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Cheryl Lynn Simmons

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MANAGERS' AND NON-MANAGERS' CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES:

THE EFFECT OF GENDER ROLE

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Psychology: Industrial / Organizational

---

by

Cheryl Lynn Simmons

June 1996

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## ABSTRACT

Conflict resolution has been studied frequently in the literature, and is cited as ranking fifth in importance of managerial tasks among 65 management issues (Rahim, 1981). The five common conflict strategies focused on in research are: avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging. Differences between individuals in preferred conflict resolution styles have been explored in the literature, attempting to assess differences related to gender, managerial status, gender role and leader traits. However findings have been equivocal. This study assessed the part gender role plays in accounting for variance in conflict resolution styles between leaders and non-leaders. It was found that gender role did in fact significantly account for variance between leaders and non-leaders in the avoiding style of conflict resolution. Though the findings did not fully support the hypotheses, improved sample characteristics would most likely lead to more conclusive results.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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My fellow employees who filled out surveys and kept asking if they came out "normal"!

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## INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal interaction is a daily occurrence in nearly every individual's life. Disagreements and conflicts of varying degrees are bound to occur (on occasion) when people with different viewpoints and goals interact. Interpersonal conflict can occur in many different settings, ranging from home to the workplace. Conflict in the workplace was ranked fifth in importance of managerial tasks, among 65 management issues (Rahim, 1981), and thus is an important issue for organizations.

Different people tend to handle or resolve conflict in different ways, depending on several criteria, including organizational status, gender and gender roles. However, research attempting to predict conflict resolution style based on organizational status of the individual (manager versus non-manager) has been equivocal. Additionally, studies assessing conflict resolution styles associated with gender have drawn differing conclusions. This study will explore all of the mentioned differences, and attempt to assess them more fully.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

There are many different ways individuals may deal with interpersonal conflict. Thomas (1992) describes two ways individuals tend to manage conflict. He proposes a

two-dimensional taxonomy of conflict management, where the first dimension is assertiveness and the second dimension is cooperativeness. These two dimensions interact to determine one of five conflict handling modes: competing (high assertive, low cooperativeness) collaborating (high assertive, high cooperative), avoiding (low assertive, low cooperative), accommodating (low assertive and high cooperative), and compromising (average assertive, average cooperative).

Other researchers concur with Thomas' model of conflict resolution (Duane, 1989; Rahim, 1995, 1990, 1986). Duane provides further explanation of these styles. Collaborative conflict resolution describes an interpersonal conflict where the individual attempts to find a solution in which both parties are satisfied. It has also been described by Shockley-Zalabek as synergistic (1981), and by Rahim (1995, 1990, 1986) as integrative. In this resolution style, neither party loses. The next style, compromising, is one in which the individual works toward finding a middle ground on issues. In this style each participant will win a little and lose a little, as opposed to the competitive resolution style. A person engaging in the competitive style of conflict resolution is intent on getting his or her needs satisfied, and to win

his or her position at all costs. Competitive conflict resolution is also referred to as dominating by Rahim (1995, 1990, 1986). In this situation, there is clearly a winner and a loser, as there is in the accommodating situation. When an individual accommodates another person during a conflict, the accommodating person loses in the interaction, and concedes to the other individual. The accommodating person's needs are not met, as this individual succumbs to the demands of an opponent. The last style of conflict resolution is avoidant. In this situation, an individual postpones issues. When confronted with an interpersonal conflict, this person attempts to put off dealing with it. In this situation both individuals lose. One party attempts to deal with an issue, while the avoidant party puts the first party off. Neither party successfully expresses their concerns in order to achieve an agreeable solution. Individuals' choices of conflict management style vary depending upon many factors, including the particular situation, the person with whom they are in conflict, and individual differences. One salient individual difference studied extensively is gender.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES

Differences between individuals on their preferred style of conflict resolution style are likely to occur. But what explains why individuals differ? Rosenthal and Hautaluoma (1988) explored differences based on gender using the Rosenthal-Hautaluoma instrument, a conflict resolution scale designed to assess conflict resolution styles of subjects using the five styles described by Thomas. The scale is forced-choice format, with items of similar social desirability paired to alleviate individuals answering in order to manage their impression to others. The researchers found that females reported using an accommodating style more often than males, and a competing style less often than male subjects.

Berryman-Fink and Brunner (1987) found males were more likely to use a competing style than females, when completing the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode instrument. Females used a compromising style more often than males. The researchers also found that subjects, regardless of gender, reported a preference for compromise most often.

Rahim (1983) explored gender's relationship to conflict resolution by validating the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II using organizational status and gender as comparison criteria. Using a discriminant

function analysis, females were found to be more integrating (i.e. collaborative, synergistic), avoiding, and compromising, and less obliging (i.e. accommodating) than males. Unfortunately of the 1219 respondents, only 50 were female. Thus this analysis included all of the female respondents from the sample, and 50 males randomly selected from the sample.

Papa & Natalie (1989) looked at gender differences in interpersonal conflict resolution styles. They employed dyads of male/male, male/female and female/female, and instructed subjects to discuss topics in which the subjects had personal interests. Raters assessed conflict resolution styles that subjects employed three times during a thirty-minute discussion session. The male/male dyads consistently used assertiveness and reason to attempt to resolve conflict, while female/female dyads tended to use assertiveness and reason during the first two ten-minute portions of the discussion. During the final ten minutes female/female dyads used low assertiveness and high bargaining strategies. Male/female dyads displayed strategies representative of each gender's stereotype. In this dyad, typical male behaviors included assertiveness and reasoning, while female behaviors included low levels of assertiveness and high levels of bargaining. The

researchers concluded it is important to look at conflict resolution behavior over time.

Contradictory to the aforementioned findings, many researchers did not, in fact, find strong gender differences. Shockley-Zalabak (1981) looked at differences in conflict management styles of male and female managers in a work setting. Different scenarios were rated as to what conflict resolution style would be optimal for the respondent. Males and females did not differ in the overall preference of resolution styles, nor did they differ in their strength of preference of styles. The order of preference of styles, in decreasing order was: Synergistic (i.e. integrating), Compromise, Win-Lose (i.e. dominating), Yield-Lose (i.e. obliging or accommodating), and Lose-Leave (i.e. avoiding). The researchers note that findings which support behavioral differences between males and females in conflict resolution styles may have limited applicability to the professional manager unless the site of the research is the work setting.

Chusmir and Mills (1989) also found similarities between genders when using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode instrument to measure the five conflict resolution styles (competitive, collaborative, avoiding, accommodating and compromise). They found that males and females alike

handled conflict more competitively at work versus home, and at home used the accommodating style more often than at work. Additionally, low-level female managers tended to collaborate more and avoid conflict less at home than at work. Male managers were less likely to compromise at home than at work.

