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Academy of Managerial Communications

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Volume 2, Number 2 1997

Proceedings of the Academy of Managerial Communications

October 14-17, 1997
Maui, Hawaii

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Co-Editors
Western Carolina University

The Proceedings of the
Academy of Managerial Communications
are published by the
Allied Academies, Inc., PO Box 2689, Cullowhee, NC, 28723.

The Academy of Managerial Communications is an affiliate of the Allied Academies, an international, non-profit association of scholars whose purpose is to support and encourage the exchange of knowledge.

Proceedings of the Academy of Managerial Communications

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A NOTE ON THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTING PROFESSION IN MEXICO: LOS CONTADORES PÚBLICOS

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ABSTRACT

Business firms in the U.S. are growing increasingly interested in doing business in Mexico and doing business with Mexican firms. The key to communicating in business is to understand the language of business, which is often the language of accounting. This paper presents a short introduction to the work of public accountants, or contadores públicos, in Mexico.

INTRODUCTION

A number of writers have emphasized the importance for U.S. businesses of dealing with Mexican businesses (e.g., Engholm and Grimes, 1997; Nevaer, 1995; Newman and Szterenfeld, 1993). McKinniss (1994) notes the importance of effective communication strategies to successful business endeavors in Mexico. Wiener (1996) examined the differences in accounting standards between the two countries, but did not focus on the differences in the practice of the profession itself. Norris (1993) and Tiburco (1993) examine the experiences of U.S. certified public accountants (CPAs) as they begin working with businesses in Mexico, but they do not examine the experiences of Mexican *contadores públicos* (CPs). Larson (1995) notes the importance of working with Mexican accounting professionals as NAFTA becomes more important to the U.S. economy and Frucot and Shearon (1991) examine Mexican managers' responses to budgetary controls.

The Mexican national association of professional public accountants, the IMCP (1997), has been in existence in one form or another since 1917 (CCPM, 1997). Regional associations exist that parallel the U.S. system of state CPA societies (IMCP, 1997). The IMCP has developed a code of professional ethics (IMCP, 1979), much as the American Institute of CPAs has done in the U.S.

Since accounting is a key component of business-related communications (Hirsch, 1994; Thomas, 1972), we have devoted this paper to describing the accounting profession in Mexico. We present this description in three sections. The first section includes a description of how one must prepare to become a CP in Mexico. The second section describes entry into the profession once a student has completed his or her studies. The third section provides a general description of the nature of CP practice in Mexico.

PREPARATION FOR THE PROFESSION

In Mexico, the standard preparation for a CP career includes University-level work. The usual course of study is devoted to professional subjects and occurs over five years. During these five years, students take a five-course load in each of two semesters. Many of the students work part-time or full-time; therefore, many schools offer courses in the evenings.

Most accounting programs offer few general studies courses; most tend to focus on accounting and business-related topics. For example, an accounting curriculum might include a writing course or a psychology course, but most non-accounting courses are in the areas of finance, business law, economics, and other business subjects. This professional school model contrasts sharply with the trend in U.S. schools to include a large number of liberal arts and

social science courses in accounting programs. The Mexican model is more like the U.S. curricula in schools of law or medicine.

In many university programs, the last semester is conducted as a seminar series in which the students take turns conducting the course. This prepares them to make presentations as professionals and gives them a chance to hone their research skills. The subjects that are covered in this final semester often include auditing, tax, and other business and accounting subjects.

ENTRY INTO THE PROFESSION

As in the U.S., grades play an important role in screening candidates at the major accounting firms. These firms only hire about 25% of university graduates in accounting. Another 10-15% of graduates are hired by smaller accounting firms. About half of all university graduates in accounting enter industry accounting positions and about 10% enter government accounting positions.

Some firms hire students before they have completed the five-year course of study. For example, several major firms routinely hire students after their fourth year and encourage them to finish their studies in evening classes. Other firms, particularly those who require new hires to travel extensively, wait to hire until the candidates have completed the five-year program. Many smaller public accounting firms hire students even earlier in their programs.

THE NATURE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTING IN MEXICO

Starting salaries for accountants in Mexico vary significantly, with firms in major cities such as Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Tijuana paying somewhat higher salaries and firms in smaller towns and rural areas paying much lower salaries. Average annual starting pay in public accounting is currently around US$ 5,000. Government positions pay somewhat more, averaging about US$ 6,500. Industry accounting positions often start for as much as US$ 8,000.

The structure of accounting firms in Mexico is somewhat similar to that of U.S. firms. The hierarchical structure is quite similar, including many staff accountants that are supervised by senior accountants. These positions report to managers who, in turn, report to partners. The mix of activities are similar, with managers and partners spending a large portion of their time in client relations and development activities. Instead of audit, tax, and consulting departments, firms in Mexico generally only have audit and tax departments. The structure of business in Mexico causes these departments to have a somewhat different focus than similar departments in U.S. firms. Financial statement audits are rare for any firms other than publicly traded companies. Of course, U.S., Japanese, and European subsidiaries are virtually all subject to financial audits by demand of their parent corporations.

The major difference between U.S. and Mexican public accounting firms is in the function of the firms' tax departments. Most firms prepare their tax returns internally. The larger firms have teams of tax lawyers in-house that perform this function. The Mexican federal taxing authority, *Secretaria de Hacienda y Crédito Público* (SHCP) has delegated much of its enforcement work to public accounting firms. The tax departments of public accounting firms perform these audits on firms that are large enough in sales, assets, or number of employees to require them under the law. The corporate tax return is due by March 31 for calendar year-end firms. These firms must then have an audit of that tax return performed by a public accounting firm by July 31. The pressure on the accounting firm to conduct a precise and accurate review of these tax return data is significant. If the SHCP finds that a firm has made mistakes consistently in its tax audits, it can deny specific partners, or even the entire firm, the right to undertake these lucrative engagements.

Mexican accounting firms' devotion to providing continuing education for their staff accountants is at least equal to that exhibited by U.S. firms. Typically, an accounting staff member will receive 120-150 hours of continuing professional education each year.

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BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In order to aid prospective managers in communicating with the opposite gender, a study was completed to determine the perceptions students have of gender communication traits. Thirty-three traits, identified by previous research, were presented to 340 students enrolled in an upper division course in the College of Business during the spring of 1997. Males and females were asked to rate each communication trait as a stronger male trait, a male trait, no difference (between genders), a female trait, or a stronger female trait.

Statistical analysis was applied to determine on which communication traits the perceptions of each gender differed to a significant degree. This paper concludes with teaching strategies for bridging the gender gap in communication.

INTRODUCTION

Few changes have affected the business world as much as the increased number of women entering the job market (Epting, Glover, and Boyd, 1994). In particular, the relatively rapid transition away from a predominantly male workforce to one of more equal gender representation has left many organizations unprepared for dealing with communication barriers that arise between the two sexes (Tingley, 1993). To a great extent, these barriers are due to the fact that business communications have not sufficiently evolved to accommodate the increased role that women have in the workplace (Tannen, 1994a).

The failure to understand gender-specific communication styles has contributed to a number of problems for the business community. First, tension between genders frequently occurs as the result of mutually unsatisfactory interpersonal interactions (Filipczak, 1994). Moreover, increased levels of cross-gender tension negatively impact the working environment, which in turn reduces job satisfaction for men and women alike (Rifkind, 1992). Second, because the business world has traditionally been a male-dominated work environment, women-oriented communication styles often create gender inequities with regard to promotion decisions, raises, and job opportunities (Brownell, 1993; Dell, 1992).

Educators can play a major role in helping to prepare prospective managers for inter-gender business communications. Unfortunately, little research exists that has focused on understanding and closing the gender communication gap in the business community (Limback and Bland, 1996; Smith, 1992). The vast majority of gender-related research has been studied in the psychology and social psychology disciplines. Moreover, many educators are themselves unaware of gender-specific communications and in fact may unintentionally utilize teaching practices that perpetuate gender biases (Darling and Sorg, 1993; Failing in Fairness [video], 1994).

This study was designed for the purpose of better understanding communication differences as they relate to prospective male and female business managers of the 21st century. Special attention is given to identifying male-oriented, female-oriented, and gender-neutral communication traits. An increased awareness of gender-specific communication styles is critical for closing the gender gap and for developing better interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Furthermore, to work together, men and women owe it to each other to have a clear understanding of their communication values and objectives - including what they have in common and how they differ (Whitaker, 1992).

To accomplish this objective, the following approach will be taken. First, research that has explored relevant gender issues will be reviewed. Included in this review will be a discussion of pertinent gender-specific communication dimensions. Second, results from a study designed to measure communication traits along a gender continuum will

be presented. Lastly, strategies that educators could take to make prospective managers more sensitive to gender communication differences and for adapting to these differences will be provided.

OVERVIEW OF GENDER COMMUNICATION

From about age three, boys and girls start interacting more frequently in gender-separate groups. These groups take on unique norms and characteristics: girl groups form more intimate friendships, show greater cooperation, and strive harder to maintain social relationship; while boy groups play rougher, become increasingly more competitive, and show greater demonstrations of dominance (Maccoby, 1990). As they mature through their adolescence years to adulthood, males and females continue to exhibit these cultural differences (Cross and Madson, 1997).

In terms of management styles, Phillips (1995) contends that men can be compared to warriors who look at work as a competitive battlefield with certain winners and losers. They become conditioned in sports to win--more often for themselves than for their team. As a consequence, men are more likely to tell of their achievements to obtain social status, are more comfortable at calling attention to themselves so that others know of their skills and knowledge, and prefer taking credit for hard work with good results (Tannen, 1990). These behaviors contribute to the fact that men are more comfortable speaking in public situations (Roiphe, 1994).

In contrast, Phillips (1995) compared women to villagers who look at business as though it were a friendly town square. This more social perspective promotes a non-confrontational approach to communications, stresses nurtured relationships, and leads to greater sensitivity of the feelings of others (Fivush, 1992; Tannen, 1994c). Partly as a function of their less competitive and more supportive nature, women tend to have more difficulty gaining credibility in male-dominated work environments (Brownell, 1993). Further contributing to the credibility gap are power inequities between the genders, with men typically holding the upper hand (Filipczak, 1994; Schonfeld, 1994). One consequence of this credibility problem is that women frequently have to phrase suggestions or ideas so that they will be accepted and/or not damage the ego of their superiors (Manss, 1994).

FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING GENDER-SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

The preceding discussion provided a brief overview of gender-specific communication traits. Although gender communication research is limited in the business education literature, a wealth of research within psychology and social psychology exists that can be used to develop our business communications framework. Specifically, four common gender-related communication dimensions emerged from this review: (1) control/dominance traits, (2) listening/feedback traits, (3) emotional traits, and (4) fairness traits.

CONTROL/DOMINANCE TRAITS

A common theme that has surfaced in the research is that men utilize power-oriented interactive strategies (Watts, 1992). Consistent with this perspective, men view communications as a way of showing their independence, maintaining their status, and negotiating desired outcomes (Tannen, 1994a). These traits increase their desire to assert control of and dominate group situations (Roiphe, 1994) and lead to more aggressive interpersonal behaviors (Eagly and Steffen, 1986). In addition, because men are more comfortable in public situations and are often fighting for the floor at a function like a business meeting, it follows that the attempts they make to get their own ideas heard result in a greater likelihood of interrupting others (Doheny, 1992), often in a boastful manner (Glaser, 1995). In contrast, the more relational nature of how women interact with others makes it more difficult for them to deliver criticism (Tannen, 1994b). Because efforts are maintained to preserve relationships, women are also less likely to insult others (Frank and Frank, 1983).

