

The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed by means of Holsti's (1969) method of content analysis. This research methodology suggests five major criteria researchers should follow when organizing research data into categories: "categories should

reflect the purposes of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, independent, and be derived from a single classification system" (Holsti, 1969, p. 95).

Procedure

The first step of the content analysis involved reading participants' responses to all five questions to identify their thematic content. Following Holsti's guidelines and the purpose of this research, the themes identified in the responses to Question #1 and Question #3 (see Table 5. 1) were coded according to a two-category scheme: A theme was either "a conflict management strategy" or "a determinant of conflict management strategy choice."

Definitional Concerns

For the purposes of this study, conflict management strategies refer to the communicative acts parties to a conflict perform in response to the situation. In conflict situations, individuals make conscious decisions about the way to manage the situation. Most of the time, an individual's decision to handle a conflict in one way or the other occurs after a careful assessment of the conflict situation; that is, the actors, the act, and the setting. Therefore, depending on the individual's assessment of all the factors

pertaining to the situation, the individual might identify the communicative acts that are most appropriate to the situation. This conceptualization of conflict strategy is consistent with Putnam and Wilson's (1982) view that conflict management involves "strategic or planned interaction" (p. 633). These authors also view conflict management strategy as "those communicative behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, that provide a means for handling conflict" (p. 633).

For the purposes of this study, determinants of strategy choice are defined as factors that cause individuals involved in a conflict situation to use a particular way of handling the conflict. This study took the perspective that human beings are rational beings who are aware of the environment around them. As human beings, we are motivated to respond to environmental stimuli in a way that is consistent with our assessment of all the factors in that environment. Therefore, there is a rationale behind any human act. In other words, for any human act, one can identify a corresponding stimulus that caused, or contributed, to that act. This researcher takes the perspective that the choice of a particular conflict management strategy in response to a particular situation constitutes a rational act rooted in a careful analysis of the factors surrounding the conflict situation.

In summary, while "strategy" refers to the actual communicative acts parties perform to handle conflict, "determinants" of strategy choice refers to the rationale or reasoning behind the choice of a particular strategy. Consistent with Holsti's (1969) guidelines for coding data into categories, "conflict management strategy" and "determinants of strategy choice" were mutually exclusive, but still reflected the purpose of study.

Coding Rules

Consistent with the theoretical definitions of "conflict management strategy" and "determinants of strategy choice" discussed above, the following rules were used to code the themes identified in the written data:

1. A theme was coded as a "conflict management strategy" when it characterized a course of action a respondent stated he would take in response to the conflict situation.

2. A theme was coded as a "determinant of strategy choice" when it explained the reason why a respondent chose a particular strategy as his response to the conflict situation. Therefore, any factor that provided an indication as to why a respondent handled the conflict in the manner he did was coded as "determinant

of strategy choice."

A few examples from both African-American and European-American respondents will clarify the first step of the data categorization scheme. Respondent #6 (A-A), for example, reported: "The impact of the decision influenced my answers to the items. The decision affected the lives of people more directly and more importantly. So my feelings were passionate." This response contains two themes: the theme of "the impact of the decision on people" and that of "passionate feelings." According to the scheme used to categorized the data, the theme "the impact of the decision" was classified as a "determinant of strategy choice," whereas the theme of "displaying passionate feelings during conflict" was classified in the category "conflict strategy" because it characterizes the respondent's behavior in the conflict situation.

Respondent #7 (A-A) reported: "The issue of the identity of the other person came to my mind. If I was [sic] in a conflict situation with somebody from another ethnic group, I would try to be more open to compromise and come up with imaginative solutions to the particular problem at hand." This response reveals three themes: identity of the other person, openess to compromise, and finding imaginative solutions. Using the two-category scheme, the theme of "identity of the other person" was

categorized as a factor that determines conflict management strategy; the themes of "openess to compromise" and "finding imaginative solutions" were categorized as conflict management strategies.

Respondent #12 (A-A) wrote: "The disposition of my colleague influenced my answers." This response contains the theme of "disposition of the other person" and was coded as a factor contributing to strategy choice. Respondent #35 (A-A) reported that he "initially considered that [he] was working with a European-American and that [he] had to be defensive." His response contains the themes of "ethnicity of the other party to the conflict" (working with a European-American), and being "defensive" as his response to the situation. Again, using the two-category scheme, "working with a European-American" was classified as a factor contributing to strategy choice, and being "defensive" was considered a conflict management strategy.

Respondent #45 (A-A) reported: "Time would play a big part because no matter what disagreement we are having, a quick solution will have to be found." In this response, the theme of "finding a quick solution" was treated as a conflict management strategy, and the theme of "time" was considered a factor that contributes to strategy choice.

The following cases are drawn from the data from the European-American respondents. Respondent #24 (E-A) reported: "I thought of how I would want to be treated in the different situations and based my responses on that. I also thought of how being open with communication is very important in solving problems." This response contains the themes of "treating other people as one would like to be treated" and "openess with communication" as a way of solving problems. Using the two-category scheme, the theme of "treating other people as one would like to be treated" was classified as a factor contributing to strategy choice, and "openess with communication" was classified as a conflict management strategy.

Respondent #29 (E-A) wrote: "If given the responsibility for making a decision, one should stick to one's conviction." This response contains the theme of "responsibility for the decision" and that of "sticking to one's conviction." The first theme was classified as a factor contributing to strategy choice, and the second a conflict management strategy.

Respondent #38 (E-A) reported: "Whether my partner would work with me and compromise with me would determine whether I would compromise with my partner." This statement alludes to the "disposition of the other party" as a factor that determines how one woud handle a

conflict situation and was classified as a factor that
determines strategy choice. Respondent #39 (E-A) gave a
similar answer: "What the person I was having the
disagreement with was acting like. If they were
aggressive, I would return the aggression. If they were
respectful, I too would be." This response also alludes
to the "behavior of the other party" as the main factor
that would determine conflict management strategy choice
and was, therefore, categorized as such.

Respondent #54 (E-A) reported: "I <u>hate</u> to argue.
Sometimes I will go along with a solution that I believe
is not necessarily the best just so that I would not
have to argue. For that reason, conformity is one one of
my guiding lights." This response contains the theme of
"dislike for having to argue" and what the respondent
does to avoid having to argue his way through a
conflict. "Dislike for having to argue" was classified
as a factor that determines strategy choice whereas
"conformity" was considered a conflict management
strategy.

Unitizing Reliability

Guetzkow (1950) argues that "the coding of
qualitative data involves two operations, that of
separating the qualitative material into units, and that
of establishing category-sets into which the unitized

materials might be classified" (p. 47).

Using the scheme illustrated by the ten examples above, the written data were sieved to isolated a total of 94 units of information or themes that were either "conflict management strategies" or "determinants of strategy choice". In order to test the reliability of the coding system, the researcher asked a second rater to comb the written data using the same coding rules. After familizing himself with the coding system, the second rater isolated a total of 79 units that were either "conflict management strategies" or "determinants of strategy choice". Using the results of the two ratings, the researcher computed the Pearson coefficient of variation between the two coders: r = .65, p < 05 for u = .08. This means that a value exceeding .08 can be expected only one time in one hundred when the Pearson coefficient of variation equals .65. (u = .08, constitute a 92% agreement between the two raters. See Guetzkow, 1950).

The first step of the content analysis revealed a total of 94 themes (54 themes from African-American repondents and 40 for European-American respondents) in the written data. Table 5.2 shows the distribution of the themes identified in the data.

Table 5.2

Results and Distribution of the Themes According to
Conflict Management Strategy and Determinants of
Strategy Choice

	A-A	E-A	Total
Conflict Management Strategies	13	22	35
Determinants of Strategy Choice	41	18	59
Total	54	40	94

Note. A-A = African-Americans, E-A = European-Americans.

Thematic Analysis

The second step of the content analysis involved subdividing "Conflict Management Strategies" and "Determinants of Strategy Choice" into a classification scheme that allowed for more detailed analysis of the nature of the themes in those two categories.

Conflict Management Strategies (RQ1)

Given that the main goal of this study was to investigate the conflict management strategies respondents report they would use in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group, the themes classified as "Conflict Management Strategies" were further divided into types of strategy. It has been noted elsewhere in this document that there are three types of strategies individuals use to manage conflict situations: a control strategy, a solution-orientation strategy, and a nonconfrontational strategy. The themes identified as "Conflict Management Strategies" were subdivided according to those three types of strategies. Some examples from both groups of respondents will help illustrate this step of the content analysis.

Respondent #7 (A-A) wrote: "In such a work-related conflict situation, I would be more open to compromise

and come up with imaginative solutions to the particular
problem at hand." This respondent's reported use of
"compromise to come up with imaginative solutions" was
categorized as a "solution-orientation" strategy.
Respondent #9 (A-A) reported that he "felt strongly
about the issues in the scenario, and [he] was concerned
about the dominance of [his] ideas. [He] could tell that
[he] was selfish about [his] position." Being selfish
about one's position and concerned about having one's
ideas dominate over those of the other party to the
conflict is a "control" strategy in a conflict
situation.

Respondent #54 (E-A) reported: "Sometimes I will go
along with a solution that I believe is not necessarily
the best just so that I don't have to argue. When I was
a little boy, I was sometimes mocked, teased, or roughed
up for being different. For that reason, the outward
appearance of conformity is one of my guiding lights."
Conformity to the ideas or view point of the other party
as a strategy for managing a conflict situation is a
nonconfrontational strategy.

The thematic analysis described above allowed me to
identify the conflict strategies reported by African-
American and European-American respondents. Tables 5.3
and 5.4 summarize the results of the subcategorization
of the themes into the three types of strategies.

Table 5.3

Types of Conflict Management Strategies from both Groups
of Respondents

Strategy	Common Themes
Control	-Dominance of my ideas
	-Winning the argument
	-Directness
	-Sticking to my guns
	-Making my opinions known
Solution-Orientation	-Compromising
	-Give and take
	-Collaborating
	-Open communication
	-Finding alternative solutions
Nonconfrontation	-Conforming to the other person

Table 5.4

Distribution of Conflict Management Strategies Between

African-American and European-American Respondents

	Conflict Management Strategy			
	Cont.	Sol-or.	Nconft.	Total
African-Americans	6	7	-	13
European-Americans	9	12	1	22
Total	15	19	1	35

Note. Cont. = Control; Sol-or. = Solution-orientation;

Nconft. = Nonconfrontation.

Determinants of Strategy Choice (RQ2)

An analysis of the nature of the themes identified as "determinants of strategy choice" revealed that these themes could be divided into two mutually exclusive categories: (1) determinants that related directly to the task at hand (deciding which computer system or which healthcare policy to buy) and (2) determinants that related to characteristics of the other person involved in the task. The following sections present a detailed description of these two categories of determinants.

Task-Related Determinants

Factors in this subcategory relate to the actual task at hand. Many respondents stated that in a work-related conflict situation involving someone from an ethnic group other their own, factors that related directly to the task to be performed would determine the way they would handle the situation.

Three main task-related factors surfaced in the data. They are: (a) the consequences of the solution favored by the other person, (b) the interests of the company, and (c) the time available to parties to reach a solution. The following quotations are examples of these three factors:

The consequences of the solution favored by the target.

Respondent #6 (A-A) wrote: "The impact of the decision influenced my answers to the items. The decision affected the lives of people more directly and more importantly. So my feelings were more passionate." In this example, it is the task itself that is a determining factor in choosing a particular conflict management strategy. The respondent goes on to justify his decision by evoking the effects of the decision on members of the organization.

Similarly, Respondent #11 (A-A) makes the point that for him "the number one factor that would determine how [he] would deal with conflict is the consequences of the issue [he and the other person] are having disagreement about." This respondent considers the consequences of the solution favored by the other person (a task-related factor) as an important factor in his decision to adopt a particular conflict management strategy. Finally, Respondent #24 (E-A) explains that "the significance of the conflict would be an important factor. If the conflict is minor, what is the point of showing [one's] own sillyness. If it were a major conflict, one issue would be who it affects and to what extent." This quote offers an example of looking at the "consequences of the solution favored by the other

party" as a factor that would determine the way one would behave in a conflict situation.