Another study found results in opposition to the differences commonly found between genders. Duane (1989) found that females were actually less likely to choose avoidance of conflict than males. This study had subjects rate the conflict resolution styles they were most likely to use during a grievance conflict. The study included 63 male and 7 female union and management officials. Duane found the opposite of other researchers' findings; that females were less inclined to avoid grievance-related issues than their male counterparts. Women tended to be more competitive than men. In addition, males were more willing to accommodate than females. No significant differences were found in collaborative or compromising styles, however. A variable which may be related to these findings is the historically male-oriented nature of the union-related positions the subjects of the study held. Females in these positions may be in them and successful in them by adopting more masculine behaviors. Caution should

be used when interpreting the results of this study due to the small number of female subjects. However, the very existence of such contradictory findings suggests further research into possible reasons why individuals differ in conflict resolution styles is warranted.

Thus many researchers have found associations between the conflict resolution styles individuals prefer and gender. However, many researchers found no significant differences between the genders on conflict resolution style. Therefore the findings of these studies are inconsistent. These inconsistent results may be due to a lack of a more accurate predictor of individual behavior. Basing a prediction of behavior on gender assumes a predetermined set of traits belongs to an individual. In contrast, gender role involves assessing the specific traits which the individual possesses. Gender role will be more predictive of conflict resolution style than gender alone, because gender role assesses the traits of the individual, while gender alone does not. Individuals are better described by assessing their gender role than "assessing" their gender, due to the more person-specific description associated with gender roles.

GENDER ROLE



Gender role refers to the degree to which individuals describe themselves according to personality attributes of instrumentality (stereotypically masculine) and expressiveness (stereotypically feminine) (Bem, 1981). Attributes defined by Bem as instrumental in nature include being independent, goal oriented, objective, assertive, competitive and logical, while expressive traits are characterized by emotionality, nurturance, and sensitivity to others. Yelsma and Brown (1985) state that this gender role classification is a more significant discriminator of communication behavior than biological sex. Yelsma and Brown employed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) to classify individuals into one of four gender role categories. Individuals scoring high on the expressive characteristics, and low on instrumental characteristics were termed feminine. Individuals scoring low on the expressive scale and high on the instrumental scale were termed masculine. Individuals low on both scales were termed undifferentiated, while individuals high on both scale were termed androgynous. The researchers found that individuals who were rated as androgynous were shown to be most disposed to handle conflict constructively. Androgynous spouses rated significantly more disposed to handle conflict constructively than undifferentiated and

feminine spouses, though they did not rate significantly higher than masculine spouses. Undifferentiated persons received the lowest scores for effective conflict management behavior. Thus differences in gender roles were found to be associated with differences in conflict resolution.

Long (1990) explored coping strategies of individuals and found that androgynous persons have more flexible coping skills and a greater coping repertoire. This was due to the greater expressiveness and greater instrumentality being able to predict problem-reappraisal coping. The coping situation in this study was interpersonal conflict. Thus androgynous persons significantly differed from persons of other gender roles on their use of interpersonal conflict coping skills.

Portello and Long (1994) investigated gender role orientation and interpersonal conflict handling styles of female managers. They concluded androgynous managers (high-expressive and high-instrumental trait) were more likely to use an integrative (collaborative) style of conflict management. High-expressive traits characterize feminine gender roles, while high-instrumental traits characterize masculine gender roles, as defined by the researchers. In addition, managers with high-instrumental

traits (masculine) indicated they would use a dominating conflict handling style.

Jurma and Powell (1994) found that managers who were viewed by their subordinates as androgynous were deemed better at handling conflict situations than managers who were viewed as masculine or feminine. The manager's ability to handle conflict was assessed by measuring subordinates' satisfaction with the leader, the task, and intrinsic satisfaction. Managers were classified into gender roles by having subordinates rate them using the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, which includes three 8-item bipolar adjective scales to assess gender roles. Thus many researchers have found that gender roles are highly associated with individuals' preferred styles of conflict resolution.

#### LEADER/MANAGER TRAITS

The trait approach to leadership suggests that leaders and non-leaders can be distinguished by the personality characteristics they possess. This approach may help to define differences between managers and non-managers on conflict resolution styles.

Melamed and Bozionelos (1992) explored personality traits of individuals, and found managers tend to be more homogenous than non-managers, with managers scoring higher

than non-managers on traits associated with intelligence, dominance, imagination, self-assuredness, and extroversion. The researchers used the 16-PF Form A which is a personality inventory assessment of 16 personality traits, including dominance, conscientiousness, and control. Managers significantly differed depending on gender on only three of the sixteen scales. Non-managers, however, differed depending on gender on fourteen of the sixteen personality traits. Additionally, the traits tended to become stronger as managerial grade increased. From this study we can infer that female non-managers differ from male non-managers. We can also infer that female managers are more similar to their male counterparts than they are dissimilar.

Spokane and Walsh (1978) also found high occupational level employees to be more homogenous than low occupational level employees. High occupational level employees were more masculine (defined by the researchers as active, hardheaded, and competitive) than low occupational level employees.

Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986) also explored personality traits of leaders and non-leaders. They completed a meta-analysis studying the relationship between personality traits and leadership. The researchers

intended to demonstrate the misinterpretation of findings published by Stogdill (1948) and Mann (1959), which were subject to methodological artifacts. These artifacts may have been due to such things as restriction of range, unreliability of measures, and median correlations' poor estimation of population parameters. Lord et al. found that among the different personality dimensions studied, two were substantially more associated with leadership than Stogdill and Mann previously determined. Those two dimensions were intelligence and masculinity-femininity. Thus managers are different than non-managers on many specific measures of personality, and therefore may differ in other areas as well.

#### MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS COMPARED TO MALE AND FEMALE NON-MANAGERS ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Another predictor of conflict resolution style is managerial status of the individual. Since managers and non-managers seem to differ in personality traits, they may also differ in preferred conflict resolution styles. Korabik, Baril and Watson (1993) found no gender differences among managers, however among non-managers found that female subjects rated themselves as more integrating, obliging, and compromising than male subjects. The researchers point out the shortcomings of previous

research, specifically that many studies found differences in conflict resolution between males and females when they were using non-managerial samples, and that these differences were less frequently found among managerial samples. This study had MBA students with and without managerial experience rate themselves on the ROCI-II (Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory). These findings agree with Chusmir and Mills (1989) who compared male and female managers and non-managers, finding gender differences in conflict resolution styles in their non-managerial sample. This suggests that non-managerial samples will show gender differences, while managerial samples will not. This could be due in part to the common finding that people tend to ascribe masculine behaviors to managers more often than feminine behaviors (Arkkelin and Simmons, 1985). If this perception translates to actual behaviors of managers, this would tend to restrict the range of behaviors, and thus create a more homogenous group of managers.