LISTENING/FEEDBACK TRAITS

Considerable research evidence supports that women are more nurturing than men, are more tender-mined, provide greater social support, and are more often viewed as responsible for sustaining interpersonal relationships

(Feingold, 1994; Wellman, 1992). Research findings consistent with this sensitivity orientation have shown that women are more likely to maintain harmonious interactions (Kolb, 1991; Rosenberg, 1989), interact in a pleasant manner (Wagner and Winterbotham, (1993), pay attention to what others are saying (Cross and Madson 1997), and verbally reinforce/support others (Watts, 1992). To maintain relationships, women have also been found to be more likely to resolve problems through consensus (Rosener, 1990; Wall and Dewhurst, 1991).

EMOTIONAL TRAITS

Research across a wide variety of disciplines has found that women are much more likely than men to share their emotions with others (Brownell, 1993). In terms of specific emotions, women are more likely to express fear (Brody, Hay, and Vandewater, 1990), guilt (Baumeister et al., 1994), and anxiety/distress (Feingold, 1994). However, while women convey emotions more often than men, two specific emotions have been found to be more male oriented: anger (Janisse, Edguer, and Dyck, 1986), and disgust/contempt (Stapley and Haviland, 1989).

FAIRNESS TRAITS

Research by Davis and Frazoi (1991) illustrated that as compared to men, women are more respectful of the views of others and are more they likely to take the view of others into consideration. Partly as a function of a greater empathy for treating others as equals, women are also perceived as having higher levels of interpersonal trust and fairness (Johnson-George and Swap, 1992). Lastly, because women emphasize fairness in their relationships, they are more willing to apologize than men when they think it is the right thing to do (Gonzales, et al., 1990).

HYPOTHESES/METHOD

The reviewed research covered a wide range gender-related issues and traits. A study was conducted to ascertain how prospective managers perceive communication traits, and how communications teachers can employ this knowledge in the classroom.

Consistent with the literature discussed above, the following hypotheses are made:

H1: Control/Dominance will be viewed as a more male-oriented communication trait.
H2: Listening/support will be viewed as a more female-oriented communication trait.
H3: (a) Through their communications, women will be perceived as greater overall conveyors of emotions/moods; including (b) distress, fear, guilt, and anxiety; (c) men will be greater conveyors of anger and disgust.
H4: Fairness will be viewed as a more female-oriented communication trait.

Hypotheses 1-4 pertain to overall perceptions of gender-related communication traits. Support for these hypotheses will be a function of the aggregated responses across genders. However, a review of the gender literature by Cross and Madson (1997) reveals that men and women may have different perceptions of the extent to which various psychological and sociological traits pertain to one of the two genders. This leads to our last hypothesis:

H5: Men and women will differ in their perceptions of the extent to which various communication traits are male or female oriented.

A study was designed to test the preceding five hypotheses. A questionnaire was developed that contained 33 traits, identified by previous research as relating to our four communication dimensions (other questions were also on the survey instrument that will not be discussed here). The questionnaire was pretested to assure understanding of the trait questions. The questionnaire was then distributed to 340 students enrolled in an upper division course in the College of Business & Economics at a major Midwestern university during the spring of 1997. The students were asked to rate each communication trait on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*a stronger male communication trait to 5=a stronger female trait*.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

The traits associated with each of the communication dimensions, the mean scores for each of the traits, and the overall mean for each of the dimensions are shown in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we classify mean scores ranging from 1-2.75 as being male-oriented communication traits, 2.76-3.24 as gender-neutral communication traits, and 3.25-5.0 as female-oriented communication traits. Means closer to the end-points represent stronger gender-specific business communication traits.

The overall mean score across genders for the control/dominance communication trait was 2.39. This provides strong support for H1 that men attempt to control/dominate communications more than do women. Moreover, each of the individual control/dominance traits had a mean score less than 2.75. Of the eight traits, bragging/boasting (1.89), assertive/bold communicators (2.11), status seekers through communications (2.28), and insulting others (2.34), were the strongest men-oriented control/dominance communication traits.

Table 1
Mean Scores and T-Tests for Communication Traits

Communication Traits	Overall Sample Mean	Mean Men (n=189)	Mean Women (n=127)	t-Value	P-Value
Control/Dominance Communication Traits (H1)	2.39	2.33	2.45	-2.10	0.05
Brag/Boast	1.89	1.83	1.96	-1.50	ns
Assertive/Bold	2.11	1.97	2.31	-4.00	0.001
Seek status when talking	2.28	2.28	2.20	0.90	ns
Insult others	2.34	2.29	2.33	-0.60	ns
Impatient with others	2.51	2.51	2.46	0.40	ns
Interrupt others	2.75	2.61	2.94	-2.90	0.01
Criticize others	2.72	2.64	2.84	-1.80	0.08
Dominate conversation	2.53	2.54	2.50	0.40	ns
Listening/Support Communication Traits (H2)	3.72	3.62	3.89	-6.10	0.001
Personal/caring communications	4.13	4.07	4.27	-3.30	0.001
Tender communications	4.00	3.97	4.06	-1.30	ns
Polite	3.87	3.78	3.98	-2.80	0.01
Seek harmony	3.81	3.71	3.96	-3.40	0.001
Build agreement	3.73	3.60	3.97	-3.80	0.001
Supportive communications	3.70	3.62	3.85	-2.90	0.05
Concede/give in to others	3.71	3.63	3.87	-1.50	ns
Listening skills	3.69	3.54	3.91	-4.30	0.001
Provide praise	3.59	3.47	3.79	-4.10	0.001
Try to bond during conversations	3.53	3.41	3.78	-3.70	0.001
Pleasant communications	3.48	3.43	3.58	-2.00	0.05
Providing feedback	3.42	3.23	3.68	-5.10	0.001
Emotional Communication Traits (H3)	3.95				

Table 1
Mean Scores and T-Tests for Communication Traits

Communication Traits	Overall Sample Mean	Mean Men (n=189)	Mean Women (n=127)	t-Value	P-Value
Overall communicator of emotions (H3a)	3.54	3.88	4.09	-2.10	0.05
Women-oriented emotions (H3b)	3.54	3.56	3.56	0.00	ns
Distress	3.74	3.74	3.76	-0.30	ns
Fear	3.73	3.70	3.78	-0.20	ns
Moody	3.56	3.71	3.35	3.90	0.001
Guilt	3.34	3.31	3.41	-0.30	ns
Anxiety	3.33	3.19	3.53	-4.00	0.001
Male-oriented emotions (H3c)	2.65	2.54	2.67	-1.60	ns
Anger	2.40	2.23	2.50	-3.20	0.01
Disgust	2.91	2.87	2.95	0.02	ns
Fairness Communication Trait (H4)	3.43	3.32	3.57	-4.80	0.001
Apologize	3.73	3.59	3.94	-4.30	0.001
Treat others as equals when conversing	3.44	3.39	3.54	-2.10	0.05
Treat others fairly when conversing	3.37	3.27	3.48	-2.80	0.05
Respectful communicators	3.37	3.26	3.50	-3.20	0.01
Trustful communicators	3.25	3.10	3.40	-3.60	0.001

Note: 24 respondents didn't disclose gender, thus men/women means used a small number of responses

Hypothesis 2 was also supported. Women were believed to have greater listening/support skills during communications (overall mean=3.72). In addition, each of the listening/support communication traits had mean scores greater than 3.4. Of the 12 traits, personal/caring communications (4.13), tender communications (4.0), politeness (3.87), and seeking harmony through communications (3.81), were the strongest women-oriented listening/support skills.

Hypothesis 3 contained three components. H3a proposed that women were stronger communicators of emotions. As shown in Table 1, the mean score for this trait was 3.54. H3a was therefore supported. H3b contained five separate emotions that were believed to be more commonly communicated by women. The mean score across the five emotional traits was 3.54, thus supporting H3b. Of these, distress (3.74) and fear (3.73) were perceived to be the strongest of the women-oriented emotional traits. Lastly, H3c proposed that anger and fear were more likely to be communicated by men than by women. The overall mean score for the proposed men-oriented emotions was 2.65 - thus H3c was supported. However, this support was due to the anger communication trait (2.40) and not the disgust trait (2.91).

The last communication trait hypothesis was H4. As shown in Table 1, H4 was supported in that women are perceived to be fairer communicators than men (3.43), Apologizing when they are wrong (3.73) and treating others as equals (3.44), were the strongest women-oriented communication fairness traits.

Also provided in Table 1 are the findings related to H5 which proposes that men and women will differ in their view of the extent to which the various communication traits are male-female oriented. Overall, H5 was strongly supported. Women and men statistically differed in terms of the control/dominance communication trait ($p < .05$),

listening/support communication trait ($p < .001$), overall emotion communication trait ($p < .05$), and the fairness communication trait ($p < .001$). In addition, of the 33 different communication traits on the questionnaire, 21 had significant cross-gender differences. Moreover, although the women- and men-oriented emotions did not have statistically significant differences when summed, three of the eight individual questions did.

Although the fact that H5 was supported by itself has strong implications, the direction of these differences are especially noteworthy. Specifically, *in all but one case* (moody communicators), men and women alike rated the individual communication traits closer to their respective end-point on the gender-specific continuum. This is not to say that men rated the communication traits as male traits and women as female traits, only that the mean scores for the two genders moved toward the endpoints. For example, the overall mean score for fairness was 3.43, indicating a women-oriented communication trait. However, the mean for men was 3.32 (closer to men endpoint) and for women it was 3.57 (closer to the women endpoint). Similarly, the overall control/dominance mean was 2.39, indicating a men-oriented trait; with the mean score for men being 2.33 and the mean score for women being 2.45.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A major objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of differences that may exist in the way in which men and women communicate with each other in the business world. Conceptually, a greater knowledge of gender communication differences is advantageous for a number of reasons. First, educators themselves would be able to improve how they communicate with men and women in the classroom. Second, these educators could revise their teaching methods to increase students' awareness of gender communication styles. As a result, future managers will have the opportunity to improve the quality of the work environment in the business world by increasing insights into not only how men and women communicate differently, but through adapting their own communications and the communications of subordinates to the needs of their exchange partners as well.

Although no effort was made in our study to develop inter-gender communication guidelines, the views of other business communication experts may provide normative insight. Specifically, as discussed earlier, Phillips (1995) labeled men as warriors and women as villagers. He contends the best managers utilize a combination of villagers and warriors communication strategies. Similarly, Tingley (1993) believes that managers will increase interpersonal influence when they adapt to gender-specific language differences. Termed "genderflexing," the main point is that temporarily using communication behaviors common to the other gender is likely to be more effective than utilizing gender-discrepant styles.

Strategically, Tingley (1993) recommends that (1) managers and co-workers must open their minds to communicating differently, (2) differences must be acknowledged and accepted without judgment, (3) reinforce those who are willing to adjust, (4) develop appropriate adaptation strategies, and (5) evaluate the success of adaptation strategies and modify your approach if necessary.

We strongly agree with the view of Phillips, Tingley and others that effective interpersonal exchange between individuals requires adapting your communication strategies to accommodate the needs of others. Educators have the ability to teach adaptive communication skills to our future managers. Teaching strategies that we feel would be useful for sensitizing students to differences in the way in which men and women communicate and that will be effective for developing successful adaptation strategies are discussed below.

