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Recommended Citation

Hermanson, Heather M., Kurt S. Schulzke, & G. Richard Shell. (2003). "The Role of Bargaining Style in Public Company Audits." *Journal of Forensic Accounting*, 4(2), 233-248.

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The Role of Bargaining Style in Public Company Audits

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Prior auditing research has found that negotiation plays an important role in audit outcomes. General purpose negotiating literature suggests that bargaining styles are an important factor in business negotiations and that bargaining style mismatches between negotiating counter-parties can influence negotiation results. To date, the role of auditors' bargaining-style tendencies in audit negotiations has gone unnoticed in the auditing literature. This study examines the bargaining styles of accountants and managers as measured by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The results suggest that accountants are predisposed to avoid conflict or accommodate whereas managers are predisposed to collaborate or compete. Recognizing this potential mismatch of bargaining styles should help the auditor to develop more effective negotiation strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Publicly available documents indicate that the following e-mail interchange occurred between Arthur Andersen partners Ben Neuhausen and David Duncan, May 28 and June 1, 1999.

[David] – Setting aside the accounting, the idea of a venture entity managed by CFO is terrible from a business point of view. Conflicts of interest galore. Why would any director in his or her right mind ever approve such a scheme? Plus, even if all the accounting obstacles below are overcome, it's a related party, which means FAS 57 disclosures of all transactions. Would Enron want these transactions disclosed every year as related party transactions in their financial statements?

[Ben] – I agree with all the points you and John raise except for two where I need some more help. But first, on your point (i.e., the whole thing is a bad idea). I really couldn't agree more. Rest assured that I have already communi-

cated and it has been agreed to by [Enron Finance VP] Andy [Fastow] that CEO, General Counsel, and Board discussion and approval will be a requirement, on our part, for acceptance of a venture similar to what we have been discussing . . . This thing is still very much in the brainstorming stage, but Andy wants to move through it very quickly to get all this done, if possible, this quarter. Andy is convinced that this is such a win-win that everyone will buy in. We'll see . . . (*Wall Street Journal Online* 2002).

The ultimate responsibility for financial statements and related disclosures rests with the management of the reporting company. Thus, when an auditor believes that an accounting adjustment or disclosure is required, the adjustment will be “booked” or the disclosure made only if the auditor successfully persuades management to approve the proposed adjustment or disclosure. In some cases, management asks auditors to review transactions in advance to test the accounting waters. If the auditors respond with a “firm” unfavorable accounting answer, management may decide to: (1) alter or abandon the transaction, or (2) find a different auditor to achieve the desired reporting features.

The e-mail exchange shown above reveals such a prospective negotiation between auditors and management over how to account for a planned transaction or business enterprise. Andrew Fastow wanted to know how Arthur Andersen would respond if Enron went ahead with his deal as planned. Whatever they were telling Fastow, the Andersen auditors clearly were not comfortable with his proposal. What we see in these e-mails, sent more than two years before Enron imploded, are auditors who take seriously their professional responsibilities and hold strong opinions in direct conflict with those of the CFO of their major client.

Publicly available information indicates that Fastow executed his deal just as he had planned, but Andersen's auditors failed to persuade Enron to disclose its details, despite their own deeply-held convictions and existing accounting authority on point. For some reason, between June 1999 and the summer of 2001, auditors David Duncan and Ben Neuhausen apparently suffered a negotiating defeat. Against their better judgment, Fastow executed the deal and negotiated his way out of fully disclosing his personal financial interests in it. In our opinion, this negotiating defeat set a precedent that eventually led Andersen into a catastrophic ethical and legal nose dive.

Successful persuasion in such situations requires technical knowledge, firm commitment to professional and ethical standards, and excellent negotiating skills. We believe that, in June 1999, Duncan and Neuhausen possessed the first two of these requirements. The last requirement, negotiating skills, is the subject of this paper.