Todd-Mancillas and Rossi (1985) looked at differences between male and female managers' styles of dispute resolution. Subjects rated four different scenarios by indicating the style of conflict resolution they would employ in each scenario. In two of the four scenarios, male managers preferred the use of power to resolve

conflict. Female managers tended to use power and communication equally on one scenario (employee violates chain of command) and on the other scenario preferred the use of communication or communication combined with power strategies. The other two of the four scenarios showed no significant differences between genders on dispute resolution. This study concludes that female managers use communication more often than male managers to resolve conflict, indicating there are differences among managers based on gender.

Managers and non-managers were also compared when male and female route salespeople and insurance managers were assessed on several personality traits, including gender role (Spokane and Walsh, 1978). Gender differences on these personality traits were not found for females between the low and high occupational levels, which is contradictory to Chusmir and Mills (1989) findings indicating differences between female managers and non-managers.

Thus findings comparing managers and non-managers on conflict management styles were also equivocal. Additionally, conflict resolution styles which subjects chose have differed depending upon the gender of the individual. However these studies' findings are also

equivocal. Many studies found that managers used predominantly the same conflict resolution styles regardless of gender, while some studies found gender did predict conflict resolution style. Additionally, some studies found non-managers did differ on conflict resolution style preferred depending upon gender, while a few did not. So perhaps it is not the gender of the individual, but the gender role of the individual which explains differences in conflict resolution style. Perhaps managers differ from non-managers on gender roles, and this could be what accounts for differences in conflict resolution styles.

Certainly, as Schein et al. (1989) found, people tend to prescribe to the stereotypes which suggest that the male gender role is ascribed to the successful manager. But are differences in conflict resolution styles explained by gender roles, or by manager status? Or are the differences in conflict resolution styles explained by the combination of two predictors; manager status and gender roles? The latter would seem to be the better explanation. Differences between managers and non-managers have been found, however these differences were inconsistent across research studies. The factor most explored in research is gender, however gender also was an inconsistent predictor.



Gender traits will be a better predictor of differences between managers and non-managers in conflict resolution style due to the more person-specific nature of gender role's assessment of traits.

The present study seeks to improve upon past inconsistencies by using a more accurate indicator of individual differences; gender role. Thus the inclusion of gender role as a more accurate predictor of behavior in the present study may correct for past research's limitations.

This study proposes to explore the relationship between manager and non-manager status as it relates to gender roles and conflict resolution styles. Specifically:

H<sub>1</sub>: Gender role will predict conflict management style above and beyond the variance accounted for by gender alone. This is based on research completed by Portello and Long (1994), and Jurma and Powell (1994) indicating differences in conflict management styles associated with different gender roles.

H<sub>2</sub>: Leaders and non-leaders will differ on preferred conflict management styles. Several researchers found that managers differ from non-managers on their preferred style of conflict resolution (Korabik, Baril and Watson, 1993, Todd-Mancillas and Rossi, 1985), while others did not (Spokane and Walsh, 1978).

H<sub>3</sub>: Leaders and non-leaders will differ on gender roles. This is hypothesized due to the findings of Melamed and Bozionelos (1992) and Todd-Mancillas and Rossi (1985). These researchers found that managers and non-managers differed on several personality dimensions.

H<sub>4</sub>: Differences between managers and non-managers on conflict resolution style preference will be accounted for by gender roles. This is expected for the following reasons: (1) the equivocal nature of research exploring gender differences associated with different conflict management styles, (2) the equivocal nature of research studies looking at manager status as it relates to conflict resolution styles, (3) the need to clarify exactly where variance in conflict resolution styles lie.

## SUBJECTS

One hundred and twenty employees of a large, international organization were recruited. Two participants did not complete the ROCI-II, and were dropped from further analyses, for a total of one hundred and eighteen participants. 134 subjects were needed to assess the possibility of a medium effect at the  $p < .05$  level for a multiple regression procedure with two predictors (Cohen, 1992), and the obtained sample nearly reaches this number. An even number of males and females were sought, but not obtained. Eighty males and thirty-eight females participated. Subjects were solicited at their workplace. Survey materials were placed in their company mailboxes, or distributed directly to them at the worksite. A confidential box (covered in paper, with a slit in the top for insertion of completed surveys) was provided for employees who were solicited on site. Envelopes with the researcher's address and postage were provided to organization members who were solicited via the postal service.

## METHODS/INSTRUMENTS

To assess preferred styles of conflict management, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) was employed (Appendix A). This measure provided continuous scores on each of the five conflict management styles (i.e. avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging). A mean score for each of the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict was obtained. The ROCI-II has been used frequently in research, and was found to have acceptable Psychometric properties, with test-retest reliabilities (one week intervals) ranging from .60 to .83, with a mean of .76. Thornton (1989) reported that intercorrelations between scales were very low (.08 to .31, with a median of .12), indicating the scale is measuring distinct conflict handling styles. Overall means and standard deviations for each style can be found in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows means broken down by gender.

To assess levels of instrumentality and expressiveness, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) was administered to subjects (Appendix B). Test-retest reliabilities (one month intervals) range from .78 to .84 (Bem, 1981). Instrumental and expressive scores attained from the BSRI have also been shown to be uncorrelated, indicating the scale is measuring distinct traits. In

addition, the scale may be less susceptible to the effects of social desirability than other gender role measures (Kottke, 1988). Overall means and standard deviations for each scale can be found in Figure 1.

Subjects also provided demographic information, and responded to a series of questions regarding leadership experience and tendency to assume leadership roles (Appendix C). Participants were categorized as leaders if they currently or in the past held a managerial position. The goal of the present study is to assess conflict resolution styles and gender roles as they are associated with individuals themselves, and not their managerial status. Many individuals with prior managerial experience are not in management positions at the present time as defined by the organization of interest. For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that these individuals still possess leadership skills and thus were categorized as leaders.

Correlational data on all variables is shown in Table 2.

## RESULTS

Prior to any analyses being calculated, the data were examined for normality and linearity. All data demonstrated adequate variability, and were normally distributed. Figure 3 summarizes leader and non-leader means on each conflict management style. Figure 4 summarizes frequencies of responses for males, females, leaders and non-leaders. Of the 118 participants, 68% were male, and 32% were female. 63% of females were managers, while 76% of males were managers. Table 1 shows means for the BSRI broken down by gender and leadership experience.

Reliability analyses were computed for both the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Alpha = .8469) and the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (.8194). Both scales have similar reliabilities to those computed in past studies.