Role playing—arrange scenarios for students to experience role reversal. First indicate which gender is associated with the trait and then ask the other gender to choose a means of communication that would eliminate barriers to the message.

Case studies—access examples of work situations that were caused by differences in gender communication. Ask the students how they would approach the case after employing critical thinking skills.

Guest speakers—ask gender equity personnel to present their position to the students and why their position evolved at their company.

The communication model—apply gender communication strategies to the communication model. Indicate how the failing to be sensitive to one's gender can pose a barrier to communication.

Projects—have students evaluate interpersonal communications in the real world and have them develop strategies for changing/improving how the company handles inter-gender communications.

Research--encourage students to conduct research in the gender communication area. On-going research is needed to determine a framework for gender communication.

We plan to expand our research in so that dimensions of gender communication can be explored. This additional research will lead to a better understanding of communication traits and how educators can address them.

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EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF IMPRESSIONS CONVEYED BY SELECTED ASPECTS OF BUSINESS MEETINGS

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ABSTRACT

Meetings in U.S. businesses are used to acquire and disseminate information and are also used to create impressions of power, credibility, and efficiency. To determine what specific aspects of meetings employees consider important for them to be successful, 161 employees in a Mid-South manufacturing facility were surveyed. A 14-item instrument was developed following a literature review. A five-point, Likert-type scale was used, with 5 representing the most positive impression and 1 the most negative impression. SPSS, Version 6.1.2, was used to analyze the data. To determine statistical differences between each meeting aspect and demographic variables of gender, age, position, and years with current firm, a series of ANOVAs was performed. Significant differences ($p<.05$) existed between demographic factors on five of the 14 meeting aspects. Two aspects varied by gender, one by age, three by position, and one by status.

INTRODUCTION

More time and money is spent on meetings by U.S. businesses than by any other country in the world (Baldrige, 1993). Because of this fact, they have become a major vehicle for creating and maintaining impressions of credibility, power, efficiency, effectiveness, and maturity. They also are used to develop skills and to make a favorable impression on colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates. According to Bixler (1991), "whether a powerful leader or participant, skillful meeting management will win widespread recognition and respect for your professional presence" (p. 80).

People often have a negative attitude toward meetings because they are perceived as a waste of time. According to results of a survey of 1,000 business leaders conducted by Hofstra University and Harrison Consulting Services, over 33 percent of time spent in meetings is unproductive, which costs companies $37 billion. In addition, respondents said that only 64 percent of meetings achieve their intended outcomes (Tobia & Becker, 1990). The negative impressions conveyed in meetings by both the leader and participants can be changed when meetings are conducted properly, giving attention to proper procedures and behavior. Bixler (1991) states that successful meetings happen by design rather than by inadvertence and that they should be brief, focused, and productive. With careful attention to specific guidelines, negative attitudes toward meetings can be changed to positive ones; following these guidelines can contribute significantly to the success of the meeting.

ASPECTS OF EFFECTIVE MEETING MANAGEMENT

While the meeting may be planned for various reasons, it will only be productive if certain basic guidelines and procedures are followed. These guidelines include: minimizing the number, frequency, and length of meetings (McCormack, 1984); scheduling meetings only when necessary (Simon & Chaney, 1993); selecting a date and time that is convenient to most people expected to attend (Raspberry & Lindsay, 1994); announcing and adhering to a beginning and ending time (McCormack, 1984); preparing a detailed agenda, with an an indication of who is responsible for each item (Raspberry & Lindsay, 1994); and providing refreshments when a meeting will exceed an

hour and a half. In addition, the person chairing the meeting should avoid the recapping of information for latecomers as this gives the impression of approval of tardiness (Bixler, 1991).

The leader is responsible for selecting the meeting site and should consider the following: adequate seating for attendees, audiovisual equipment, tables or other special furniture, room temperature and lighting, and related supplies, such as pens and notepads. Checking the facility an hour before the meeting starts is recommended (Harcourt, Krizan, & Merrier, 1996). The setting chosen can convey impressions of equality/inequality, formality/informality, or power; a setting should be chosen that complements the meeting's purpose. To convey authority and a no-nonsense atmosphere, the boardroom is a good choice. For informal sessions, someone's office would be appropriate. For equal, on-target sessions, a conference table in neutral territory is recommended (Booher, 1994).

Seating arrangements are an important aspect of the setting and should be selected as carefully as the meeting site. Where a person sits affects interaction with others. For example, more communication occurs between people seated across the table from each other than those seated to the left or right of each other (Booher, 1994). The person who called the meeting chooses a seat of central authority, such as at the head of a rectangular table that is farthest from the door, commonly referred to as the "power perch." Although the leader could sit in the center seat along the length of the table, this position commands less attention and authority (Frank, 1989; Bixler, 1991; Chaney & Lyden, 1996). The meeting room should be left neat and clean; coffee cups/refreshment remnants should be removed.

The primary nonverbal elements that should be considered when chairing or participating in meetings include greeting/seating protocol, dress and appearance, and body language. As the meeting chairman and participants arrive, they greet each other and shake hands. Newcomers wait to be seated until regular attendees have been seated.

People's reactions to others are also affected by their physical appearance; therefore, one's appearance should inspire confidence and give an impression of professionalism (Fast, 1991; Leary, 1995). Gray (1993) recommends wearing highly authoritative clothes when chairing a meeting unless there is the possibility of offending someone who may think you are trying to appear too much like higher management. People who wear suits, whether male or female, are perceived as more professional than those who wear any other type of attire (Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). People who wear casual attire in important situations, such as when chairing a meeting, give the impression that they are not serious about their work or that the meeting is unimportant (Riordan, 1989).

One of the most important nonverbal aspects of meetings in this culture is related to eye contact. In research conducted by Chaney and Lyden (1997), direct eye contact when greeting people or conversing conveyed the most positive impression of the 15 subtextual communication elements studied. Eye contact should be maintained for a second or two, then broken; eye contact is considered a sign of respect and attentiveness. Very direct eye contact or a prolonged gaze can be misinterpreted as hostility, aggressiveness, or intrusiveness (Chaney & Martin, 1995). Other aspects of body language are also important. Folding the arms across the chest, for example, is often viewed negatively. Facial expressions should be positive and attentive. Posture is important for all participants; sitting erectly with squared shoulders creates an impression of fitness, vitality, and alertness. The person in charge of the meeting carefully plans and monitors the meeting to assure that it is conducted efficiently and effectively to project a positive corporate image. The person chairing the meeting should be familiar with proper parliamentary procedure, especially basic procedures related to motions, such as those requiring a second and those requiring a simple majority vote; these procedures simply assure that the will of the majority is implemented, that the minority is heard, and that group goals are achieved as expeditiously as possible (Raspberry & Lindsay, 1994; Simon & Chaney, 1993). Other guidelines for the meeting chairman suggested by Grant-Sokolsky (1986) and Baldrige (1993) include: distributing the agenda well in advance; arriving a few minutes early and taking the lead in the introductions; starting on time and ending on time; maintaining control of the meeting; using effective presentation techniques; recognizing those who have made presentations and contributed to the success of the meeting; and handling follow-up activities.

Participants are just as responsible for the success of the meeting as is the person chairing it. Grant-Sokolsky (1986) and Baldrige (1993) offer these characteristics of a good participant: preparing ahead of time by reviewing the agenda; bringing needed materials; arriving a few minutes early and introducing himself/herself to others standing nearby; drinking juice/soda from a glass/cup rather than a can or bottle; maintaining good posture and giving the speaker full attention, including appropriate eye contact; and thanking the person in charge as he or she leaves the meeting.

Visual aids may be used to stimulate interest, to reinforce the oral message, and to focus the audience's attention (Mandel, 1993). They may take the form of transparencies, slides, videos, handouts, or any other visual to clarify or emphasize various aspects of the meeting. According to research reported by Osborne (1990), an audience is more likely to be persuaded by presenters who use visuals than by those who do not. Suggestions for using visual aids successfully include: limiting the information to one main point per visual (Mandel, 1993); making visuals large enough to see from a distance (Becker & Becker, 1994); making them attractive through the use of color; varying the font size and the type of visual; and being familiar with equipment to enhance efficiency and to assure a smooth, professional presentation (Jolles, 1993). When properly used, visual aids can shorten a meeting and make it more productive (Frank, 1989).

SURVEY PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

To determine positive and negative impressions conveyed by selected aspects of organizational meetings, selected employees in a large manufacturing facility were surveyed. This Mid-South plant of 1,634 employees conducts business both domestically and internationally. The convenience sample of 161 represents about 10 percent of the population. About 41% of the 1,634 employees are female and 59% are male.

A 14-item instrument was developed following a search of meeting management and impression management literature; a five-point, Likert-type scale was used, with 5 representing a positive impression and 1 a negative impression. Demographic information (gender, age, status/job title, and years with the company) was also requested.

Mean responses (based on the five-point scale) for each of the statements related to the meeting environment and chairman/participant behavior were calculated. Frequencies and percentages for each demographic factor were also calculated. A series of ANOVAs was used to test for significance between demographic factors and responses.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings are based on the 161 employees who responded to the questionnaire. As shown in Table 1, the largest percentage of respondents were male, 45 years of age or above, production employees, and had been with the company from 5 to 24 years.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Gender:	Female: 54 (34.0%)
	Male: 105 (66.0%)
Age:	Under 25: 10 (6.2%)
	25 - 34: 27 (16.8%)
	35 - 44: 56 (34.8%)
	45 or above: 68 (42.2%)
Position:	Engineer: 26 (16.1%)
	Manager/Supervisor: 37 (23.0%)
	Production Employee: 45 (28.0%)
	Professional/Technical: 40 (24.8%)
	Secretarial/Clerical: 2 (1.2%)
	Other: 11 (6.8%)
Years With Current Company:	Less than 5: 39 (24.2%)
	5 - 14: 49 (30.4%)

15 - 24: 49 (30.4%)
25 and above: 24 (14.9%)

The meeting aspect making the most positive impression (highest mean score) was the chairman beginning the meeting by introducing newcomers; the most negative impression (lowest mean score) was the presence of debris from an earlier meeting. Mean responses for each of the 14 items are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Positive or Negative Impressions Conveyed by Selected Aspects of Meetings

	Mean*
Chairman begins meeting by introducing newcomers	4.25
Agenda is available at the door	4.24
Chairman uses charts and table to clarify figures	4.23
Chairman follows correct rules of order (parliamentary procedure)	4.22
Refreshments are available	4.11
Chairman sits at the end of rectangular table	3.16
A summary of the meeting is sent two weeks after its conclusion	2.66
Meeting is called for 2 p.m. Friday	2.56
Chairman permits one participant to talk for ten minutes	2.19
Meeting chairman wears jogging attire	1.92
Chairman leaves twice during the meeting to take telephone calls	1.56
Chairman arrives 15 minutes late	1.38
Participants carry on side conversations while the chairman is talking	1.38
Used coffee cups and paper plates have been left from an earlier meeting	1.25

* Based on a 5-point scale with 5 representing a positive impression and 1 a negative impression.

An SPSS Statistical Package was used to analyze the data. To determine statistical differences between each meeting aspect and demographic variables of gender, age, position, and years with current firm, a series of ANOVAs was performed. As shown in Table 3, significant differences ($p<.05$) existed between demographic factors on five of the 14 meeting aspects. Two aspects varied by gender, one by age, three by position, and one by status.