The purpose of this study is to compare the bargaining styles of accountants and managers. Negotiation theory suggests that, in audit negotiations, the alignment of the bargaining styles of auditors and clients may impact audit outcomes positively or negatively. We compare the bargaining styles of senior and graduate accounting students (largely non-traditional age) with executive MBA students using a widely accepted bargaining style test, the *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* (TKI). We find that the accounting students score significantly lower than the executive MBAs in the competing and collaboration modes of the TKI and significantly higher than executive MBAs in the avoiding and accommodating modes. These differences suggest a dichotomy in assertiveness in the bargaining styles of managers and accountants. That is, managers tend to view conflict as a game to be won, whereas accountants tend to accommodate counterparties or avoid conflict altogether. The results indicate that audit firms may want to explicitly evaluate potential bargaining style mismatches and develop mitigating negotiating strategies and training prior to engaging in auditor-client negotiations over significant issues.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we provide background on the use of negotiation in audits and discuss some recent changes in the profession. Second, we discuss negotiation theory and explain a model that describes personal bargaining style. Third, we describe our hypothesis, methodology, and results. Finally, we discuss the results and potential implications for forensic accountants.

BACKGROUND

External auditors regularly use negotiation to resolve conflicts between themselves and client management over the nature, extent, and format of proposed adjustments and disclosures (DeZoort and Salterio 2001; Gibbins et al. 2001; Johnstone et al. 2002). Such negotiations can affect the content of a company's financial statements and other disclosures, the nature of the auditor's opinion on the statements, reappointment of the auditor, the reputation of the auditor, the career success of the auditor, the auditor's relationship with other clients, and even the auditor's professional survival (Gibbins et al. 2001; Johnstone et al. 2002; Johnstone and Muzatko 2002).

In some cases, an auditor's failure to effectively negotiate with clients produces no objectively measurable harm. In other cases, such failures contribute to harming investors or creditors who have made decisions in reliance on misleading financial reports. In these cases, an auditor's negotiating failure can lead courts or administrative agencies, like the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), to impose civil penalties on the auditor or auditee (Beasley et al. 1999).

In less typical situations, such as that of former Enron auditor and Andersen partner David Duncan, failure to persuade company management to make adjustments or disclosures ultimately may contribute to widespread economic hardship, collapse of businesses, and criminal conviction. When good negotiation strategy and tactics fail to persuade a wayward client, auditors must be prepared to lose the client. However, better negotiation acumen and skills might empower some auditors, faced with ethical dilemmas, to successfully persuade clients to record adjustments or make disclosures.

Recent Professional Developments

In its CPA Vision Project – 2011 and Beyond (AICPA 1997), the AICPA listed as first among its Top Five Core Competencies for CPAs the ability to “influence, inspire, and motivate others to achieve results.” Additionally, two studies commissioned by the American Accounting Association in 2000 concluded that negotiation skills are essential to the success of entry-level accounting professionals (Albrecht and Sack 2000; AAA Environmental Screening Committee 2000).

Similarly, in a January 2002 white paper responding to the Enron collapse, the AICPA issued a “Call to Action” to management, auditors, and audit committees. The paper recommends ten important actions that auditors should take to ensure “high-quality” financial reporting. Of the ten recommended actions, at least five clearly require auditors to understand basic negotiation theory and to actively practice good negotiation skills (AICPA 2002).

While many are calling for tighter reporting and ethical standards, it is unclear whether new standards alone will lead to better audits and more transparent financial reporting. Laws and regulations provide behavioral incentives and normative guides to conduct, but their effectiveness in actual auditing situations also will depend on the willingness and ability of auditors to persuade their clients to comply. Thus, transparent financial reporting may require a combination of two important professional developments: (1) strong and clear rules, and (2) better persuasion and negotiation skills on the part of auditors.