The best interests of the company.

Many respondents stated that they would handle a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group in a manner that is consistent with "the best interests of the company" they work for. Respondent #13 (A-A), for example, stated that "the best interest of the company would be a deciding factor. I would concentrate on the issues and on getting the job done. The company is paying me to work, not to argue." Respondent #49 (A-A) expressed a similar opinion: "One should do what is best for the company. If there are conflict resolution systems already in place in the company, I would use them." According to Respondent #28 (E-A), in a work-related conflict situation, "one should always have the company's best interest in mind in all actions." Respondent #32 (E-A) shares the same opinion. He contends that he "would feel [his] job is on the line and would be looking for a solution that is best for the company."

Time available to parties to reach a solution.

The final task-related factor that determines choice of conflict management strategy is the time

available to parties to reach a solution to the conflict. Many of the respondents mentioned that the time available to reach a solution would influence the way they would deal with the situation. For example, Respondent #18 (A-A) lists the following points as factors that that would influence the way he would handle work-related conflicts involving someone who is not African-American: his conviction, knowledge of the subject, the attitude of the other person, and time. Respondent #11 (A-A) makes a similar point when he states "the time I have to argue or discuss will determine the way I would handle the situation."

European-American respondents also commented on the role played by time. Respondent #33 (E-A), for example, said that "the amount of time [they] have left to make a decision" would influence how he would behave. Respondent #65 (E-A) lists "time, money, and the importance of the decision" as issues that would influence the way he would handle a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group.

Target-Related Factors

Factors in this subcategory related to characteristics of the other person involved in the task respondents reported would influence the way they would

handle the situation. Two such factors surfaced in the written data: the other person's cultural background and his personal attributes. The following exerpts from both African-American and European-American respondents are examples of "Other-related factors."

Cultural differences between the parties to the conflict.

Respondent #5 (A-A), for example, reported that "sometimes, it is difficult for Whites to respect the knowledge and opinion of a Black person in the same position. Because of this, I would be more willing to compromise with somebody from my own ethnic group." Respondent #6 (A-A) wrote: "I am more patient with my own people. I have a greater understanding of their ideas and what their ideas are rooted in. Therefore, I make a conscious effort to strive for good vibes and feelings between me and my own." Respondent #26 (A-A) admits that the "ethnic or cultural stereotypes held by the other person" would impede progress and communication in trying to resolve a conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group.

European-American respondents also reported that the cultural background of the other person would be considered in their decision on how to deal with the conflict situation. Respondent #25 (E-A), for example,

wrote: "Issues such as the cultural backgrounds we are from would play a role in the situation." Respondent #30 (E-A) also alludes to the cultural background of the other person when he wrote "when I work with Black people, I am often not as quick to put down their ideas or get into debates. I think this is because of the racial tension in society. So the way I act is sort of an anti-racial tension way of doing things." Respondent #40 (E-A) says that he "would be much more careful in [his] language use" in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group.

Interpersonal skills of the other person.

The following quotations are examples of how the personal character of the other person involved in the conflict would influence the way respondents would deal with a work-related conflict. To Respondent #12 (A-A), for example, "issues related to the person [he is] at odd [sic] with, whether the person's personality requires delicate handling" would be an important factor in his decision to handle the conflict one way or another. Respondent #15 (A-A) also admits that he would take "the personality" of the other individual into consideration when deciding on the best way to handle the conflict. Respondent #16 (A-A) wrote: "My knowledge of the individual and their personal background would

determine how I handle the conflict."

From European-American respondents, the following excerpts illustrate factors related to the personal character of the other person that determine how they would deal with a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic background. Respondent #30 (E-A) reported: "If the person comes across as a nice person with bad ideas, I would try to be gentle in showing him why my ideas might be better. If the person was not so nice, I would get into a heated debate with him." Respondent #39 (E-A) makes a similar remark: "The way the other person acted would be the deciding factor in how I deal with him." Respondent #62 (E-A) wrote that "the other person's open-mindedness or stubborness" would determine how he would behave in a conflict situation involving someone from a different ethnic background.

Table 5.5 summarizes the nature and frequency of the reported determinants of conflict management strategies involving someone from a different ethnic group. Two types of determinants were reported: task-related determinants and target-related determinants. The task-related determinants included: (a) the consequences of the solution favored by the other person, (b) the best interests of the company, and (c) the time available to the parties to reach a solution.

Table 5.5

Nature and Frequency of the Determinants of Strategy

Choice

	Task-related determinants			Target-related determinants		
	CSFT[a]	BIC[b]	TARS[c]	ISOT[d]	CDBP[e]	Total
A-A	6	2	2	14	8	32
E-A	9	2	2	8	6	27
Total	15	4	4	22	14	59
%	25%	7%	7%	. 37%	24%	100%

Note. [a] Consequences of the Solution Favored by the

Target; [b] Best Interests of the Company; [c] Time Available

to Reach a Solution; [d] Interpersonal Skills of the

Target; [e] Cultural Differences Between Parties.

Target-related determinants included: (a) the cultural background of the target, and (b) his personal attributes.

Interrater Reliability

Having divided the units identified in the first step of the data analysis into the five-category scheme described in the preceeding paragraphs ("control", "solution-orientation", "nonconfrontation", "task-related determinants", and "target-related determinants"), the researcher asked a graduate student to separate the same set of units into this categorization scheme. Cohen's (1960) Kappa equaled .827. Table 5.6 represents the comparison of ratings between the researcher and the trained coder.

Table 5.6

Comparison of Ratings Between the Researcher and the

Trainee

RESEARCHER

		A	B	C	D	E	Total
	A	11	3				14
T R A I N E E	B	2	18				20
	C			1			1
	D				19	3	22
	E				4	33	37
Total		13	21	1	23	36	94

Note.

A = Control strategy; B = Solution-orientation strategy;

C = Nonconfrontational strategy; D = Task-related

determinants; E = Target-related determinants.

The Semistructured Interview

After the data were categorized according to the
schemes above, a semistructured interview protocol was
developed to clarify and gain a greater insight about
the way the different factors relate to specific
conflict management strategies. For example, even though
most respondents stated that the five factors described
earlier would determine the way they would deal with
conflict, the relationship between these factors and
specific conflict management strategies, such as
control, solution-orientation, or nonconfrontational
strategy, is not clear from the written data.

Therefore, a subsample of respondents were
interviewed to clarify the five factors and to establish
their relationship to specific conflict management
strategies. The next sections present a detailed account
of the development, the conduct, and the results of the
interview used for this purpose.

Development of Interview Protocol

The semistructured interview format (Borg & Gall,
1983) was particularly appropriate because it allowed me
to probe individuals and clarify the relationships
between the strategies they reported they would use to
manage conflict involving someone from a different

cultural background and the factors that contributed to such choice. The aim of the semistructured interview was to clarify the nature of the factors respondents reported would influence the way they deal with conflict involving someone from a different cultural background and to gain a greater understanding of the way these factors related to specific conflict management strategies.

The topical content of the interview focused on both "task- and target-related determinants" that contributed to conflict management strategy choice. The actual questions and their sequencing during the interview process were derived from the five factors discovered in the written data. The flexible structure of the interview allowed the researcher to probe interviewees about specific factors that they said contributed to conflict management strategy choice (see Appendix D).

Conduct of the Interviews

The semistructured interview was conducted with a subsample of the twenty three participants who had indicated willingness to partake in follow-up phone interviews. Interviewees were drawn according to a table of random numbers from the pool of respondents who indicated that they would be willing to participate in

these follow-up interviews. A total of ten respondents (five African-Americans and five European-Americans) were asked to participate in the interview. These individuals were contacted by telephone to arrange a time for the interview.

All ten interviews took place by telephone. In all ten interviews, the researcher reminded interviewees that the purpose of the study was to investigate conflict management strategies in work-related conflicts involving people from different cultural backgrounds. Interviewees were assured that the data accrued in these interviews would be kept strictly confidential and that only the researcher and his dissertation advisor would have access to the information. Interviewees were also told that summaries of information gathered through these interviews would be part of research reports that might include direct quotations identifying only the ethnic background of the interviewee. Individuals were assured that they would never be identified by name.

Finally, the consent of the interviewees to audio-tape the interview for the purposes of transcription and analysis was requested. The researcher assured interviewees that the tapes were for research purposes only; that they would not be played for classes or at conferences, and that they would be erased after completion of the study (see Appendix D). Eight

interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed for analysis. Two individuals said they did not feel comfortable being audio-taped; therefore, the researcher took extensive notes during those interviews. Each interview lasted about half an hour.

Transcription and Analysis of Interview Data

The researcher listened repeatedly to all eight audio-taped interviews in order to familiarize himself with the nature of the data collected. The researcher then used an "interview log" (Merrian, 1988) to transcribe the eight interviews. Modeling the interview log on the format of the interview protocol, which contained five main questions (corresponding to the five factors under investigation) and tentative probes, the researcher transcribed verbatim the statements that seemed to clarify and expand on the nature of the factors being investigated. Each interview log contained five pages (a page per question), with the first page containing the demographic information about the interviewee (see Appendix E for a sample of the transcription process). The extensive notes taken during the two untaped interviews were used to reconstruct (to paraphrase) the responses that clarified the nature of the factors being investigated. The next sections present a detailed description of pertinent information

gathered through these interviews.

Task-Related Determinants

The consequences of the decision favored by the other person.

Among the task-related factors that interviewees reported would influence the way they would deal with conflict, the consequences of the decision favored by the other person was most important. This factor represented 25% of the themes in the category of task-related factors (see Table 5.5). Like the respondents to the survey, eight of the ten people interviewed said that their perception of the way the solution favored by the other person will affect the organization as a whole will determine the way they would handle a work-related conflict involving someone from a different culture. Interviewee #1 (A-A), for example, said: "I would concentrate on the implications of the option my partner favors on the people and the organization, and I would use that as a guiding principle for solving the problem." When probed about this guiding principle for managing conflict, he replied: "Because ownership of a decision is important, I would like to feel that I could deal with any aspects of the final decision without saying it is [the other person] fault."

When asked how he would deal with the situation,

if, in his assessment, the option favored by his partner
will have negative consequences on the organization, he
answered: "I will probably feel strongly [about the
option I favor]. In that situation, there will a
standstill. I will have to give in a little here, a
little there. We will have to work out a compromise in
that situation."

The researcher then asked him what communicative
strategies he would use "to work out a compromise." He
stated that the strategy is "the way [one]
communicate[s]. [One does not] be hostile. But [one]
need[s] to be firm." He was also asked how he would
behave in case he perceived the option favored by the
other person to have only minor adverse effects on the
organization. He answered in the following terms: "I
will still stand by my standards. Be firm without being
hostile."

Interviewee #1 (E-A) made remarks similar to
Interviewee #1 (A-A) when he stated that "the best thing
to do is to make everyone happy. So [one] has to look at
the consequences of the decision and try to make the
consequences as positive as possible." When asked to
give a specific example of how one might use the
perceived consequences of the solution favored by the
person as a basis for determining conflict management
strategy, he said: "I would weigh the options of my

decision and the options of his. If I perceive that the solution he is proposing can get the organization in trouble, I would not go for it. I would show him somehow that the consequences of his decision will be severe, and that another solution would be desirable." The researcher then asked this interviewee about the specific communicative strategies he would use to show his partner that another solution is desirable. The answer was: "I would talk to him, try to make him realize that he is mistaken. Hopefully we can come to an agreeable solution."

It seems that these interviewees are taking the position that one's assessment of the perceived rewards associated with a particular option should guide his or her behavior in managing work-related conflicts. On the basis of such assessment, one should then move to identify the appropriate communicative strategies [Being firm without being hostile] or [Talking to him, try to make him realize....] that might get the other party to relinquish their position and accept a compromise solution.

