

Running Head: Women and conflict

Experiencing conflict as a woman

Gina Perri

Master's Project

The University of Massachusetts Boston

Spring, 2002

Advisor: Susan Opatow Ph.D.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Susan Opotow, for her constant enthusiasm and support. She was crucial in facilitating my progress with this paper, without her I may never have been able to write more than one sentence. I am eternally grateful for the lessons she has bestowed upon me. Her knowledge of language, her sense of humor and her sincere appreciation for independent thought gave me a safe palate to paint with my own ideas.

I would also like to thank Steven Cannady for being patient and for so graciously allowing me to drive him insane with my worries and questions. All of the countless hours on the phone and shared emails about what I was finding and how to present it were priceless. Without his encouragement and love I never would have had this paper done on time. (And now, I promise to jump headfirst into our wedding plans.)

Thirdly, I would like to thank my housemates Anne Vargas-Prada and Gherta Hernandez-Palacios for all of their assistance. Having people so close experiencing the same mental blocks and thirst for breaks created a great working atmosphere. Having Anne available for round-the-clock consultation made everything seem feasible. Gherta's support made me feel like every sentence was an accomplishment.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the women who participated in my study. Their willingness to share their stories and be candid with me made this paper possible.

Contents

Preface.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	6
Literature Review	7
1) Conflict and Identity	7
2) Conflict Context	14
3) Conflict Process	18
4) Research critique	22
Chapter 2: Methods.....	25
Focus Group Pilots	25
One-on-on Interviews	27
Chapter 3: Results.....	30
Identity	32
Context	38
Process	42
Chapter 4: Discussion.....	47
References.....	55
Appendix.....	60

Preface

I'm just a girl, I'm just a girl in the world... That's all that you'll let me be.

-Gwen Stefani (1995)

I have had more estrogen in my body than testosterone my entire life. Being a woman is what I know best. I am also one of five children and a product of divorce; conflict is what I know second best.

I have been a mediator for five years and in that time have come to believe very deeply in the positive potential of conflict and the importance of guided conflict resolution processes. I am passionate about mediating and those passions lead me to the University of Massachusetts Boston to obtain a Master's Degree in Dispute Resolution.

While working toward my graduate degree I worked as a graduate assistant for Susan Opatow, PhD. Together, we designed and hosted women only focus groups. We noticed consistencies among the women's voices. It became evident that women's experiences with conflict are quite different from what I was reading about in my coursework.

I believe that women have been overlooked and undervalued throughout history. I wanted to do research on women, and that is what this paper is.

Abstract

There are holes in current conflict literature regarding women. The literature depicts a false understanding of what women's conflict is. Current literature is limited and only explores women's conflicts in marriage and work settings. Ten one-on-one interviews were conducted with women, utilizing a critical incident method and allowing the women's own voices to emerge. The interviews were then transcribed and coded. Analysis of the data showed strong similarities among the women. Prominent themes such as guilt, responsibility, and deligitimization emerged from the results. These data indicate that traditional definitions of conflict significantly overlook the intricacies of women's experiences; and that conflict resolution practitioners must reevaluate their approaches in order to find ways that can truly help women navigate through their conflicts.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Conflict is ubiquitous; it is an eight-letter word that touches everyone. Culture may contribute to the ways people define and approach conflicts but all people experience conflict (Brody, 1997; Pearson & Cooks, 1995). Scholars have tried to understand conflict and they insist that it has positive potential (Coser, 1956; Deutsch, 1973; Pondy, 1992; Thomas, 1993; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1993; Donnellon & Kolb, 1994; Bush & Folger, 1994). The past several decades have witnessed major implementations of conflict resolution practices in a variety of settings. Most people are aware of different approaches to conflict, both formal and informal. The intention behind the field of conflict resolution practitioners is a genuine desire to utilize conflict's potential to elicit positive change. The models of conflict intervention spring from some very basic beliefs about what conflict is.

Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur, when one party wants something that another party resists doing or giving, when there is a perceived divergence of interest, or when parties to conflict believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Deutsch, 1973; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1993). Coser (1956) defines 'conflict' as existing once a person sees an action against him or her as unjustified. A response to a conflict may not involve a visible action.