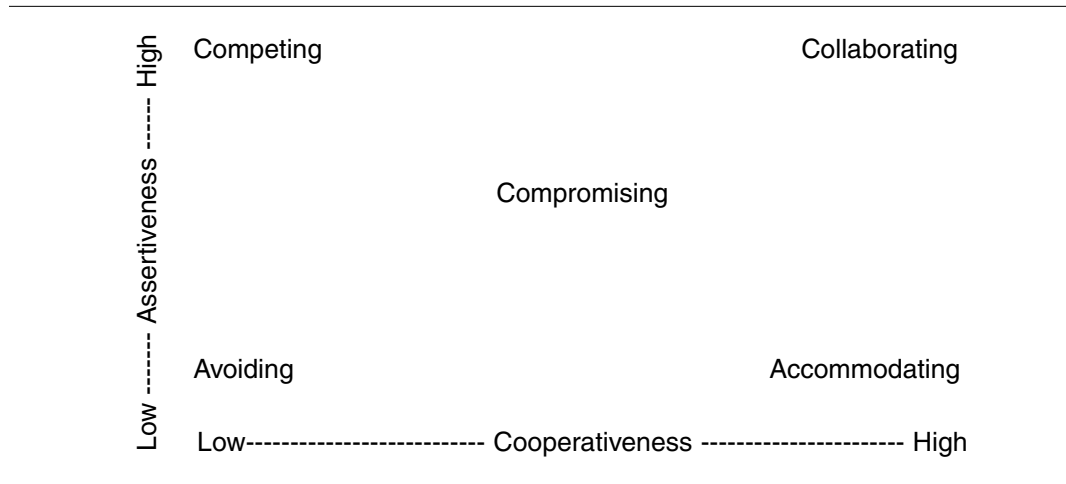
Negotiation Theory and Bargaining Style

Auditors may improve their performance as negotiators by better understanding the psychology of bargaining behavior, especially human predispositions toward negotiation-related interpersonal conflict. Negotiation experts discuss such predispositions under the general heading of *bargaining styles* (Fisher et al. 1991; Shell 1999; Shell 2001). A rich literature

in management and negotiation explores bargaining styles and various ways of testing for such styles (see Gilkey and Greenhalgh 1986; Pfeiffer 1988; Kirkbride et al. 1991; Berger and Watts 1992; Lourdes et al. 1999; Lee 2000; Montoya-Weiss et al. 2001; Rahim et al. 2001; Shell 2001). However, we were unable to locate any reference to bargaining styles or conflict modes in extant auditing and accounting literature.

Despite its apparent invisibility to auditing researchers, bargaining style looms as a potentially major factor in auditor-client interaction. An auditor can use negotiating theory and knowledge of bargaining styles to craft a negotiation strategy to address the circumstances of a particular audit conflict. Several bargaining style or conflict mode models have evolved over the years. The most popular of these are variants of the Dual Concerns Model, first proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964). According to this model, human behavior in conflict situations can be mapped along two dimensions: (1) assertiveness – the capacity and willingness to communicate and advocate one’s own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness – the capacity and willingness to understand and accommodate the conflicting concerns of others. Five behavioral classifications or “conflict modes” derive from plotting these two dimensions: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Figure 1 provides a summary of the five characteristics in relation to the two dimensions.

Figure 1
Conflict Handling Modes



Source: Adapted from Kenneth Thomas, *The Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, edited by Marvin Dunnette (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976).

Thomas and Kilmann (1974) developed a now widely accepted instrument (Kirkbride et al 1991; Berger and Watts 1992; McKendall 2000; Montoya-Weiss et al 2001), the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (TKI), to objectively assess the Blake and Mouton conflict handling characteristics or “modes.” The interpretation materials disseminated with the TKI describe the five modes as follows.

1. Competing is assertive and uncooperative – an individual pursues [his/her] own concerns at the other person’s expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one’s own position.
2. Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative – the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects [his/her] own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode.
3. Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative – the individual does not immediately pursue [his/her] own concerns or those of the other person. They do not address the conflict.
4. Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative – the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons.
5. Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties (Thomas and Kilmann 1974, 10).

The TKI assesses an individual’s relative natural affinity for or predisposition to use each of the five conflict modes. Understanding these conflict-mode tendencies may help auditors more effectively “influence, inspire, and motivate” audit-engagement counterparties to provide better financial disclosure, especially when the parties’ bargaining styles are mismatched (e.g., where the auditor prefers to avoid interpersonal conflict, but management is predisposed toward assertive, combative behavior).

