Web Exercises

# Chapter 11: Managing Conflict

## Kilmann and Thomas Conflict Mode Instrument

This is a multi-part activity that: (a) explains how two dimensional models work; (b) explains the forced-choice method of responses; (c) gives students some basic practice in developing a survey instrument of their own; (d) identifies some limitations of the Kilmann and Thomas instrument; and (e) provides extended discussion questions regarding conflict.

Part A: How 2-dimensional models work

Figure 10.3 in our textbook shows how two attitudes (assertiveness and cooperativeness) can be plotted on a graph. It is a visual representation of two attitudes that are simultaneously expressed by a given person. The *X* axis plots cooperativeness from low to high, while the *Y* axis plots assertiveness from low to high. One’s position on the graph is determined by 2 coordinates: one’s score on assertiveness and one’s score on cooperativeness from the questionnaire. Dozens of different scores are possible, so people’s conflict styles can range over the entire graph. For simplicity’s sake, the more pronounced positions (very low or very high on an attitude) are identified as “styles.”

You can create your own two-dimensional model in class on most any characteristics or behaviors. For example, using two employee characteristics – job competence and diligence (willingness to work) – what would a two-dimensional model look like? Plot competence on the *X* axis and diligence on the *Y* axis. At the lower left corner is the low competence, low diligence employee. At the lower right corner is the low competence, high diligence employee. At the upper left corner is the high diligence, low competence employee, and at the upper right corner is the high diligence and high competence employee. In the middle is the employee who is moderate in both characteristics. What types of employees would fit into these categories? What labels would you attach to each of these types?

Part B: Forced choice method

Begin by discussing in class the students’ responses to the forced choice method in assessing their conflict styles. Explain that the forced choice rating method first appeared in 1947 as a response to dissatisfaction with existing rating scales. It aims to isolate and measure those behaviors most closely associated with the attitude or construct being studied. Items can be grouped in pairs (as in the Kilmann and Thomas Instrument), triplets, or other combinations (positive/negative; more desirable/less desirable, etc.) The method can be used to measure the subject’s preference, the importance of an item to the subject, or other criteria. It has limitations; among others is that a subject may not feel strongly about either choice, or some questions may not be applicable at all. Therefore forced choice is often used in combination with other scales. As with all quantitative measurement, it is important to test for validity: Are the questions actually measuring what they’re *supposed to* measure? With regard to measuring conflict styles, it would be beneficial to supplement one’s self-assessment with peer ratings and supervisor ratings, which are less likely to be biased.

Part C: Developing a survey instrument

After students have constructed a two-dimensional model of their own, brainstorm what behaviors or attitudes would exemplify each of the axes of their model. For example, using the employee characteristics of competence and diligence which were mentioned above, brainstorm how students identify competence – a particular skill set? Emotional intelligence? Ability to problem-solve? Accuracy? Quality? Innovation? Speed at which a task can be completed? Multi-tasking? Ask: Does an assessment of “competence” depend on the job requirements? Once all the ideas are written on the board, have students group similar ideas together. The items that are grouped together can comprise a basic scale that measures one element of competence, such as problem solving. Have students craft questions that measure each of the items comprising problem-solving ability. This can be done in small groups, with each group working on a different variable. Groups should show their drafts to other groups and get feedback on clarity and wording. How would they score their questionnaire to determine where on the axis a respondent would appear?

Part D: Discussion

Discuss in class how conflict style depends on whom we’re in conflict with. Do we use different styles depending on whether it is a content conflict or a relational conflict? How can we identify different stages in a conflict? How do cultures differ in their view of conflict? Ask students who come from a different culture than (white) North American, to explain how a problem would be viewed from their culture or tradition. How can we learn to appreciate each style of conflict and put it to its best use?

## Setting the Stage for Conflict Resolution

This activity is intended to help students consider the practical aspects of conflict resolution, beginning with the step of setting the physical environment.

Have students visit the Harvard Negotiation Project website and watch the brief video on “Setting the Stage” (<http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/video-setting-the-stage-for-productive-negotiations/>).

Ask students to come to class prepared to talk about the following points:

* The importance of the physical environment for effective conflict resolution.
* Possible ways to set the stage in order to create a positive environment.

In class, discuss these points and have the students role play different conflict resolution scenarios, giving thought to how the space is arranged. By varying the number of participants in each scenario, you can demonstrate the different dynamics that are involved, and the importance of setting the stage.

## Negotiation Simulation

This is a two-part activity. The first part is done online; the second in class. The activity can be developed into a larger and more complex assignment if desired. The purpose of the activity is to practice negotiation skills on a current social controversy, applying Fisher and Ury’s principles. First, the instructor or class should come up with a current conflict that has opposing sides. Ideally, it should be a controversy they care about and that they can easily research online. Some examples from the past: Steroid use in Major League Baseball, controlling the U.S. border with Mexico, “Don’t ask, don’t tell policy” regarding gays in the military, reparations to descendents of slaves, etc.