While there were overall significant differences on three of the elements with regard to position, Scheffe post hoc analysis revealed that no two groups differed significantly for any of these elements. With regard to gender, post hoc analyses revealed that females ranked the availability of refreshments (mean of 4.33) as significantly more positive than did males (mean of 4.00). On the other hand, females ranked the chairman permitting one participant to talk for ten minutes as significantly more negative (mean of 1.89) than did male respondents (mean of 2.34). Post hoc analyses revealed that younger respondents, those under the age of 25, ranked parliamentary procedure as significantly more positive (mean of 4.90) than did respondents aged 25 to 34 (mean of 4.04).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Meetings are an important management tool; they are useful for exchanging ideas and for seeking and giving advice. Tobia and Becker (1990) maintain that "they are also metaphors for power relationships" (p. 34). Power may be exhibited by either the leader or the participant.

Survey results add to the body of empirical research related to impressions created by selected aspects of meeting management. Employees' impressions in this Mid-South plant generally agree with the literature on effective meeting management. The exception was related to the timing of agenda distribution; experts agree that the agenda should be distributed well in advance of the meeting. Employees rated "agenda available at the door" positively (4.24). Subsequent discussions with several employees revealed that this positive ranking was given because most of their meetings have no written agenda.

The importance of making a favorable impression in meetings is emphasized by Frank (1989). He states, "how well you present yourself and your ideas and how well you work with other people are the two basic essentials of any career. The way you conduct yourself at meetings, whether as the leader or as a participant, can make or break your career." (pp. 17-18).

Table 3: ANOVA Results

	Gender		Age		Position		Status	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Meeting is called for 2 p.m. Friday	.00	.98	1.52	.21	1.30	.27	.08	.97
Chairman arrives 15 minutes late	.43	.51	1.80	.15	.85	.52	.30	.83
Refreshments are available	5.26	.02**	1.10	.35	.27	.93	1.09	.35
Meeting chairman wears jogging attire	.12	.73	1.05	.37	.32	.90	.62	.61
Chairman sits at the end of a rectangular table	.78	.38	.06	.98	.35	.88	.65	.58
Chairman begins meeting by introducing newcomers	.41	.52	1.94	.12	.43	.83	.78	.51
Used coffee cups and paper plates have been left from an earlier meeting	.07	.79	.43	.73	.57	.72	.53	.66
Participants carry on side conversations while the chairman is talking	.03	.87	1.87	.14	.54	.75	3.35	.02**
Agenda is available at the door	.76	.38	.34	.79	1.23	.30	.43	.73
Chairman leaves twice during the meeting to take telephone calls	3.55	.06	.96	.41	1.04	.39	1.17	.32
Chairman permits one participant to talk for ten minutes	8.95	.00*	.76	.52	2.79	.02**	1.39	.25
Chairman uses charts and tables to clarify figures	.01	.92	1.94	.13	.76	.58	.26	.85
Chairman follows correct rules of order (parliamentary procedure)	1.26	.26	2.89	.04**	2.24	**.05****	.87	.46
A summary of the meeting is sent two weeks after its conclusion	.74	.39	1.38	.25	2.72	**.02****	1.46	.23

* .01 level of significance ** .05 level of significance

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INTERNATIONALIZING BUSINESS CURRICULUM AT A RURAL COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

To meet the challenge of global issues and new technology, international dimension courses need to be an integral part of the business school curriculum. Many students in rural schools lack the money or the desire to travel or to work beyond the boundaries of their current environment. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how to develop international dimension courses targeted for small colleges in rural areas. We believe that new technologies can provide rural students access to the outside world and can be used to enhance and broaden their learning experience. A course outline is provided in the paper. At the conference, we will present a needs analysis and instructional delivery for such a course in detail. Classroom assessment techniques will be suggested to evaluate to what extent students acquire knowledge and skills and to what extent their attitudes toward the outside world change.

INTRODUCTION

A flood of information, transactions and knowledge flows across what have traditionally been regional or national borders on the "information superhighway." Any business or academic organization establishing a site on the Internet automatically becomes a multi-national organization. In this sense, all business majors are not only citizens of a global village, they are also members and the future employees of global organizations. To meet the challenge of this development, international dimension courses need to be an integral part of the business curriculum and they are mandated by AACSB.

Many students in rural schools have never been beyond the boundaries of their current rural environment. The global economy and the rapid development of computer and communication technologies make the world appear smaller than ever before. But the students in rural areas lack the desire to travel or to work elsewhere. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how to develop such international dimension courses targeted for small colleges in rural areas. It has been well-documented that American high school students know little about the world (Jarchow, 1993), although interest in international business has never been greater in the United States (Griffin and Putstay, 1996).

While current literature tends to support the idea that new technologies such as the Internet, multi-media computers, virtual classrooms, etc., are threats to traditional classroom learning (Brown and Duguid, 1996; Ives and Jarvenpaa, 1996), we believe that these new technologies can provide rural students access to the outside world and can be used to enhance and broaden their learning experience. New communications technologies, combined with up-to-date texts, videos, and supplemented by diversified faculty and guest speakers can afford rural students a more global perspective. In turn, organizations can benefit from having employees who are globally oriented and who better understand cultural and political diversity.

We have taken an approach to instructional delivery that utilizes the technology of today as a way to understand and prepare for the applications and markets of tomorrow. Students will be directed to use new technology to obtain information and make class presentations so that they will develop a sense of the potential of technology and a sense of their connection to the global community.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. *Purpose*:
Expose students to the world's diverse cultural traditions, political and economic structures, and legal and financial systems. Students will learn basic skills of managing diversity in and among multi-national organizations and in the global marketplace.

II. *Identification with Individual Countries or Multinational Company (MNC)*:
- A. Each student or a small group of students will select a country or a MNC.
- B. Students will learn about their selected country by using various sources (Internet, CD-ROM, magazines, government documents, etc.), make class presentations about the country (or MNC), and become an expert on "their" country (or MNC).

III. *Instructors*:
- A. Provide broad background information on respective foreign environments, e.g., on international organizations, political and legal systems, etc.
- B. Will be living models demonstrating the diversity of cultures and customs, especially non-Western cultures.

IV. *Methodology*:
- A. Course delivery would be by means of an interactive approach. The multi- media facility, CD-ROM and LCD projector are used for presentations, incorporating audio, videos, graphics and animation. The central purpose is to give students hands-on experience by using new tools as an integral part of learning.
- B. Students will make presentations in class using multi-media computers with LCD projectors, reporting on their selected countries (or MNC's).
- C. Findings about each country (or MNC) will be discussed.

V. *Current Issues*:
Students are required to turn in a written report on current issues every three weeks. They will relate what they have learned in the course to a major article in business literature or on the Internet The instructor will summarize the current issues and comment on students reactions.

VI. *Summary*:
To prepare our students to be informed, intelligent, and well-rounded citizens of the global community.

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GENDER NORMS MAY DETERMINE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to ascertain if gender norms can determine conflict management styles of organizational members. Subjects involved in this study were initiated members of sororities and fraternities at a large mid-western university. Subjects' gender group was determined by scores from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSI) (Bem, 1981).

The Organizational Communication Conflict Inventory (OCCI) (Putnam and Wilson, 1982) was used to determine the median scores for the Conflict management styles of control and non-confrontation for males and females

The influence of gender norms on conflict style may have more significance for women than men. Women's socialization process has not supported a managerial life role because they are just now being socialized to be in leadership roles in the workforce. Perceptions held by both men and women can create a block to women's ascent to management positions.

The researchers of this study believe the ability to manage conflict is initially developed through the socialization process. Infants are subjected to the sounds and feelings of conflict within their immediate environment. As they grow, they begin to observe, practice, and adopt conflict behaviors generally acceptable to their environment. Because the adopted behaviors for dealing with conflict are reinforced by a system of reward and punishment, they are most practiced and, over time, become the primary method or style used by the child to manage conflict. The primary style continues to be the preferred style as long as the child remains within that or a similar value-oriented environment. Moving to another environment where different conflict behaviors are practiced, the child may be obliged to adapt to a different style.

The socialization process described provides a basis for the proposition that if conflict management style is a product of the socialization process, then the primary conflict style of a given individual may depend on the values of the society in which the individual developed. Therefore, conflict management styles may be considered to be influenced by gender norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Freud (1930, 1938), Reik (1941), and Becker (1973, 1975) are a few of the explorers of human behavior who have concluded that conflict is indigenous to human life. Hall (1973) states, "Conflict is a natural part of the human condition; and the manner which one responds to and manages its dynamics may often determine the success of his enterprise."

The researchers of this study believe the ability to manage conflict is initially developed through the socialization process. Infants are subjected to the sounds and feelings of conflict within their immediate environment. As they grow, they begin to observe, practice and adopt conflict behaviors generally acceptable to their environment. Because the behaviors for dealing with conflict are reinforced by a reward and punishment system, they are practiced and become the primary method or style used by the child to manage conflict. The primary style continues to be the preferred style as long as the child remains within that or an environment with a similar value orientation. Moving

to another environment where different conflict behaviors are practiced, the child may be obliged to adapt to a different style.

The socialization process described provides a basis for the proposition that if conflict management style is a product of the socialization process, then the primary conflict style of a given individual may depend on the values of the society in which the individual developed. Therefore, conflict management styles may be considered to be influenced by gender norms. Males are generally taught to be dominant, assertive, direct, and competitive. They learn to emphasize competition and winning. The "macho" image is to be tough. Men are expected to be objective and logical. Relationships are secondary to life goals. Women, in contrast, are generally taught subjectivity, intuitiveness, and spontaneity, as well as the values of being passive, indirect, and yielding to authority. They learn that relationships have a higher value than goals. Women are taught to allow men to resolve conflicts for them (Nieva & Gutek, 1980).

This difference in the sex role socialization of men and women has led to the belief that each of the sexes must have correspondingly different primary methods for managing conflict. The influence of gender norms on conflict style may have more significance for women than men, particularly in organizational settings. Men have historically dominated organizational life, especially in positions of management; their socialized gender norms support that life goal, while women have only recently begun to assume a more visible role in management. Women's socialization process, however, does not support a managerial life role. The male stereotypical perception of females is that they are temperamentally unqualified for management positions because of their inability to deal with conflict. Women supposedly lack the strength, toughness, and objectivity to confront conflict situations. They are perceived by men as allowing emotions(concern for the relationship) to interfere with and influence conflict resolution. Women are generally described in terms of their deference to authority and their willingness to yield their positions rather than hurt others' feelings (Loring and Wells, 1972). Such perceptions held by both men and women create a block to women's ascent to management positions(Ehrich, 1994).

The dimensions of the model of conflict introduced by Blake and Mouton in 1964 remains the basis of much of today's research on interpersonal conflict styles. The Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (OCCI) is a scale that is designed to tap the five conflict styles proposed by Blake and Mouton. The OCCI reveals a three-dimension structure. The three dimensions are:

(1) Nonconfrontation: for accommodation and avoidance behaviors
(2) Solution-orientation: for confrontation and compromise behaviors
(3) Control: for competitive behaviors (Putnam & Wilson, 1982).

