CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES: A PREDICTOR OF LIKABLITY AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS AMONG SUBORDINATES

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication Studies,
Indiana University

June 2008

Accepted by the Faculty of Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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DEDICATION

To my friends and colleagues in the Communication Graduate Program, from whom I have learned so much, received such priceless encouragement and advice, and without whom I would have missed so much during my time at IUPUI.

To the faculty who taught the academic material in class and the application thereof through their commitment and dedication to their students.

To Dr. Catherine Dobris who has opened my eyes to new and fascinating ways of viewing the world, and who remains my inspiration and the person I aspire to become.

To George, my best friend. Thank you for believing in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. You remain an important and valuable part of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Kim White-Mills, my thesis advisor, for her friendship and encouragement throughout this process. A special thanks to Dr. Ronald Sandwina and Dr. Catherine Dobris for agreeing to be a part of my committee and for their assistance and encouragement along the way. I would also like to acknowledge each professor I have had in each class I have taken during my time at IUPUI. I gained great value from each instructor and class assignment, and each experience has contributed to the knowledge I now possess.

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INTRODUCTION

As greater numbers of women throughout the past few decades have assumed managerial roles in organizations, the question of whether gender differences exist in the ability to manage effectively has become an important concern. According to Korabik, Baril, and Watson (1993), conflict management skills are a fundamental aspect of leadership effectiveness and "perceptions of how females handle crisis and conflict often are cited as blocks to the female manager's ascent to the executive suite" (Shockley-Zalabak, 1981, p. 289). Additionally, the importance of likability of supervisors by their subordinates has become of greater importance in the past few years as researchers have discovered that more people leave their job because they do not like their supervisor than for any other reason (Agrusa, Spears, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Joyce, 2006). In addition to the costs accumulated from hiring and training new employees, customer satisfaction is directly related to employee loyalty. Employee dissatisfaction with supervisors, therefore, may in turn jeopardize the objectives of the organization (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in supervisor's conflict management styles and to determine how they relate to both effectiveness and likability among their subordinates. The term *gender* is used because of the assumption that any such differences likely result from culture or experience, rather than biology. It should be recognized, however, that gender was not directly measured, but was rather operationalized in terms of the biological sex of the subjects researched. Specifically, research was conducted to reveal a) what differences exist between conflict management

styles chosen by women and men leaders, b) if a relationship exists between conflict management styles and likeability among subordinates, c) what influence conflict management styles have upon perceived effectiveness among subordinates, and d) what correlation exists between likability and perceived effectiveness.

Likability

A great deal of research has been dedicated to the topic of likability. While aspects of what makes a person likeable have been presented, studies have varied in their measurement of the actual construct of likeability (Reysen, 2005). Likability has been labeled both a persuasion tactic and a method of self presentation (Cialdini, 1993; Kemick, Neuberg, & Cialdini, 2002). Aspects that appear to increase likability include physical attractiveness, similarity to self, compliments and association (Cialdini, 1993). Physically attractive individuals have been rated as more talented, kind, honest and intelligent (see Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991). Similarity to ourselves has been shown to increase likability (Byrne, 1971; Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991; Hogg, Cooper-Shaw, & Holzworth, 1993). Additionally, compliments or praise increase likability (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965; Drachman, deCarufel, & Insko, 1978).

Effectiveness

According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), competence is “the capability that a person brings to a situation” (p. 97). Within the context of organizations, competence, or more specifically, effectiveness has been defined as a combination of quality and quantity of performance within the unit or section for which the manager holds responsibility (Luthans et al., 1985). More importantly, it has been noted that the *perception*, more so

than the *actuality*, of managerial competence determines the interpersonal dynamic and effectiveness of an organizational team (O'Driscoll, Humphries, & Larsenwhich, 1991). Subordinate perceptions of managerial competence is defined by Mott (1972), as encompassing technical knowledge, human relations skills, administrative expertise, as well as issues such as mutual trust and confidence. Therefore, although a manager may believe him or herself to be an effective leader, if this opinion is not shared by his or her subordinates, the leadership efforts will result in failure (Bass, 1960). As Downton (1973, p. 95) explains:

> The greater a leader's competence as perceived by the follower, the greater the probability that the follower will transact goods with him…We should expect the leader's information, skills, and personal temperament to be important factors influencing the formation and maintenance of follower commitments. . . Competence to cope with the instrumental tasks of the group is an important criterion in selecting leaders, for it is through the leader's successful performance of his instrumental functions that rewards are accumulated by individual followers.

Conflict

If an individual is perceived to manage conflict in an appropriate and effective manner within an organizational setting, that individual is also perceived to be more competent in general (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). Researchers in recent years have evaluated the basic assumptions underlying organizational conflict, questioning much of the existing body of conflict research (Jameson, 1999). The old view held that conflict is filled with simple procedures and structures. The old, non-contextual view of conflict meant that researchers could take an optimistic view of the generalizability of research findings (Lewicki et al., 1992). In recent years, however, literature on marketing, management, organizational behavior and social psychology has been filled with studies

regarding conflict's dimensionality and intricacy (Song, Dyer, & Thieme, 2006). Many scholars believe that the failure to incorporate these factors into conflict research has had a negative impact on the value of research findings and has slowed theoretical development (Jameson, 1999; Song, Dyer, & Thieme, 2006). For example, Jehn and Chatman (2000) argue "the most common conceptualization of conflict may be incomplete and hinder the usefulness of the research" (p. 56).

Wilmont and Hocker (2001, p. 41) state that conflict is "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals" and conflict management styles refer to "patterned responses, or clusters of behavior, that people use in conflict" through diverse communication tactics (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 130). At the individual level, conflict begins "when one party perceives that the other has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that he or she cares about" (Thomas, 1992, p. 653). At the cultural level, conflicts occur between members of different cultures, and members of the same culture who feel that cultural rules or norms are being violated (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 66). Although the definitions of conflict are different from one researcher to another and are dependant on situational variables, conflict can be generally defined as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals (Putnam & Poole, 1987).

Conflict Management Styles

Researchers have suggested that an individual's conflict style is a behavioral orientation of how to approach and handle conflict, with individuals choosing a pattern of

principles to guide them through the conflict process. These patterns evolve into actions and reactions that become known as their "style" (Ruble & Thomas, 1976; Thomas, 1976; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978). According to Thomas (1976) and Folger et al., (1997), conflict management style is a "general and consistent orientation toward the other party and the conflict issues, manifest in observable behaviors that form a pattern and share common characteristics over time" (Kuhn & Poole, 2000, p. 560).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide a review of literature related to conflict and conflict management styles, and how these concepts relate to gender and leadership effectiveness of supervisors within organizations. In this chapter, the various conflict management styles referenced in this study will be reviewed, and an overview will be given of how these definitions relate to past and current scholarship. Second, what scholarly literature reveals regarding the role gender occupies in conflict management will be discussed. Third, an overview of the studies which have been performed on leadership styles will be presented. Fourth, the relevant research that has been conducted on the leadership styles of women and men in organizations will be discussed, and the limitations that exist within this research will be examined. Finally, the theoretical base for this study will be established by reviewing the tenets of social role theory. Additionally, how social expectations shape women's behavior and interaction in an organizational setting will be examined, as well as how perceptions of women leaders are shaped by their subordinates.

Description of Conflict Management Styles

Conflict management style has been and continues to be measured by a variety of classifications. Follett (1940) first conceptualized the first five-style classification of behavioral conflict-handling strategies in the 1920's. Follett reported findings of methods individuals typically use when dealing with conflict: domination, compromise, integration, avoidance and suppression. Another one of the first conceptual schemes for classifying conflict revolved around a simple dichotomy involving either cooperation or competition (Deutsch, 1949). Deutsch defined conflict as incompatible interaction between two individuals, where one is interfering, obstructing or in other ways making

the behavior of another less effective. He argued that the dynamics and outcomes of conflict depend upon whether the conflict is handled cooperatively or competitively.