As a hypothetical illustration, assume that Vanessa, a partner at a large audit firm, wants to persuade her client’s CFO, Michael, to include in the client’s consolidated financial statements a heavily-leveraged special purpose entity (SPE). The client, which we will call Megawatti, Inc., is Vanessa’s largest client, consuming fifty percent of her annual billable hours. In developing her negotiating strategy, Vanessa’s first task is to assess the negotiation

situation along two dimensions: relationship factors and non-relationship stakes. First, she must assess (a) how highly she values her ongoing relationship with Michael, and (b) how highly Michael values the relationship. This relationship assessment may consider personal and professional aspects of the relationship. Typically, Vanessa probably places a high value on the professional relationship because of Michael's importance to her firm and, therefore, her long-term income stream. In contrast, Michael is unlikely to be too concerned with the relationship because plenty of auditors would like to get Megawatti's audit business. Next, Vanessa evaluates the non-relationship stakes. Thinking in pre-Enron-Worldcom terms, Vanessa probably minimizes the need to consolidate the SPE because (a) the SPE is relatively small, and (b) while non-consolidation may be somewhat misleading to financial statement users, current accounting principles technically permit Megawatti to exclude the SPE from its consolidated financials.

Balancing the high relationship and low non-relationship stakes, Vanessa logically adopts an accommodating or compromising (non-assertive) bargaining strategy. Thus, she decides to raise the SPE consolidation issue with Michael at their next golf outing, but she makes a mental note not to push too hard if Michael pushes back. Vanessa can consciously choose an assertive or a non-assertive strategy. However, how well her strategic choice works in this situation will depend partly on Vanessa's and Michael's natural bargaining styles and on Michael's chosen bargaining strategy.¹

A misalignment of bargaining styles between Vanessa and Michael could further complicate the strategic landscape. If Vanessa naturally tends to avoid or accommodate and naturally dislikes competitive bargaining, but Michael likes competition and habitually "goes for the jugular," then Vanessa will be even less likely to persuade Michael to consolidate the SPE than she would be if she were naturally more competitive. If Vanessa expects Michael to respond in a hotly competitive way, Vanessa may not even raise the SPE issue.

Negotiation theory suggests that if Vanessa is aware of such a bargaining style mismatch, she should consider involving an intermediary to moderate the impact of Michael's competitiveness on the negotiation (Shell 1999). Theory also suggests that if Vanessa's partners are aware of the bargaining style mismatch, in the exercise of due professional care, they arguably should avoid sending her alone to negotiate with Michael, especially if the audit involves high risk.

¹ Negotiation theory suggests that bargaining styles are involuntary, natural tendencies. In contrast, a bargaining strategy is a conscious choice made in a particular bargaining situation to achieve a desired result. According to theory, despite her deliberate strategic choices, a negotiator who is naturally unassertive is less likely to achieve her negotiation objectives in a negotiation with a naturally assertive counterparty than if she were naturally more assertive.

HYPOTHESIS

Our reading of extant negotiation and auditing literature leads us to two foundational premises: (1) negotiation skills can significantly impact auditor effectiveness, and (2) the mix of bargaining styles in any given encounter can affect both the process used and the outcome of negotiations. Building on this foundation, we initiate a line of inquiry suggested by Gibbins et al. (2001) in relation to what they describe as a “contextual feature” of audit negotiations – the “parties’ capabilities.” The central question is whether auditors, as a group, tend to be bargaining-style misaligned with their likely counterparts in audit negotiations, client management.

Prior research indicates that accounting students exhibit certain patterns for psychological traits and that these traits are consistent between accounting students and professional accountants (Wheeler 2001). Using the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) numerous studies have documented a dominant personality type among accountants (e.g., Shackleton 1980; Otte 1984; Schloemer and Schloemer 1997). The accountants’ dominant personality type is referred to as Sensing-Thinking-Judging on the MBTI scale. It reflects people who tend to be practical, logical, and decisive.