The best interests of the company.

Although the best interest of the company represented only 7% of the factors reported by respondents, all of the ten people interviewed said that

one should identify strongly with the company one works

for and always use "the best interests of the company"

as guide for action. One of the interviewees (E-A #2)

said: "In any situation, one should look at the big

picture. I would look after the best interests of the

company I work for." When the researcher pointed out

that looking after the "best interests of the company"

may restrict one's ability to see "the big picture," he

clarified his statement by saying that "keeping the best

interests of the company does not mean that one has to

be stubborn or selfish. One should give a rational

explanation for one's position, and most people would

agree to settle for a solution that is consistent with

the best interests of the company."

Interviewee #1 (A-A) made similar remarks. He

stated that "as a result of their values and family

upbringing, people in a workplace think in different

ways. What you don't want to do is put your personal

feelings in the forefront. You don't want those to stand

out. You want to make a decision that is the best

decision for the particular situation. You want to make

the decision that is best for the company like a parent

makes a decision for the child." This interviewee's use

of the analogy of a parent making the decision that is

best for a child made the researcher probe him about the

communicative strategy he would use to make sure that

the best interests of the company are looked after. He was asked if he would force a decision on his partner if he thought that the decision was in the best interest of the company. He replied that he would "look to open communication to persuade his partner."

Interviewees were also probed to find out if they perceived work-related conflicts involving someone from a different background to be uncertain situations and whether they were using "the best interests of the company" as the only certain way they know of handling the situation. Nine of the interviewees said they would use "the best interest" of the company as a way of dealing with the situation out of loyalty to the company. However, one interviewee admitted that there might be other motives behind using "the best interests of the company" as a factor that would determine the way he would behave in conflict situations. He said, "personally, [he] would consider the best interests of the company as a way of avoiding further conflict, and as a way of protecting myself. When in doubt, go by the company book."

In summary, all ten people think that it is desirable to keep in mind the best interests of the company one works for out of loyalty to that company. However, it seems that one could also use the best interests of the company as a way of dealing with the

uncertainty that a conflict with someone from a different ethnic group constitutes.

Time available to parties to reach a solution.

Although the amount of time available to reach a solution to the conflict represented only 7% of the reported determinants, nine of the ten people interviewed conceived of time as "one's best asset" in conflict situations with someone from a different ethnic group. The interview data revealed that time in work-related conflict situations relates to conflict management strategy choice in two ways.

First, if the parties involved have plenty of time available to them to make a decision, they would be more willing "to think things through" (Interviewee # 3, E-A) and "explore other paths to find better solutions" (Interviewee #2, A-A). Interviewee # 1 (A-A) said that "with more time [one] begins to weigh things" before concluding that "time would definitely be a factor thorough out the process of resolving the conflict." In contrast, Interviewee #2 (E-A) thought that "more time leads to second-guessing and complications." In general, it appeared that the more time people have to make a decision, the more willing they would be to use solution-orientation strategies such as compromising or collaboration.

On the other hand, if time is short, then individuals in a work-related conflict situation involving someone from a different culture would use more controlling conflict management strategies. For example, all of the interviewee said that if time is short, they would be more willing to go along with whatever their conflict partner wants to do provided that "he can convince [them] that their solution [their partner's] is the best one." However, interviewees also said if their partners failed to convince them, they would attempt to impose their solution to the conflict. Interviewee #1 (E-A), for example, said if time is short and the other person is not willing to cooperate, "that's when [he] would look to the best interests of the company, and take the solution that looks to be the best for the company."

When the researcher probed them about the communicative strategies they might use in this case, many interviewees stated that they would point out the flaws in the other person's solutions before imposing theirs. Interviewee #1 (A-A), for example, reported: "I will try to be persuasive, and I know I can be very very persuasive." This assertion led the researcher to ask this interviewee the secret of his persuasive ability. According to him, "it's the way [one] communicates with someone like that [meaning, someone from an ethnic group

other than one's own]. If you become head strong, in return you get a head strong type of reaction." Another way lack of time relates to strategy choice is third-party intervention. Interviewee #4 (E-A), for example, "would look to a third party to help convince the other party or mediate between [him and his conflict partner]."

The conclusion that one may make from the above observations is that ample time leads to more discussion and careful exploration of other potential solutions, while lack of time leads to the acceptance of solution of dubious quality, or the use of more controlling strategies, which, in turn, may lead to stalemate and third-party intervention.

Target-Related Determinants

Two factors related to the other person involved in the work-related conflict situation accounted for 61% of the factors that survey respondents reported would determine the way they would deal with conflict (see Table 5.5). The interplay of the personal attributes of the other person and the cultural differences between the two parties with conflict management strategy choice were further explored through the interviews.

Interpersonal skills of the target.

The interpersonal skills displayed by the target, represented 37% of the factors identified in the survey data. Eight of the ten people interviewed stated that the way the person they are in conflict with behaves will influence the way they would choose to deal with that person. Interviewee #1 (A-A), for example, said that, in a work-related conflict, "people should be professional and courteous toward one another." This interviewee further remarked that "some people are spoiled and are not used to working with others. So if a conflict arises, quite naturally, they just won't move."

When probed as to how he would deal with such a person, he offered: "First, I would show them that I am willing to break down a leg off my table, and see if they would break one down off theirs so that we could move on. But let's say I am giving in a little and they are not giving any, I would try to prioritize things, and from there a third party could get involved, some neutral person. You got to try everything at your disposal. Call in a mediator."

Although this interviewee was willing to accommodate to the other person, Interviewee #4 (A-A) had a different approach. This interviewee said that in any conflict he would respect the opinions of the other person. In return, he expects the other person to show

him respect. To this interviewee, "respect is the number

factor." He continued: "We can disagree. No problem, but

above all, there must be respect before resolution. If I

feel that the other person is not showing me respect, I

would not acknowledge his concerns. If necessary, I

would remove myself mentally and physically from the

proximity."

The European-Americans interviewed also reported

that their assessment of the interpersonal behavior of

the other person involved in the conflict would

determine the way they would behave in the situation.

For example, according to Interviewee #1 (E-A), "if [the

other] person is hostile, I would not be hostile. I

would be calm and reason with the person." In contrast,

Interviewee #2 (E-A) stated that, "if the other person

is aggresive, [he] too will be. But, if the other person

is calm, he too will be calm."

When the researcher pointed out that meeting

"aggression with aggression" might cause the situation

to escalate and compromise the chances for a solution,

he moderated his position by stating that "if the other

person is, say, rude without being mean, [he] would

focus on the issue and try to negotiate with him. But,

if the other person is behaving like an a...... [he]

would walk away." For interviewee # 3 (E-A), "it does

not matter which ethnic group the other person is from.

If he is bossy, I will be bossy. If he is nice, I will
be nice."

It seems that interpersonal behavior may hinder or
facilitate conflict management between people from
different cultural backgrounds. From the remarks made by
the people interviewed, one might conclude that
individuals involved in a work-related conflict
involving someone from a different ethnic group will be
more inclined to use solution-orientation communicative
strategy if they perceive the other party to have "good"
interpersonal skills. On the other hand, if they
perceive the other person to lack in interpersonal
skills, they would either respond in kind by using
controlling strategies or remove themselves from the
situation by walking away, which is a nonconfrontational
strategy.

Cultural differences between the parties to the
conflict.

Many survey respondents mentioned that the
differences in cultural backgrounds between them and
their conflict partners would influence the way they
would approach the conflict situation. Factors related
to cultural differences between the parties to the
conflict represented 24% of the total number of factors
in the survey data (see Table 5.5). The African-

Americans and European-Americans interviewed to clarify

the importance of cultural differences in work-related

conflict management differed, to a large extent, in

their reports of how the cultural backgrounds of the

parties in conflict would influence their own management

of conflict.

The European-Americans interviewed, for example,

remarked that they would worry about not having a

knowledge of the other person's culture that would allow

them to avoid saying something that might offend them.

Interviewee #1 (E-A) commented: "I think now more than

ever, when people are in conflict, they are more worried

when they are dealing with someone from a different

ethnic group. People are more worried about hurting the

feelings of people from other ethnic groups than those

of people from their own ethnic groups. For example, if

I were in conflict with say an Asian person, I would be

more worried about hurting his feelings than a person

from my own ethnic group."

When probed about the reasons for such worries, he

offered "lack of knowledge about other cultures" as an

explanation. When asked how he could avoid saying

something that might hurt the Asian in his example, he

offered the following strategy: "Instead of attacking

their ideas as I would if this person were from my own

ethnic background, I would say something like: "Let's

compare all the solutions to see which one is most suited to the needs of the company." I would do it in a manner... I would try to make them understand as best as I could. If they insist to go on then, you have to go to higher authority or somebody else."

Interviewee #3 (E-A) said that his initial behavior in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group would be influenced by the "stereotypes he holds about the ethnic group of the [other] person." He said that "stereotypes are inevitable in today's society." When asked about the stereotypes he holds about minorities in general, and African-Americans in particular, and how those stereotypes might affect his behavior, he offered the following: "I would question the views and opinions of a minority before accepting them. I wouldn't do this in a negative way. I feel that if there is a work-related conflict between me and a Black man, I would hesitate to accept his views because I have witnessed the lack of education of Black males in high school. If I was [sic] in a conflict with a White man I would assume he was credible, and be more acceptable [sic] at first without questioning. I would be suspicious of a Black man's views compared to a White man's initially. I think it is important to note initially. Based on stereotypes and my high school experiences, I would question a Black man

before I would a White man. I would check out a Black

man's educational background to see if he is competent."

African-Americans admitted that they would vary

their conflict management strategy on the basis of the

ethnic background of the other person. When asked why

they would deliberately use different standards for

different ethnic identities, interviewees stated that

interethnic relations in this country have always been

characterized by a sense of "us versus them" that forces

them to look after their own. In other words, they feel

obliged to use different standards of behavior when

dealing with one another.

Interviewee #1 (A-A) puts it this way: "Most

African-Americans I know are very hostile towards I

guess...you could say hostile against... non-Black or

you could basically say Whites." When probed as to why

African-Americans might feel hostile towards other

ethnic groups in the workplace, he added that "Most

African-Americans feel threatened...they feel they don't

have much to begin with. In the workplace, the

competition is sort of like do or die kind of

situation."

The researcher remarked that in the workplace,

everyone is competing against everyone, regardless of

their ethnic backgrounds. He answered, "Right. But the

only difference is that you really don't care what

happens when you are standing on another worker who is not one of your people. But in the situation where an African-American is against another African-American, you are more prone to really work together, because you have something in common to begin with. I will be more willing to compromise and work something out. With European-Americans, I believe most African-Americans would use the standard: 'may the best man win'."

Interviewee #3 (A-A) also thought that there are cultural differences between African-Americans and European-Americans regarding negotiation. He stated, "Blacks will tend to be more willing to negotiate or at least they will be more open-minded as to different possibilities. European-Americans, on the other hand, tend to be more adamant about their position. They seem to be convinced that they are right, and unfortunately, there usually lies the main reason for conflict."

When asked how he might deal with a European-American who is "adamant" about his position, he said that it would depend on what is at stake. He said, "If the issue causing conflict is not that important, [he] would be willing to let the other person have it his way. However, if the issue is important and requires more thought, [he] would disagree with this person and ask for a third party intervention."

Interviewee #2 (A-A) stated that in a work-related

conflict involving a European-American, the most important cultural factor he would worry about is "lack of understanding about the other culture." In his words, lack of understanding about the other person's culture may cause "animosity" between two people in conflict. He concluded that the best way to deal with conflict is to look to "better communication." It is interesting to note that this interviewee's concern about "lack of understanding about the other culture" is similar to the worries about "lack of knowledge of other cultures" expressed by Interviewee #1 (E-A).