However, doubts were raised over the ability of Deutsch's (1949) dichotomy to reflect the complexity of an individual's perceptions of conflict behavior (Ruble & Thomas, 1976; Smith, 1987) and a new two-dimensional grid for classifying the styles was developed by Blake and Mouton (1964). Based on Follett's (1940) classifications, Blake and Mouton (1964) grouped the various styles for handling interpersonal conflict into five types: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising and problem solving. Blake and Mouton's (1964) work proposes that conflict is managed in different ways depending on whether the individuals, specifically managers, involved have high or low concern for production and high or low concern for people. By juxtaposing the two dimensions, then, they generated five styles: problem solving resulting from high concern for productivity and people, forcing showing high concern for productivity and low concern for people, compromising based on moderate concern for productivity and people, smoothing depending on low concern for productivity and high concern for people, and withdrawing representing low concern for productivity and low concern for people.

Thomas and Kilmann (1974) also developed a model for handling conflict that utilizes five styles: competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating and compromising. The competing style is high in concern for self, which is characterized by a drive to maximize individual gain, even at the expense of others. This style is in contrast to the collaborating style, which constructs solutions to conflict to meet the needs of all parties involved. The avoiding style is low in concern for self and disengages from

conflict. The accommodating style sacrifices self-interests to satisfy the needs of others. Finally, compromising theoretically straddles the midpoint between cooperativeness and assertiveness, and involves making concessions to arrive at a resolution of conflict.

On the basis of a factor analysis of the items of their Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument, Putnam and Wilson's (1982) three-conflict management style model divides conflict management strategies into three factors: non-confrontation (obliging), solution-oriented (integrating) and control (dominating). Putnam and Wilson (1982) state that non-confrontation, or obliging, strategies manage conflict indirectly, by either simply avoiding disagreements or by minimizing controversial issues. Solution-oriented, or integrating, strategies manage conflict both by searching for creative, integrative solutions and by making compromises. Control, or dominating, strategies manage conflict by arguing persistently for their positions and using nonverbal messages to emphasize demands.

Pruitt (1983) provided empirical evidence from laboratory studies that there are four styles of handling conflict: yielding, problem solving, inaction and contending. Based partially on Blake and Mouton's (1964) two level component, these styles were based on a two dimensional model consisting of concern for self (high or low) and concern for others (high or low).

While numerous researchers proposed revisions of the preceding frameworks, Rahim and Bonoma's (1979) conceptualization has been one of the most popular, with empirical evidence (e.g., Rahim & Magner, 1995; van de Vilert & Kabanoff, 1990) suggesting it to be most valid. Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the styles of resolving interpersonal conflict on two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for

others. The first dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy their own concerns, while the second dimension explains the degree to which an individual tries to satisfy the needs or concerns of others. The combination of these two dimensions results in five specific styles of conflict management, known as integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising.

Integrating is characterized by both high concern for self and for others. This involves openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties. It is associated with problem solving, which may lead to creative solutions. This style has been found to be useful in utilizing the skills and information of different individuals to generate solutions, and may be appropriate for dealing with strategic issues relating to objectives, policies and long-range planning (Afzalur, Garrett, & Buntzman, 1992).

An obliging style involves low concern for self and high concern for others. This style is associated with attempting diminish differences and emphasize commonalities for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the other party. This style has been found to be used by an individual believing that he or she may be wrong and that the issue in question is much more important to the other person involved. It can be used as a strategy when an individual is willing to make a concession with the hope of getting something in return (Afzalur, Garrett, & Buntzman, 1992).

A dominating style is characterized by high concern for self and low concern for others. This style has been identified with a win-lose perspective or with forcing behavior by one individual over another as a means to win a position or resolve a conflict situation. An individual using a dominating style typically uses whatever measures necessary to

win the objective, and as a result, ignores or minimizes the needs and expectations of the other party. This style is often used when the issues involved in a conflict seem relatively unimportant or when a quick decision is required. A dominating may style may also be used by upper management for implementing strategies and policies, or when unpopular courses of action must be implemented (Afzalur, Garrett, & Buntzman, 1992).

An avoiding style is associated with both low concern for self and others. This style is usually accompanied by withdrawal, as an individual using this style fails to satisfy both his or her concerns as well as the concerns of the other party. This style is often used when the potential ramifications of confronting the other party seem to outweigh the benefits of resolving the conflict. This style has often been found to be used when individuals deal with perceived tactical or minor issues (Afzalur, Garrett, & Buntzman, 1992).

Compromising is associated with an intermediate level of concern for both self and others. This style typically involves “give and take” where both parties involved relinquish some aspect in order to arrive at a mutually-acceptable decision. This style is often used when the goals of the conflicting parties are mutually exclusive or when both parties, who are equally powerful, such as a labor union and management, have reached an impasse. This style is used when dealing with particular strategic issues (Afzalur, Garrett, & Buntzman, 1992).

Some researchers have suggested that successful conflict management involves using specific styles to resolve conflict situations; for example, that the integrative or problem-solving style is most appropriate for managing all conflict (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Likert & Likert, 1976). Other researchers have indicated that for conflicts to be

managed most effectively, one style is more appropriate than the other, based on the situation (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1992). According to Gross and Guerrero (2000), the effectiveness of individuals is perceived based on which conflict management styles they choose to incorporate. They discovered that an integrative conflict management style is generally perceived as the most appropriate (in terms of being both a polite, prosocial strategy, and an adaptive, situationally appropriate strategy) and most effective style. The dominating style tended to be perceived as inappropriate, and the obliging style was generally perceived as neutral. The avoiding style was generally perceived as both ineffective and inappropriate. Finally, compromising was perceived as a relatively neutral style.

Influence of Gender

Taylor and Hardman (2004) posit that "gender must be seen as more than an individual's sex; it must be seen, simultaneously, as: a characteristic of (some) languages; sets of expectations for individuals' behaviors, attitudes and feelings; sets of social structures created and recreated through human interactions; complex webs of relationships; ideology; interactive outcomes of perceptions and self-presentations, thus always in progress and in relations" (p. 3). With increasing numbers of women moving into decision making positions in organizations (Neubert & Palmer, 2004), coupled with the obvious importance of conflict management skills in providing effective leadership, there has been an increased focus on the gender differences in managing conflict.

Early research was often tainted by stereotypical assumptions about women in both the research design and in the interpretation of the data. For example, results from psychological studies, especially those prior to the 1980's, suggested that men and

women tend to endorse conflict management strategies that complement gender role expectations (Wachter, 1999). Additionally, older research examining individual differences in conflict management style focused upon gender as an explanatory variable, and suggested that the five conflict management styles are compatible with gender role orientation (Bern & Lenney, 1976; Kagan, 1964; Maccoby, 1966). Bern and Lenney (1976), for example, suggest that strongly sex-typed individuals are constrained to their respective stereotypical behaviors, whereas androgynous individuals have greater behavioral flexibility and can adopt both masculine and feminine conflict management characteristics. Interestingly, research from this same time frame also suggested that women are competitive based upon contextual variables (Bedell & Sistrunk, 1973; Rubin & Brown, 1975). According some (Bern, 1974; Bern & Lenney, 1976; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), differences in conflict management behavior of men and women are determined by gender roles, which are considered to represent learned patterns of masculine and feminine characteristics, and determine how individuals behave in certain circumstances (Cook, 1985). For example, men are generally thought to develop masculine characteristics, which include aggressiveness, independence, competitiveness and assertiveness, while women are thought to develop feminine characteristics such as emotionality, sensitivity and cooperativeness (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972). Since an individual's progress in an organization often seems to have been associated with the possession of masculine rather than feminine characteristics (Brenner et al., 1989; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Powell & Butterfield, 1979), it is possible that in order to progress in their careers women were either forced to adopt a more masculine orientation, or naturally made their way to the

top by virtue thereof. Supporting this suggestion is research evidence which strongly suggests that women managers made their way into their top positions because they possessed more masculine characteristics than women in the general population (Fagenson, 1990; Powell, 1988).

Supporting this hypothesis, additional previous findings (Korabik & Ayman, 1987) suggested congruence between gender and conflict management styles, and suggest that women deliberately choose a cooperative orientation to conflict management than do men (Rahim, 1983; Rubin & Brown, 1975). In efforts to resolve conflicts, women self-report softer tactics as a first resort more so than do men, who report greater use of more aggressive tactics, including pressure and contention (Carothers & Allen, 1999; Gruber & White, 1988; Offerman & Schrier, 1985; Pruitt, 1998). For example, according to Monroe, DiSalvo, Lewis, and Borzi (1991), male subordinates used relational leverage (confrontation) more often with female supervisor and female subordinates used avoidance more often with male supervisors.