Larabee (1994) found that compared to undergraduate college students as a whole, accounting undergraduates were significantly over-represented in the sensing-thinking-judging personality traits on the MBTI. In addition, a comparison between senior accounting students and accounting professionals indicated no significant differences in MBTI traits (Larabee 1994). Thus, the personality traits of accounting students may be good proxies for accounting professionals. Also, accounting students’ personalities are “unique” relative to their college peers.

Given the apparent common personality similarities among accountants and their uniqueness as a group, it is possible that accountants may exhibit a common bargaining style as well. We extend this line of research by utilizing a second widely used psychological instrument, the TKI, to investigate whether bargaining styles of accountants are uniquely different from those of their bargaining counterparts, in management.

This leads to our hypothesis:

- H1: The TKI scores of senior and graduate accounting students are significantly different from the TKI scores of the executive MBA students.

METHOD

To test the hypothesis, we gathered the TKI scores of senior and graduate accounting students and compared them to the scores of executive MBA students. These groups were used to proxy for accountants and managers, respectively. Details on the subjects, administration, and TKI instrument are provided below.

Subjects

One hundred forty students from a large, southeastern university participated in the study. Due to the commuter nature of the school, participants were non-traditional type students with a mean age of thirty-two and mean professional experience of ten years. Table 1 provides the demographic information for the accounting students and executive MBAs.

Table 1
Demographic Information

Mean	Accounting Students (n = 82)	Executive MBAs (n = 58)
Age	30.76	35.50
Degree Hours	133	141
Professional Experience	8.79	12.85
% Male	37%	74%

Eighty-two accounting students were selected from several senior level accounting classes and one graduate level accounting class. The largely female group (63%) had a mean age of 30.8 and mean experience of about nine years.² All indicated their intent to pursue or continue working in accounting positions upon graduation.

Fifty-eight executive MBAs were selected from one class. To qualify for the executive program, the students must have an undergraduate degree and a minimum of five years of professional experience. As a result, the mean age of 35.5 and mean experience of approximately 13 years are slightly higher than those of the accounting students.

² The high percentage of females in the accounting group is consistent with the overall percentage for accounting majors at the university. Nationally, 56% of accounting graduates are female (AICPA 2001).

While the gender and experience vary between the groups, we control for these factors in the analysis of the results.

Administration of Instrument

Five senior level accounting classes, one masters level accounting class and one executive MBA class were selected to participate in the study. Students were told that their participation was voluntary. All students attending each class session chose to participate.³ One author appeared at each class session and read from a standardized script. Students signed a participation consent form and followed the directions for filling out the TKI.⁴ Upon completion of the TKI, students completed a brief demographic survey and then scored their own TKIs.⁵

TKI Content

The TKI consists of 30 paired statements. Each statement represents one of the five conflict modes (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, or accommodating). Each mode is represented by 12 statements (for a total of 60 statements/30 pairs). Subjects choose the statement from each pair that best represents their preference (e.g., “I propose a middle ground” versus “I press to get my points made”). There is no social context for the statements; thus, the results should represent participants’ overall predisposition for conflict-handling rather than the response to a particular situation. A participant’s score for each of the five modes is determined by the number of times a statement from that mode was selected. Thus, the total of the five scores should be 30 (e.g., one statement from each of the 30 pairs is selected). However, the score for any individual mode (e.g., competing) can range from 0 to 12.

RESULTS

Figure 2 plots the mean scores for each of the five conflict modes for the accounting students and executive MBAs. The graph depicts a distinct difference between the two groups