Scoring of the Bem was completed by computing the means for the masculine and feminine scales. In addition, a multiplicative scale was computed (masculine score multiplied by feminine score) to assess differences between androgynous and undifferentiated persons' responses. Individuals scoring high on both the masculine and feminine scales (androgynous subjects) would have very high scores on the multiplicative scale compared to individuals scoring

low on both scales (undifferentiated subjects). Continuous scoring of items was completed to obtain a more representative score for individuals than would categorical scoring of participants (Miller and Kottke, 1993). To test this assumption, median-split categorical scoring of the Bem responses were computed. This method has been completed in most research involving the Bem, and assigns individuals to one of four categories; masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated. Median values for each of the masculine and feminine scales were computed, and compared to median norms provided by Bem (1981). Values for both males and females were far higher for the masculine scale, and lower for the feminine scale. Thus individuals in the present sample were categorized into gender roles using the normed data from Bem's sample because of their non-normal distribution. Individuals scoring higher on the masculine scale than the masculine median, and lower on the feminine scale than the feminine median were categorized as masculine. Individuals scoring higher on the feminine scale than the feminine median, and lower on the masculine scale than the masculine median were categorized as feminine. Individuals scoring higher on both scales than both medians were categorized as androgynous, and individuals scoring lower on both scales

than both medians were categorized as undifferentiated. A Chi-Square analysis comparing frequencies of leaders and non-leaders on each of the categories of gender roles showed non-significant results (Pearson Chi-Square = 4.024,  $p > .05$ ). Because past research in this area used both continuous and categorical scoring, additional analyses were computed using continuous measures of the BSRI. Scoring of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory involved computing means for each of the five conflict management styles.

Leaders and non-leaders were defined by past or present managerial experience, with individuals currently in managerial positions, or who had past managerial experience being defined as leaders. Individuals with no leadership experience were defined as non-leaders. This was with the assumption that individuals, whether they are currently a leader or were a leader in the past will still possess leader traits and will behave more similar to each other than individuals who have never been in a leadership position. To test this assumption, individuals with current leadership experience were compared with individuals with past leadership experience on gender roles and conflict resolution styles. These two groups were not found to differ significantly on the masculine scale ( $t = -$



.610,  $p > .05$ ), the feminine scale ( $t = -1.452$ ,  $p > .005$ ), or the masculine/feminine multiplicative scale ( $t = -1.264$ ,  $p > .005$ ).

Hypothesis one (gender role will predict conflict management style above and beyond the variance accounted for by gender alone) was partially supported. Five hierarchical regression analyses were computed, where gender was entered into the equation first to account for variance in conflict management style, and the three gender role scores were entered second. A series of hierarchical regressions were computed to assess variance accounted for in steps for each conflict management style, separately. Due to the series of hierarchical regressions computed, alpha was set at .01 to control for the possibility of family-wise error. These analyses provided  $R^2$  and change in  $R^2$  values which reflected variance accounted for by each set of variables in each step. In this way the variance accounted for in the first step was associated with variables in the first step, so that variables entered in the second step, if significant, accounted for variance over and above variance accounted for in the first step. Gender role was found to account for significantly more variance in conflict management style than gender alone on two of the five conflict resolution styles: avoiding ( $R^2$  change = .133,  $p < .001$ ) and obliging ( $R^2$  change = .094,  $p < .01$ )

(See Table 3). Correlations were computed to further describe where variance in conflict resolution styles fell. The feminine scale was positively correlated with the avoiding style ( $r=.333$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the obliging style ( $r=.261$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Hypothesis two (leaders and non-leaders will differ on preferred conflict management styles) was supported. A profile analysis computed using the multivariate technique to compare conflict resolution styles of participants with leadership experience to those without leadership experience was significant (Wilks' Lambda  $F=2.921$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Two of the five styles were found to be significantly related to leadership experience: avoiding ( $F=5.819$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and integrating ( $F=7.635$ ,  $p<.01$ ), with leaders having a higher tendency to prefer the integrating style, and a lower tendency to prefer the avoiding style (See Table 4).

Hypothesis three (leaders and non-leaders will differ on gender roles) was supported. A t-test was computed to compare leaders and non-leaders on gender roles. Leaders were found to be significantly higher on the masculine scale than non-leaders ( $t=2.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and significantly lower on the feminine scale than non-leaders ( $t=-2.443$ ,  $p<.05$ ) (See table 5).

Hypothesis four (differences between leaders and non-leaders on conflict resolution style will be accounted for by gender roles) was partially supported. Results of Hypothesis two showed leaders and non-leaders differed on the avoiding and integrating conflict management styles, therefore hierarchical regressions on these styles were computed to determine if gender role would mediate the relationship between conflict management styles and leadership experience (Table 6). A series of hierarchical regressions were computed to assess variance accounted for in steps for each conflict management style, separately. Due to the series of hierarchical regressions computed, alpha was set at .01 to control for the possibility of family-wise error. These analyses provided  $R^2$  and change in  $R^2$  values which reflected variance accounted for by each set of variables in each step. In this way the variance accounted for in the first step was associated with variables in the first step. Variables entered in the second step, if not significant, indicated that the relationship between conflict management style and leadership status was mediated by variables entered in the first step of the equation.

For the first hierarchical regression examining the avoiding style of conflict management, the three gender

role scores (masculine, feminine, and multiplicative) were entered into the first step of the hierarchical regression equation to account for variance in the avoiding conflict management style ( $R^2=.132$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In the second step, leadership experience was entered into the equation to see if it would account for further variance ( $R^2$  change =  $.021$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Gender role accounted for a significant amount of variance in the avoiding style of conflict management. Because the  $R^2$  change in the second step was non-significant, gender role was thus shown to mediate the relationship between conflict style resolution and leadership experience. The addition of leadership experience to the equation did not cause a significant change in R squared.

For the next hierarchical regression examining the integrative style of conflict management, the three gender role scores were again entered into the equation first, to assess variance accounted by gender role in the integrative conflict management style ( $R^2=.044$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Next, leadership experience was entered into the equation to see if it would significantly account for variance ( $R^2$  change =  $.049$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Gender role did not account for a significant amount of variance in the integrative conflict management style, and thus was not shown to be a mediator

of the relationship between the integrative conflict resolution style and leadership experience.

## DISCUSSION

Although gender role predicted variance in the avoiding and obliging styles of conflict management (Hypothesis 1), leaders instead differed on avoiding and integrating styles of conflict management (Hypothesis 2). To explore the assumption that these differences between leaders were mediated by gender role, first leaders and non-leaders were compared on gender role, and found to differ significantly on both the masculine and feminine scales (Hypothesis 3). When the avoiding and integrating differences between leaders were further explored, only the relationship between the avoiding style of conflict resolution and leadership experience was found to be mediated by gender role (Hypothesis 4). The variance in integrating style was accounted for by leadership experience and not gender role, which was counter to what was hypothesized. This leads to the conclusion that other factors or traits of leaders are contributing to variance in the integrating style of conflict management in addition to gender role. Though gender role was found to mediate the relationship between avoiding and leadership experience, gender role's scope may be too narrow to account for significant differences in multiple conflict management styles.