Additionally, women in professional settings reported that they were more likely to use affilitative (Baker, 1991; Lucas & Lovaglia, 1998) and indirect negotiation strategies (Sagrestano, 1992). Additional researchers have indicated female supervisors tend to use interpersonal, compromising, collaborative, accommodating, integrating, cooperative, avoiding, pro-social communicative methods (Gibbs & Lach, 1994a, 1994b; Lay, 1994; Sorenson & Hawkins, 1995; Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993; Conrad, 1991; Monroe et al., 1991; Fink & Brunner, 1987). These findings are consistent with Eagly and Johnson's (1996) argument that the strongest evidence for gender differences in

leadership style is the tendency for women to adopt a more participative and democratic style and men a more autocratic or directive style.

Other researchers have questioned whether male and female managers differ at all in their preferred conflict management style (Baxter & Shepard, 1978; Yelsma & Brown, 1985). Many of the studies that have demonstrated gender differences have employed nonmanagerial samples (e.g., Chanin & Schneer, 1984; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Ruble & Stander, 1990; Rosenthal & Hautaluoma, 1988) and gender differences are found more frequently among such samples than among samples of managers (Powell, 1988). Also, even when managers are used as subjects, the men and women are usually not equivalent in age, education, or managerial experience. Gender differences in conflict management style, if they exist at all, tend to disappear once these other factors are controlled (Champion, 1979; Chusmir & Mills, 1988; Korabik & Ayman, 1987). Thus, men and women managers who are similar to one another do not appear to differ in self-reports about their preferred conflict management style (Renwick, 1975, 1977; Shockley-Zalabak, 1981).

According to Burrell, Buzzanell, and McMillan, (1992), the equivocality of these findings may be explained by the fact that women approach conflict in unique ways that may not be apparent or surface in empirical investigations that quantify results and predict outcomes, and that "equivocality may be associated with the research methods used by investigators" (p. 121). Women's conflict orientations tend to emerge when ethnographic, sociolinguistic, rhetorical-critical and feminist methodologies are utilized instead. Research using these more experiential methods have uncovered findings such as women's struggles to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation in communication (Gilligan,

1982; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Pearson, Turner, & Todd-Mancillas, 1991); organizational dilemmas related to being paradoxically female and professional (Fairhurst, 1986; Moore, 1988; Wood & Conrad, 198) and suppression of authenticity by pervasive patriarchal expressions of expected behaviors and speech (Gillian, 1982; Lewis, 1990).

Overview of Leadership Styles

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) define leadership style as relatively stable patterns of behavior displayed by leaders. Studies on leadership have suggested that leadership styles are generally either agentic or communal, with agentic described as "an assertive, controlling, and confident tendency – for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive" and communal described as "affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant and gentle" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). Most commonly reported was a distinction between two approaches to leadership: task-oriented style, defined as a concern with accomplishing assigned tasks by organizing task-relevant activities, and interpersonally oriented style, defined as a concern with maintaining interpersonal relationships by tending to others' morale and welfare. This distinction was introduced by Bales (1950) and developed further by Hemphill & Coons (1957). In this research, task-oriented style, labeled initiation of structure, included behavior such as encouraging subordinates to follow rules and procedures, maintaining high standards for performance, and making leader and subordinate roles explicit. Interpersonally oriented style, labeled consideration, included behavior such as helping and doing favors for subordinates, looking out for their welfare, explaining procedures, and being friendly and available.

Other studies distinguished between leaders who a) behave democratically and allow subordinates to participate in decision making or b) behave autocratically and discourage subordinates from participating in decision making. This dimension of leadership, ordinarily termed democratic versus autocratic leadership or participative versus directive leadership, followed from earlier experimental studies of leadership style (e.g., Lewin & Lippitt, 1938) and was further developed by a number of researchers (e.g., Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

In the 1980's and 1990's, many researchers turned their attention to new types of leadership styles by distinguishing between leaders who are transformational and those who are transactional (Bass, 1998). This effort was initially inspired by Burns's (1978) argument that existing analyses of leadership style left out some of the most important aspects of effective leadership. This new work emphasized that effective leaders inspire their followers and nurture their ability to contribute to the organization. This approach initially emerged in Burns's (1978) delineation of a type of leadership that he labeled transformational. According to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) these two types of leadership – transformational and transactional – are both displayed by effective leaders. In addition to transformational and transactional leadership, researchers have distinguished a laissez-faire style that is marked by a general failure to take responsibility for managing (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2003).

As elaborated by Bass (1985, 1998), transformational leadership involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining the trust and confidence of followers. Such leaders state future goals and develop plans to achieve them. Skeptical of the status quo, they innovate, even when the organization that they lead is generally successful. By

mentoring and empowering their followers, transformational leaders encourage them to develop their full potential and thereby to contribute more capably to their organization. Many of these same qualities also were studied by researchers who labeled this future oriented, empowering style as charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Burns (1978) and other researchers (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998) contrasted transformational leaders to transactional leaders, who appeal to subordinates' self-interest by establishing exchange relationships with them. This type of leadership involves managing in the more conventional sense of clarifying subordinate responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives. Researchers have suggested that transformational leadership contributes to the success of organizations, and is therefore a preferred leadership style to be followed (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2003).

The significance the of choice of conflict management style on leadership ability is aptly described by Lehnen, Ayman, and Korabik (1995), who examined the conflict management styles of female and male leaders. Results indicated that transformational leadership was strongly associated with using an integrative conflict management style. The relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction was shown to be mediated by the conflict management style used by the leader. Leaders who described themselves as more transformational used integrative conflict management styles and had followers with greater levels of satisfaction. However, in Lehnen et al.'s study, this relationship was stronger for the female versus male managers in the sample, and self-described male transformational leaders described themselves as using more of a compromising style of conflict management.

Limitations of Past Research on Leadership

Because men have long held leadership roles and have defined the leadership styles to which people have become accustomed (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001), virtually all theories of effective management have been based on observations of male managers (Powell, 1988). Researchers have long made judgments regarding what effective management is, not recognizing that the majority of managers are male and are therefore judged on their adherence to the male gender stereotype. Wilson (2003) asserts that there remains a persistent stereotype that associates management with "being male" (p. 64), and that whichever characteristics are considered important for managers, they appear to be the ones generally identified more closely with men than with women. It is not surprising, then, that masculinity remains prevalent in the ranks of management, and that the perception remains that successful managerial characteristics are more likely to be held by men than by women (Schein, 2001). This perception unfortunately discounts that although managers tend to be masculine, *better* managers are not necessarily masculine nor do better managers necessarily adhere to masculine-typed behaviors (Wilson, 2003).

In addition to this dilemma, women and issues about their work have been considered by many to be less important than that of men, and as such, less extensive and in-depth research has been conducted on them (Wilson, 2003). If not ignored altogether in organizational theory, women's perspectives and ideas have often been absent, buried or marginalized. When women and issues or concern to women are studied, the research questions are too often framed through the eyes of men (Unger & Crawford, 1992). For example, when gender is acknowledged in books, the "male as norm" syndrome appears,

as was the case in a textbook on communication in small group that featured an index entry for “women in groups” (Bormann, 1990, p. 303). No entry exists for “men in groups,” which suggests that women are not the norm and therefore deserve special research. In a male-dominated workplace, the expectation is that women’s experiences can be adequately understood through the filter of the dominant gender culture (Sheppard, 1992).

There are obviously many more women in the workforce now and in higher positions, which may have changed women’s communication and leadership for a host of reasons. However, although women have made considerable gains in management roles, the glass ceiling remains firmly in place, with women still clustered in staff jobs, rather than in line management jobs that are more likely to lead to higher level positions (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000).

Although in recent years women have been the focus of discussions of the impact of gender on leadership, there is little agreement about how women actually lead, and a continuing debate of whether men and women behave differently in leadership roles. Although there is general agreement that women face more barriers to becoming leaders than do men, especially for leader roles that are male-dominated (Eagly & Karau, 2002), there is much less agreement about the behavior of women and men once they attain such roles.