These definitions are silent about gender and therefore suggest that conflict is a gender-free construct and is experienced similarly by women and men. Recognizing that women and men are different leads to a logical conclusion that those differences lead them to experience life differently. Conflict literature does not differentiate. The

literature does not label situations as conflicts unless there is a struggle for “incompatible goals” (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1993). Over the past decade, however, behavioral, attitudinal, and physiological research has increasingly identified a number of gender disparities (Worrell, 1996).

Psychological research has exerted a considerable amount of time and effort highlighting the differences in men and women’s behaviors. We now know that women and men have different ways of talking (Pearson & Cooks, 1995; Cook-Huffman, 2000; Mulac & Bradac, 1995), expressing emotions (Shields, 1998; Mackey & O’Brien, 1998), and dealing with anger (Cupach & Canary, 1995). The “gender research” (Pearson & Cooks, 1995) that has been done shows the ways that women are not men. This study takes a more feminist approach to research and attempts to explain women’s experiences without a comparison to the other sex. Women exist independently of men and attempts to understand them do not need to include men. This is a study about women and conflict. What this study will answer is how women, in particular, experience and define their own conflicts, looking at conflict identity, context, and process.

This paper will begin with a discussion of prior research on conflict identity, context, and process then will present an empirical study on women and conflict.

Background

Identity, Gender, and Conflict

Having a penis rather than a vagina is a sex difference. Boys performing better than girls on math exams is a gender difference.

Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000)

A woman's depiction of herself correlates directly with how she acts in conflicts. By examining the variables that contribute to identity we can better understand the factors that shape women's experiences with conflict. Gender is an important variable when looking at women and conflict. Understanding gender makes it possible to look beyond the simple observation that women and men are different. Through a gendered lens we can begin to understand how women's identities are formed and influenced by the world around them.

Pearson and Cooks (1995) claim that researchers first began to differentiate between 'sex' and 'gender' in the 1970's. Before then all differences in women and men's behaviors were attributed to inherent characteristics due to their biological make-up. Today, gender is viewed as being socially constructed (Worell, 1996; Shields, 1998; Pearson & Cooks, 1995). Keashly (1994) explains that "behaviors attributed to men and women are a reflection of societal beliefs, expectations, and prescriptions for people based on biological distinctiveness" (p. 168). Shield (1998) also notes the importance of distinguishing between gender and sex. In her criticism of sex-difference based psychological research on emotions, she claims that any difference that has been found comparing women and men is a result of gender, not sex. How each person identifies and understands their gender roles directly shapes and determines his or her behaviors. Because conflict is a personal experience it is different for everyone. In order to look at how women experience it, it is necessary to understand how they experience themselves.

Social Identity. How people see themselves and what groups they feel they are a part of forms their social identity (Minow, 1997). Women exist first in a social category as a 'woman' and that category shapes how they act in conflicts (Cook-Huffman, 2000).

As members of society we all operate within a social construct, we determine our own set of morals based on what social identity we belong to and that ‘frames’ our conflict behaviors (Cook-Huffman, 2000). Women’s concern with always being nice influences their interactions in conflict situations. One’s social identity could cause women to monitor their actions and words in order to maintain the persona of being a nice person.

Role Assignment. Minow (1997) observes that identity is assigned in two ways. An individual can shape her own identity, but that same individual may be essentialized by others and identified in ways over which they do not have control. Being a woman places females in a category without a way out. Cook-Huffman (2000) explains the trap of being identified primarily as a woman, “it [being a woman] is a social categorization that is difficult to exit, or to choose not to be a part of, and when it is salient for others, it may or may not be salient for the women themselves” (p. 123).