It seems that in work-related conflict situations involving African-Americans and European-Americans, differences in cultural background will influence the way the conflict is resolved. According to the interview data, participants in such settings will have different needs and agendas and will attempt to identify the best strategies for meeting their needs and fulfilling their agendas. Three of the five European-Americans said they would worry about hurting the other's person feelings (unintentionally), or projecting a negative image of themselves to the other person. Therefore, they would look to open communication to avoid unpleasant situations. However, at least one interviewee admitted that the stereotypes held by society about the other person will initially dictate how he would deal with the

individual.

All of the African-Americans interviewed admitted
that they would apply different standards according to
the ethnic background of the other person to the
conflict. They stated that while they would not pre-
judge anyone, they would strive to maintain positive
feelings between them and another African-American in a
work-related conflict situation. In this case, they
would be more willing to cooperate and find a solution
to the problem. Interviewees reported that in work-
related conflict siuations involving European-Americans,
they would look for the best way to solve a problem, but
they would also use a competitive approach.

As a way of concluding the interview, every
interviewee was asked to identify the first and second
most important factors from the five in the interview
protocol that would determine the way they would deal
with a work-related conflict involving someone from a
different ethnic group. Three interviewees declined to
volunteer an answer to this question saying that "it all
depends on the circumstances surrounding the conflict
situation."

Of the seven interviewees who answered this
question, the "best interests of the company" was evoked
36% of the time as either the most important or the
second most important factor that would determine the

way they would deal with a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group. This is surprising in light of the fact that the "best interests of the company" represented only 7% of the factors identified in the survey data as important in determining conflict management strategy choice.

The interpersonal skills of the other person to the conflict were cited 29% of the time as either the most important or the second most important factor that determines conflict management strategy choice. In the survey data, this factor represented 37%, and was the single most important factor respondents reported would determine strategy choice. The consequences of the decision favored by the other person was cited 21% of the time as either the most important or the second most important factor that determines strategy choice. In the survey data, this factor represented 25% of the total number of responses.

The time available to parties to reach a solution was rated 14% of the time as either the most important or second most important factor that determines strategy choice. This factor accounted for 7% of the factors respondents to the survey said would determine the way they would deal with work-related conflicts involving someone from a different background.

Most surprising is the fact that although cultural

differences between parties accounted for 24% of the factors in the survey data (third most important after personal attribute of the target and consequences of the solution favored by the target), none of the interviewees rated cultural differences as either most important or second most important.

In summary, even though the quantitative data failed to reveal any statistically significant differences in conflict management strategy choice in work-related conflicts involving people from different ethnic backgrounds, the qualitative data yielded important information about the choice of strategies people make in such situations. The qualitative data revealed the range of strategies available and the reasons people use those strategies. The implications of these findings for theory and practice of conflict management in the culturally diverse workplace are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The goal of this study was to investigate conflict management strategy and factors that contribute to strategy choice in work-related conflicts involving people from different ethnic groups. Using a research design that combined both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study sought to determine whether African-American and European-American respondents vary in their reported use of the control, solution-orientation, and the nonconfrontational strategies on the basis of the ethnic background of the person with whom they are in conflict. The study also investigated factors that respondents would report contributed to their choice of conflict strategy. More specifically, the following hypotheses and research questions guided the investigation.

Hypothesis 1: In a hypothetical work-related conflict scenario, African-American respondents will differ in their reported use of conflict management strategies (control, solution-orientation, nonconfrontational) as a function of the ethnic background of the other party involved.

Hypothesis 2: In a a hypothetical work-related conflict scenario, European-American repondents will differ in

their reported use of conflict management strategies

(control, solution-orientation, nonconfrontational) as a

function of the ethnic background of the other party

involved.

RQ1: What conflict management strategies do people in

work-related conflicts involving someone from a

different ethnic background use?

RQ2: What factors determine choice of conflict

management strategy(ies) in work-related conflicts

involving people from different ethnic backgrounds?

Summary of Findings

In general, the quantitative data analysis failed

to reveal any statistically significant differences

between African-American and European-American

respondents in the probable use of the three strategies

investigated. However, an examination of the means for

the three conflict strategies and the analysis of

factors respondents reported influenced the way they

dealt with conflict provided rich information concerning

intercultural work-related conflict behavior.

African-American respondents tended toward control

strategies when dealing with a work-related conflict

involving European-American targets than when dealing

with a work-related conflict involving their fellow

African-Americans. African-American respondents also
tended more toward solution-orientation strategies when
dealing with African-American targets than when dealing
with European-American targets. African-American
respondents also reported a greater likelihood of using
more nonconfrontational strategies when dealing with
European-American targets than when dealing with
African-American targets (see Table 4.4).

European-American respondents identified more
control strategies when dealing with European-American
targets than when dealing with African-American targets.
However, these respondents tended more toward solution-
orientation strategies when dealing with African-
American targets than when dealing with European-
American ones. European-American respondents also
indicated more likelihood use of nonconfrontational
strategies with African-Americans targets than with
European-American targets. When the grand means are
considered, however, European-Americans showed a greater
propensity for control strategies that African-
Americans, regardless of the ethnic background of the
target (see Table 4.4).

The analysis of the factors that determine strategy
revealed two types of factors: task-related factors and
target-related factors. The task-related category
included such factors as (1) the consequences of the

solution favored by the other person, (2) the best
interests of the company, and (3) the time available to
make a decision. The target-related factors included (1)
cultural differences between the parties to the conflict
and (2) the interpersonal skills of the other party to
the conflict.

The following sections discuss the results of the
quantitative and qualitative data analyses in light of
the research hypotheses and questions outlined in the
introduction to this chapter. The findings of this study
are also contrasted with previous studies.

Survey Data

The results of the quantitative analyses do not
validate previous studies of conflict management
strategies among African-Americans and European-
Americans (see Kochman 1981; Ting-Toomey, 1986). In
fact, the results of the present study challenge the
main findings by Ting-Toomey (1986), who also used the
OCCI. Her main findings were that: "Blacks used
significantly more controlling strategies than Whites.
Conversely, Whites used significantly more solution-
orientation strategies than Blacks" (p. 83). An
examination of the grand means for the control and
solution-orientation strategies shows that the European-

American respondents tended to report more probable use of control strategies than African-American respondents, which runs counter to the findings of the Ting-Toomey study (see Table 4.4). Then again, both of the Ting-Toomey and Kochman studies were methodologically more cross-cultural than intercultural studies of conflict behavior; that is, the findings of these studies were based mostly on analyses of African-Americans in conflict with other African-Americans and European-Americans in conflict with other European-Americans. In the Ting-Toomey study, for example, the "majority of the participants (89% Blacks, 92% Whites) indicated that their conflict partners were from the same ethnic background" (Ting-Toomey, 1986, p. 82).

That the present study did not turn up any statistically significant differences between the two groups of participants raises a question about the wisdom of investigating interethnic communication by means of quantitative methodology. Interethnic communication, and conflict communication in particular, is such a sensitive social issue in the United States that any attempt at investigating it using a quantitative methodology is likely to suffer from severe social desirability effects, which would either severely bias results or, worse, make them uninterpretable (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). In fact writers, such Eysenck

(1983) and Cronbeck (1984), strongly question the validity of quantitative methodology in cross-cultural or intercultural research. More recently, researchers are turning to interpretivist approaches to investigating interethnic communication (Elise & Umoja, 1992; Hecht et al., 1993; Orbe, 1995).

The Open-Ended and Interview Data

One way the present study improved on previous studies was in its use of triangulation to investigate conflict communication involving African-Americans and European-Americans. The results of the qualitative analysis of the open-ended and interview questions are important in sheding light on communication about work-related conflicts involving African-Americans and European-Americans. Therefore, the remainder of the discussion concentrates on the factors that respondents reported determined the way they dealt with conflict involving someone from a different cultural background. Given that the relationship between cultural background and conflict management strategy is the central focus of this study, the following discussion focuses on cultural differences between the parties to the conflict.

Cultural Differences Between the Parties to the Conflict

The reader would recall that both African-American and European-American respondents reported that their "lack of knowledge about other cultures" influenced the way they would likely handle conflict. Because of their limited knowledge about the other culture, it could be speculated that, both African-American and European-American respondents perceived these work-related conflict situations in terms of social categorization and role schemata (Gudykunst & Gumbs, 1989; Gudykunst & Lim, 1986; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Forgas, 1981).

Social categorization, according to Gudykunst and Gumbs (1989) "places a person, object, or event as a member of a particular category. Social schemata provide the content of the categories and delimit the effects of the categorization on future perceptions, memory, and inferences" (p. 207). Closely related to social schemata is role schemata, or stereotyping, which describes actual intergroup interaction. Gudykunst and Gumbs (1989) contend that "because individuals cannot process all of the information they receive from other people, they structure their perceptions of and responses to others through the use of abstract social categories" (p. 209). Lack of understanding about other cultures leads to stereotyping, and the data show that both African-Americans and European-Americans engaged in some

form of stereotyping.

Gudykunst and Gumbs (1989) argue that "the fundamental social cognitive process operative in intergroup interaction is social categorization" (p. 205). The process of social categorization is influenced by such variables as participants' perceptions of themselves, their perceptions of others, and the perceptions they think others have of them. Tajfel and Forgas (1981), for example, argue that social categorization impedes effective intergroup interaction by creating biases and filters through which interactants perceive each other. The following sections discuss how cultural differences led participants to engage in social categorization in dealing with work-related conflict situations.

The African-American Perspective

Analysis of participants' reasons for choosing a particular conflict management strategy reveals that sometimes the way African-Americans and European-Americans relate to each other is based on perceptions and assumptions. The following excerpts from the qualitative data are examples of the way social categorization affected the African-American respondents' interaction with European-Americans. In the opinion of Respondent #5 (A-A), for example, "sometimes,

it is difficult for Whites to respect the knowledge and opinion of a Black person in the same position. Because of this, I would be more willing to compromise with somebody from my own ethnic group." This excerpt may explain not only why African-Americans are less controlling, and more solution-oriented when the target is another African-American, it may also explain why they are more controlling when the target is a European-American: the perception, they have, that European-Americans do not respect the knowledge and opinion of African-Americans even if they hold similar positions.

Myth or fact, the opinion of one of the European-American participants substantiates this perception when he remarked: "I feel that if there is a work-related conflict between me and a Black man, I would hesitate to accept his views because I have witnessed the lack of education of Black males in high school. Based on stereotypes and my high school experiences, I would question a Black man before I would a White man. I would check out a Black man's educational background to see if he is competent."

Another theory that might explain why respondents varied in their use of conflict management strategies based on the cultural background of the other party is "Speech Accommodation Theory," which attempts to explain why speakers may converge toward or diverge away from

their interlocutors in interpersonal encounters (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987). Even though primarily posited to explain linguistic behavior in communities with majority and minority languages (the extent to which speakers of the minority language would converge toward or diverge away from the majority language), the findings of this study suggest that Speech Accommodation Theory may provide a framework for understanding work-related conflict management behavior in multiethnic communities.

Strong ethnic identification and a shared sense of history are two tenets of Speech Accommodation Theory that are particularly relevant to understanding conflict communication between African-Americans and European-Americans. Speech Accommodation Theory contends that divergence away from the majority language by the minority group is likely to occur when members of the minority group "identify strongly with their ethnic group and perceive the in-group language as an important dimension of their cultural identity" (Garrett, Giles, & Coupeland, 1989, p. 203). Divergence is also likely to occur when members of the minority group "feel that their own relative position was illegimately created historically by dominant group oppression" (Garrett et al., 1989, p. 203).

For the African-Americans in this study, their

common historical experience in the United States is a bonding factor that should be taken into consideration when dealing with each. From the opinions expressed in the interviews, one could infer that the same factor that tends to make African-Americans converge toward one another in a work-related conflict situation would tend to make them diverge away from European-Americans, who are seen as the group that created "their historically illegitimate situation."