This study is an effort to examine the extent conflict management style behaviors of accommodation and competition are influence by gender norms. Conceptualization of conflict management styles being compatible with stereotypical gender behaviors is not new (Parson & Bales, 1955; Kagan, 1964; Maccoby, 1966). Competitive behavior has been associated with the male sex role, while accommodating behavior, reflecting concern for the relationship, has been associated with the female sex role. However, research investigating the influence of gender socialization on conflict management style is limited. A review of the literature revealed little available investigative data. Four studies were found which directly examined conflict management styles as they are differentiated by gender norms (Gray-Little, 1974; Renwick, 1977; Baxter & Shephard, 1978; Shockley-Zalabak, 1981). The studies were similar in the conceptualization of gender norms as determinants of conflict styles, but differed in the variables examined, instrumentation, and subjects involved.

The Gray-Little study (1974) was designed to evaluate the extent to which subjects' desirability judgements of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) "conflict with authority" items would vary as a function of gender and relevant personality variables. Gray-Little (1974) notes that empirical studies have determined a gender difference in beliefs about acceptable attitudes and behaviors toward authority; women are usually more disapproving of conflict with authority than men. This difference is attributed to societal pressures exerted on women to accept authority. Gray-Little's expectation that men would express less respect for authority than women was confirmed when using university students as subjects for this study. The author points out that the results were consistent with findings suggesting the feminine role has been traditionally defined in terms of adherence to authority and the upholding of cultural values (Komarovsky, 1950; Asch, 1956).

Renwick (1977) examined the impact of an employee's sex on the management of superior-subordinate conflict. The author noted that some studies had been accomplished which supported differential societal expectations for male and female behavior (Miner, 1965; Tyler, 1965). Experiential games in previous studies indicated that women tended to avoid competition and rely on compromise and accommodation, while men tended to exploit their partners and behave competitively. Experiential game results also suggested that women were conforming, persuadable, and bound to norms of reciprocity; whereas, men were more concerned with success in solving a given task. Renwick (1977) challenged the game findings on the basis that subjects were accorded equal status and that game conditions did not approximate conditions typically encountered in organizational life. Rather than use experiential games or students, Renwick (1977) used male and female management personnel from a nationwide insurance company. Age, experience, and management level were comparable. None had received conflict management training. Questionnaires were used to gather data. The results provided no support for the notion that women were less assertive than men in dealing with conflict. The results also failed to confirm that women were more or less competitive than men as suggested by results from experiential games. Renwick (1977) wrote that the results derived from the female sample indicated the strongest positive attitude toward conflict style was for smoothing which is consistent with the stereotype that women prefer to let others have their way rather than hurt feelings. The second strongest method for women was confrontation.

The study by Baxter and Shephard (1978) was designed to assess behavior differences between the genders in only one type of conflict interaction: interpersonal conflict. Baxter and Shephard's study was based on work by the scholars: Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967), Rossiter and Pearce (1975), and Wilmot (1975) who conceptualized possible behaviors in an interpersonal situation along two dimensions: concern for content level of communication, and concern for relationship level of communication. Work by Hall (1973), and Thomas and Kilmann (1974) was identified as being operationally parallel in that both conceptualized the two dimensions in a five-category scheme for classifying interpersonal conflict management behavior. Certain of those conflict management styles were conceptualized as being compatible with stereotypical gender behaviors (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Kagan, 1964; Maccoby, 1966). Competitive behavior, for example, was considered consistent with the masculine gender norm, while accommodating behavior (concern for the other in a conflict) was considered compatible with a feminine gender norm. This was further supported by Bem and Lenney (1976) who demonstrated that strong gender-type individuals appear constrained to their respective stereotypical behaviors. Thus, Baxter and Shephard (1978) hypothesized that masculine persons would more likely employ competitive behavior in conflict situations, and feminine persons would more likely use accommodation type of behavior. Subjects were college students identified by gender group as either feminine, masculine, or androgynous. To study conflict styles, the authors asked subjects to specify actual conflicts then respond to questions representing the five-category scheme. The procedure used was suggested by Harre' (1974) as appropriate for the discovery of perceived legitimate behaviors. The hypothesis that women would exhibit accommodation behaviors was not confirmed although the results were in the expected direction. The hypothesis that men would more likely use competitive behaviors was confirmed.

The purpose of Shockley-Zalabak's (1981) study was to investigate the effects of gender differences on the preference for utilization of conflict styles in personal, interpersonal, small groups, and overall contexts. She cites Bardwick's (1971) contention that women are socialized into drastically lower levels of activity in conflict than men, and Rubin and Brown's (1975) contention that women are sensitive to relationship cues while men are oriented toward goal maximization. Managers representing forty-seven departments in five organizations self-administered the Hall Conflict Management Survey. Shockley-Zalabak (1981) reported that although much of the literature in conflict management research supports the view that females are more relationship oriented than males and that males opt for goal maximization more than females, the study did not indicate that such a dichotomy existed. This study strongly suggested that there were no differences in conflict style preference of male and female managers.

In summary, the results of these studies indicate: (1) Men express less respect for authority than women who have been traditionally viewed in terms of adherence to authority and upholding cultural values (Gray-Little, 1974); (2) There is neither support for the belief that women are less assertive than men in conflict situations, nor for the idea that women are more or less competitive than men. There is an indication that women preferred to avoid hurting others (Renwick, 1977); (3) There is no confirmation that women would exhibit accommodation behavior, but there was confirmation that men would use competitive behavior (Baxter & Shephard, 1978); (4) There was no difference in conflict style preference (Shockley-Zalabak, 1981). Although there is a lack of consensus, the results of the four

studies reviewed appear to reflect a general rejection of the idea that women prefer a conflict style of accommodation, while accepting the idea that men prefer a competitive style of conflict management.

All of the studies fail to consider many variables that may influence conflict style. If preference for conflict style is a product of the socialization process as suggested by the literature, then care must be taken to insure consideration of the subjects' social background. Variables for which there appears to have been a lack of consideration include: education (experiential and formal), social status, age differential, job status, and family composition. These and other personal variables may influence the perspective individuals have regarding conflict. Organizational variables that do not seem to have been considered include: language style, communication networks, symbol use, norms (rules and policies, specified and implied), power availability, and decision making processes. Such structural variables may influence an individual's conflict style regardless of the personal variables involved.

As indicated by the literature, there is sufficient reason to believe that gender norms affect preference for conflict management style. The collective findings of the studies reviewed fail to adequately support or discredit that belief. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested for additional investigation:

H_1 Feminine subjects will show a greater preference for using accommodating conflict management style behavior than male subjects.

H_2 Masculine subjects will show a greater preference for using competitive conflict management style behavior than female subjects.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Subjects (59 females and 52 males) involved in this study are volunteers from two randomly selected sororities and two randomly selected fraternities at the University of Oklahoma. They are "Active" members entitled to all rights and privileges of their organization and are residents of the house of the Greek organization of which they are members. Ethnic backgrounds, social status, and educational backgrounds are similar. Ages range from 19 to 22. All are full-time students at a major mid-western university. Subjects were administered all instruments by the same researcher in their respective organizations to maintain integrity of the organizational environment.

An assumption is made that the sorority and fraternity provide reinforcement and encouragement of gender behaviors and values. They are also assumed to have similar inputs, outputs, symbols, language, communication networks, traditions, and rituals. They are nationally chartered social organizations with similar power sources and decision-making processes.

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) was used to identify gender groups for this study. The Bem contains 20 masculine and 20 feminine personality characteristics treating masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions rather than as two ends of a single dimension. An additional 20 personality characteristics are included as filler. Respondents indicated their gender group by applying a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from never (1) to always (7), to each of the 60 items on the BSRI. The BSRI identifies four separate groups: feminine, masculine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Only the feminine and masculine gender groups were considered. Test-retest reliability of the Bem was determined by Pearson Product-Moment correlations from the first and second administration of the 1973 Stanford sample. Scores were computed separately for females and males for the Femininity scale, the Masculinity scale, and the Femininity minus Masculinity Difference score. All three scores proved highly reliable with the lowest test-retest reliability (.76) occurring for males describing themselves on the masculine items.

Preference for conflict style was determined by use of the Putnam and Wilson 30-item Organizational Communication Conflict Inventory (OCCI), which operationalizes conflict as any type of disagreement among organizational members. The instrument is designed to measure three conflict management styles: (a) solution-orientation, for confrontation and compromise behaviors; (b) non-confrontation, for accommodation and avoidance behaviors; and (c) control, for competitive behaviors. Respondents indicated conflict style preference by applying a 7-point Likert type scale, ranging from always (1) to never (7) to each of the 30 items. Twelve items represented non-confrontation, 11 items represented solution-orientation, and 7 items represented control. The 11 items representing solution-orientation were not considered in the final analysis but were left in the instrument to prevent predictive

responses to the two styles being examined. Reliability statistics for the OCCI resulted in a Cronback alpha of .93 for the 12-item non-confrontation subscale and .82 for the 7-item control subscale (Putnam & Wilson, 1982).

DATA ANALYSIS

The independent variable (gender group) was determined by applying the median split established by the Stanford sample (1978). Subjects with a score above the Stanford masculinity median and below the Stanford femininity median were classified as Masculine. Subjects with a score above the Stanford Femininity median and below the Stanford masculinity median were classified as feminine. The mean for each dependent variable (control and nonconfrontation) was established by computing total OCCI scores for all subjects for each variable. A one-tailed t-test was computed to determine significance at the .05 level for male and female preferences for control or non-confrontation conflict management styles.

RESULTS

The BSRI and the OCCI was administered to a total of 111 subjects. Of the 59 surveys administered to females, three were rejected for incompleteness and two were rejected because the respondents were "Pledges" rather than "Actives" of the sorority. Five of the 52 surveys administered to the males were rejected for incompleteness. The BSRI scores for the remaining surveys were compared to the Stanford masculinity/femininity median split to determine gender groups. Thirty-four of the surveys completed by females and 19 of the surveys completed by males were classified as either androgynous or undifferentiated and were, therefore, rejected for the purpose of this study. A random numbers table was used to reject an additional eight surveys completed by males to balance the male and female n at 20 each for a final total n of 40.

Numerical values given to each of the seven control items and 12 non-confrontation items on the OCCI were totaled for each respondent. Possible low and high scores for each variable are: control = 7(always) and 49(never); nonconfrontation = 12(always) and 84(never). The totaled scores were then used to compute the means for each dependent variable of each gender group.

Figure 1 displays the means for each gender group for the control (competitive) conflict management style. The 24.90 mean for the male gender group responding to the control items is closer to the lower, or always, end of the scale than is the 32.15 mean for the female gender group.