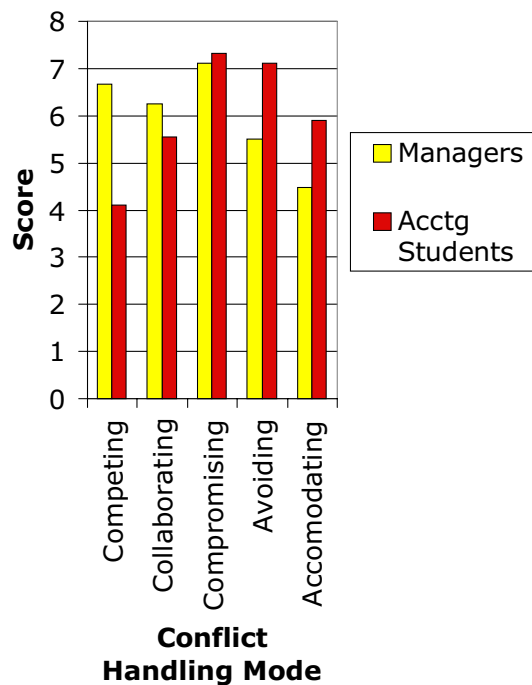
³ Students who had taken the TKI in a previous session did not repeat the test.

⁴ The TKI has explicit written instructions in each test booklet. The students were asked to read along in their booklets as the administrator read the directions aloud.

⁵ Students scored their own TKIs as an enticement to participate. TKI scores provided students with immediate feedback on their personal bargaining styles. Each score was reviewed for accuracy by the authors before data entry.

for four of the five conflict modes. The executive MBAs appear higher than the accountants in the competing and collaborating modes and lower than the accountants in the avoiding and accommodating modes.

Figure 2
TKI Scores



Prior research suggests that gender affects TKI scores. Females tend to score higher in the accommodating mode whereas males tend to score higher in the competing mode (Nelson and Lubin 1991). To control for the effects of gender in our sample, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to determine whether the accounting means were statistically different from the management means for each of the five modes, holding gender constant. Table 2 presents the results of the ANCOVA for each conflict mode.

The executive MBAs’ mean score of 6.66 for the Competing Mode is significantly higher than the accounting students’ mean of 4.10 ($p = 0.00$). Likewise, the executive MBAs’ mean score of 6.24 for the Collaborating Mode is significantly higher than the accounting stu-

Table 2
ANCOVA Results by Conflict Mode

Conflict Handling Mode	Executive MBAs	Accounting Students	ANCOVA* Student Type p-value	ANCOVA Gender p-value
Competing	6.66	4.10	p = .00	p = .09
Collaborating	6.24	5.55	p = .01	p = .05
Compromising	7.12	7.33	p = .97	p = .17
Avoiding	5.50	7.12	p = .00	p = .06
Accommodating	4.48	5.90	p = .00	p = .50

* For the modes with significant results, the ANCOVA model was significant and r^2 ranged from .05 to .18.

students' mean of 5.55 ($p = 0.01$). The executive MBAs' higher scores for competing and collaborating suggest that they are more predisposed to solving tough problems in interactive ways (e.g., they tend to like negotiating). On the other hand, the accounting students' lower scores suggest that they are less likely to seek out negotiation scenarios – focusing instead on reducing conflict. The disparity between the competing scores of the managers and accounting students could be problematic. High competitors view negotiations as an opportunity to win, whereas low competitors prefer to focus on developing trusting relationships (Shell 2001). In an audit setting, this may mean that the auditor is predisposed to focus on maintaining the client relationship rather than “pushing” a contentious issue.

The mean scores for the Compromising Mode were not statistically different for the two groups ($p = 0.97$). The remaining two modes, avoiding and accommodating, did have significantly different means. The executive MBAs' mean scores of 5.50 for the Avoiding Mode and 4.48 for the Accommodating Mode were significantly different from the accounting students' mean scores of 7.12 and 5.90, respectively ($p = 0.00$ avoiding, $p = 0.00$ accommodating). The accounting students' high avoiding mode scores indicate that they tend to dodge confrontation. In an audit setting, this may mean that auditors may be more comfortable trying to find some technical support for a questionable accounting treatment as opposed to trying to dissuade the client from the proposed approach.