Rosenweig (1991) suggests that women’s roles began to change in the early nineteenth century; “the years between 1880 and 1920 witnessed... women’s struggle to achieve autonomy and self-consciousness” (p. 5). Rosenweig’s study (1991) contributes an important component to women and conflict theory because it shows how young women’s aspirations to redefine themselves (and thus women in general) were met with strong opposition by other women, including their mothers. The article analyzes advice columns and old letters from those decades. Up until that point there had been a “continuity of expectation and experience” (p. 6) between mothers and daughters, which linked them together intimately. Periodicals at the time blamed mothers for any conflicts that were happening with their daughters and urged them to maintain close relationships with their daughters. One commentator stated, “There should be no one upon earth to

whom that daughter should feel so ready to go with every thought, every hope, every plan. If she does not, it is her mother's fault" (Jackson, 1905 in Rosenweig, 1991, p. 7).

Another commentator urged mothers to tell their daughters that she (the daughter) "was responsible for the happiness of others" (Rosenweig, 1991, p. 9). Women were expected to be concerned with others above all else. Femininity was associated with being "talkative, tactful, gentle, religious, neat, quiet, dependent, illogical and emotional" (Nevill & Damico, 1978). Women have been labeled the "care-givers" of society (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Women's identities have always been formed through relationships, "for women, identity is based not on separation and independence...but rather on the ability to grow and develop within a relationship" (Carr, Gilroy, & Sherman, 1996, p. 376).

Multiple Roles. Many researchers have looked at how women balance their roles and how that juggling act affects their lives and conflicts (Crosby, 1991; Tiedje, Wortman, Downey, Emmons, Biernat, & Lang, 1990; Jenkins, 1996; Nevill & Damico, 1974, 1977, 1978; Napholz, 2000). Identity for today's women does not come from only one source. Women have multiple roles, they are mothers, wives, students, and employees (Rostow, 1971) and sometimes those roles can be in conflict.

A study looking at the multiplicity of women's lives found that juggling does not guarantee conflict and that it may actually enhance a woman's life (Tiedje, 1990). Deutsch (1999) has claimed that there are major benefits for women when they work outside of the home, and have identities beyond being mothers. She notes that having multiple roles helps women establish realistic expectations for themselves, that no longer include being a "superhuman" (p.210). Steil (1997) concurs, citing that working mothers

report less negative stress from parenting than those who stay home. Working mothers have more power within their marriages and are happier (Steil, 1997).

Studies examining what women expect of themselves, and what it means for them to identify as a woman. One woman reported, “I think women feel obligated to save everything, to fix everything. And they feel guilty when they can’t do multiple roles. Some feel a little too guilty about it” (Napholz, 2000, p. 259).

Having multiple roles and responsibilities, however, does not guarantee conflict (Tiedje, et. al, 1990; Crosby, 1991; Rostow, 1971; Jenkins, 1996), but can emerge as a result of the individual’s self-expectations and perceptions (Carr et. al, 1996; Tiedje, et. al, 1990; Crosby, 1991; Rostow, 1971; Jenkins, 1996; Napholz, 2000). When women were asked, “Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel that your relationship with your children is affected by your career or your responsibilities at work?” (Tiedje, et. al, 1990, p 66), they reported that their roles were often a source of “enhancement” (p. 67) in their lives. Crosby (1991) noted, “juggling enhances physical as well as psychological health” (p. 16). Another study on role conflict separated women into two categories: self-defining or socially defined (Jenkins, 1996). Self-defining women were reported as having less role conflicts because they were less self-critical, were able to make realistic, attainable expectations for themselves, and asked for help when they needed it. The socially defined women were found to “assimilate to relationships and social roles, take fewer instrumental initiatives, reflect on rather than act on their internal experience, and see themselves as responding to events in a chaotic world” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 101). Two themes that have relevance to women’s conflicts are guilt and depression.

Guilt. Webster's dictionary defined guilt as, "a feeling of self-reproach from believing one has done a wrong" (1989, p. 303). The literature on conflict discusses women's high self-expectations and their struggle to balance several roles at once, but it avoids the issue of guilt. There are some exceptions. Napholz (2000) found that guilt was an issue that most of her participants reported, specifically at times in their lives when they were balancing multiple roles. Three different women talked about guilt:

[I] went through school when David was real young, so there is that *I should have been there to play with him, I should have, I should have.* [emphasis added]

Oh, *I need to do this thing. I have to do this thing, If I don't do this thing, I'm going to feel guilty,* and as I'm doing it, sometimes that feeling will go with me as I'm doing it and I'll wind up burning the dinner.