Figure 1. Control (Competition) CMS

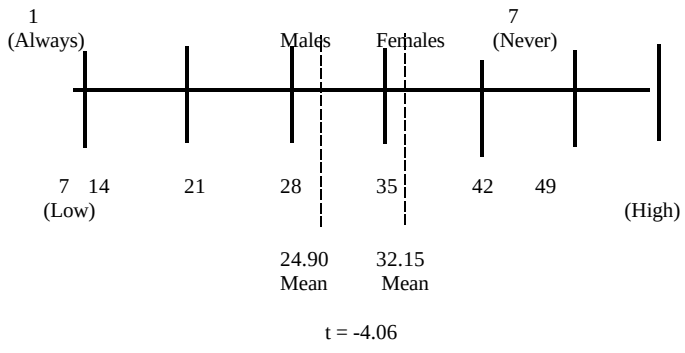
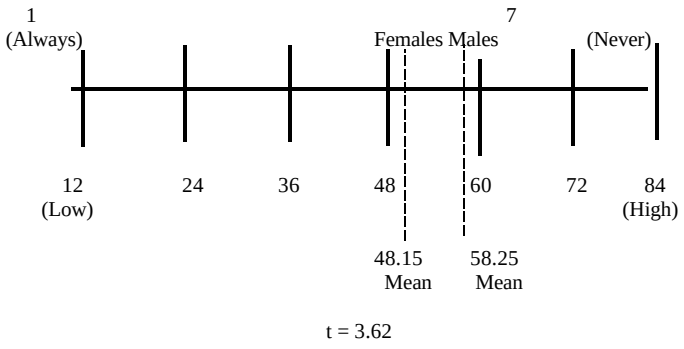


Figure 2 shows the means for each gender group for the non-confrontation (accommodation) conflict management style. The 48.15 mean for the female gender group responding to the non-confrontation items is closer to the lower, or always, end of the scale than is the 58.25 mean for the male gender group. The t-test results are

significant at the .05 level for both the control (t = -4.06; df = 38) and the non-confrontation (t = 3.62; df = 38) variables.

Figure 2. Non-Confrontation (Accommodation) CMS



DISCUSSION

As predicted, feminine subjects did show a greater preference for non-confrontation (accommodation) conflict management style behaviors than masculine subjects, and masculine subjects did show a greater preference for control (competitive) conflict management style behaviors than feminine subjects. The means are in the direction predicted by the hypotheses with statistically significant t-values.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of the Gray-Little (1974) and Baxter-Shephard (1978) studies. Although the Baxter-Shephard (1978) study did not confirm feminine preference for accommodating conflict management style behaviors, it did state that results were in the expected direction.

Results of this study are incongruent with findings of the Renwick (1977) and Shockley-Zalabak (1981) studies which reported no difference in male and female preferences for conflict management styles.

This study, the Baxter-Shephard (1978) study, and the Gray-Little (1974) study are similar in that college students were used as research subjects; whereas, the Renwick (1977) and Shockley-Zalabak (1981) studies involved members of real-world organizations as research subjects. A change in the security and support structure may help explain the difference in findings between the college students and business members. College students receiving parental financing as well as moral support from many same-sex friends with similar backgrounds may not perceive a need to adjust their learned value system. However, when confronted with joining the business world and being expected to be financially self-supporting as well as losing their strong support system, those same college students may perceive a strong need to adapt to organizational values. This value change may be more prevalent among women than men, since the business world has been historically male dominated. Women may find greater pressure to adapt to male values to enable them to ascend to managerial positions. Should that be the case, Renwick (1977) and Shockley-Zalabak (1981) may have measured adapted behaviors rather than preferred values resulting in their finding similar conflict styles practiced by both genders.

This study implies a positive relationship between constraints of strong gender types to respective stereotypical behavior, as noted by Bem (1974), and a strong gender oriented environment for the encouragement and reinforcement of those stereotypical behaviors and values. The findings of this study and those of Renwick (1977) and Shockley-Zalabak (1981) suggest an environmental influence on stereotypical behaviors and values. The implication is that stereotypical behaviors and values of a gender group member may, over time, adjust to the behaviors and values of a dominant gender group.

Of the 47 male subjects, 59 percent were classified masculine while 37 percent of the 54 females were classified as feminine by the BSRI. The implication is that the female perception of female gender values may have changed more than male perception of the male gender values. The significance of the findings of this study indicates

a need for additional research to further validate the results. Such research may best be accomplished by comparative examination of conflict management styles in both the college and business domains. That research should consider possible progressive changes in conflict management styles by following college seniors into business organizations. Additional research is also recommended to examine the influence of a dominant female gender group on the stereotypical behaviors and values of male gender group members' conflict management style.

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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STUDENTS' FUTURE ROLES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Policies for Business and Economic Education challenged business educators to develop students' business communication skills (Policies, 1994). There is little question among educators and business executives that excellent communication skills are requisites for today's jobs. Yet, most business teachers realize the difficulty of getting students to take business communication courses seriously.

Successful teachers know that students learn best when they perceive what they are learning as relevant. Teachers can often create learning environments that stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning if they can relate topics taught in school to their requisite of career or life goals. As students become more aware of tasks performed by business professionals and therefore more cognizant of tasks they will be expected to perform when they enter the business workplace, they will take learning more seriously.

This study was conducted to determine what business communication faculty perceive to be students' future roles in business communication. Data collected from the study provided information which will make students more aware of business communication tasks why will be expected to complete when they enter the business world. The overall goal was to provide information that could be used by instructors to create a learning environment wherein the significance of communication processes is recognized and appreciated.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS OF ASSISTING DOMESTICALLY ABUSED EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is no longer confined to the home; it is creeping into the workplace. Whether it is harassing telephone calls to an employee, a stalker in the parking lot, or an angry spouse who attacks a partner while he or she is at work, domestic violence is a problem that leaders cannot afford to ignore.

Quite predictably, people suffering from family violence quickly become problems in the workplace. And, many of these so-called "problem employees" who have difficulties getting to work on time or focusing on their tasks, or who are frequently absent from work, may, in fact, be victims of domestic violence. In addition, the National Safe Workplace Institute estimates that domestic violence affects employers in a number of ways, e.g., decreased productivity, increased legal liability, increased absenteeism, and increased health care costs. In fact, it is estimated that domestic violence costs organizations $5 billion a year.

This paper gives a definition of domestic violence, outlines the numerous costs of domestic violence to employers, and suggests steps employers can take to assist domestically abused employees.

AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONALITY TYPES AND LEARNER PROFILE AMONG BUSINESS COMMUNICATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between personality type and learner profile among those students enrolled in the Business and Interpersonal Communications (AD 321) course offered, at a state-supported Pennsylvania University. Learner profile was measure utilizing the Oddi Continuing Learning Inventory (OCLI) and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator(MBTI) was used to measure subjects' personality dispositions and preferences.

Subjects consisted of 198 students enrolled in the AD 321, Business and Interpersonal Communications course, offered at a state-supported Pennsylvania university during spring 1996. To examine relationships between the variables of personality type and learner profile, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data. Frequencies were computed for both the MBTI and the OCLI, and cross-tabs were performed between the OCLI and the MBTI. Where statistical significance was achieved, Pearson Product Moment Correlations were computed to determine the magnitude and direction of these correlations.

An examination of the resulting data revealed that of the initial 198 subjects, 122 were identified as self-directed, with the largest percentage of these subjects (n = 65) reporting into the following four MBTI categories: ESTJ, ISTJ, ESTP and ENFP. Findings and recommendations for further research are included.

AACSB COLLEGE OF BUSINESS DEANS, BUSINESS COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTORS AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS PERCEIVED VALUE OF SELECTED COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES

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ABSTRACT

What business communication skills are needed by university business graduates? There has been an abundance of literature in recent years concerning needed business communication skills and abilities. Research has indicated that business communication competencies are essential for a successful business career. What business communication competencies should be taught? What competencies are being taught? Are the colleges and universities providing graduates with the needed business communication competencies required in the business world?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to determine which communication competencies deans, business communication instructors and human resource managers perceive as most essential. The business communication competencies studied included writing skills, verbal/interpersonal skills and global communication skills.

METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was used in completing this research study. Communication skills used for this study were derived from the following sources: various research studies identifying critical management skills, a locally developed College of Business and Technology advisory group listing of skills and knowledge essential for a businesses major and from various business communication textbooks. After the communication skills were identified, a questionnaire was developed and mailed to deans of AACSB colleges of business, Association for Business Communication members in the East and Southwest Regions of ABC, and human resource managers of the 200 largest companies in the Dallas-Ft.Worth area. Respondents were asked to identify which business communication skills they perceive to be most essential for entry-level business graduates. Analysis of variance was used to analyze the responses.

The results of this study may have an impact on the business communication curriculum. Analyzing what deans, business communication competencies for college graduates should be of interest to all business communication instructors.

USING A COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT AS THE BASIS FOR AN INTEGRATED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COURSE

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ABSTRACT

The students in a senior-level Management Communications course conducted a Communications Audit for the School of Business Administration at The University of Montana. The data were collected through multiple questionnaires designed specifically for each target group: administrators, faculty, staff, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, MBA students and graduating seniors in the capstone classes. Follow-up interviews were conducted by students in the Management Communications class. Students wrote up the results of their research findings and presented the results to multiple audiences within the school.

BENEFITS

Student Benefits: The student communications audit provides an integrated learning experience where students apply skills in this course they develop throughout their entire business education careers; statistics, marketing research methods, accounting, spreadsheet formulation, organizational behavior principles and management communications tools such as speaking, listening, interviewing, writing and multi-media presentation techniques.

Throughout the audit, students commented how they finally understood that their courses were complementary rather than isolated areas of learning. The audit forced students to be flexible in how and when day acquired information. They were required to take risks in to acquiring information, particularly because the direction of many of their interviews could not be planned in advance. The process of conducting an audit and applying communication strategies discussed in class forced students to think creatively and to improve their communication skills with minimum involvement from the instructor. In fact, the instructor served primarily as a coach and evaluator of ideas, providing feedback on oral and written assignments.

School/Department Benefits: Another important benefit of the communications audit was that it prompted discussion among faculty members about how communications could be improved. A few faculty candidly shared with each other what they discussed in the audit questionnaires. The audit was an excellent way to establish a communications benchmark because it systematically reviewed communications style and vehicles. Additional benefits of the audit were that it promoted discussion of the communications climate among administrators in the School of Business Administration, which in turn, stimulated administrative involvement in solving communications problems.

The specific information the audit generated about ways to improve communications. (what works and what doesn't) certainly was of immediate practical benefit. The information the students provided to the School of Business Administration influenced the communications process in a permanent way. Whatever information the student audit contributed to the well being of the organization had to be viewed as a windfall. Few departments or schools can afford an outside consultant to Conduct this type of audit. This information was "free".

Pedagogical Benefits: With many schools of businesses today focusing on incorporating experiential learning and integrated learning in the curriculum, the communications audit project makes an important contribution to pedagogy. It promotes teamwork, student centered problem solving, goal setting, revision and accountability. It also reinforces risk taking, flexibility and creative thinking.

Because of these many benefits, this project is the type of course that conference participants should be interested in exploring.

MANAGER AS INTER-CULTURAL COMMUNICATOR

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ABSTRACT

This paper details the findings of a study of inter--cultural material communication competence. The study found that managers who speak English as an only language were viewed as competent to communicate with English second language staff as were managers spoke English as a second language.

INTRODUCTION

Global economics, immigration policies, changes in social policy and shortages of skilled workers have contributed to changes in the demographic profiles of organization's customers and employees. One segment of the United States economy which has experienced these changes in a very critical manner is medical care. Hospitals, in particular, are being asked to serve patients speaking different first languages and to utilize professional and unlicenced staff which reflect this language diversity. At the nexus of the managerial issues this cacophony of language creates is the nurse manager. It is the nurse manager who is responsible to ensure that diverse needs of this multi-cultural organization are met. In this analysis the author Canines the communication skills of nurse managers working in hospitals employing a significant number of English Second Language (ESL) staff nurses. The findings of this study have implications for developing managerial communication skills as well as the selection of managers, managerial development, job design, and organizational structures. The focus of this paper is managerial communication skills will be discussed.