Strong ethnic identification and a sense of common history, namely slavery and oppression, seemed to motivate this African-American respondent when he stated: "I am more patient with my own people. I have a greater understanding of their ideas and what their ideas are rooted in. Therefore, I make a conscious effort to strive for good vibes and feelings between me and my own." One of the ways unity and brotherhood could be achieved and maintained among members of minority groups is to strive for a good relationship with one another.

Racial discrimination as a common historical experience among African-Americans seems to be the rationale behind the following African-American respondent when asked how he would solve a work-related conflict involving a European-American: "In this racist ... world, you should and will learn that you can't take

no ... from White folks. Because if you let him ... you once, you'll forever be his ...." From such a statement, it appears that the rationale for conflict management strategy choice among the African-Americans in this study is rooted in the history of race relations in the United States. History plays an important part in the collective psyche, and it seems to transcend situational factors in African-American European-American communication. Consider, for example, the following excerpts from Respondent #6 (A-A): "The fact that my colleague was white was, of course, the biggest issue. In that there was a conflict, and that the conflicting party was white, as a rule of thumb, I have the utmost conviction that I know best for the masses."

The importance of common history and strong ethnic group identification and the way these factors relate to conflict strategy choice was characterized in the following manner by this African-American interviewee "In the situation where an African-American is against another African-American, you are more prone to really work together, because you have something in common to begin with. I will be more willing to compromise and work something out. With European-Americans, I believe most African-Americans would use the standard: 'May the best man win.'"

The general observation that African-Americans

approach conflict differently depending on the ethnic identity of the other person involved is characteristic of collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1986) and parallels findings by Leung (1988). In a cross-cultural investigation of the relationship between the individualistic-collectivistic dimension of cultural variability and reward allocation, Leung (1988) found that Chinese and American respondents differed in their reported likelihood of pursuing conflict on the basis of in-group/out-group status of the target. Chinese respondents (who are from a collectivistic culture) reported that they would be less likely to pursue a conflict involving an in-group target. The European-American respondents in this study reported the same likehood of pursuing conflict regardless of the in-group/out-group status of the target.

The conflict behavior reported by African-Americans also parallels the findings of another study by Leung and Bond (1984) that investigated the use of the equality and equity norms in reward allocation among Chinese and American subjects. The study found that, regardless of individual input, Chinese subjects "were more likely to sacrifice their self-gain by choosing a distributive rule that results in a larger share for in-group members" (p. 37). However, with strangers, "Chinese subjects simply followed the equity rule" (p.

37). The African-American respondents in this study
tended to display a conflict behavior that is consistent
with the differential treatment associated with in-
group/out-group status, which lends support to the
contention that African-American culture is a
collectivistic culture (see Cox et al., 1991).

The European-American Perspective

European-Americans also engaged in social
categorization. In light of the strategies they
reported, it was clear that the historical evolution of
race relations in the United States affected the way
they reported they would manage a work-related conflict
involving an African-American. European-Americans
reported that they would use more control strategies
when dealing with other European-Americans than when
dealing with African-Americans. In fact, European-
Americans were more solution-oriented when dealing with
African-Americans than when dealing with other European-
Americans (see Table 4.4). European-Americans behaved as
if they wanted to avoid sending out signals that might
be misinterpreted by the other person involved. In fact,
that was precisely the case, according to the following
responses:

> When I work with Black people, I am often not as
> quick to put down their ideas or get into debates.
> I think this is because of the racial tension in
> society. So the way I act is sort of an anti-racial

tension way of doing things. (Respondent #30, E-A)

I think now more than ever, when people are in conflict, they are more worried when they are dealing with someone from a different ethnic group. People are more worried about hurting the feelings of people from other ethnic groups than those of people from their own ethnic groups. (Interviewee #1, E-A)

I would be much more careful with the language I use in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group. (Respondent #40, E-A)

From these excerpts, it is clear that the specter

of wider societal issues, such as the fear of being

perceived as "racist" or "prejudiced," affect

interethnic conflict communication in the workplace. The

European-American respondents were conscious of these

societal issues and, therefore, acted as if they wanted

to avoid any behavior that might be misinterpreted by

the other party. This sensitivity to ethnic differences

resulted in deliberate monotoring of one's interaction,

or the use of "safer" tactics to communicate about the

conflict.

The conflict communication tactics used by the

European-American respondents may be explained by

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975;

Gudykunst, 1988, 1995). The previous quotations suggest

that a work-related conflict involving someone from a

different background constitutes an uncertain situation,

one in which participants are not sure how their

communicative acts might be interpreted. The central

argument in Uncertainty/Anxiety Reduction Theory is that

intercultural encounters create cognitive uncertainty

for participants because they do not know how to behave

in those situations, which, in turn, makes them feel

insecure and anxious. The extent to which participants

experience effective interaction in such situations

depends on their ability to reduce uncertainty and

anxiety. Gudykunst and Kim (1992) explain that "if our

anxiety is high, we must cognitively manage our anxiety

(i.e., become mindful) if we are to communicate

effectively" (p. 112). The following is an example of

mindful communication on the part of a European-American

in intercultural work-related conflict communication:

> Instead of attacking [the] ideas [of someone who is
> from a different ethnic group] as I would if this
> person were from my own ethnic background, I would
> say something like: "Let's compare all the
> solutions to see which one is most suited to the
> needs of the company." I would do it in a manner...
> I would try to make them understand as best as I
> could. If they insist to go on then, you have to go
> to higher authority or somebody else. (Interviewee
> #1, E-A)

In sum, both the African-American and the European-

American respondents engaged in social categorization in

dealing with these work-related conflicts. As such,

their conflict management strategies were affected, to a

large extent, by their social identities. African-

Americans were more controlling when the other person

was European-American and more solution-oriented when

the other person was an African-American. The reason for

this may be that African-Americans feel that solidarity with in-group members is important in maintaining a sense of unity in the group. European-Americans, on the other hand, tended to be more controlling when the other person was another European-American and more solution-oriented when the other person was African-American. One possible explanation for this behavior was that European-Americans perceived work-related conflicts involving people from a different culture as an uncertain situation, in light of the unstable nature of intergroup relation in the United States, and "played it safe" by trying to avoid any misunderstanding of their conflict behavior by the other party. However, both groups mentioned lack of knowledge about other cultures as an important determinant of conflict behavior. The results of this study have important implications for the practice in interethnic conflict communication in the workplace.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

Ever since the publication of the Hudson Institute's seminal work <u>Workforce 2000</u>, which predicted dramatic changes in the demographic composition of the American labor force by the year 2000, there has been an intensified effort by business and industry to establish

workplaces that value and respect the diversity among
workers. Many large corporations have moved to establish
a critical link between their ability to attract and
retain a highly qualified and highly motivated workers
from the so-called minority groups, and their ability to
compete.

It has been argued elsewhere (see Chapter 1) that
one of the challenges of diversity in organizations is
that it creates an environment in which interpersonal
conflicts and misunderstandings can occur. Learning more
about conflict and how to manage it constructively in
the culturally diverse organization should be a main
area of concern for scholars and practitioners of
organizational communication. The present study was a
step in that direction, and its findings have
implications for the effective management of work-
related conflicts involving people from different
cultural backgrounds.

Analysis of factors respondents said would
determine the way they would deal with conflict revealed
that both African-Americans and European-American
respondents engaged in social categorization in their
attempts to manage those work-related conflicts. This
finding is consistent with the views of Gudykunst
(1985), who has stated that, "[T]he majority of the
interactions that take place in modern organizations are

a function of social group memberships, rather than the individual characteristics of the communicator. That is, the interaction [among workers] is influenced mainly by the person's occupational group, sex, class, race, or ethnic group" (p. 155). The variation in conflict behavior displayed by both the African-American and European-American respondents is reflective of social categorization in the sense that they varied their strategies for managing conflict according to the in-group/out-group status of the other individuals.

That both groups viewed these work-related conflict situations from the in-group/out-group perspective and varied their conflict management strategies accordingly has implication for training. Respondents from both groups reported that lack of knowledge about the other person's culture was a determining factor that influenced the way they dealt with conflict. One of the main advantages to having a culturally diverse workforce is its potential for greater creativity in how tasks are accomplished (see Cox et al., 1991; Loden & Rosener, 1991). However, for any group to reach the peak of its creativity, it must have synergy (Cattell, 1948). Communication plays an important part in helping a group develop synergy through constructive management of conflict. To accomplish this, the cultural information gap that leads participants to perceive each other as

members of specific cultural or ethnic groups (social categorization), along with the emotional meaning attached to such categorization (role schemata), should be bridged. If participants reported that lack of knowledge concerning other cultures influenced the way they deal with conflict, then one implication for culturally diverse organizations is finding a way of training their members in ways people from different cultures relate to one another.

To be effective, an intercultural communication training program should be more than a one-time presentation of snapshot information (most of the time too general or blatantly stereotypical) about other cultures, as most cultural diversity training programs are. The effective management of conflict in the culturally diverse workplace entails understanding how other people view conflict and how they respond to it behaviorally. This is difficult and time consuming and cannot be achieved with one or two training sessions in intercultural communication. Bridging the cultural gap between employees in a culturally diverse workplace should be approached as a multifaced process involving learning and teaching. In other words, employees should be willing to learn about other cultures and at the same time teach other people about their own cultures.

Bridging the cultural gap between employees demands

energy and commitment, and organizations should be able
to create training programs that combine a variety of
perspectives on intercultural communication. In addition
to encouraging diversity from the moral standpoint
(which views the maintenance of diversity as the right
thing to do), organizations might find it helpful to
devise an incentive program that encourages employees to
engage actively in intercultural learning.

If intercultural communication is perceived as a
process that contributes to personal growth (and
economic gain), through the active learning about other
cultures and teaching about one's culture, then perhaps
the effects of factors that lead to social
categorization during intergroup encounters could be
minimized. Through the process of learning and teaching,
members of the culturally diverse workplace might come
to understand why others behave the way they do and to
what effect(s). This understanding, in turn, might lead
to the establishment of a communication climate in which
people might be able to relate to each other as
individuals rather than as members of a particular
group.

Once people have confidence that they have
established a workplace environment in which their
cultural identities are recognized and respected, then
they can stop worrying about their actions being

misunderstood or misinterpreted because they are members
of a particular group. They can also stop worrying about
making wrong attributions to the actions of other
individuals because they are members of a particular
ethnic group. Once cultural anxiety and uncertainty are
taken out of the workplace, then employees can get down
to the business of resolving work-related interpersonal
conflict in a constructive way that furthers the goals
and objectives of the organization as a whole.

Limitations of the Study

Even though this study was tightly controlled in
terms of design and sampling procedures, there are many
other factors that might have influenced the findings.

The first factor that might have influenced the
findings of this study is the relatively small size of
the sample of participants. Thirty nine (39) African-
Americans and forty (40) European-Americans participated
in this study, which not only made the design
unbalanced, but also might have affected selection of at
least one of the dependent variables, notably the
control strategy. Note that the difference between the
two groups in their reported use of the control strategy
was close to being significant (p < .053; see Table
4.4). A larger sample size might have allowed this

difference to be statistically significant.

A second factor that might have affected the results of this study has to do with the fact that the particpants were undergraduate students with limited workplace experience. The results turned up by this study may have been different had participants been graduate students with substantial workplace experience.

A third factor that might have affected the findings of this study is the strong social desirability effects inherent to the topic (intercultural conflict strategy). The long and convoluted history of interethnic relations in the United States makes any attempt at investigating the way people react to people culturally different from themselves risky and vulnerable; risky, because the motives of the study might be questioned; vulnerable, because the topic is "taboo." Therefore, it is difficult to minimize social desirability effects. Many people simply do not feel comfortable expressing their true feelings on the issue of intergroup relations.

The fourth limiting factor is, perhaps, the instrument used to investigate intercultural conflict strategy. Even though the OCCI is a communication-based instrument, it does not capture the full range of conflict management strategies used in work-related conflict involving people from different cultures. The

OCCI does not include, for example, "referring the matter to higher autority," "third person intervention," or "using the company book" as strategies, all of which were uncovered in analysis of the qualitative data.