Men and Women in Leadership

Powell and Graves (2003) suggest that the “sex of the individuals who hold leader roles should be of little concern. What should matter is how individuals, male and female, respond to the demands of the particular leader role that they occupy. However, the sex

of leaders does make an emphatic difference to others" (p. 151). Corroborating this observation, the past few decades, management literature has been filled with the ongoing debate of whether female and male managers use different leadership styles. The advocates of difference in leadership styles between women and men include several writers of trade books who have drawn on their personal experience in organizations as well as informal surveys and interviews of managers (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). These writers have claimed that the leadership styles of women and men are different, mainly stating that women leaders are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative and more oriented to enhancing others' self-worth (Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995). In contrast, social scientists have typically either claimed that female and male organizational leaders do not differ or minimized the importance of those differences that have been observed (Powell, 1990). Careful examination of relevant research, however, has revealed more complex findings than acknowledged by the advocates of difference or the advocates of similarity.

Early scholars expressed skepticism about women's ability to assume managerial roles and responsibilities, because managerial roles are often associated with masculine rather than feminine characteristics (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Shein, 1989; Powell & Butterfield, 1979). This skepticism was prevalent despite findings from research examining leadership style in general, which suggests that males and females who occupy equivalent managerial positions behave in much the same way (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Korabik et al., 1993; Powell, 1988).

Through the early 1990's, a growing body of research emerged positing that gender differences in leadership styles do not exist, with several well-known management

researchers, including Powell (1990, 1993) and Bass (1981) supporting this belief. However, in 1990, following the publication of a *Harvard Business Review* article, "Ways women lead" (Rosener, 1990), the previously researched conclusion of the absence of gender differences in leadership styles was called into question (Rosener, 1990). Even Bass, who had previously been a strong advocate of the absence of female-male differences in leadership styles, began to question his previous conclusions (Bass et al., 1996).

In summary, to the extent that gender roles influence leadership behavior in organizational settings, the behavior of female leaders, compared with that of male leaders, may be more interpersonally oriented, democratic, and transformational. In contrast, the behavior of male leaders, compared with that of female leaders, may be more task-oriented and autocratic. In addition, the greater incongruence of the female than male gender role with typical leader roles may make it more difficult for women than men to manifest the more agentic leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Societal Prescriptions

The following sections of this review, which comment upon the societal prescriptions for women, and the resulting theories of social role and role congruency, are included for the purpose of explaining the expectations underlying this study and the research questions developed throughout. It is useful to comment upon research conducted on the behavior of men and women in an organizational context, but of greater significance is research which has been performed that analyzes the social and cultural influences which both contribute to and maintain this behavior.

According to DeVault (1996), “feminists believe that women have been subordinated through men's greater power, variously expressed in different arenas” (p. 31). What this means is that the subordination of women by men is pervasive, that it orders the relationship of the sexes in every area of life, that domination is equally in evidence in the private spheres of the family and in the public spheres of work (Bartky, 1990). Patriarchal culture has ascribed to women a distinct feminine nature by which it has justified the exclusion of women, and enforces behavior in women that benefits men (Young, 1990). Several writers have observed that social consensual conceptions exist not only descriptively, how women are, but also prescriptively, how they should behave Glick & Fiske, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway, 2001). The extent to which these prescriptive standards influence the adoption of conflict management styles can be explained through societal, patriarchal views of women, particularly in the ways in which women are expected to interact with others and behave both interpersonally and in an organizational setting.

One major patriarchal prescription for women’s behavior, in both domestic and public life, is that they present themselves in an agreeable and pleasant way. According to Fox (1997), stating that a women is “nice” is a form of social control titled “normative restriction.” This form of control over the social behavior of women is embodied in such value constructs as “good girl,” “lady” or “nice girl.” As a value construct, these terms connote the idea of chaste, gentle, gracious, good, clean, kind and virtuous. To use Rokeach’s (1971) terminology, the concept “nice girl” is both an instrumental and terminal value: both a standard for and goal of behavior. The stereotype of “niceness” tends to be highly prescriptive, because communal traits are associated with the deferent

behavior that men demand of women (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000). Traditional gender relations clearly fit this mode. Women, who are societally subordinate to men, are stereotyped as being nicer (Eagly & Mladinic,1989) and are more likely to enact subordinate roles that require communal traits (Eagly, 1987). Unfortunately, women who violate the "niceness expectation" by adopting male characteristics are not liked, because they violate the prescriptive aspect of female gender stereotypes (i.e., what women should be); in particular, that women ought to be communal (i.e., kind, thoughtful, and sensitive to others' feelings). Because women are held to a higher standard of niceness than men, women who violate this "niceness expectation" may be viewed as competent but insufficiently feminine (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999).

In addition, men's dependence on women (e.g., for sex, sexual reproduction, homemaking, and child care) creates incentives for men to ensure that women remain deferent, compliant, and willing to enact subordinate roles. Since persuasion is more effective than hostility (Jackman, 1994), women who behave "nicely" are treated benevolently by men (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Thus, the prescriptiveness of the "niceness" stereotype is reinforced by men because they are dependent upon acquiescence from women (Glick & Fiske, 1999).

Finally, the prescription that women behave in a communal way "serves to counteract societal changes that threaten male dominance" (Rudman & Glick, 2001, p. 745). As women in recent years have continued to enter the workplace, society has begun to view women as agentic, and women have also started to view themselves accordingly. (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Spence & Buckner, 2000). Although these changes might seem

to threaten the established male hierarchy, the continuing societal prescriptions for females to maintain traits of communality seem to negate this threat (Spence & Buckner, 2000), and people continue to stereotype women as nicer than men (Diekman & Eagly, 2000).

Patriarchal expectations, then, have prescribed specific characteristics to which women and men (specifically women) should adhere. These prescriptions are most starkly evident when considering the construction of social roles and role congruency. In the subsequent sections, the conceptualizations of social role theory and role congruency will be reviewed, and how these theories relate to the research that is presented in this project will be explained.

Social Role Theory

Eagly (1987) explains social role theory as the concept that men and women behave differently in social situations and adopt different roles, due to societal expectations of how they should behave in various situations (See also Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000; Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Social role theory is often seen as a form of "social determinism whereby individuals are trapped into stereotypes, which people then choose to maintain as customs" (Claes, 1999, p. 432).

"Social determinism" (Claes, 1999, p. 432) is explained further by Eagly (1987), who maintains that this social role theory of sex differences in social behavior suggests that people are expected to behave in ways that are consistent with these gender roles. For example, men and women often are expected to, and do, occupy different roles in society (i.e., provider, caregiver) and through fulfillment of these roles, they learn different skills

and beliefs that encourage specific social behavior. Men and women are also subject to different expectations for behavior. According to Eagly (1987), societal expectations for proper or socially condoned activities lead to different behavior on the part of men and women. For example, “men are expected to be more agentic…and women are expected to be more communal” (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007, p. 485). Therefore, women and men will strive to fulfill these expectations, or social roles in various facets of social interactions.

Eagly (1987) additionally asserts that although society possesses expectations regarding how women and men should behave, “these expectations are more than beliefs about the attributes of women and men: Many of these expectations…describe qualities or behavioral tendencies **believed to be desirable**” (emphasis mine). When individuals act in ways that are consistent with their prescribed roles, they are generally viewed favorably; however, when individuals act in ways that violate what is considered acceptable behavior for their gender, they are likely to be viewed negatively (Eagly, 1987). Bolino and Turnley (2003) agree, stating that social-role theory suggests that women are likely to be penalized for acting assertively, or in other ways that are counter to stereotypical expectations.

These societal expectations are apparent in men and women’s interaction in organizational settings, not only because of the influence of societal expectations, but also because internalization and self-description into these specific feminine or masculine-based roles. In emphasizing gender roles as well as leader roles, social role theorists state that leaders occupy both the roles defined by their specific position in an organization and their socially-prescribed gender. Therefore, to the extent that gender

roles influence leaders, women and men holding the same leadership role would behave somewhat differently. Consistent with this argument, researchers (Gutek & Morasch, 1982; Gutek, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001) maintained that gender provides an identity that men and women adhere to in the workplace. As Eagly et al. (2000) subsequently argued, the influence of gender roles on organizational behavior occurs, not only because subordinates and other tend to relate to leaders in terms of the gender expectations they posses, and then, leaders tend respond accordingly, but also because most people have "internalized gender roles to some extent" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 784). (See also Cross & Madson, 1997; Deaux & Major, 1987; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Wood, Christensen, Hebl, & Rothgerber, 1997).