Traditionally, nurse managers used a bureaucratic communication system (Freidson, 1989). This formal system was paralleled by in informal system of interpersonal relationships based on professional training and similar work experiences (O'Mara, 1995), This combination of system allowed the manager to effectively communicate with staff nurses and supervise patient care. The current health care environment challenges nurse mangers to create new systems and to learn new communication skills to effectively communicate with patients and staff from diverse cultures speaking different first languages. Research indicates that placing a manager in an inter-cultural environment for which they are not well trained or psychologically matched can affect their ability to communicate effectively (Tannen, 1993 p.B5; Devine, 1979, pp 29-30), This lowered performance may be a result of the manager's sense of frustration and tendency to engage in defensive communication behaviors such as formality, control, masking or depersoning messages (Gibb, 1978).

The intent of this study was to identify, through communication skills instruments, ESL staff nurses perception of the inter-cultural communication competence of their nurse manager. The term *inter-cultural communication competence* (ICC) was operationally defined by low numeric scores generated on communication perception instruments completed by a population of staff nurses. The data collected was used to test hypothesis and the answer research questions.

DEFINING INTER-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Contributions to understanding the concept of inter-cultural communication competence (ICC) can be found in several disciplines. At the center of these disciplines is the field of social psychology. Within social psychology two conflicting sets theories contribute to defining ICC. First is symbolic interactionism. Mead (I 974) discussed the creation of reality as the interaction between "self" which is composed of two parts, "I" and "me". The "me" consists of the organization of attitudes (expectations) of others. The "I" is the response of self to organized expectations of others. The "I" is creative and spontaneous human behavior while the "Me" crates a view of the world based on expectations of others. In the self Mead saw a dialectical conversation where the attitudes of others (me) are responded

to by the "I". Through this process Mead determined that society shapes the self and self shapes society. Blumer (1962, 1969) followed Meas thinking to refine his view of the creation of reality through a social process. He called the process symbolic, interaction and based it on three premises.

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the thing have for them.
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
3. The meanings are handled modified through, an interpretive process used when the individual deals with the things he encounters (Blumer. 1969, p.2).

Given that humans develop their reality through social interaction there would appear to be a need for a register or digest of symbols used in these interactions. For some, language provides this vehicle. Cassirer (1957) viewed language as:

> Living in a world of denominations, of phonetic symbols, with which it links definite meanings -- of these it holds fast to the unity and determinacy denominations, and thereby the manifold sensory experience which it strives to grasp and signalize take on a relative stability and come to a kind of standstill (p. 14).

Literature from social psychology, sociology, anthropology, cognitive psychology and philosophy support the position that language is central to the development of human social and cognitive systems. For Pinker (I 994) language is the result of two "tricks of nature". The first is the ability of humans to connect a sound to a meaning. This is accomplished through rote memorization of these pairings (Saussure, 1916). The second is the ability to make infinite use of finite media. To help make sense of the limited data this process creates requires a set of rules called "generative grammar" (Humbolt, 1836). The result of generative grammar is a system of rules which provide structure for words and defines how a sentence is understood (Smith & Miller, 1966).

Attempts to explain how these tricks work is open to continued passionate debate. The first round of these debates was between Sapir-Whorf linguists. One school of thought was deterministic in perspective thus placing the individual in a prison created by the particulars of their language. The second "softer" perspective views the effects of language as shaping the individual (Lustig & Koester, 1993). The next major debate has been between the research of behaviorist such as B.F. Skinner (1938, 1957) and the rational cognitive approach of the development of language espoused by Noam Chomsky (1959, 1965). To summarize the debate, for Chomsky language is a part of the innate structure of the brain. For Skinner, language is developed by a group and taught to the young. For the purpose of this research it is not necessary to resolve these issue in order to accept the power of language in the communication process.

Considering the lack of understanding of exactly how language works makes attempts to understand effective communication between individuals speaking different first languages even more complex. Assistance is provided by Gudykunst & Kim (1984) who suggest that authority relationship will provide clues into acceptance or rejection of cross-cultural messages. Jandt (1995) invites a study of cultural habits and customs as a means to understand acceptance or rejection of managerial communication efforts. Kanter (I 971) and Johnson (I 994) provide the numbers of individuals involved in the communication exchange as a possible clue to linkages between roles & communication effectiveness. It is their view that should one part be a token (less than fifteen percent of the population) they may be encapsulated in a prescribed role and fail to accurately communicate their message.

The second area of social psychology contributing to the understanding ICC is role theory. Role theory, like symbolic interaction, emerged front different traditions anthropology, psychology, and sociology. While the perspective of each field is different, all seek to explicate how humans develop within a social system (Hurley-Wilson, 1968). This research probed the communication roles taken by nurse managers and suff nurses in an inter-cultural setting. It is the performance of these roles and the effect they have on perceived communication competence which provide the foundation for the construction of the hypothesis and research questions used in the study. Figure 1 provides a model of this relationship.

Role theory provides rich sources which m be used to develop explanations of managerial communication effectiveness. As early as the French revolution philosophers were attempting to understand how roles influence the structure of society. Comte (1798 - 1857) brought the perspective of the scientific method to theories used by sociologists and introduced the concept that social systems, like biological systems, have needs and functions which contribute to their survival. Durkheim's (I 858 - 1917) work expanded the biological concepts to include need, normality, and pathology. Weber's (1946, 1947) bureaucratic structure is a continuing point of reference for organizational role theory. It was his introduction of the concept of vocation or calling which is used as a way of explaining the relationship between the social structure and the social person.

Mintzberg (1989) sees roles set forth in an organizational context as sets of behavior identified with a position. In his classic study, he captured the dynamics of roles required of a manager. He classified these roles as interpersonal informational, and disseminator. He further developed his definition of manager's role and used the metaphor of managers as "nerve centers" in their units (1994) to help explicate his conclusions. He expansion on the original typology was based on observation of nurse managers working Montreal hospitals. These managers where repeatedly engage in a series of conversation with up to 15 people at a time. These conversions tended to occur as the manager was either going or coming A descriptor used by one manager was that her style was "going with the wind."

"As one would expect national culture has been found to have a significant affect on inter-cultural communication. One problem facing researchers in inter-cultural issues is finding a working definition of culture. Krober and Kluckhorn (1952) told how their search of the literature resulted m finding 164 different definitions. Listing 164 definitions is not particularly helpful, the placement of definitions into general categories can assist In providing clarity to the teen. Some of these categories include everything man made (Herskovits, 1955), shared meanings based on symbols (Geertz, 1973: White, 1949), the human made part of the environment (Triandis, 1976), communication (Hall, 1959), a historically transmitted system of symbols, meaning and norms (Collier and Thomas, 1988), and a response mechanism (Hofstede, 1980).

Brown (1991), an influential anthropologist, provides a valuable addition to the list of definitions that assists in understanding inter-cultural communication:

> Culture consists of the conventional patterns of though, activity, and artifact that are passed on from generation to generation in a manner that is generally assumed to involve learning rather than specific genetic programming Besides being transmitted "vertically" from generation to generation culture may also be transmitted horizontally between individuals and collectives. Examples of culture are tools, kinship terminologies and whole world views -which in each case may take distinct forms among people who are genetically undistinguishable. Culture is divisible into "traits" (single terms) and "complexes" (more or less integrated collection of traits) and typically thought of as though it were attached to collectivities rather than isolated individuals. This deemphasis of the individual stems not from an anthropological belief that individuals do not create culture but from the observation that any given individual receives more culture that he or she creates. Because so much culture is imposed upon rather than created by any particular individual, anthropologists (and others) often think of culture as a son of supraindividual entity called "society." (p.40)

Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) bring together the overarching theories of symbolic interactionism, and role theory into a model which provides the basis for the definition and measurement of inter-cultural communication used in this study. The model has two components appropriateness and effectiveness, which Spitzberg alla Cupach view as necessary for an individual to communicate in a competent manner Wieman and Backlund (1980) define the construction of appropriateness as:

> . . generally referring to the ability of an interactant to meet the basic contextual requirements of the situation-IO be effective in a general sense... These contextual requirements include: (1) the verbal context, that is, making sense in terms of wording, of statements, and of topic; (2) the relationship of context, that is, the structuring type, and Style of messages so that they are consonant with the

> particular relationship at hand; and (3) the environment context, that is, the consideration of constraints imposed on messages making by the symbolic and physical environment. (p. 185)

Effectiveness is conceptualized as achievement of interactants' goals or objectives; and satisfaction of interactants needs, desires, or intentions (Breen et al, 1977; Foote and Cottrell, 1955; Fitts, 1970) Thayer (1968) conceptualizes three aspects of efficacy:

> One's effectiveness es a communicator depends first upon the implicit facilitators and inhibitors (the "circumstances") which establish consequences as possible, inevitable, or impossible; then an only then upon his competence accurately to discern which type of situation he is in; and then and only then (a) upon his ability to compensate for those situations in which certain communicative Intentions or goals are possible and (b) upon his tact cal competence to succeed in those situations in which it is possible to achieve his purpose to some degree. (P. 151)

For Spitzberg the inter-culturally communication competent nurse manager would be one whose behavior is appropriate to context of the message and where that message is received by staff nurse in a manner which creates a behavior which accomplishes tasks necessary to complete job assignments (effectiveness). One research tool that is helpful to determine if this exchange is cresting understanding is Osgood 's semantic differential technique (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957), The technique is administered through a questionnaire and would be useful in measuring the Spitzberg's (1989) effectiveness dimension. The technique forces the subject to respond to a number of concepts represented by words on a series of pre-established dimensions which are represented on a Likert scale. This process allows for the placement of words on scales, or semantic space, and the distance between them can be interpreted to reflect how different their meanings are perceived to be (Osgood et al., 1957). For the purpose of this study, effectiveness involved communication of critical information in a high risk environment (patient care). An example of its application was Nigro's attempt to measure shared meaning of critical words used by project managers who communicated with scientific staffs conducting highly specialized research (Nigro, 1972) Utilizing the Osgood (1957) and Nigro (1972) methodology an instrument was constructed to create an Goldhaber (1986) suggest an approach which measures valence through a communication audit. The International Communication Association created a multi dimensional audit which was composed of five measurement tools, each of which could be administered independently or in combination The tools included a questionnaire survey (116) items, interviews (random and purposively conducted), network analysis, communication experiences, and communication diaries. In validating this instrument ICA conducted audits of eighteen organizations including four hospitals. The reliability of the scares utilized in the 116-item set ranged from .73 to .92. This reliability is based on the relationship of the scores to organizational communication their ability to predict organizational outcomes, and their relationship to previously validated measures of organizational communication (GoIdhaver & Krivonos, 1977). By relating valence to Spitzberg's appropriateness dimension, measurement of appropriateness becomes possible.

Gibb (1961) provides an additional perspective on the appropriateness dimension. He suggests that by measuring the communication climate climate along a continuum from supportive environments which are provisional, empathetic equal, spontaneous, problem-oriented, and descriptive to defensive which are evaluative, controlling, strategic, neutral, superior, and certain one can gain a sense of the appropriateness of the climate to the purpose of the organization. Costigan and Schmeidler constructed a survey instrument to measure the degree of Gibb's supportiveness or defensiveness in a managers communication style. Kreps (1990) (Kreps & Thornton, 1992) agree that troth members of a relationship must work toward collaboration, trust and trustworthiness when communication occurs in ambiguous, high-stress situations such as hospitals. Gibb argues that trust occurs through communication which is less defensive and more supportive, Linkage between Krep's view of the hospital setting and Gibb's framework for trust building provides an additional dimension to measure the appropriateness of the communication climate a nurse manager creates. The use of tested ICA and Gibb based statements allows for construction of the appropriateness metric.