The results of the ANCOVA support the hypothesis that TKI scores of accounting students are significantly different from executive MBAs. As discussed previously, the executive MBAs had slightly more experience than did the accounting students. To test the sensitivity of the results to professional experience, the analysis was replicated including years of

experience in the model. The results remain qualitatively unchanged from those previously reported, and experience is not significant across any of the modes.⁶ Additional implications and limitations of this finding are discussed in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Auditors regularly use negotiation to resolve conflicts between themselves and client management over proposed adjustments and disclosures. Negotiating capability is partly defined by one's bargaining style and by how that style aligns with the style of one's bargaining counterpart. Bargaining style is defined by a negotiator's natural predisposition to compete, collaborate, compromise, accommodate or avoid when faced with interpersonal conflict in negotiation settings. Competition and collaboration are assertive in nature. Compromise, accommodation, and avoidance are less assertive. Negotiating theory suggests that a less assertive auditor will find it more difficult to elicit financial reporting compliance from more assertive clients when the stakes in the audit negotiation are high for the client.

This study examines the bargaining styles of senior and graduate accounting students (older, non-traditional) and executive MBAs. Bargaining styles are measured using the widely accepted Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). We hypothesize and find that accounting students' TKI scores are significantly different from those of executive MBAs.

On the whole, the significant differences in the scores of the accounting students and the executive MBAs suggest a bargaining style mismatch. As portrayed in a hypothetical audit negotiation scenario, a style mismatch could lead to an adverse audit outcome. The large dichotomy appears to be that managers tend to be competing and collaborating, while accountants tend to be avoiding and accommodating. These are polar opposites on the assertiveness scale (degree of concern for one's self). In the match-up between a competitor and an avoider, the tendency will be for the competitor (manager) to prevail because the avoider (auditor) either sidesteps the issue or withdraws from the conflict. Recognizing this predisposition toward avoiding should help the auditor develop a more effective negotiation strategy.

The results should be considered in light of several limitations. First, our sample consisted of senior accounting students, not auditors. While prior research suggests that senior

⁶ A further analysis substituted age for experience, and again the results remain qualitatively unchanged except for one area. Age was significant only in the collaborating mode – collaboration scores increase with age. The significance of the difference between accounting students and executive MBAs is diminished to $p = 0.08$.

accounting students are excellent proxies for accounting professionals (e.g., Laribee 1994), it is possible that auditors may have responded differently. Second, the TKI is not context-specific. The statements in the instrument are free from specific scenarios, so that the TKI can measure overall tendencies. It is possible that participants may respond differently given a specific context (e.g., participant is generally predisposed to be competing but will always compromise in conflicts that affect long-term relationships with family members).

Future research may explore the bargaining styles of auditors in specific audit scenarios. Also, research may examine whether an individual's knowledge of his or her TKI tendencies leads to improved negotiation outcomes. Finally, research may investigate whether the TKI tendencies of accounting subgroups (e.g., forensic accountants or internal auditors) differ with the tendencies of accountants as a whole.

The results of this study may have implications of interest to forensic accountants. Depending on the situation, forensic accountants may be subject to more or less intense negotiation-related conflict than are external auditors. For instance, in a case where the fact of fraudulent activity is presumed from the outset of the forensic engagement (e.g., WorldCom), the level of conflict inherent in the engagement may be less intense than in an engagement where fraud is merely alleged or suspected. If internal or external auditors have previously produced evidence justifying a presumption of fraud, then the forensic focus may be on the total dollar amount of the fraud rather than on the question of the fraud itself. However, where the management denies fraud allegations and forensic accountants have been asked to intervene, the level of conflict may be more intense than in an external audit. Given the potential for intense conflict in "pre-presumption-of-fraud" engagements, forensic accountants who tend to accommodate, compromise, or avoid may want to consider declining such engagements or employing mitigating strategies and techniques. Interesting questions for future research include whether particular bargaining style tendencies are better suited to some accounting practice areas than to others and, if so, whether accountants self-select accounting practice areas that are ideally suited to their bargaining style tendencies. That is, for example, are competitors better suited to forensic accounting than to cost accounting and, if so, do natural competitors select forensic accounting? We believe that negotiation research in forensic accounting represents a fruitful area of inquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the valuable comments of Richard Clune and participants of Kennesaw State University's Brown Bag workshop.

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