The final limiting factor to this study is the fact that it is a simulation and, therefore, cannot be generalized to real life work-related conflict situations because of what Abelson and Miller (1967) termed the simulation gap. No matter the sophistication level of a simulation, there is always the chance that it might differ or deviate from the real life situation it represents. In the case of the present study, it could be that because the conflict scenarios were imaginary, and, therefore, nothing tangible was at stake, participants chose to make responses that are socially desirable. In other words, a social desirability bias might have combined with the simulation gap to affect the findings of this study. A good indication of this is the fact that although "cultural differences between parties" accounted for 24% of the factors identified in the survey data (third most important after "interpersonal skills of the target" and "consequences of the solution favored by the target"), none of the participants in the follow-up interviews rated "cultural differences" as either most important or second most important.

Because of these limitations, the findings of this study should not be generalized to all work-related conflict situations involving African-American and European-Americans.

Suggestions for Further Research

In light of the growing trend toward cultural diversity in the American workplace, continued efforts should be made to understand communication in general, and conflict communication in particular in such a setting.

Research in this area should avoid the trap of single methodology so pervasive in past research. Communication research in the culturally diverse workplace should use an ecclectic methodology that allows the researcher to document both instances of the behavior being studies and the factors that elicited that behavior. In other words, future research should use a methodological approach that allows both description of and explanation for the behavior being studied. Given the fact that the ability to manage conflict is a critical organizational issue, it is important that researchers pay more attention to the factors (societal or organizational) that affect the way people in the culturally diverse workplace see and

relate to one another.

In the present study, five factors were identified as determinants of strategy choice in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group (see Table 5.5). Future research should particularly concentrate on "cultural differences" and the "interpersonal skills of the target," the two target-related factors that respondents reported would determine strategy choice to how they relate to other contexts of communication in the culturally diverse workplace. Together, these two factors accounted for 61% of the total factors reported in the survey. However, when interviewees were asked to rank-order these factors in terms of first and second most important factor that determined their conflict strategy choice, none of them mentioned "cultural differences" as first or second most important, which is very surprising given that "cultural differences" alone accounted for 24% of the factors mentioned in the survey. It was as if it was "safer" to mention "cultural differences" as a factor in the anonymity of the survey, but not during the interview when it was a one-on-one situation with the interviewer. During the interviews, interviewees' social filters were activated; therefore, mentioning "cultural differences" was seen as inappropriate.

The challenge before scholars interested in issues

of diversity in the workplace is to work toward the
development of theoretical models of the way
communication may function to create a work environment
in which people do not perceive factors related to
cultural or ethnic differences as important in
determining the way they resolve work-related conflicts.
Such models would not only allow a better understanding
of the way communication functions to create a climate
in which people avoid bringing into the open matters
related to cultural or ethnic differences for fear of
being perceived as insensitive to other cultures, but
also suggest effective ways of "purifying" that climate.
"Purifying" the communication climate is tantamount to
taking the elements of anxiety and fear out of work-
related interaction so that people may not interact with
one another mechanically "by the company book," or have
to refer matters to "higher authority" or "a third
person" when they are in conflict with a different
other. Future research is needed to investigate
conditions that lead to the creation of the comunication
climate that allows for uninhibited communication,
because that is only when American society in general
and Corporate America in particular will reap the
benefits of a culturally diverse workforce.

Future research on intercultural work-related
conflict behavior should also include women because

gender constitutes an important dimension of diversity in the workplace today. It will be interesting, for example, to investigate gender as a factor that determines conflict strategy choice in work-related conflicts involving men and women.

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Appendix A

SAMPLE SURVEY CONSTRUCTION FOR HOWARD UNIVERSITY
PARTICIPANTS

Survey Form
(Howard University)

Section I
<u>Directions</u>: Please check the appropriate box.
1. To which of the following ethnic groups would you say
you belong? (circle one):
        1.   African-American
        2.   Asian-American
        3.   European-American
        4.   Hispanic-American
        5.   Other (please specify)

2. What class are you in? (circle one):
        1.   Freshmen
        2.   Sophomore
        3.   Junior
        4.   Senior
        5.   Graduate Student

3. What is the socio-economic background of your family?
(check one):
        1.   Working class
        2.   Middle class
        3.   Upper class

4. Work Experience
        1.   None
        2.   0-2 years
        3.   2-4 years
        4.   4-6 years
        5.   Over six years

5. Job Classification
        1 = Administrative (e.g., management)
        2 = Professional (e.g., accountant)
        3 = Technical (e.g., computer programmer,
                 engineer)
        4 = Service (e.g., sales, custumer
                service)
        5 = Clerical (e.g., secretary)

Section II
<u>Directions</u>: Please read the following scenario
carefully.
      Imagine that you and a colleague are involved in a
work-related project that requires an equal amount of
input and dedication from each of you. The project,
which consists of deciding on what computer system is
most suitable to replace the current system, has been
assigned to you by the Head of the department in which

you are employed. The present information system is outdated and can no longer handle efficiently the volume of work in the department. Upgrading the system is an imperative, and your boss made it clear that you are both responsible for the timely completion of the upgrading, at which time, each one of you will get a raise.

You and your colleague John Williams, a 28-year old African-American, just like yourself, are highly qualified to work on this project because you have similar professional backgrounds. You both hold M.B.A. degrees with emphasis in M.I.S., and were hired into this company at about roughly the same time. However, despite your dedication and enthusiasm, things are not progressing at the pace they should if the project is to be completed as scheduled. This lack of progress is mainly due to the fact that you and your colleague cannot agree on what kind of system to install. Even though the company can afford the latest system on the market, you are unable to reach a decision on which system to buy. You favor one system and your colleague favors another. You are running out of time. Using the following questionnaire, indicate what you would do by circling one of the numbers 1 to 5.

Scale: 1 = Completely Agree
      2 = Disagree somewhat
      3 = Neither agree nor disagree
      4 = Agree somewhat
      5 = Completely agree

1.   I would blend my ideas with my colleague's to create new alternatives for resolving the disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

2.   I would shy away from the topic that is the source of the disagreement between my colleague and me.   1 2 3 4 5

3.   I would make my opinions about this disagreement known to my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

4.   I would suggest solutions that combine viewpoints from both of us.   1 2 3 4 5

5.   I would steer clear of the disagreeable topic.   1 2 3 4 5

6.   I would give in a little on my ideas when my colleague also gives in.   1 2 3 4 5

7.   I would avoid my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

8. I would integrate arguments into a new
    solution from issues raised in the discussion
    of our disagreement.   1   2   3   4   5

9. I would go fifty-fifty to reach a solution that
    is acceptable to both of us.   1   2   3   4   5

10. I would raise my voice when trying to get
    my colleague to accept my position.   1   2   3   4   5

11. I would offer a creative solution to our
    disagreement.   1   2   3   4   5

12. I would keep quiet about my views
    in order to avoid the disagreement
    with my colleague.   1   2   3   4   5

13. I would frequently give in a little if my
    colleague would meet me halfway.   1   2   3   4   5

14. I would downplay the importance of the
    disagreement between my colleague
    and me.   1   2   3   4   5

15. I would reduce conflict by saying that the
    disagreement between my colleague and me
    is insignificant.   1   2   3   4   5

16. I would meet my colleague at a midpoint
    of our differences.   1   2   3   4   5

17. I would assert my opinion forcefully. 1   2   3   4   5

18. I would dominate arguments until my colleague
    understood my position.   1   2   3   4   5

19. I would suggest that my colleague and I work
    together to create solutions to our
    disagreement.   1   2   3   4   5

20. I would try to use my colleague's ideas
    to generate solutions to
    our disagreement.   1   2   3   4   5

21. I would offer tradeoffs to reach a solution
    to our disagreement.   1   2   3   4   5

22. I would argue insistently
    for my position.   1   2   3   4   5

23. I would withdraw when my colleague
    confronts me about the issue causing

our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

24. I would side step the disagreement with
     my colleague   1 2 3 4 5

25. I would try to smooth over our disagreement
     by making it appear unimportant.   1 2 3 4 5

26. I would insist that my colleague accept my
     position during the discussion of our
     disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

27. I would make our differences on the issue
     seem less serious.   1 2 3 4 5

28. I would hold my tongue rather than argue with
     my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

29. I would ease the disagreement by claiming that our
     differences of opinion are trivial. 1 2 3 4 5

30. I would stand firm in my views during the
     discussion of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

**TAKE A 15 MINUTE BREAK BEFORE
COMPLETING THE NEXT SECTIONS**

Section III
<u>Directions</u>: Please read the following scenario carefully.

Imagine that you and a colleague are involved in a
work-related project that requires an equal amount
of input and dedication from each of you. The
project, which consists of deciding on which
Employee Healthcare Plan is most suitable to
replace the current plan, has been assigned to you
by the Head of the department in which you are
employed. The present Employee Healthcare Plan is
outdated and can no longer meet the needs of the
employees in the organization. Identifying a plan
better suited to the needs of the employees in
this organization is a pressing issue, and your
boss made it clear that you are both responsible
for the timely completion of this project, at
which time you will both get a raise.
       You and your colleague Chris Johnson, a 28-
year old European-American, are highly qualified
to work on this project, because you have similar
professional backgrounds. You both hold M.B.A.
degrees with emphasis in Human Resource

Management, and were hired into this company at about roughly the same time. However, despite your dedication and enthusiasm, things are not progressing at the pace they should if the project is to be completed as scheduled. This lack of progress is mainly due to the fact that you and your colleague cannot agree on a decision. Even though the company can afford either one of two plans, you are unable to reach a decision on which plan to buy. You favor one plan and your colleague favors another. You are running out of time. Using the following questionnaire, indicate what you would do by circling one of the numbers 1 to 5.

Scale: 1 = Completely Agree
       2 = Disagree somewhat
       3 = Neither agree nor disagree
       4 = Agree somewhat
       5 = Completely agree

1. I would meet my colleague at a midpoint
    of our differences.   1 2 3 4 5

2. I would assert my opinion forcefully. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I would dominate arguments until my colleague
    understood my position.   1 2 3 4 5

4. I would suggest that my colleague and
    I work together to create solutions
    to our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

5. I would try to use my colleague's
    ideas to generate solutions to our
    disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

6. I would offer tradeoffs to reach a
    solution to our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

7. I would argue insistently
    for my position.   1 2 3 4 5

8. I would withdraw when my colleague
    confronts me about the issue causing
    our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

9. I would side step the
    disagreement with my colleague   1 2 3 4 5

10. I would try to smooth over our
    disagreement by making it appear
    unimportant.   1 2 3 4 5

11. I would insist that my colleague accept my position during the discussion of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

12. I would make our differences on the issue seem less serious.   1 2 3 4 5

13. I would hold my tongue rather than argue with my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

14. I would ease the disagreement by claiming that our differences of opinion are trivial.   1 2 3 4 5

15. I would stand firm in my views during the discussion of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

16. I would blend my ideas with my colleague's to create new alternatives for resolving the disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

17. I would shy away from the topic that is the source of the disagreement between my colleague and me.   1 2 3 4 5

18. I would make my opinions about this disagreement known to my colleague   1 2 3 4 5

19. I would suggest solutions that combine viewpoints from both of us. 1 2 3 4 5

20. I would steer clear of the disagreeable topic.   1 2 3 4 5

21. I would give in a little on my ideas when my colleague also gives in.   1 2 3 4 5

22. I would avoid my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

23. I would integrate arguments into a new solution from issues raised in the discussion of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

24. I would go fifty-fifty to reach a solution that is acceptable to both of us.   1 2 3 4 5

25. I would raise my voice when trying
    to get my colleague to accept my
    position.   1   2   3   4   5

26. I would offer a creative solution
    to our disagreement.   1   2   3   4   5

27. I would keep quiet about my views
    in order to avoid the disagreement
    with my colleague.   1   2   3   4   5

28. I would frequently give in a little
    if my colleague would meet me
    halfway.   1   2   3   4   5

29. I would downplay the importance of
    the disagreement between my colleague
    and me.   1   2   3   4   5

30. I would reduce conflict by saying
    that the disagreement between my
    colleague and me is insignificant. 1   2   3   4   5

Section IV
Directions: Please answer honestly and thoroughly the
following questions. Use the space provided. Remember, your
answers will be kept strictly confidential.