I wouldn't have time with my kids because I was working all the time and I had a babysitter who is my cousin and *she was like their mommy and when I would come home she would say, 'Oh, the baby did this for the first time today' and I'm like, 'Oh, stab me in the heart.'* It's like every time it was the first time she got to be there to experience it.

In a 1974 study on role conflict researchers asked thirty women to list any role conflicts they faced (Nevill and Damico, 1974). The data were then used as a pilot to develop an eight point Likert-type scale of common role conflicts for women. From the scale developed in the pilot, 518 women then ranked the eight categories from highest to least stressful. Nevill and Damico found that the "greatest role conflict for the women of today centers around her image of herself and that those areas that deal more directly with that central concept are more stressful" (1974, p. 743). Their data clearly illuminates that women in conflicts are very concerned with their own behaviors and responsibilities to those conflicts. The findings imply guilt as a significant component of women's conflict.

Little of the literature identified guilt as a component of women's conflicts. However, I see women's guilt as strongly shaping their self-identity and their actions, particularly in conflict. The women who were asked, "...how do you feel that your relationship with your children is affected by your career or your responsibilities at work?" (Tiedje, et. al, 1990, p. 66) and reported that role conflicts enhanced their lives, may have been influenced by the structuring of the question. If they answered that the relationship was suffering, they would be admitting responsibility, and would possibly feel guilty.

Depression. Studies on women and depression show a strong link between self-identity, guilt, depression and conflict (Carr, et. al, 1996; Jenkins, 1996; Sperberg & Stabb, 1998). Women are torn between what they want to do and what they should do. They sincerely want to be a "good wife" and "good mother," and they try. Femininity is evaluated on a woman's abilities to care and give. Any indication of concern for self over others causes a woman to be seen as failing to be a 'woman' (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Living up to societal expectations of women requires self-denial and self-sacrifice, which presents a conflict for women. Women learn to silence their own desires for fear of being labeled negatively or abandoned (Carr, et. al, 1996).

Women's desire to maintain a positive image in other people's eyes causes them to blame themselves and to avoid conflict, which locks in their anger and leads to depression because they discover that their needs will never be met (Carr, et. al, 1996). Research on depression show women's tendencies of self-sacrificing in order to maintain their ideal image of who they believe they should be. Nevill and Damico (1974; 1977; 1978) suggest a woman's greatest conflict is with herself.

Conflict Context

Conflicts can happen anywhere. The literature on women's conflict however primarily concentrates on conflicts within the home, then deals secondly with work situations. This limited exploration of where conflict exists for women in literature on women's conflicts is problematic.

In a search of two academic databases, PsychInfo and Sociological Abstracts, dating from the early 1900's to the present, the term "conflict" matched in the descriptor field of 19,562 papers. "Women and conflict" overlapped in only 1,196 of those papers. Using the themes from the literature, I continued the search overlapping "conflict and women and marriage," and yielded 3,847 results. A Second combination of "conflict, women, and work," produced 1,901 articles. Thus the literature focuses on conflict as a marital component as compared with work in a two to one ratio in these two databases alone.

Marriage. One of the most consistent features of the literature on women and conflict is that the data have been collected from women who are married (Napholz, 2000; Rostow, 1971; Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981; Mackey & O'Brien, 1998; Cupach & Canary, 1995; Tiedje, et. al, 1990). Research has taken a relational approach to women's conflicts, looking primarily at heterosexual marital relationships to examine how women experience conflict. It has been found that the women who avoid conflict are the ones who report being the least happy (Mackey & O'Brien, 1998). Another study found that women who blame themselves for conflicts within the marriage are more happy than those who blame their husbands (Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981). Together, these data would suggest that the only way for a woman to be happy (and conflict free) is

by confronting conflicts through a dialogue with her husband in which she blames herself for the situation.