Therefore, as a consequence of the influence of social roles (which results in specific gender identities) women and men possess different expectations for their own behavior in organizational settings (Ely, 1995). The way managers identify or view themselves in terms of gender may be incorporated into managerial roles; thus these self-definitions influence their behavior (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2003).

Role Congruency

Role congruity theory is grounded in social role theory's treatment of the content of gender roles and their importance in promoting sex differences in behavior (Eagly et al., 2000). However, role congruity theory reaches beyond social role theory to consider the congruity between gender roles and other roles, especially leadership roles, as well as the factors influencing perceptions of female managers who behave in a manner that is incongruent with their socially-prescribed gender role and the consequences that these women face as a result (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Role congruity theory, in conjunction with social role theory, suggests that female leaders' choices are constrained in two ways: Conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their socially-prescribed gender role. A particular consequence for the choice of leadership and conflict style are the negative reactions that women may experience when they behave in a clearly agentic style, especially if that style entails exerting control and dominance over others (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Despite the influence of gender roles in organizational settings, clear evidence exists that a woman conforms to the requirements of the leader role that she occupies should to some extent restrain gender-stereotypical inferences about her. Consistent with this prediction, both male managers (Heilman et al., 1995) and graduate students in business (Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995) perceived that female managers who were described as successful were almost as similar to successful managers in general as successful male managers were.

Paradoxically, female manager or leader who is perceived as adopting a leadership style similar to a male leader may be disadvantaged (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This disadvantage can arise from the norms associated with the female gender role. Because women who are effective leaders tend to violate standards for their gender when they manifest socially-defined male attributes and fail to display socially-defined female attributes, they may be unfavorably viewed as a result their gender role violation, at least by those who endorse traditional gender roles. This reaction reflects the general tendency for deviations from prescribed social roles to elicit disapproval (Cialdini & Trost, 1998).

A woman who fulfills a leader role may thus elicit negative reactions, even while she may also receive some positive evaluation for her fulfillment of this role. Some evidence of this mix of positive and negative evaluations emerged in Heilman et al.'s (1995) finding that, even when the researchers described female managers as successful, participants regarded these women as more hostile (e.g., more devious, quarrelsome, selfish, bitter) and less rational (i.e., less logical, objective, able to separate feelings from ideas) than successful male managers (Eagly & Karau, 2002)..

Conclusion

Scholarly research of leadership and conflict management styles concludes that women face a distinct disadvantage in organizational contexts. Research has shown that because of salient societal pressures, gender roles influence leadership behavior and conflict management styles in organizational settings. Because of the pervasiveness of pressure to conform to a particular social role (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000; Bolino & Turnley, 2003), the struggle to maintain a leadership persona congruent to stereotypical roles (Cialdini, 1993; Kemick, Neuberg, & Cialdini, 2002), the behavior of female leaders, compared with that of male leaders, may be more interpersonally oriented, non-confrontative and democratic. In contrast, the behavior of male leaders, compared with that of female leaders, may be more aggressive, task-oriented and autocratic. The incongruence of the female than male gender role with typical leader roles makes it difficult for women to manifest an agentic leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Research has also uncovered findings such as women's struggles to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation in communication (Gilligan, 1982; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Pearson, Turner, & Todd-Mancillas, 1991); organizational dilemmas related to being paradoxically female and professional (Fairhurst, 1986; Moore, 1988), and suppression of authenticity by pervasiveness patriarchal expressions of expected behaviors and speech (Gillian, 1982; Lewis, 1990). These findings, along with considerable additional research, point to gender as an explanatory variable for differences in choice of conflict management style. A number of theoretical sources suggest that the five conflict management styles of integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) are compatible with gender role orientation (Bern & Lenney, 1976; Kagan, 1964; Maccoby, 1966).

Leadership and conflict management literature seem to suggest that women are not only constrained by societal norms and pressures to choose a particular pattern of behavior within an organizational context, but that they strategically choose these behaviors as a method to avoid negative repercussions and to foster a positive image. Research has also shown abundant evidence of the negative reactions to women who behave in a male-stereotypical manner and has suggested that women garner more social approval by maintaining a female-stereotypical persona.

Therefore, the assumptions implicit in this study and in the research questions formed in the next section rely on the theoretical basis that male and female managers will choose conflict management strategies that conform to societal expectations of their gender role. These questions are also based on the assumption that the subordinates of these supervisors will express liking, and indicate that they perceive their managers to be

effective based on the conflict management style the supervisors choose. Additionally, the research will attempt to determine the importance and viability of likability within the managerial role by measuring perceived managerial effectiveness among subordinates.

Research Questions

Based on the assumptions garnered from the preceding review of literature, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: Is there a difference in conflict management style between male and female supervisors?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and subordinate likability?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and perceived effectiveness?

RQ4: Is there a correlation between likeability and perceived effectiveness?

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the participants involved in this study will be presented, and the instruments used in the survey process will be explained. Additionally, the statistical tests used to analyze the data will be described.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of employees of a Midwestern hospital. After Institutional Review Board approval was obtained, the Human Resources Director of the hospital provided the names of 37 supervisors within the hospital, and the corresponding subordinates they supervise. The supervisors included heads of both administrative and technical/medical divisions of the hospital.

All 37 supervisor/subordinate teams received a questionnaire, totaling approximately 800 total subjects. Each questionnaire was distributed personally by the Human Resources Director to the teams within the hospital. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Each questionnaire was coded for the purpose of matching the supervisor with his or her subordinates. The only indentifying information that the respondents were asked to provide were their biological sex and the biological sex of their supervisor.

Instruments

Supervisors occupying upper and mid-level managerial positions within the hospital were asked to complete the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II) (Rahim, 1983). Per the hospital's request, only administrative personnel and

their subordinates were surveyed, and doctors and nurses were excluded. The cover letter asked the respondents to assess how they typically handle conflict, rather than limiting their reports to specific conflict episodes with superiors, subordinates or peers (See Appendix A). Completion of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II) was designed to identify the individual's tendency to resolve conflict with subordinates either an avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating or obliging manner (See Appendix B). The two basic dimensions used to differentiate the five styles are "concern for self" versus "concern for others" based on Thomas's (1976) work. The instrument contains 28, 5-point Likert-type items that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Cronbach alphas range from .61 for compromising to .81 for avoiding. Test-retest correlations for the five scales were: integrating, .83; obliging, .81; dominating, .76; avoiding, .79; and compromising, .60. Thus, both the coefficients of internal consistency and test-retest correlations show moderate to good evidence of reliability for all subscales.

The subordinates of the supervisors who were asked to complete the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II) (Rahim, 1983) were given the The Reysen Likeability Scale (Reysen, 2005), and the Organizational Effectiveness Questionnaire (Mott, 1972). Each set of questionnaires was accompanied by a cover letter asking the respondents answer the questions as they corresponded with their perceptions of their supervisors (See Appendix C).

The Reysen Likeability Scale (Reysen, 2005), is designed to measure a subject's likeability (See Appendix D). The scale incorporates both attractiveness and expertise factors described by Chaiken and Eagly (1983) into one factor, and additionally requires

participants to imagine the target source as part of their lives. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's standardized reliability coefficient, alpha at .95. Each question was scored using a Likert scale format, from 1 *very strongly disagree* to 7 *very strongly agree*. All 11 items were positively scored, with higher scores representing higher likability of the target individual.

The Organizational Effectiveness Questionnaire (Mott, 1972) is designed to measure the perceived effectiveness of managers (See Appendix E). Mott (1972) defined managerial effectiveness as perceptions of competence encompassing technical knowledge, human relations skills, administrative expertise, as well as issues such as mutual trust and confidence. Thirteen items adapted from Mott's (1972) organizational effectiveness questionnaire measure subordinate perceptions of their managers' technical knowledge, human relations skills, administrative expertise and related issues. Each question was scored using a Likert-type scale format, from 1 representing a low competence level to 5 representing a high competence level. All 13 items were positively scored, with higher scores representing higher level of competence of the target individual. Items were summed to derive an index of perceived managerial competence, which had an internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha, of .95

Data Analysis

Research question one: “Is there a difference in conflict management style between male and female supervisors?” will be analyzed by a chi-square test of independence to compare the sex of the manager with the self-reported, preferred conflict management style.