1. As you were recording your reaction to these imaginary
work-related conflicts, what were some of the issues that
came to your mind? How did these issues influence your
answer to the items on the questionnaire? Please elaborate.

2a. Have you ever been involved in a work-related conflict
with somebody from your own ethnic group?
- If yes, explain in your own words, what the problem was,
and how you went about resolving the conflict.
- If no, then go to 2b.

2b. If you found yourself involved in a work-related
conflict with somebody from your own ethnic group, what
would be some of the issues that you think would influence
the way you would handle the problem?

3a. Have you ever been in a work-related conflict with somebody from an ethnic group different than your own?
- If yes, explain in your own words, what the problem was, and how you went about resolving the conflict.
- If no, then go to 3b.

3b. If you found yourself involved in a work-related conflict with somebody from an ethnic group different than your own, what would be some of the issues that you think would influence the way you would handle the problem?

Appendix B

**SAMPLE SURVEY CONSTRUCTION FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM PENN
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Survey Form
(PENN STATE UNIVERSITY)

Section I
<u>Directions</u>: Please check the appropriate box.
1. To which of the following ethnic groups would you say
you belong? (circle one):
       1.   African-American
       2.   Asian-American
       3.   European-American
       4.   Hispanic-American
       5.   Other (please specify)

2. What class are you in? (circle one):
       1.   Freshmen
       2.   Sophomore
       3.   Junior
       4.   Senior
       5.   Graduate Student

3. What is the socio-economic background of your family?
(check one):
       1.   Working class
       2.   Middle class
       3.   Upper class

4. Work Experience
       1.   None
       2.   0-2 years
       3.   2-4 years
       4.   4-6 years
       5.   Over six years

5. Job Classification
       1 = Administrative (e.g., management)
       2 = Professional (e.g., accountant)
       3 = Technical (e.g., computer programmer,
       engineer)
       4 = Service (e.g., sales, custumer service)
       5 = Clerical (e.g., secretary)

6. In which course did you receive this survey?

Section II
<u>Directions</u>: Please read the following scenario
carefully.

      Imagine that you and a colleague are involved
      in a work- related project that requires an
      equal amount of input and dedication from each
      of you. The project, which consists of
      deciding on what computer system is most

suitable to replace the current system, has been assigned to you by the Head of the department in which you are employed. The present information system is outdated and can no longer handle efficiently the volume of work in the department. Upgrading the system is an imperative, and your boss made it clear that you are both responsible for the timely completion of the grading, at which time you will both get a raise.

You and your colleague John Williams, a 28-year old European-American just like yourself, are highly qualified to work on this project, because you have similar professional backgrounds. You both hold M.B.A. degrees with emphasis in M.I.S., and were hired into this company at about roughly the same time. However, despite your dedication and enthusiasm, things are not progressing at the pace they should if the project is to be completed as scheduled. This lack of progress is mainly due to the fact that you and your colleague cannot agree on a decision. Even though the company can afford the latest system on the market, you are unable to reach a decision on which system to buy. You favor one system and your colleague favors another. You are running out of time. Using the following questionnaire, indicate what you would do by circling one of the numbers 1 to 5.

Scale: 1 = Completely Agree
       2 = Disagree somewhat
       3 = Neither agree nor disagree
       4 = Agree somewhat
       5 = Completely agree

1.   I would blend my ideas with my colleague's
     to create new alternatives for
     resolving the disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

2.   I would shy away from the topic that is
     the source of the disagreement between
     my colleague and me.   1 2 3 4 5

3.   I would make my opinions about this
     disagreement known to my colleague 1 2 3 4 5

4.   I would suggest solutions that
     combine viewpoints from both of us.1 2 3 4 5

5. I would steer clear of the disagreeable
   topic.   1 2 3 4 5

6. I would give in a little on my ideas
   when my colleague also gives in.   1 2 3 4 5

7. I would avoid my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

8. I would integrate arguments into a new
   solution from issues raised in the discussion
   of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

9. I would go fifty-fifty to reach a solution that
   is acceptable to both of us.   1 2 3 4 5

10. I would raise my voice when trying to get
    my colleague to accept my position. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I would offer a creative solution to our
    disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

12. I would keep quiet about my views
    in order to avoid the disagreement with my
    colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

13. I would frequently give in a little if my
    colleague would meet me halfway.   1 2 3 4 5

14. I would downplay the importance of the
    disagreement between my colleague
    and me.   1 2 3 4 5

15. I would reduce conflict by saying that the
    disagreement between my colleague and me
    is insignificant.   1 2 3 4 5

16. I would meet my colleague at a midpoint
    of our differences.   1 2 3 4 5

17. I would assert my opinion
    forcefully.   1 2 3 4 5

18. I would dominate arguments until my colleague
    understood my position.   1 2 3 4 5

19. I would suggest that my colleague and I work
    together to create solutions to our
    disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

20. I would try to use my colleague's ideas
    to generate solutions to our
    disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

21. I would offer tradeoffs to reach a solution
    to our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

22. I would argue insistently for
    my position.   1 2 3 4 5

23. I would withdraw when my colleague
    confronts me about the issue causing
    our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

24. I would side step the disagreement with
    my colleague   1 2 3 4 5

25. I would try to smooth over our disagreement
    by making it appear unimportant. 1 2 3 4 5

26. I would insist that my colleague accept my
    position during the discussion of our
    disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

27. I would make our differences on the issue
    seem less serious.   1 2 3 4 5

28. I would hold my tongue rather than argue with
    my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

29. I would ease the disagreement by
    claiming that our differences of
    opinion are trivial.   1 2 3 4 5

30. I would stand firm in my views during the
    discussion of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

TAKE A 15 MINUTE BREAK BEFORE
COMPLETING THE NEXT SECTIONS

Section III
Directions: Please read the following scenario carefully.

Imagine that you and a colleague are involved in a
work-related project that requires an equal amount
of input and dedication from each of you. The
project, which consists of deciding on which
Employee Healthcare Plan is most suitable to
replace the current plan, has been assigned to you
by the Head of the department in which you are
employed. The present Employee Healthcare Plan is
outdated and can no longer meet the needs of the
employees in the organization. Identifying a plan
better suited to the needs of the employees in
this organization is a pressing issue, and your

boss made it clear that you are both responsible for the timely completion of this project, at which time you will both get a raise.

You and your colleague Chris Johnson, a 28-year old African-American, are highly qualified to work on this project, because you have similar professional backgrounds. You both hold M.B.A. degrees with emphasis in Human Resource Management, and were hired into this company at about roughly the same time. However, despite your dedication and enthusiasm, things are not progressing at the pace they should if the project is to be completed as scheduled. This lack of progress is mainly due to the fact that you and your colleague cannot agree on a decision. Even though the company can afford either one of two plans, you are unable to reach a decision on which plan to buy. You favor one plan and your colleague favors another. You are running out of time. Using the following questionnaire, indicate what you would do by circling one of the numbers 1 to 5.

Scale: 1 = Completely Agree
       2 = Disagree somewhat
       3 = Neither agree nor disagree
       4 = Agree somewhat
       5 = Completely agree

1. I would meet my colleague at a midpoint
    of our differences.   1 2 3 4 5

2. I would assert my opinion forcefully.1 2 3 4 5

3. I would dominate arguments until my colleague
    understood my position.   1 2 3 4 5

4. I would suggest that my colleague and
    I work together to create solutions
    to our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

5. I would try to use my colleague's
    ideas to generate solutions to our
    disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

6. I would offer tradeoffs to reach a
    solution to our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

7. I would argue insistently
    for my position.   1 2 3 4 5

8. I would withdraw when my colleague
    confronts me about the issue causing

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

our disagreement.　　　　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

9. I would side step the
   disagreement with my colleague　　1　2　3　4　5

10. I would try to smooth over our
    disagreement by making it appear
    unimportant.　　　　　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

11. I would insist that my colleague
    accept my position during the
    discussion of our disagreement.　1　2　3　4　5

12. I would make our differences on
    the issue seem less serious.　　1　2　3　4　5

13. I would hold my tongue rather than
    argue with my colleague.　　　　1　2　3　4　5

14. I would ease the disagreement by
    claiming that our differences of
    opinion are trivial.　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

15. I would stand firm in my views
    during the discussion of
    our disagreement.　　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

16. I would blend my ideas with my
    colleague's to create new alternatives
    for resolving the disagreement.　1　2　3　4　5

17. I would shy away from the topic that
    is the source of the disagreement
    between my colleague and me.　　1　2　3　4　5

18. I would make my opinions about
    this disagreement known to
    my colleague　　　　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

19. I would suggest solutions that
    combine viewpoints from both of us. 1　2　3　4　5

20. I would steer clear of the
    disagreeable topic.　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

21. I would give in a little on my
    ideas when my colleague also
    gives in.　　　　　　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5

22. I would avoid my colleague.　　1　2　3　4　5

23. I would integrate arguments into a new solution from issues raised in the discussion of our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

24. I would go fifty-fifty to reach a solution that is acceptable to both of us.   1 2 3 4 5

25. I would raise my voice when trying to get my colleague to accept my position.   1 2 3 4 5

26. I would offer a creative solution to our disagreement.   1 2 3 4 5

27. I would keep quiet about my views in order to avoid the disagreement with my colleague.   1 2 3 4 5

28. I would frequently give in a little if my colleague would meet me halfway.   1 2 3 4 5

29. I would downplay the importance of the disagreement between my colleague and me.   1 2 3 4 5

30. I would reduce conflict by saying that the disagreement between my colleague and me is insignificant.   1 2 3 4 5

Section IV
Directions: Please answer honestly and thoroughly the following questions. Use the space provided. Remember, your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

1. As you were recording your reaction to these imaginary work-related conflicts, what were some of the issues that came to your mind? How did these issues influence your answer to the items on the questionnaire? Please elaborate.

2a. Have you ever been involved in a work-related conflict with somebody from your own ethnic group?
- If yes, explain in your own words, what the problem was, and how you went about resolving the conflict.
- If no, then go to 2b.

2b. If you found yourself involved in a work-related conflict with somebody from your own ethnic group, what would be some of the issues that you think would influence the way you would handle the problem?

3a. Have you ever been in a work-related conflict with somebody from an ethnic group different than your own?
- If yes, explain in your own words, what the problem was, and how you went about resolving the conflict.
- If no, then go to 3b.

3b. If you found yourself involved in a work-related conflict with somebody from an ethnic group different than your own, what would be some of the issues that you think would influence the way you would handle the problem?

APPENDIX C

Semistructured Interview Protocol

<div align="center">**Semistructured Interview Protocol**</div>

Opening

<u>Researcher:</u>

Hello Mr. -------. My name is Salifou Siddo, and I am conducting follow-up interviews to the questionnaire on work-related conflict management strategy that you completed during the spring semester. Your name was randomly selected from the pool of participants who indicated on the informed consent forms that they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Before we start, I would like to assure you that any data accrued in this interview will be kept strictly confidential. Other than I, only my dissertation advisor, Professor Susan Jarboe, will have access to the interview data. These data will be summarized and included in research reports in the form of direct quotations identifying interviewees by ethnic background only. No interviewees will be identified by name. You can decline to answer any question I ask.

Also for the purposes of transcription and analysis, I request your permission to audio-tape this interview. Tapes will be erased as soon as the study is completed. Tapes will not be played for anyone except my advisor, if necessary, and me. The interview should require no more than half an hour of your time. Do you have any questions? Do I have your permission to proceed and to record the interview?