Next, assign the following homework:

*Negotiation Exercise Preparation for (Date)*

* *For the next class period, we will role play a negotiation on the topic of X. In preparation for the class, be sure you have read chapter 10 in our textbook and the “Bare Bones Guide to Negotiation” found at* [*http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/DAS/interneg/training/bare\_bones\_guide.html*](http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/DAS/interneg/training/bare_bones_guide.html)*. You will need to do some outside research on the current controversy over X to know what the issue are surrounding this topic.*
* *Come to class prepared with two strategies for the negotiation – one for party A and one for party B (these will depend on the topic selected). For each side, be prepared to discuss:*

*Its interests,*

*Its possible concessions,*

*Its areas for concessions.*

* *Then consider any communication or negotiation strategies you think might work for each side, and why. Do not simply report what each side has already done.*
* *In class you will be randomly assigned to represent one group or the other in a simulated negotiation, so be prepared to play either role.*

In class, prepare for the negotiation by reviewing the facts of the case. Ask the students to report their research on:

The key people or groups in the controversy

The timeline of events

Turning points so far in the controversy

Miscellaneous information and issues

Create a task sheet for the class on the goals of the negotiation. (The instructor will need to do some research as well, to become familiar with the issues and what the negotiation tasks should be). A sample task sheet below (for a negotiation on drug testing in Major League Baseball) can be adapted for other topics.

***Your Task***

* *Your task is to WIN for your side. If possible, aim for a WIN/Win outcome*
* *We know what the positions are, but what are the underlying interests? What are the two sides really after?*
* *What are your areas of concession?*
* *What resources can you mobilize to strengthen your case? (Other groups, public opinion, objective criteria such as precedents in other organizations, etc.)*

***Negotiation Tasks – 3 Sets of Issues***

1. *How frequent should drug testing be?*

*Should tests be taken during the off season?*

*Should the list of banned substances be broadened?*

*Should athletes be sanctioned for drug violations based on evidence other than a positive test?*

*Should there be “reasonable cause” testing?*

1. *Should disciplinary measures be strengthened?*

*How long should suspensions be? How large the fines?*

*Should contracts be voided for athletes proven to use banned substances?*

*Should there be retroactive discipline of athletes who used drugs in the past?*

*Should there be a zero tolerance policy?*

1. *Should athletic records (home runs, RBIs, hitting streaks, etc) be revoked for players proven to have used performance enhancing drugs?*

*Should players proven to have used performance enhancing drugs be barred from election to the Hall of Fame?*

Running the negotiation: Set the parameters you wish for how long the debate should last (full class period?); how much time the sides have to prepare; who gets to speak and for how long; how you will grade participation and quality of speakers’ contributions, etc.

## World Peace

Ask students to watch the presentation by Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams on a realistic vision for world peace at *TED talks* (<http://www.ted.com/talks>). Williams tells about her efforts to eradicate landmines as well as how other Nobel Peace Laureates are addressing exploitation, violence and conflict in their countries. Have students reflect on the following questions, in writing or in small group discussions:

* What is Williams’ concept of sustainable peace?
* What are some of the creative ways that the Nobel Laureates are addressing conflict issues?
* How inspiring are these role models to you?
* How is active citizenship related to leadership?
* What do interpersonal and group conflict have to do with global conflict issues? How do the principles in chapter 10 apply to larger contexts?

## Managing Conflict

PowToon is an online animation presentation software that can be used initially for free There is a version for educators as well. In class show the following PowToon about conflict in literature:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg_10OfdEss>

Have students form groups of 3 and assign each group one of Fisher and Ury’s four principles of negotiation, or one of the five types of conflict (beliefs and values, goals, esteem, control, affiliation). Ask them to create a 2-minute teaching module for the class using PowToon (<http://www.powtoon.com/>).

## Keyword Search (F, I)

There are many significant concepts in this chapter. Assign students to choose one of the glossary terms at the end of the chapter and search their library’s online databases for articles on their topic. Have them read the most interesting article they find during the online keyword search, and write a one page annotated bibliography of it. Have students share in class a “best practice” regarding conflict management that they took away from this article.

## Presidential Election (A, I, C)

After the 2016 presidential election, scholars and journalists will be interpreting the results for a long time. This is an opportunity to apply many of the concepts from chapter 11 to the conflicts that divide us as a nation. Conversation about these divisions can be handled safely and courageously by using Fisher and Ury’s principles of negotiation, and the communication strategies explained in chapter 11 (differentiation, fractionation, and face saving).

Start by assigning a news report such as this:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/how-2016-election-exposed-america-s-racial-cultural-divides-n682306>

Then ask students to find two or three additional news articles from reputable sources explaining the different values and goals of the candidates. The focus should not be on how the candidates managed their campaigns, but on the issues that divided them.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/news/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world>

1. How did Clinton and Trump differ regarding their espoused beliefs and values? Compare one or two values.
2. How did Clinton and Trump differ regarding their goals for their presidency? Compare one or two goals from their platforms.
3. Were the candidates able to separate their opinions of one another from their opinions of the problems facing the United States? Find examples of how this was, or wasn’t done. How *could* it have been done?
4. The candidates held different positions on most issues. What interests did they have in common? Find an example or two.
5. In order to ameliorate some of the problems facing the United States, it helps to refrain from either-or thinking. Choose one of the topics that the candidates disagreed on and consider how government leaders (not the candidates) can work together and invent options for mutual gains.
6. Using the same topic as in #5, what objective criteria could be used to settle different interests in the problem?
7. How did the candidates differentiate themselves from each other? How clear were the differences to you?
8. In small groups, choose one of the problems that both candidates addressed (e.g. social security, immigration) and discuss how their different approaches to the problem could be fractionated, instead of framed as an all-or-nothing decision.
9. What face-saving actions did you see during and after the election from the candidates and other politicians?