Research question two, “Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and subordinate likability?” will be analyzed by running a one-way ANOVA to compare the supervisor’s conflict management styles by subordinate likability ratings.

Research question three, “Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and perceived effectiveness?” will be analyzed by running a one-way ANOVA to compare the supervisor’s conflict management styles by effectiveness ratings.

Research question four, “Is there a correlation between likeability and perceived effectiveness?” will be analyzed by calculating a Pearson correlation coefficient to assess the relationship between likability and effectiveness.

RESULTS

In this section the response level will be reported, and the results from the statistical tests performed for each research question will be discussed. This section will be followed by additional discussion and the theoretical implications of the findings.

Response Level

Of the 37 supervisors who received the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II) (Rahim, 1983), 31 responded. Of these 31 supervisors, 18 were female and 13 were male. Subordinates of all supervisors were asked to complete the Reysen Likeability Scale and the Organizational Effectiveness Questionnaire pertaining to their supervisor. Of the 864 subordinates who received the questionnaires, 193 subordinates responded.

Research Question One

The first research question was: “Is there a difference in conflict management style between male and female supervisors?” Thirty one supervisors returned a completed the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II). Subordinate evaluations for two additional supervisors were received, but because these two supervisors had not completed the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory, they were excluded from the final report.

As shown in Table 1, in total, 80.6% of all managers reported an integrating style, 6.5% reported a dominating style and 12.9% reported a compromising style. No manager reported an obliging or avoiding style. Of the 13 responding male managers, nine reported an integrating style (69.2%), three reported a compromising style (23.1%) and

one reported a dominating style (7.7%). Of the 18 responding female managers, 16 reported an integrating style (88.9%), one reported a dominating style (5.6%), and one reported a compromising style (5.6%).

Table 1

			Conflict Style			Total
			Integrating	Dominating	Compromising	Integrating
Manager Sex	Male	Count	9	1	3	13
		Expected Count	10.5	.8	1.7	13.0
	Female	Count	16	1	1	18
		Expected Count	14.5	1.2	2.3	18.0
Total		Count	25	2	4	31
		Expected Count	25.0	2.0	4.0	31.0

A chi-square test of independence was calculated comparing the sex of the manager with the self-reported, preferred conflict management style. No significant relationship was found (X^2 (1) =.384, $p > .05$). Choice of conflict management styles appear to be independent of the sex of the leader.

Research Question Two

The second research question was: "Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and likability?" The supervisor's conflict management styles by likability ratings were compared using a one-way ANOVA. As shown in Table 2, no significant difference was found ($F(2,185) = .108$, $p > .05$). Likability was not affected by choice of conflict management style.

Table 2

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	772.809	2	386.404	2.249	.108
Within Groups	31788.149	185	171.828		
Total	32560.957	187			

Research Question Three

The third research question was "Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and perceived effectiveness?" The supervisor's conflict management styles by effectiveness ratings were compared using a one-way ANOVA As shown in Table 3, no significant difference was found ($F(2,185) = .281$, $p > .05$). Effectiveness was not affected by choice of conflict management style.

Table 3

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	347.385	2	173.692	1.279	.281
Within Groups	25119.695	185	135.782		
Total	25467.080	187			

Research Question Four

The fourth research question was "Is there a relationship between likeability and perceived effectiveness?" A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between likability and effectiveness. A moderate positive correlation was found ($r(185) = .668$, $p < .001$) between likeability and perceived effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, what was learned from the results of the study will be discussed, each of the research questions will be referenced, and how the results correspond to the review of literature conducted will be analyzed. Limitations of the research will also be explored, as well as the larger implications these results offer to the field of organizational communication.

Research Question One

The first research question was "Is there a difference in conflict management style between male and female supervisors?" Previous findings (e.g., Korabik & Ayman, 1987) suggested congruence between gender and conflict management styles. Researchers have indicated female supervisors tend to use interpersonal, compromising, collaborative, accommodating, integrating, cooperative, avoiding, pro-social and communicative methods. In contrast, there is evidence male managers tend to use more aggressive, competitive, confronting, assertive, pro-task, and coercive strategies more often female managers (Gibbs & Lach, 1994a, 1994b; Lay, 1994; Sorenson & Hawkins, 1995; Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993; Conrad, 1991; Monroe et al., 1991; Fink & Brunner, 1987).

Other researchers have questioned whether male and female managers differ at all in their preferred conflict management style (Baxter & Shepard, 1978; Yelsma & Brown, 1985). Gender differences in conflict management style, if they exist at all, tend to disappear once gender differences on these other factors are controlled (Champion, 1979; Chusmir & Mills, 1988; Korabik & Ayman, 1987). Thus, men and women managers who

are similar to one another do not appear to differ in self-reports about their preferred conflict management style (Renwick, 1975, 1977; Shockley-Zalabak, 1981).

Interestingly, in the case of the hospital supervisors in this study, the majority of both men and women indicated the use of an integrating style when resolving conflicts with subordinates. Possibilities for this finding present themselves, including the nature of organizational culture within hospitals and the possibility of gender-sameness. In the next paragraphs, the influence of organizational culture and the ideology of gender sameness will be explored. Implications of the results for this question and suggestions for future research will be offered.

Organizational Culture

The study of organizational communication involves the intersection of two complex concepts – organization and communication. Both of these terms have been defined and approached in a variety of ways, and clearly, no single definition exists. Weick (1979) suggests that the primary function of organizations is "sense making" and that members of an organization collectively develop a set of mutually acceptable ideas regarding what is real, what is important and the acceptable ways of responding to particular situations. The culture of an organization is this shared, learned pattern of behavior (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). This pattern includes the values that are shared by the members, the heroes who exemplify the organization's values, the rituals that provide for the expressive bonding of members and cultural learning, and the stories that transmit the cultures values and ideas (Bass & Stodgill, 1990).

Additionally, Schein (1985) suggests that culture manages management more than management manages culture. For example, a strong organizational culture, with values

and internal guidelines for more autonomy at lower levers, can prevent top management from increasing its personal power at the expense of middle management (Rubin & Berlew, 1984).

To understand communication within a particular organization, then, requires understanding how the context of the organization influences communication processes, and how the nature of this communication influences the expression and management of conflict by its members. The specific organizational structure of the hospital of which the employees completed the questionnaires is not known; however, research has shown a significant trend for hospitals, and more important, employees of these hospitals to avoid admittance of errors and as a consequence, an admittance of flaws in leadership. For example, Tucker and Edmondson (2003) report that hospital errors have received considerable nationwide attention recently; however, an emphasis on only those errors that lead to severe consequences such as the death of a patient has perhaps obscured the subtler phenomenon of smaller errors that take place within the care delivery process everyday. Although "most errors are caught and corrected before patients are harmed…a lack of attention to the process errors that precede more visible, consequential failures may limit opportunities for organizational learning and openness regarding managerial problems" (p. 3).

Another, and related, explanation is that the supervisors were fearful that the human resources manager who distributed the questionnaires would read their responses, and so they attempted to answer the questions in the "most appropriate" manner possible. The supervisors may have also been anxious of what type of likeability and effectiveness rating they would receive from their subordinates. Although the cover letter which

accompanied the supervisor's questionnaires specifically stated that the respondents would not be identified, several supervisors contacted the researcher and expressed concern that they would somehow be identified to the human resources director and would experience retribution as a result.

Gender Sameness

Another significant explanation for this finding is suggested by gender-sameness proponents, who argue that while gender is one influence on communication style, there exist many other variables which deserve as much if not more recognition as key factors. This argument states that there is a lack of convincing scientific evidence that men and women are, essentially, different. Many of these researchers argue that, in fact, women and men are more alike than different but that a few "outliers" are often utilized to represent the population as a whole (Trent, 1998). What is more significant to these researchers is the diversity of personality traits and situational variables that affect organizational communication. They argue that the communication differences, which may be attributed to gender, are small and should only be considered in conjunction with other factors (Wilkins & Andersen, 1991).