METHODOLOGY

One hundred and twelve staff nurses and nine nurse managers working at four medical centers at Northern California teaching hospitals and at one medical center operated by a Northern California private hospital participated in this study. The cohorts selected in each center were determined by Senior Nurse Administrator as having a significant number of ESL staff nurses in their population. Care was taken to ensure that as many ESL nurse managers as possible were included in the sample. Staff nurses were asked to complete two instruments measuring communication climate and common language systems as well as a demographic survey used to create fourteen variables (e.g., first language, second language, inter-cultural training). Nurse managers were asked to complete one instrument measuring common language systems and the same demographic survey.

Two primary survey instruments were used in this study to ten Spitzberg and Cupach's inter-cultural communication competence dimensions. The first survey was a word importance survey (WIS) which measured the ability of a manager to create joint undemanding of words used in directing the work of staff nurses This instrument measures the cognitive or effectiveness dimension of the Spitzberg & Cupach theory. The instrument determines if nurse manager and staff nurse agree on the urgency of joint agreement on the meaning of select words. The WIS instrument used in this this study often often key typically used to communicate directions to staff nurses (See table 1.) Nurse managers and staff nurses in the cohort rate how important they perceive it is to have joint agreement on the meaning of these items. The subjects were asked to rank joint agreement importance of each word with a score ranging from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (important). The subjects were also asked to predict how their counterpart (nurse manager or staff nurses) would evaluate the criticality of joint agreement. The ten words were developed using a Delphi group consisting of five senior nurse managers working in different organizations in California

The second instrument the communication climate inventory (CCI), has two components consisting of 46 statements. This instrument was given to staff nurses only. The 36 statements were used to measure the perceptions of staff nurses regarding the supportive or defensive style of communication utilized by their managers. This instrument also contained ten statements which measured the degree of satisfaction the employee has with the quantity of job specific information he/she receives from his/her supervisor. The survey asks the respondents to provide a rating on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The thirty six responses related to the nurse manager's communication style were scored based on a formula which resulted in an overall score which indicated the degree a nurse managers communication behaviors were perceived by staff nurses as defensive or supportive communication behaviors. The scores were categorized as along a continuum of supportive to defensive. The ten questions related to job information were scored separately to generate an ICA score.

RESULTS

The underlying questions behind this are: "Do nurse managers who speak English only (EOL) and staff nurses who speak English as a second language (ESL) place similar value on joint agreement on critical job specific words?" "Do ESL staff nurse perceive the work communication climate the same as EOL staff nurses?" Last. "Do ESL staff nurses perceive EOL nurse managers as competent in their communication sldlls?" To provides answers to the first question it was predicted that WES = aICA - bDEF + cSUP + Constant. To answer the second and third questions it was predicted that ICA = aWES - bDEF + cSUP - dEngsting + Constant.

The study of nurse managers in action with ESL and EOL staff nurses and perception of staff nurses regarding nurse manager inter-cultural communication competence revealed four underlying themes:

1. There is a high level of agreement between all nurse managers and all staff nurses on the need for joint agreement on critical words (WES -word error scores- were low throughout the population)*
2. ESL staff nurses perceive their nurse managers as having a supportive communication style (ESL staff nurses had low (SUP - supportive communication style- scores)
3. A lower number of EOL staff nurses perceive their nurse managers as having a supportive communication style (EOL staff nurses had higher SUP scores than ESL staff nurses)
4. ESL staff nurses perceive their nurse managers as providing adequate job related information (ESL staff nurses has lower ICA - International Communication Association Survey - scores than EOL staff nurses.

The relationship of scale scores and inter-cultural communication competence is provided in Table 2.

The means and standard deviations for scores on WES, ICA, DEF, and SUP for the entire population are presented in table 3. To evaluate the normality assumption, kurtosis and skewness values were calculated (Watt & van den Berg, 1995). The assumption was met for ICA, DEF, and SUP. As expected, the WES was positively skewed. Since this is representative of the population, these scores were used as reported.

The first conclusion to be drawn from the multiple regression analysis relates to the first prediction. Prior to a multiple regression analysis is was necessary to conduct a step-wise multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between a strong agreement on critical words and following variable combined: ICA, DEF, and SUP. A listwise deletion procedure handled missing data. As previously highlighted, the assumption of normality was tested and met for ICA, DEF and SUP, and WES was positively skewed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that the assumption of collinearity was met as no correlation was over .70 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). By design, singularity was not an issue.

The critical word agreement was measured by the WES (M = 4.56, SD = 6.06); the scores ranges from 0 - 40. A low score on the WES indicated a strong critical word agreement, and high score correlated with a weak critical word agreement. One subject did not complete this instrument. ICA scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.40 (M = 2.21, SD = .71). A low score on the ICA indicated that the manager provided enough information to the participant to effectively understand job tasks. A high score on the ICA signified that the necessary information may be lacking. One participant failed to provide the ICA results. DEF results ranged from 20 - 90 (M = 66.68, SD = 15.01). In contrast to the other instruments, a high result on the DEF revealed that the manager's communication style was NON-defensive. A low figure disclosed a more defensive communication style. DEF results were comprehensive. Finally, SUP scores ranges from 14 to 82 (M = 38.60, SD = 14.62). The SUP was inversely proportional to the DEF, meaning that low scores indicated a supportive management style and high stores indicated otherwise.

The bivariate correlations between WES and the variables described above are presented in table 4. As illustrated in Table 4, subjects with 4 strong critical word agreement indicated that enough information was provided from their supervisors to do their job, $r\ (107) = .336$, $p \leq .001$.

1. As illustrated in table 4, subjects with lower WES scores had lower ICA scores $\underline{r}\ (107) = .34$, $p < .001$, had higher DEF scores $\underline{r}\ (107) = -.25$, $p < .01$, and lower SUP scores $\underline{r}\ (107) < .36$
2. Low SUP scores predicted low ICA scores independent of the other variables. However, the bivariate correlation analysis again supported the direction of the predictor relationships. As highlighted in table 6 subjects with lower ICA scores had lower WES scores $\underline{r}\ (107) = .34$, $p < .001$, higher DEF scores $\underline{r}\ (107) = -.50$, and lower SUP scores $\underline{r}\ (107) = .77$.

An interpretation of the data results in the finding that there is a statistically significant relationship between the instrumental (Effectiveness) and affective (Appropriateness) attributes of inter-cultural communication competence. The findings of the statistical analysis in regard to the questions raised in this paper would therefore indicate that there is an operational linkage provided in the hypothesis to test the probable truth or falsity of the relationship between the variables as described by Watt & van don Berg (1995).

DISCUSSION

The limited variability in the WES scores may affect other variables. The homogeneous nature of the scores may be the result of: the limited number of sites used to collect the data (all three sites are located in Northern California), the demographics of the nine cohorts (all subjects in the study were volunteers working in units witch were selected by senior nurse management as having a significant number of English second language (ESL) sniff nurses and/or were a unit which was managed by an ESL manager, the level of formal education of staff nurses and nurse managers (95.6% of staff nurses hold a minimum of an Associate of Arts degree with 55.4% holding a Bachelor of Arts degree while all nurse manages hold graduate degrees with four Masters of Arts and one Master of Business Administration), last the population has a significant amount of professional experience (71.5% of the staff nurse have in excess of five years of work experience with 52.7% having in excess of ten years experience, and all nurse managers have in excess of ten years experience with 33% having over twenty years of experience).

The relationship between SUP sores (affective) and WES scores (instrumental) may be explained by viewing the WES, which represents Spitzberg and Cupach's (1989) EFFECTIVENESS dimension and indicates the strength of messages, as an attempt by nurse managers to construct a common symbolic system for their staffs utilizing a supportive communication structure. The data indicates that nurse manages are using Spitzberg and Cupach's (1989) APPROPRIATENESS dimension as operationalized in this study as a SUP score to create a supportive communication climate. The flexible style may assist subordinates in understanding critical symbols used by the nurse manager.

While this study is limited in scope and, therefore, generalization of the results is not appropriate, the data indicate that for a receiver to accept the strength of a message, the degree to which the climate in which the message is sent is perceived by the receiver as supportive is a significant factor in acceptance of the message.

GENERAL IMPLICATIONS

The data used in this research suggest that through the education process nurses are trained in a common language. This observation is supported by the laugh degree of agreement between both ESL, EOL staff nurse and ESL and EOL nurse managers on words utilized to provide patient rare. The finding support continued nurse training Common symbolic systems. This common system allows ESL and EOL nurses a set of critical symbols which ran be used to bridge cultural and first language barriers.

The data also suggest that nurse managers who are skilled at creating a dynamic common symbolic system which includes cognition, language, and discourse, are better able to communicate cross-culturally and are also able to create communication climates which arc perceived to be support by both ESL and EOL staff nurses. I may be of value to determine if nurse managers that develop this foundation of symbols for staff nurses are also more successful in attaining organizational goals.

The finding that ESL staff nurses tend to be more accepting of responsibility for message clarity And view their managers as more supportive than EOL staff nurses may be of value in creating a learning environment. It would be easy for a manager to perceive an ESL subordinates feedback regarding satisfaction with communication style as indicative of an effective communication climate. This could occur if the ESL nurse was engaging in face saving behaviors rather expression of real understanding of a message.

This study provides an indication of power of common language, common goals, critical work settings, and a supportive climate in assisting in the formation of inter-cultural communication competence. A metaphor assist in understanding this process may be of value.

The "Velcro effect" (Estenson, 1997) may be such a metaphor since there appears to be a similarity between Velcro strips attempting to attach to one another and managers attempting to connect diverse individuals. The Velcro strip consists of multiple hooks affixed to a strip of material. This strip could also represent a homogeneous work group. On a strip of Velcro the miniature hooks are engineered and produced in a similar manner, but each one is in some way different. Within organizations each hook (the individual) is formed through a combination of group, organizational or cultural experiences. In each application (the material or the diverse group being brought together) cohesion can only occur when hooks arc brought into contact with a different strip.

The success of the cohesion is the similarity of the construction of the hooks. In this study the communication hooks were formed for both ESL and EOL nurses through basic and advanced nurse education, creation of a common symbolic system (medical language), common views of humankind, and the existence of the Superordinate goal of reduction of human suffering.

In addition to the fundamental design and shape of the hooks, the nurse Velcro worked because pressure was applied to both sides. In the cast of material, the pressure is physical. In organizations the pressure could come from the critical nature of the work (patient survival), congruent goals (professional standards of behavior), or force (skills shortages, affirmative action or ethnic marketing programs).

Velcro is unique because it can come together and form a cohesive bond. This is done while allowing the individual hooks to function as individuals. A similar view of a cross cultural work force may be worth visualizing. In a diverse work environment all individuals bring their special design to the group. If the uniqueness is valued and retained while still connecting with another who is similar but different cohesion can occur. This cohesion allows for performance greater than the individual. Velcro is also unique because it allows for separation after to need for

connection is past. Once separated the hook, in a slightly modified state, is ready for another opportunity to connect and form a new and unique bond.

Editors' Note: Figures and tables omitted due to technical difficulties. Contact the author for a full copy of the paper including exhibits and tables.

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