Several attributes of the data lead the researcher to the conclusion that had the sample been different (equal number of males and females, less "male" oriented organization), the results may have been more dramatically in support of the hypotheses.

The first and most obvious characteristic of the data is the ratio of males to females. There were over twice as many males as females in the sample, with 68% of respondents being male, and only 32% being female. 63% of females, and 76% of males had leadership experience. Given that the organization sampled was predominantly male, an attempt was made to counter-balance this by targeting females as recipients of the survey. Though the ratio of males to females does not approach 1:1, it is far closer than the actual organization's population ratio (6:1). The hierarchical analyses are robust to such unequal cell sizes, as the t-test is. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) discuss methods of artificially equalizing cell sizes. However, they also note that there must be more research units in the smallest group than there are dependent variables. The present data exceeds this minimum by far, and thus the unequal cells do not pose a problem.

An additional anomaly about the data on males and females could also be a factor; females as well as males

tended to endorse masculine items on the Bem more frequently than feminine items. This is counter to norms provided by Bem (1981) with a sample of 340 females and 476 males. Means for Bem's normative data indicate males' mean for the masculinity scale was 5.12, and the femininity scale was 4.59. Females in Bem's normative data scored means of 4.79 for masculinity and 5.05 for the femininity scale. However in the present sample, females' mean response on the masculinity scale was 5.20, and on the feminine scale was 4.94.

The higher mean for the masculine scale may be due in part to the high proportion of subjects with leadership experience, which is the next important aspect of the data. Eighty five of the one hundred and eighteen subjects had either current or prior leadership experience. As discussed in the measures section, leadership was defined as the subject being in a management position either currently or in the past. It is important to use leadership experience rather than current managerial status as the defining variable for these groups, because the crux of the present argument is that individuals are better defined by the traits they possess than the category they belong to (gender, current managerial status). To test the assumption that past leaders and present leaders were more



similar than different, and thus could be combined into one group, t-tests were computed to compare these groups on gender roles and conflict resolution styles. As stated in the results section, the two groups did not differ significantly on gender roles. They did, however, differ significantly on two of the five conflict resolution styles. Past managers were found to endorse avoiding items more often than current managers ( $t=-2.49$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and also endorsed integrating items more often than current managers ( $t=-2.055$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Therefore, while current and past leaders did not differ on the trait measure (BSRI), they were found to differ on two of five behavioral self-report scales (ROCI-II). While these findings do suggest that there are differences between past and current leaders, they also suggest that past and current leaders are more similar than they are dissimilar. Given their similarities, all results of analyses with the exception of the two described here were completed with two groups; those with past or present leadership experience and those with no leadership experience.

The high percentage of individuals with leadership experience is a function of the present study's organizational sample. The organization sampled hires continuously, and due to downsizing of management positions

at this and other companies, career changes, and individuals changing companies, the present sample had a high percentage of respondents with prior leadership experience. Given that leaders tend to exhibit masculine traits more often than feminine traits, the present sample is not representative of the normal distribution of individuals on gender traits and leadership experience. The present findings support this.

Gender role did account for significant variance in the avoiding conflict resolution style as hypothesized. However other limitation affected the current research. Both the ratio of males to females and the unexpectedly higher endorsement of masculine items than feminine items by females cause this sample to be non-normal. However, given the sample's shortcomings, the finding that gender role accounted for variance upon a trait which leaders differed on would indicate that further research with these sample errors corrected could provide more conclusive results.

The lack of overall significant results on two of the five conflict resolution styles, though not hypothesized, is expected given the uneven splits in the data sample on leadership experience and gender. The styles which did show significant differences could arguably be defined as

falling on the extreme ends of conflict resolution styles. Avoiding is the least proactive of the conflict resolution styles because individuals using this style do not attempt to resolve conflict at all. Integrating is the most proactive because in this style individuals seek to find a solution in which both parties win; it is the most positive conflict resolution style, and thus is on the positive extreme of conflict resolution styles. Therefore, given the restriction of range in the present sample, if there were differences to be found, they would be the differences on the extreme styles of conflict management.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant results may be the nature of the two remaining conflict resolution styles. The dominating style may be unpopular for all individuals, not just leaders or non-leaders. The compromising style may be equally popular for all individuals, regardless of their role or status in the organization.

Future research exploring differences between leaders and non-leaders on conflict resolution styles could include measurements of additional leader traits which may enhance the ability to assess personal characteristics accounting for differences on conflict resolution styles. Additional leader traits such as interpersonal skills and personality

traits could possibly account for additional variance in differences on conflict management styles among leaders and non-leaders. Intelligence could also play a role in predicting conflict management styles of leaders and non-leaders. Presumably, some styles of conflict resolution are more appropriate than others in different situations. Intelligence could be another factor in predicting conflict management styles, as the individual of higher intelligence is able to determine which style is best in a given situation.

## APPENDIX A

### Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II

You may have incompatibilities, disagreements, or differences (i.e., conflict) with your co-workers (colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, etc.). Rank each of the following statements by circling a number on the scale provided after each statement to indicate how you handle your conflict with your co-workers. Try to recall as many recent conflict situations as possible in ranking these statements.

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

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

## APPENDIX B

### Bern Sex Role Inventory

Below you will find a list of number of personality characteristics. Please use those characteristics to describe yourself by indicating on a scale of 1 to 7 how true of you each of these characteristics is.

**Example: Sly**

Write a **1** if it is **never or almost never true** that you are sly.

Write a **2** if it is **usually not true** that you are sly.

Write a **3** if it is **sometimes but infrequently true** that you are sly.

Write a **4** if it is **occasionally true** that you are sly.

Write a **5** if it is **often true** that you are sly.

Write a **6** if it is **usually true** that you are sly.

Write a **7** if it is **always or almost always true** that you are sly.