Of consideration is the following definitive statements found in Eagly and Johnson (1990) work: "Contrary to notions about sex specialization in leadership styles, women leaders appear to behave in similar fashion to their male colleagues" (Nieva & Gutek, 1981, p. 91). Some studies, especially those conducted in the laboratory, have been able to find differences, but more have not (Osborn & Vicars, 1976). The paradox in these findings is that men and women have often been perceived as possessing different strengths and weaknesses, but whether these differences result in either perceived or

actual variations in leadership style or communicative behavior remains a point of contention (Wilson, 2003). Wilson (2003) further suggests that "if we implicitly believe that men and women do have differences in [leadership] style, then this may be due to the stereotypical images we have about men and women" (p. 144).

Implications

While the basis of this present study was built on the assumption that differences in societal expectations influence difference in male and female communication and conflict style, a possibility of congruence in male and female styles seems to present itself within its results. The reasons for this similarity can be explained first by the previously-explained organizational influence of the hospital, but a more sanguine possibility is suggested.

A positive implication of these results is that perhaps women, within the particular organization studied, experience the freedom to both manage and express their managerial skills in a non-avoiding, non-evasive manner, or at least are experiencing greater freedom to do so than they have in the past. According to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003), differences in organizational culture often exist, with "some types of organizations providing a more congenial context for women's display of transformational leadership" (p. 584). Additionally, there exists research suggesting that the tendency for women to show differing communication styles than men erodes when the male and female managers occupy the same or similar supervisory roles (Kanter, 1977; Kark, 2001). Since both the male and female supervisors who completed the questionnaires occupied middle-management positions, it is possible that their communication and conflict styles are indeed genuinely similar. To summarize the

gender-sameness theory as it applies to this study, perhaps the styles of both men and women within the organization studied possess the similar or nearly-identical patterns of conflict management styles, and the questionnaires accurately reflect this reality.

Suggested Future Research

Based on these findings and past research, it would be interesting to determine if there consistently exist no gender differences in conflict management styles reported by experienced managers. Because this study did not ask the managers completing the form to indicate the amount of time they had occupied a managerial role, it was not possible to determine if perhaps the results were based on the similarity of time in management.

Research Question Two

The second research question was: "Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and likability?" Because the majority of the managers indicated an integrating conflict management style, testing for differences in likability scores as they corresponded to conflict management styles was obviously useless in terms of gaining any significant results. However, the question itself remains unanswered, and if differences in conflict management style had been reported, it seems that, based on previous research regarding societal sanctions for women who demonstrate behavior incongruent to stereotypical roles, that likability scores would have varied correspondingly. The importance of this question remains, as the pressures on women to be viewed as likable and to be liked remain an important element and influence on communicative behavior. In the next paragraphs, the salience of past research emphasizing the importance of this question will be discussed, and suggestions for future research will be offered.

Salience of Past Research on Likeability

Likeability is a viable concern for female managers, particularly because of the pressures that women face to be successful within a sphere that has been traditionally occupied by men. For example, although bias against female executives by males has decreased consistently between 1965 and 1985, it had not disappeared (Bowman, Worthy, & Greyser, 1965; Sutton & Moore, 1985). Gallup Poll results in 2000 concluded that the preference for male bosses over female bosses was still present for both genders (Gallup, 2001). As suggested by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), a particular consequence for the choice of leadership and conflict style are the negative reactions that women may experience when they behave in a clearly agentic style, especially if that style entails exerting control and dominance over others. Women in managerial positions may avoid the negative reactions and prejudice associated with assuming a masculine-oriented role by combining the assertive, confident, and decisive behaviors required in this role with a more communal or feminine style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). True to the theory set forth in this study, previous research has affirmed that women who exhibit competence and a warm, people-oriented style exert greater influence than do women who are merely competent (Carli, 1995; Shackelford, Wood, & Worchel, 1996). As an example, male and female students who viewed videotapes of speakers delivering a persuasive speech using different nonverbal styles rated male and female speakers based on the style they used (Carli, La Fleur, & Loeber, 1995). Female speakers who engaged in a competent style with warm and friendly mannerisms *were liked more* than were women who used a competent style but did not show nonverbal warmth.

Suggested Future Research

It would be interesting to determine if these findings translate over to female strategies and results within organizational conflict management, and therefore, further research measuring the effects of male and female conflict management style on likability among subordinates is suggested. If a study can be conducted where male and female supervisors indicate a range of conflict management styles, rather than just one primary style, then it is possible that a valid assessment of the effect of conflict management style on likability can be determined. It is suggested that mangers with both little and extensive experience be studied to determine 1) what, if any, differences lie in their self-reported conflict management style and 2) what, if any, differences are found in their subordinates' perceptions of likeability.

Research Question Three

The third research question was "Is there a relationship between managerial conflict management styles and perceived effectiveness?" Once again, because the majority of the managers indicated an integrating conflict management style, testing for differences in effectiveness scores as they corresponded to conflict management styles was obviously useless in terms of gaining any significant results. However, the question itself remains unanswered, and if differences in conflict management style had been reported, it seems that, based on previous research, that effectiveness scores would have varied correspondingly. In the next paragraphs, past research will be discussed which emphasizes the importance of this question, and suggestions for future research will be offered.

Salience of Past Research

Salient to this research question is the assumption that males and females may differ in the ways in which they carry out managerial roles, and that expectations others have for their behavior may differ. Even when men and women leaders behave similarly, however, they are not necessarily evaluated similarly. For example, Korabik and Watson (1993) reported that in a study of managers and subordinates, although there were no gender differences in self-reported conflict management style among experienced managers, there were differences in the way that subordinates evaluated male and female supervisors who used similar styles. Dominating was more negatively related, and obliging more positively related, to subordinates' perceptions of effectiveness for women than for men.

Suggested Future Research

It would be interesting to conduct research among managers who indicate differences in self-reported conflict management styles for the purposes of determining differences in subordinates' perceptions of effectiveness. It is suggested that mangers with both little and extensive experience be studied to determine 1) what, if any, differences lie in their self-reported conflict management style and 2) what, if any, differences are found in their subordinates' perceptions of effectiveness.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question was "Is there a relationship between likeability and perceived effectiveness?" A moderate positive correlation was found between likeability and perceived managerial effectiveness. The results of this question are important when

considering the goals of management and the goals of an organization at large. It is obvious from past research that likability of supervisors by their subordinates has become of greater importance in the past few years as researchers have discovered that more people leave their job because they do not like their supervisor than for any other reason (Agrusa, Spears, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006; Joyce, 2006). Additionally, it has been noted that the *perception*, more so than the *actuality*, of managerial competence determines the interpersonal dynamic and effectiveness of an organizational team (O'Driscoll, Humphries, & Larsenwhich, 1991).

Implications

When considering the implications of this finding, it is important to note that the question itself is grounded in the assumption that employee satisfaction and the interpersonal dynamics among supervisors and their subordinates are significant. It considers the well-being and happiness of employees to be important to the overall functioning of the organization. According to Howard and Gould (2000), “employee happiness can impact substantially on an organization’s performance. It can influence employee retention, absenteeism and work performance. Because of this importance, such happiness is inseparable from the real business of the organization” (p. 377). To invest in understanding the interrelation of subordinates who like and who are happy with their supervisor, and how this liking lends itself to the perception that their supervisor is effective, is to understand the contribution of happy employees to the overall goals of an organization.

Conclusion

Although the results of this study were surprising based on the original assumptions drawn, the implications of these results are helpful in understanding the field of organizational communication; specifically how they relate to the roles and communicative patterns of women in the workplace. Based on the results of the first research question, it seems that women are perhaps discovering greater latitude in choosing strategies which reflect a transformational style of leadership and of which they feel most comfortable. Because the level of experience that each manager holds within the organization studied is not known, it is difficult to determine if these results are based on knowledge and capability of leadership, as is suggested by previous research. In any case, these results can be considered encouraging when assessing whether women in managerial positions feel socially constrained to present themselves in a prescribed way, or to manage conflicts through a socially-prescribed set of responses.

Although further research is suggested for the second and third research questions, it can be hoped that subsequent findings will uncover useful information relating to how women in organizational managerial positions are perceived as likable and effective. The importance of these two questions remains salient as women continue to strive to relate and be related to in a positive and effective way in both the private and public sphere.