The Sex-stereotype Hypothesis proposed by Cupach and Canary (1995) states that women will be calm, nurturing, kind, and patient in conflicts. The hypothesis is shaped around societal expectations for the appropriate ways for women to behave, concluding that their “womanly” characteristics will carry over into their conflicts. Thus, because women are naturally “nice” they will be delicate or pleasing in conflict situations as well. The literature seems to suggest that the Sex-Stereotype Hypothesis is correct and should be followed for all women in conflict to find happiness. Yet, in contrast to their own hypothesis, Cupach and Canary (1995) found that women are more verbally aggressive than their husbands in discussing things about which they disagree. Women admitted to making demands, and insulting and intimidating their husbands. Wives reported, “I criticized an aspect of his personality”, “I shouted at him”, “I used threats” (p. 244). Their results were surprising, contradicted the Sex-Stereotype Hypothesis, and indicate that women behave differently than expected in conflicts.

The relational focus of the literature on women’s conflicts continues by investigating what its like for women to balance multiple roles. The “women’s question” (Rostow, 1971) is defined as how the woman herself will juggle her career and her duties at home. Rostow (1971) suggests that women are lucky if their husbands help with maintaining the house and taking care of the children and that if a wife is unhappy in the marriage it is her own fault. She places the blame of unhappiness on the woman, for not figuring out what she wanted before getting married (i.e., family size, career, and her husband’s characteristics). Rostow suggests that a woman’s marital dissatisfaction is the

woman's own fault for marrying the wrong man. While it is important to look at conflict within marriage in order to help couples successfully navigate conflicts it is careless to present conclusions about all women, and about women's conflict in general, from the standpoint of an unidentified wife. Research on women and conflict needs to look deeper than how the 'good wife' fights with her husband.

Work. Studies that have focused on women's disputes in the workplace have found that women handle and approach conflict situations in two ways. First women act in a relational way, rather than adversarially, conscientiously communicating with others in order to maintain good relationships (Kolb, & Coolidge, 1993). Women are more likely to try to make everything "nice" and comfortable than to create animosity and destroy relationships in the work setting. Secondly, women deal with their conflicts internally and do not utilize the dispute resolution systems that are in place.

Tannen (1990) explains that by the age of five girls view themselves as part of a community and use language that iterates their membership within the community. Girls are not likely to give single handed orders when assigning tasks, rather they will say things beginning with "Lets (build a house)" or "We (gotta clean them first)." Viewing others around them as part of their community, and wanting to maintain harmony in that atmosphere is a mentality that stays with women into adulthood. The work of Kolb and Coolidge (1993) concurs, explaining that women in the workplace have a "relational view of others" (p. 264). This inclusive attitude causes women be sensitive to needs and to understand the emotions of everyone involved.

Women's approaches to others in the workplace have been gaining recognition and advancing more women into higher positions. Newsday reported that 44 percent of

organizational managers were now women and that they were placed in those positions because of their ability to communicate effectively and build more cohesion in the workplace (Newsday, New York, NY, February 3, 2002). Still, women's ability to empathize with others in the workplace may also have its drawbacks.

Women's communication tendencies can present difficulties in work-place negotiations. Work-place negotiations are often distributive rather than integrative. In distributive negotiations there is a "winner" and a "loser," both sides are in competition. Each side is strongly pitted against the other and a strong battle ensues in order to determine who gets what (Lewicki, Minton, Saunders, & Irwin, 1997). Women can be at a real disadvantage in that setting when their tendency is to be integrative (Lax & Sebenius, 1986). What is expected of a distributive negotiator strongly contradicts women's behavioral tendencies. Her "womanhood" is at stake in her behavior in the negotiation, she must find a way to allow her true voice to come out and still get what she wants and needs (Kolb & Coolidge, 1993). Integrative negotiation strategies, in contrast, involve collaboration where each side openly discusses what they need and problem solves together, as a team.