Thus, if you feel it is **sometimes but infrequently true** that you are "sly", **never or almost never true** that you are "malicious," **always or almost always true** that you are "irresponsible," and **often true** that you are "carefree," then you would rate these characteristics as:

Sly	3
Malicious	1

Irresponsible	7
Carefree	5

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always or almost always true
Defend my own beliefs							
Affectionate							
Conscientious							
Independent							
Sympathetic							
Moody							
Assertive							
Sensitive to needs of others							
Reliable							
Strong personality							
Understanding							
Jealous							
Forceful							
Compassionate							
Truthful							
Have leadership abilities							
Eager to soothe hurt feelings							
Secretive							
Willing to take risks							
Warm							
Adaptable							
Dominant							
Tender							
Conceited							
Willing to take a stand							
Love children							
Tactful							
Aggressive							
Gentle							
Conventional							
Self-Reliant							
Yielding							
Helpful							
Athletic							
Cheerful							
Unsystematic							
Analytical							
Shy							
Inefficient							
Make decisions easily							
Flatterable							
Theatrical							
Self-Sufficient							
Loyal							
Happy							
Individualistic							
Soft-spoken							
Unpredictable							
Masculine							
Gullible							
Solemn							
Competitive							
Childlike							
Likable							
Ambitious							
Do not use harsh language							
Sincere							
Act as a leader							
Feminine							
Friendly							

**APPENDIX C**

Demographics Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself. Please do not leave any question unanswered, as this will render your survey responses invalid.

Do not include your name at any point in this survey.

1. Work position title \_\_\_\_\_
2. Years in position \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender Male/Female
4. Age \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you in a management position? Yes/No
6. If yes, how many people do you supervise? \_\_\_\_\_
7. If no, have you ever been in a supervisory position? Yes/No Please describe:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- |  | <i>Never</i> | <i>Seldom</i> | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Often</i> | <i>Very Often</i> |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|
|  | 1            | 2             | 3                | 4            | 5                 |
| 8. In social situations, how often do you tend to be the group member who makes plans/decisions for the group?           |              |               |                  |              |                   |
| 9. In work situations when a group project has been assigned, how often do you volunteer to be in charge of the project? | 1            | 2             | 3                | 4            | 5                 |
| 10. In your family, how often do you tend to organize functions and/or outings?  | 1            | 2             | 3                | 4            | 5                 |

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN MANAGING SITUATIONS



My name is Cheryl Simmons, and I currently support the CART Zone in Cucamonga. I am working on a graduate school research study, looking at ways people respond to different situations. This study includes a survey which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This project has been reviewed according to California State University, San Bernardino procedures governing human subjects research. While this study is not sponsored by Frito-Lay, the following managers have agreed to allow me to use Frito-Lay personnel in my study: Malaika Layne, Darren Marshall, and Bill LaFerriere.

Please answer all of the questions in relation to your immediate work group. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your answers will remain anonymous and confidential. **Please do not put your name anywhere on this survey.** By completing this survey and returning it you consent to participation. Return the survey in the envelope provided by May 31st (this Friday). Please accept the enclosed pen as my thanks for your participation. For further information about the study contact Cheryl Simmons at (909) 512-4461.

Thank You!

California State University, San Bernardino, Department of Psychology



## **APPENDIX E**

### **Debriefing Statement**

The study in which you have just participated in was designed to measure the personal attributes of individuals which may be associated with different conflict resolution styles. Some attributes, such as gender and managerial status, have been shown to be related to differences in conflict resolution styles. However, studies have demonstrated inconsistent results, thus the reasoning for the present study. For grouped results of the study, or if you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Cheryl Simmons at (909) 512-4461, or Janelle Gilbert at (909) 880-5587.

Thank you for your participation.

Table 1  
Means for Males, Females, Leaders and Non-Leaders on the Bem  
Sex Role Inventory

	Male	Female	Leader	Non-Leader
Feminine	4.5956	4.9473	4.6234	4.9288
Masculine	5.4209	5.207	5.4481	5.1045
Masculine/Feminine	24.8963	25.7401	25.1883	25.1158

Table 2  
Correlational Data for All Variables

Pearson Correlation										
	Avoiding Compromising	Dominating	Integrating	Obliging Age	Leadership Gender	Feminine Score	Masculine Score	Masculine/Feminine Score		
Avoiding	1.000	.307**	0.147	0.005	.400**	0.037	.219*	0.040	.333**	-0.111
Compromising	.307**	1.000	-0.014	.520**	.417**	-0.102	-0.060	0.057	0.134	0.085
Dominating	0.147	-0.014	1.000	0.016	0.178	-0.049	-0.035	-0.081	-0.079	0.141
Integrating	0.005	.520**	0.016	1.000	.301**	-0.149	-.249**	0.115	0.030	.194*
Obliging	.400**	.417**	0.178	.301**	1.000	-0.064	-0.024	-0.109	.261**	0.024
Age	0.037	-0.102	-0.049	-0.149	-0.064	1.000	0.035	0.077	-0.036	-.241**
Leadership Experience	.219*	-0.060	-0.035	-.249**	-0.024	0.035	1.000	0.136	.217*	-.214*
Gender	0.040	0.057	-0.081	0.115	-0.109	0.077	0.136	1.000	.260**	-0.139
Feminine Score	.333**	0.134	-0.079	0.030	.261**	-0.036	.217*	.260**	1.000	-0.074
Masculine Score	-0.111	0.085	0.141	.194*	0.024	-.241**	-.214*	-0.139	-0.074	1.000
Masculine/Feminine Score	0.175	0.174	0.050	0.171	.215*	-.210*	-0.007	0.085	.674**	1.000

	Avoiding Compromising	Dominating	Integrating	Obliging Age	Leadership Gender	Feminine Score	Masculine Score	Masculine/Feminine Score		
Avoiding	0.001	0.001	0.111	0.959	0.000	0.690	0.017	0.667	0.000	0.233
Compromising	0.001	0.001	0.111	0.959	0.000	0.690	0.017	0.667	0.000	0.233
Dominating	0.111	0.881	0.881	0.000	0.278	0.517	0.539	0.148	0.148	0.361
Integrating	0.959	0.000	0.864	0.864	0.054	0.604	0.705	0.381	0.396	0.128
Obliging	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.001	0.111	0.007	0.217	0.746	0.746	0.035
Age	0.690	0.278	0.604	0.111	0.498	0.800	0.240	0.004	0.004	0.794
Leadership Experience	0.017	0.170	0.705	0.007	0.800	0.713	0.411	0.698	0.411	0.009
Gender	0.667	0.539	0.381	0.217	0.240	0.411	0.141	0.019	0.019	0.020
Feminine Score	0.000	0.148	0.396	0.746	0.004	0.698	0.019	0.005	0.005	0.133
Masculine Score	0.233	0.361	0.128	0.035	0.794	0.009	0.020	0.133	0.133	0.425
Masculine/Feminine Score	0.059	0.060	0.592	0.064	0.019	0.023	0.940	0.358	0.000	0.000

Table 3  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Gender Role and Gender

		R Squared				
		Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	Change	Significance
Step 1	Gender	Gender	-0.059	0.002		0.667
Step 2	Gender Role	Gender		0.135	0.133	0.518
		Masculine/Feminine	1.031			.001***
		Masculine	-0.848			0.188
		Feminine	-0.410			0.144
						0.477