Finally, the fourth research question underscores the importance of employee satisfaction and happiness with their supervisors, and that this concern remains valid for both male and female managers. Although it can be argued that the strategies and tactics employed by male and females in managerial positions vary according to societal

pressures, a simple realization that the overall goals of an organization will be met through greater focus and understanding of supervisor and subordinate relations prompts greater interest into the further investigation of this interplay.

Conflict management styles and their influence on the perceptions of subordinates of their managers remains an area of interest and concern for those involved in researching organizational communication. It can be hoped that the findings discovered in this study will stimulate the continued investigation of the roles and strategies of women within leadership positions, the unique obstacles they encounter and the strategies which will enable them to achieve greater success.

APPENDIX A

Dear Supervisor:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project.

My name is Rachel Copley and I am a graduate student at IUPUI. I am currently working on my graduate thesis on the conflict management styles of supervisors and the resulting perceptions by those that they supervise. Your answers to the attached questionnaire will be very helpful to me in compiling data for writing my thesis.

Please fill out this questionnaire in regards to how you generally manage conflict among and with the team members which you supervise.

The attached questionnaire is marked with a code to identify which team you supervise. This code will in no way identify your name or who you are. The only information I ask you to list is your biological sex.

The results of this study will be held in highest confidence. The results of these questionnaires will be combined into a general report. In no way will any department or individual member of any department be identified.

I am including an envelope for you to place your questionnaire in, and to seal, to ensure absolute privacy and to mail back to me. If at all possible, please complete the questionnaire within a week of receipt.

Please do not answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you do not wish to answer. Please contact me at (317) 842-0880 or rcopley@libertyfund.org if you have questions about the study or the questionnaires.

Thank you once again for your helpful response.

Best regards,

Rachel Copley
IUPUI Graduate Student

APPENDIX B

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II

Strictly Confidential

Please check the appropriate box after each statement, to indicate *how you handle your disagreement or conflict with y subordinates*. Try to recall as many recent conflict situations as possible in ranking these statements.

	Strongly Agree				*Strongly Disagree*
1. I try to investigate an issue with my subordinates to find a solution acceptable to us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my subordinates to myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my subordinates to come up with a decision jointly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I try to work with my subordinates to find solution to a problem that satisfies our expectations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I usually accommodate the wishes of my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I give in to the wishes of my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. I exchange accurate information with my subordinates to solve a problem together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. I usually allow concessions to my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I negotiate with my subordinates so that a compromise can be reached.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I try to stay away from disagreement with my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I avoid an encounter with my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I often go along with the suggestions of my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. I collaborate with my subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. I try to satisfy the expectations of my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. I try to keep my disagreement with my subordinates to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my subordinates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. I try to work with my subordinates for a proper understanding of a problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

APPENDIX C

Dear Team Member:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project.

My name is Rachel Copley and I am a graduate student at IUPUI. I am currently working on my graduate thesis on the conflict management styles of supervisors and the resulting perceptions by those that they supervise. Your answers to the two attached questionnaires will be very helpful to me in compiling data for writing my thesis.

Attached to this sheet are two questionnaires. Please answer the questionnaires as they correspond with your perceptions of your supervisor.

They are marked with a code to identify to which team you belong. This code will in no way identify your name or who you are. The only information I ask you to list is your biological sex and the biological sex of your manager.

The results of this study will be held in highest confidence. The results of these questionnaires will be combined into a general report. In no way will any department or individual member of any department be identified.

I am including an envelope for you to place your questionnaires in, and to seal, to ensure absolute privacy and to mail back to me. If at all possible, please complete the questionnaire within a week of receipt.

Please do not answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you do not wish to answer. Please contact me at (317) 842-0880 or rcopley@libertyfund.org if you have questions about the study or the questionnaires.

Thank you once again for your helpful response.

Best regards,

Rachel Copley
IUPUI Graduate Student

APPENDIX D

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Please indicate your biological sex Male ☐ Female ☐
Please indicate the biological sex of your supervisor Male ☐ Female ☐

Circle how strongly you agree with the following statement as it applies to your supervisor:

1. This person is friendly.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

2. This person is likeable.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

3. This person is warm.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

4. This person is approachable.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

5. I would ask this person for advice.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

6. I would like this person as a coworker.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

7. I would like this person as a roommate.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

8. I would like to be friends with this person.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

9. This person is physically attractive.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

10. This person is similar to me.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

11. This person is knowledgeable.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

APPENDIX E

Please indicate your biological sex Male ☐ Female ☐ **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**
Please indicate the biological sex of your supervisor Male ☐ Female ☐

Please rate your manager according to the following questions

1. How much does your manager know about each of the jobs in your section?

Very much	A great deal	Quite a bit	Some	Very little

2. How well does your manager handle the technical side of his or her job (for example: general expertness, knowledge of the job, technical skills, etc...)?

Extremely well	Very well	Fairly well	Not so well	Not at all

3. How often do you feel you get help from your manager when you really need it?

Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Usually	Always

4. Do you feel that your manager will "go to bat" or stand up for you?

Not at all	Probably won't	May or may not	Probably will	Definitely will

5. How free do you feel to discuss important things about your job with your manager?

Completely Free	Rather free	Fairly free	Not very	Not at all

6. In solving job problems, does your manager generally try to get your ideas and opinions?

Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost always	Always

7. To what extent do you feel that you, personally, can influence the activities and decisions of your manager on matters that are of concern to you?

To a great extent	Considerably	Moderately	To some extent	Not at all

8. How well does your manager handle the human relations side of his or her job (for example, getting people to work well together, getting individuals to do the best they can, giving recognition for good work done, letting people know where they stand, etc...)?

Extremely well	Very well	Fairly well	Not so well	Not at all

9. How frequently is work time lost because you manager fails to do the proper planning and scheduling?

Very often	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost never	Never

10. How well do you feel your manager understands the work problems and needs which you have?

Complete Understanding	Considerable understanding	Some understanding	A little understanding	Has no understanding

11. How well does your manager handle the administrative side of his or her job (for example, planning and scheduling the work, assigning jobs, following up on work to be done, setting goals, etc...)?

Extremely	Very well	Fairly well	Not so well	Not at all

12. How much confidence and trust do you have in your manager?

None at all	Not very Much	A fair amount	A great deal	Complete confidence

13. How much confidence and trust does your manager have in you?

None at all	Not very Much	A fair amount	A great deal	Complete confidence

14. All in all, how effective a job do you think your manager is doing?

A rather poor job	A fair job	A good job	A very good job	An excellent job

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Education

Master of Arts – Applied Communication
Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana

Bachelor of Arts – Journalism
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Awards

- 2008 Graduate Outstanding Research/Creative Project Award, Department of Communication Studies, IUPUI. *Starfish Initiative: Help Guide a Promising High School Student to College.*
- 2008 Graduate Outstanding Research/Creative Project Award, Department of Communication Studies, IUPUI. *Rhetoric Bowl I: A Rhetorical Analysis of Super Bowl XLI.*
- Past Presidents Award for Top 2008 CSCA Debut Paper. *Picturing Society: An Analysis of the Ideology of Male Domination in an Advertising Campaign.*

Conference Presentations

- "What I Really Didn't Want to Know: Illicit Family Privacy Dilemmas." *National Communication Association Convention, 2006.*
- "Picturing Society: An Analysis of the Ideology of Male Domination as Exemplified in an Advertising Campaign." *Central States Communication Association Convention, 2008.*

Research Experience

Research Assistant to Dr. Kim White-Mills

- Primary responsibilities involved the creation and administration of an online survey measuring parenting practices.

Research Assistant to Dr. Catherine A. Dobris

- Primary responsibilities involved conducting research on women in various life-stages and the revision and implementation of graduate course teaching materials.

Activities

Editor-in-Chief, Jaguar Journal. IUPUI, Indianapolis, Indiana

- Primary responsibilities included generating story ideas for the Jaguar Journal, and assigning and editing articles to staff. Supervised staff of six writers. Performed final layout and design of articles and photographs. Also responsible for interviewing and writing stories for various editions.

Vice President, Graduate Communication Club. IUPUI, Indianapolis, Indiana

- Primary responsibilities include recruiting members, organizing meetings, external communications and relations, photography, and creation of materials and guidelines for members.

Professional Organizations and Affiliations

- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)
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