Women in the workplace face conflicts daily. These conflicts can be highly personal and have a lasting effect on the woman. Many organizations have internal dispute resolution systems in place to assist employees with disputes; but because of the ways that women experience and define their conflicts they are least likely to utilize those systems (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1991). Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach (1991) conducted 60 interviews with people in the workplace and found consistent reports among the women. First, their data emphasized the complexity of conflict for women. The women's

stories told of, “highly detailed episodes of intricate interpersonal relationships, which resembled ‘hot-houses’ of feelings” (p. 190). Second, women focused on their own responsibilities in the conflicts they were facing. Third, they minimized their conflicts by not addressing them or by convincing themselves that they were insignificant. They reported that many of the women were hesitant to label their situations as ‘harassment’ or ‘discrimination’ because they “seemed to be unsure whether it was really occurring or whether they might be at fault in part themselves” (p. 191). Finally, women do not use open-door policies because they do not want to stir things up or be labeled. Formal dispute resolution channels are not viewed as a resource. They also found “ample evidence of a lack of sympathy...for the personality conflicts that women workers are more likely to face” (p. 193).

Research on women and work conflicts begins to answer the question about how women experience and define conflict. Through the studies on workplace disputes it is shown that women work to collaborate and want to maintain harmony, that they internalize their conflicts, but they do not seek assistance in dealing with conflict. Consistently struggling to ‘be nice,’ women suffer through their conflicts alone.

Conflict Process

Once a conflict is realized there is a response to it; a plan is created; and finally an action is taken. The process of dealing with conflict is different for everyone. Literature on conflict patterns finds similarities and differences in how women and men respond to conflict (Sternberg & Soriano, 1984; Keashly, 1994; Cupach & Canary, 1995;). Some researchers claim that the differences found are artifacts of such variables as the nature of the relationship, beliefs about conflict, age of subjects, and the research design (Keashly,

1994; Shields, 1998). Other researchers argue that there are significant differences in the ways men and women behave which are largely due to gender:

Given that men and women act similarly about 99% of the time, the presumption that sex differences affect most social behavior is clearly unfounded. However, given the conceptual correspondence between sex stereotypes and generic approaches to managing conflict, it is possible that conflict is one domain of behavior wherein sex differences remain robust (Cupach & Canary, 1995, p. 234).

A common response to conflict is anger. Studies have found that women in heterosexual relationships are found to express more anger and be more aggressive than men (Brody, 1997; Cupach & Canary, 1995). Other studies have found women and men's experiences of anger to be similar (Averill, 1982). The design of the study has a direct influence on the level of anger a subject feels and displays. Studies that utilize sex-sensitive anger provoking scenarios were able to report more accurate comparison responses (Cupach & Canary, 1995).

Women may also have a tendency to delegitimize their conflicts (Carr, et. al, 1995; Cook-Huffman, 2000). When something is seen as legitimate it is understood and accepted as real and true. Delegitimizing happens as a result of an evaluation of an action or thought that has been found to be false or not real. Women self-evaluate and show tendencies to devalidate their experiences and minimize their conflicts by convincing themselves that they are simply over-reacting and that the conflicts are insignificant. Doing so delegitimizes their thoughts, feelings, and actions. By responding to a conflict situation with the mentality that one has no right to feel the way they feel or, that they are being selfish, silly, or petty (Opotow & Khaminwa, 2000), the conflict gets minimized and may never get addressed. The delegitimization process can also lead women to respond to conflicts with self-blame and criticism.

Once a conflict has been realized the individuals involved must decide what to do about it; some type of conflict plan is developed. People have been noted to act on a continuum of various conflict styles (Thomas, 1967). Thomas developed a categorization of five conflict styles and how well they address the concerns of each party in conflict (Table 1).

Table 1 -Thomas Conflict Styles

Conflict Style	Definition	Outcome (For each party's concerns)
Competing	Competing means trying to win over the other party	Competing shows great concern for self and little or no concern for the other party
Collaborating	Collaborating means working toward the full benefit of both you and the other party	Collaborating shows a high level of concern for yourself and the other party
Compromising	Compromising involves a combination of mutual sacrifice and mutual benefit for each party	Compromise shows some concern for self and some concern for the other party
Accommodating	Accommodating means giving in to the other party	Accommodating shows concern for the other party while sacrificing your own concerns
Avoiding	Avoiding involves not addressing the issues	Avoiding shows little concern for your concerns or the concerns of the other party

As some of the literature suggests there are many variables that go into a person's conflict plan. The relationship between the participants and the setting each directly influence conflict strategy. As discussed above, identity and image may contribute to the ways people choose to act. A woman who does not want to be seen as a "bad wife" may

decide to keep quiet about her complaints. In work situations women are least likely to utilize dispute resolution systems in their conflict plans (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1991; Keashly, 1994). Women in work-related conflicts commonly plan to avoid the person or situation that is causing the conflict (Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1991).