-If participants withhold consent, the researcher will apologize for taking their and end the interview.
-If participants give consent to audio tape the interview, OR
-If they agree to be interviewed but not taped, the researcher will proceed as follows.

Body

[Start tape] OR [Prepare to take notes]
"The questions I am going to ask you involve the way you manage work-related conflicts. I will ask you to clarify or elaborate on some issues that emerged in the survey data from all the participants. I will also ask you to describe the way these issues relate to your choice of conflict management strategies. The purpose of the interview is not to evaluate you as a person. I want to learn from your responses to these questions; therefore, anything you are willing to share with me will be helpful."

<u>Section1</u>: Interviewees clarify the demographic information.

Q 1: "To which of the following two ethnic groups would you say you belong?"
     1.   African-American
     2.   European-American

Q 2: "What is your class standing?"
     1.   Freshman
     2.   Sophomore
     3.   Junior
     4.   Senior
     5.   Graduate student

Q 3: "How would you characterize your family of origin?"
     1.   Working class
     2.   Middle class
     3.   Upper class

Q 4: "What is your work experience?"
     1.   None
     2.   0 to up to 2 years
     3.   More than 2 years up to 4 years
     4.   More than 4 years up to 6 years
     5.   More than 6 years

Q 5: "How would you classify your job?"
     1. Administrative (e.g., management)
     2. Professional (e.g., accountant)
     3. Technical (e.g., engineer)
     4. Service (e.g., sales, customer service)
     5. Clerical (e.g., secretary)

Section 2. Interviewees elaborate on and/or clarify "Task-Related" issues mentioned in the written responses to the open-end questions in the survey. Probes are tentative examples; actual follow-up questions depend on the thrust of the initial responses.

Q 6a:
Researcher: "Many of the people who responded to the survey mentioned that in a work-related conflict involving someone from an ethnic group other than his own, the perceived consequences of the decision to be made would dictate the way he would deal with the

conflict. Does this apply to you?"

Q 6b:
"Could you give me an example of how your perceptions of
the consequences of a particular decision on the
organization affected your choice of strategy in
resolving a work-related conflict involving someone from
another ethnic group?"

Q 6c:
[probe] "Let us say for example that the decision to be
made will have severe consequences for the organization,
how would that influence, in concrete terms, the way you
would manage the conflict?"

Q 6d:
[probe] "What if the decision will have only minor
consequences for the organization?"

Q 7a
Researcher: "Another theme that was mentioned by many
respondents when resolving a work-related conflict
involving someone from an ethnic group other than their
own, is the best interests of the company. Could you
clarify and expand on how one might use the "best
interests" of the organization as a principle for
resolving a work-related conflict?"

Q 7b
[probe] "Could it be that people perceive a work-related
conflict situations involving people from backgrounds
other than their own as uncertain or even as threatening
situations and, therefore, they use "the best interests"
of the organization as a way to avoid dealing with the
situation?"

Q 8a
Researcher: "Many respondents mentioned that in a work-
related conflict involving someone from an ethnic group
other than their own, the time available to make a
decision would affect the way they would deal with the
situation. How does time relate to your decisions to use
particular conflict management strategies?"

Q 8b
[probe] "If time is not a factor, would you be more
willing to compromise and explore other solutions to the
conflict?"

Q 8c

[probe] "What would you do then if time is limited? Would you go along with whatever your colleague wants to do or would you take charge and attempt to impose a solution?"

Section 3.
Interviewees elaborate on and/or clarify "Other-Related" factors mentioned in the written responses to the open-end questions in the survey.

Q 9a
Reseacher: "A great number of the respondents to the survey mentioned that cultural differences would play a role in the way they would deal with a work-related conflict involving someone from a different cultural background. What specific cultural differences would affect the way you deal with such a conflict?"

Q 9b
[probe] "So as an [African-American] [European-American] you would take the cultural background of the other individual into consideration when trying to resolve a conflict with that person?"

Q 9c
[probe] "What are some of the aspects of the other person's background that you would consider, and how would they relate to your choice of conflict management strategy?"

Q 9d
[probe] "Say, for example, the other person is of the same cultural background as yourself, what strategies would you use? Why?"

Q 9e
[probe] "What if the other is, say [African-American] [European-American]. What strategies would you use? Why?"

Q 10a.
Researcher: "Another factor mentioned as a determinant of conflict management strategy in a work-related conflict involving someone from a different ethnic group is the interpersonal behavior of that person. How does the interpersonal behavior of the other individual relate to the manner in which you would deal with a work-related conflict?"

Q 10b.
[probe] "So you mean if the other is courteous and professional about the situation, you would also be courteous and professional?"

Q 10c.
[probe] "What would you do if the other person does not want to cooperate, is rude, or insists to have the situation resolved his way?"

Q 11.
Researcher: "When trying to resolve a work-related conflict involving someone from an ethnic background other than your own, which of the following is most important: The consequences of the decision, the best interests of the organization, time, cultural differences, or the interpersonal behavior of the other person?"

Q 12.
[preparing to close] "Is there anything else about work-related conflict that you would like to share with me?"

Ending
Researcher: "Thank you very much for your participation in the study and your time. If you are interested in seeing the results of the study, please give me your departmental address so that I can send a summary of the study to you. Also, if for any reason, you need to contact me, call or write: Salifou Siddo, 234 Sparks Building, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802. Phone (814) 865-34 61." This statement was read to each interviewee.

Appendix D

SAMPLE OF SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

SAMPLE OF SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

<u>Interviewee # 1 (A-A)</u>

<u>Demographic Data:</u>
Ethnic Group: A-A
Class Standing: Senior
Family of Origin: Working Class
Work Experience: More than 2 years, but less than 4
Job Classification: Administrative

INTERVIEWEES ELABORATE ON AND/OR CLARIFY "TASK-RELATED" ISSUES MENTIONED IN THE WRITTEN RESPONSES TO THE OPEN-END QUESTIONS IN THE SURVEY.

Q 6a:
<u>Researcher:</u> "Many of the people who responded to the survey mentioned that in a work-related conflict involving someone from an ethnic group other than his own, **the consequences of the decision favored by the other person** would dictate the way he would deal with the conflict. Does this apply to you?"

<u>Interviewee:</u>
"I would concentrate on the implications of the decision on the people and the organization, and I would use that as a guide principle for solving the problem."

<u>Researcher:</u>
[Probe] "Could you give me an example of how your perceptions of the consequences of a particular decision on the organization affected your choice of strategy in resolving a work-related conflict involving someone from another ethnic group?"

<u>Interviewee:</u>
"I am thinking about it in terms of the job I am doing now. Because ownership of a decision is important, if I am not pleased with a particular decision, I would regret not communicating with my partner a little further. I would like to feel that I could deal with any aspects of the final decision without saying it is his fault. As long as we work together, we gonna stand by our decision".

<u>Researcher:</u>
[probe] Let us say for example that the decision to be made will have severe consequences for the organization, how would that influence, in concrete terms, the way you would manage the conflict?

Interviewee:
He will feel strong about his position, and I will
probably feel strong about mine. In that situation,
there will a stand still. I will have to give in a
little here, a little there. We will have to work out a
compromise in that situation.

Researcher:
[Follow-up] How would you work out a compromise?

Interviewee:
The way you communicate. You don't be hostile. But you
need to be firm.

Researcher:
[Redirecting] What if the decision will have only minor
consequences for the organization?

Interviewee:
I will still stand by my decisions. Be firm without
being hostile.

Q7
Researcher: Could you clarify and expand on how one
might use **the best interest of the company** as a
principle for resolving a work-related conflict?

Interviewee:
Some things that arise in a workplace. People think in
different ways. Your value, background family etc. What
you don't want to do is put your personal feelings in
the forefront. You don't want those to stand out. You
want to make a decision that is the best decision for
that situation. You want to make the decision that is
best for the company like a parent make a decision for
the child.

Q 8
Researcher:
How does **time** relate to your decisions to use
particular conflict management strategies?

Interviewee:
Time is your best asset. In any situation time to think,
time to rethink. It is the best thing to do because,
your initial thoughts might be your best thoughts, but
then with time you begin to weigh things. Time would

definitely be a factor thorough out the process of
resolving the conflict.

Researcher:
[probe] If time is not a factor, would you be more
willing to compromise and explore other solutions to the
conflict?

Interviewee:
If we had more time, I would be more willing to
compromise and explore as many alternatives as possible.
If time is short, I will be all for a solution. I will
try to be persuasive, and I know I can be very very
persuasive.

Researcher:
[Probe]How?

Interviewee:
The way you communicate with someone like that. If you
become head strong, in return you get a head strong type
of reaction.

INTERVIEWEES ELABORATE ON AND/OR CLARIFY "OTHER-RELATED"
FACTORS MENTIONED IN THE WRITTEN RESPONSES TO THE OPEN-
END QUESTIONS IN THE SURVEY.

Q 9
Reseacher:
A great number of the respondents to the survey
mentioned that cultural differences would play a role in
the way they would deal with a work-related conflict
involving someone from a different cultural background.
What specific cultural differences would affect the way
you deal with such a conflict?

Interviewee:
Most African-Americans I know I are very hostile.

Researcher:
[Surprised]Hostile?

Interviewee:
Hostile towards I guess.You could say hostile against
non-black or you could basically say Whites.

Researcher:
[Probe] Why is that?

Interviewee:

Most African-American feel threatened. They feel they
don't have much to begin with. In the workplace, the
competition is sort of...like do or die kind of
situation.

Researcher:
[Remark] In the workplace everybody is competing against
everybody.

Interviewee:
Right. But the only difference is that you really don't
care what happens when you are standing on another. But
in the situation where an African-American is against
another African-American, you are more prone to really
work together, because we have something in common to
begin with. I will be more willing to compromise and
work something out. With European-Americans, I believe
most African-Americans would use the standard may the
best man win.

Q 10
Researcher:
How does **the interpersonal skills** of the other
individual relate to the manner in which you would deal
with a work-related conflict?

Interviewee:
Some people are spoiled. They are not used to working
with others. So if a conflict arises, quite naturally,
you have a person who won't move.

Researcher:
[Probe] So in the case you are confronted with somebody
who just would not move, how would you deal with the
situation?

Interviewee:
First I would show them that I am willing to break down
a leg off my table, and see if they would break one down
off theirs so that we could move on. But let's I am
giving in a little and they are not giving any, I would
try to prioritize things. From there a third party could
get involved, some neutral person. You got to try
everything at your disposal. Call in a mediator.

Q 11
Researcher:
When trying to resolve a work-related conflict involving

someone from an ethnic background other than your own,
which of the following is most important: The
consequences of the decision favored by your partner,
the best interest of the organization, the time
available for you to make a reach a solution, the
cultural differences between you and your partner, or
the interpersonal skills of partner?

Interviewee:
The one that would influence me the most is the best
interests of the company. The second one would be
interpersonal behavior.

Q 12.
Researcher:
[preparing to close] Is there anything else about work-
related conflict that you would like to share with me?

Interviewee:
No. Not really. I think you covered all the bases.

SALIFOU SIDDO

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University, USA
Ph.D. Speech Communication   1996
MA Speech Communication   1991

University of Niamey, Niger
MA English   1989
BA English   1987

EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Communication Studies
   Barry University   Since 1995
Lecturer, Speech Communication
   The Pennsylvania State University,   1991-1995
Hewlett Graduate Fellow
   The Carter Center, Atlanta, GA   Summer 1993
Cross-Cultural Program Coordinator
   The U.S. Peace Corps-Niger   1988-1989

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Speech Communication Association (SCA)

Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (SIETAR)

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

PAPERS

   Siddo, Salifou. (1993). Variation in second language discourse as a function of topic and interlocutor familiarity. Paper presented at the 79th Speech Communication Association Convention. Miami Beach, FL.

   Siddo, Salifou. (1995). Decision-Making in the Culturally Diverse Small Group: Challenges to Effective Communication. Paper Presented at the 12th Annual Intercultural and International Communication Conference. Miami, FL.