		R Squared				
		Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	Change	Significance
Step 1	Gender	Gender	0.040	0.003		0.539
Step 2	Gender Role	Gender		0.045	0.041	0.681
		Masculine/Feminine	1.138			0.187
		Masculine	-0.733			0.167
		Feminine	-0.698			0.229
						0.250

		R Squared				
		Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	Change	Significance
Step 1	Gender	Gender	-0.048	0.007		0.381
Step 2	Gender Role	Gender		0.028	0.021	0.623
		Masculine/Feminine	0.329			0.480
		Masculine	-0.110			0.691
		Feminine	-0.296			0.857
						0.628

		R Squared				
		Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	Change	Significance
Step 1	Gender	Gender	0.143	0.013		0.217
Step 2	Gender Role	Gender		0.020	0.049	0.134
		Masculine/Feminine	0.578			0.120
		Masculine	-0.208			0.477
		Feminine	-0.412			0.729
						0.492

		R Squared				
		Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	Change	Significance
Step 1	Gender	Gender	-0.185	0.012		0.240
Step 2	Gender Role	Gender		0.106	0.094	0.048
		Masculine/Feminine	0.559			.010**
		Masculine	-0.387			0.481
		Feminine	-0.097			0.510
						0.869

Table 4  
Profile Analysis, Multivariate Method

	F Value	Significance
Overall Wilks' Lambda Intercept	1754.493	.000***
Overall Wilks' Lambda Effect for Leadership Experience	2.921	.016*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects		
Avoiding	5.819	0.017*
Compromising	0.422	0.517
Dominating	0.144	0.705
Integrating	7.635	0.007**
Obliging	0.065	0.8

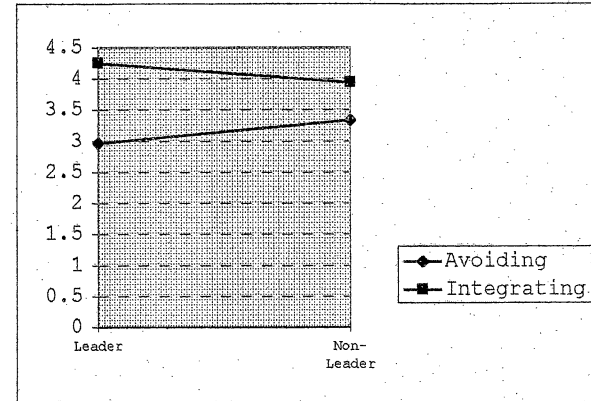


Table 5  
 T-Test with Leader/Non-Leader and Conflict Resolution Style

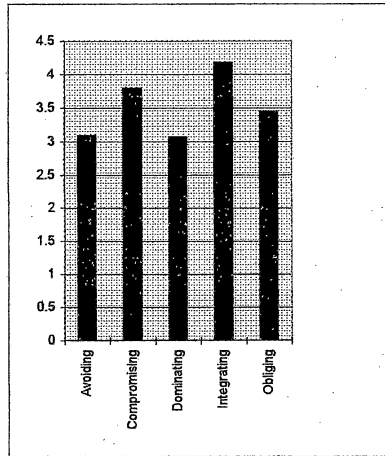
	Feminine Scale Mean	Masculine Scale Mean	T Value	Significance (2-tailed)
Leader Experience	4.6234	5.4481	-2.443	.017*
No Leader Experience	4.9288	5.1045	2.35	.022*

Table 6  
 Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Gender Role and Leader/Non-Leader

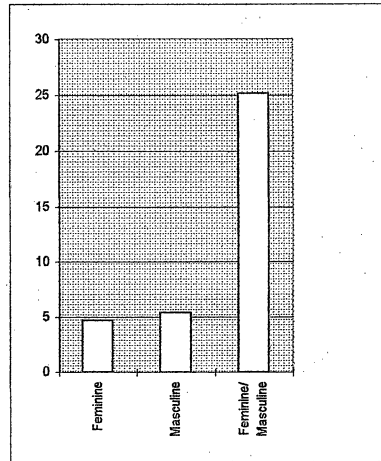
<b>AVOIDING</b>						
	Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	R Squared Change	Significance	
Step 1	Gender Role		0.132		.001***	
	Feminine	-0.533			0.353	
	Masculine	-0.888			0.122	
	Masculine/Feminine	1.137			0.144	
Step 2	Leadership Experience		0.153	0.021	0.098	
	Leadership	0.152			0.098	

<b>INTEGRATING</b>						
	Variable Entered	Beta Weight	R Squared	R Squared Change	Significance	
Step 1	Gender Role		0.074		0.032*	
	Feminine	-0.119			0.842	
	Masculine	-0.370			0.530	
	Masculine/Feminine	0.546			0.499	
Step 2	Leadership Experience		0.079	0.005	0.440	
	Leadership	-0.073			0.440	

Figure 1  
Means and Standard Deviations for the Bem Sex Role Inventory  
and Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II



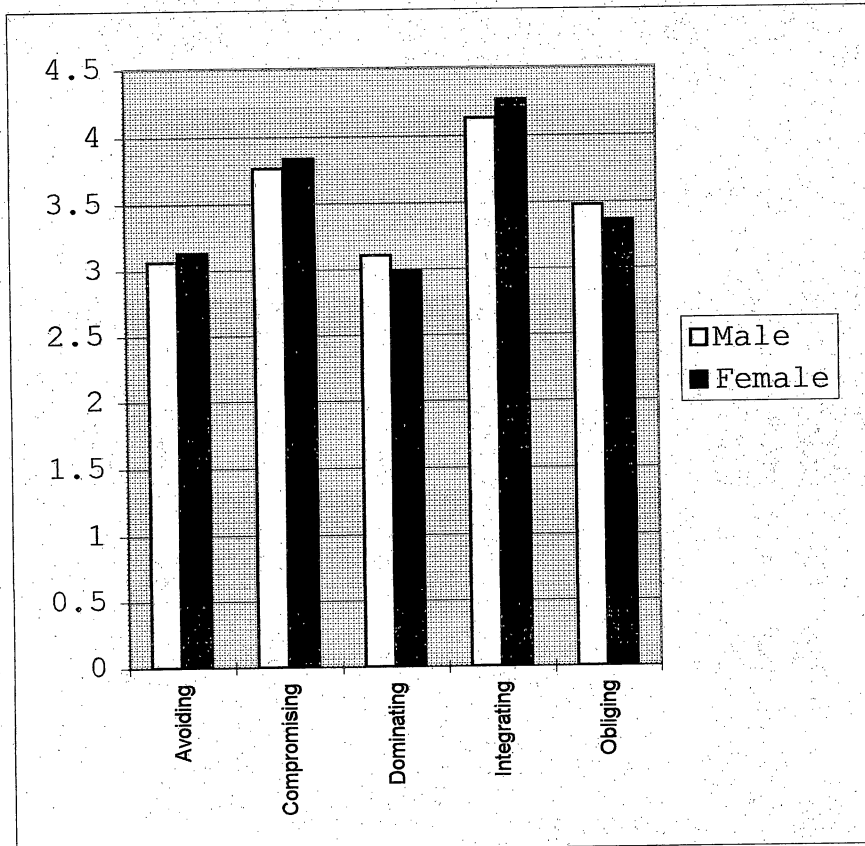
Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Conflict Resolution Styles</b>		
Avoiding	3.0833	0.7592
Compromising	3.7867	0.6181
Dominating	3.0636	0.6978
Integrating	4.1712	0.5557
Obliging	3.4393	0.5056



Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Gender Role Scores</b>		
Feminine	4.7088	0.6356
Masculine	5.352	0.7224
Feminine/ Masculine	25.1681	4.6425



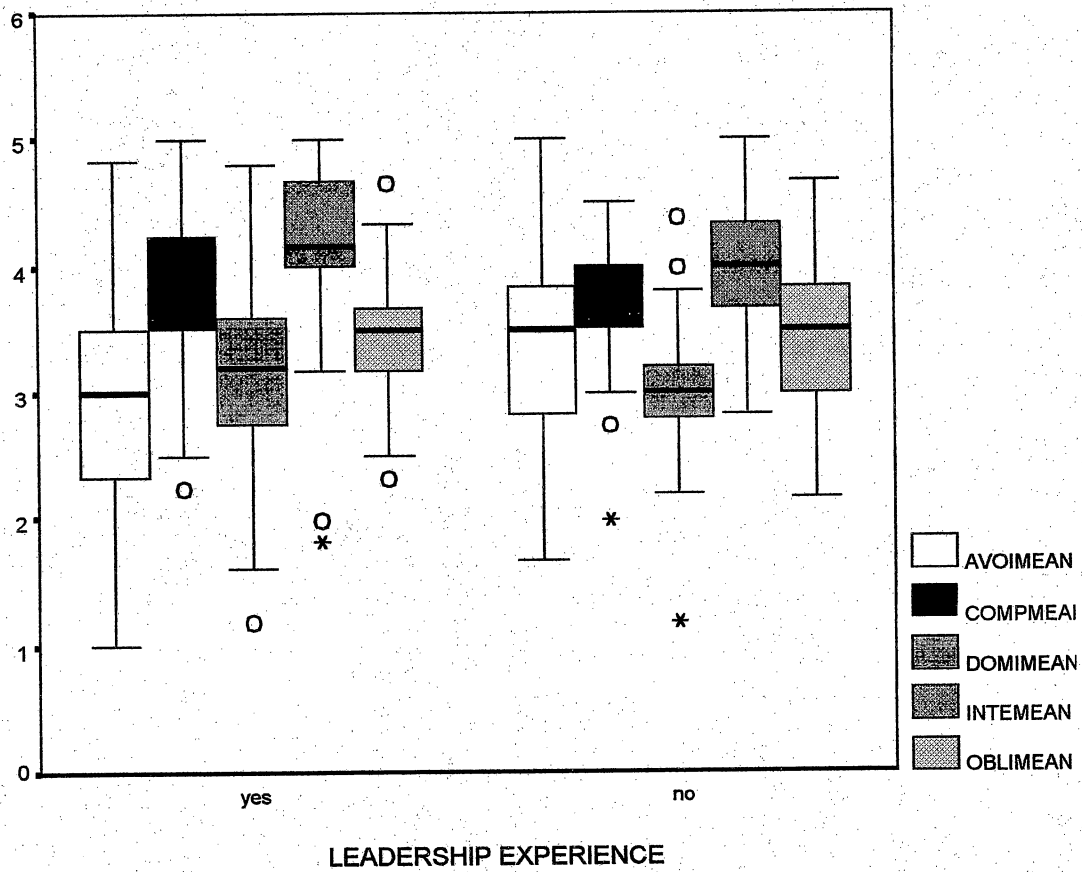
Figure 2  
 Means for the Rahim Organizational Conflict - II, broken down by gender



	Male	Female
Avoiding	3.0625	3.1272
Compromising	3.7625	3.8377
Dominating	3.1025	2.9816
Integrating	4.1275	4.2632
Obliging	3.4771	3.3596

Figure 3

A comparison of Leaders and Non-Leaders on Conflict Resolution Styles

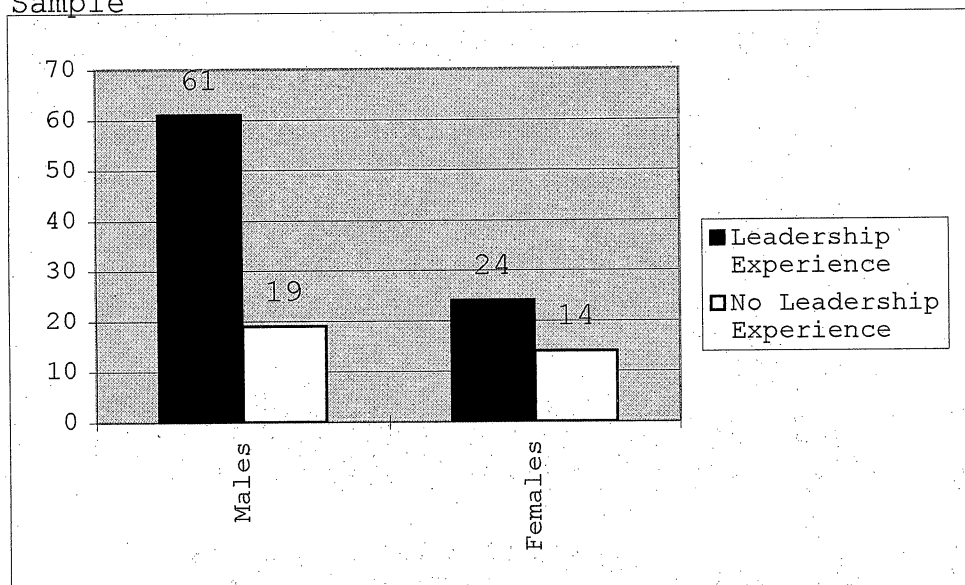


o = Outliers

\* = Extremes

	Leader	Non-Leader
Avoiding	2.9804	3.3485
Compromising	3.8098	3.7273
Dominating	3.0788	3.0242
Integrating	4.2569	3.9505
Obliging	3.4467	3.4202

Figure 4  
 Frequencies for Leaders, Non-Leaders, Males and Females in Sample



	Males	Females
Leadership Experience	61	24
No Leadership Experience	19	14

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