Wives have been found to be more confrontational than their avoidant husbands (Mackey & O'Brien, 1998). Women have been found to use more community oriented actions (using inclusionary language and presenting tasks as group activities) and men more competitive ones (using singular language and assigning individual orders) (Cook-Huffman, 2000; Tannen, 1990). Studies of conflict actions, however look at conflict predominately from an interpersonal perspective and only explains actions that are visible to the human eye and audible to the human ear; there is no scrutiny of the private process of conflict for individuals.

Assumptions About Emotion. The first conflict action that takes place is an emotional response. Shields (1998) reviewed psychological studies on emotion and noted that women understand and use emotion more and report higher frequencies of emotional displays than men do.

Much attention has been given to anger and the varying displays and responses to it from both men and women (Averill, 1982; Brody, 1997; Campbell, 1993; Cupach & Canary, 1995; Shields, 1998). Anger seems to be the standard emotion associated with conflict in the literature. Although anger is commonly thought of as a likely response to conflict there are many other emotions that people could be experiencing: fear, anxiety, concern, dejection, distress, embarrassment, nervousness, and others (Rosenburg, 1999).

Research on emotion has made little attempt to name the emotions that women are experiencing.

Methods of research on women and conflict

Current scholarship on women and conflict is helpful because it identifies important variables in women's conflicts. Methodologically, however, this body of work is characterized by experimental demand characteristics and the utilization of hypothetical conflict scenarios.

Demand Characteristics. Research studies have a number of demand characteristics that may affect the way women discuss conflict (Rosenthal, 1963). Studies have not allowed the participants to define the conflicts that are relevant to them, nor have they examined emotions that women feel, or the ways women respond to conflicts.

Rosenthal (1963) found that the experimenter has a large influence over the responses given in research studies. Subjects' ratings of perceived professionalism in the researcher directly correlated with their own malleability. Even when the researcher had no intention of skewing the data, the results showed an impact; "the more a person is able to influence others subtly, the more he seems able to make others carriers of his subtle influence" (p. 280). Rosenthal's research shows the need for heightened awareness to be applied and calculated in research involving human subjects.

An issue to be examined in the current research is the degree to which the study design elicits or prevents self-regulating responses, where the subject behaves as they believe the researcher wants them to (Tiedje, et. al, 1990). In a heterosexual study, where the woman and man are being compared, it is obvious that each person is a representative of her or his own sex. The wives know that to the researchers they are the "woman."

Being categorized as a woman may lead them to behave in a sex-stereotyped way. The women may also be influenced by self-imposed pressure of having to accurately represent all women, instead of just themselves. As Worell (1996) explains, “behavior displayed in public may reflect the actor’s beliefs about gender-congruent behavior and the anticipated consequences of violating these socially gendered expectations” (p. 475). Society may have already conditioned the woman to give a “correct” answer.

Hypothetical conflict stories utilized. A second problematic variable in the design of research on women and conflict is that the conflict scenario is presented to the participants, then their reactions to that conflict are analyzed and assumed to be representative of all women’s conflicts. Typically, women participants in these studies are asked to respond to hypothetical conflict situations, which the researcher may assume are relevant to women or are “typical” women’s conflicts. Using standard conflict scenarios, however assumes that all people label conflicts similarly. Providing the conflict context is limiting because it privileges the researcher’s assumptions about conflict over those of the women participants. Study design confines women’s voice and does not allow an opportunity for women’s definitions of their own conflicts to emerge.

Opotow & Khaminwa (2000) claim, “conflict is sensitive to the contingencies of gender. As it is experienced and waged by women, conflict is more likely to be hidden and unnamed, waged in a manner that disadvantages female protagonists, and to be resolved informally, if at all” (p. 8). Thus, presenting women with a hypothetical, synthetic conflict situation and forcing them to discuss their feelings about it is not an accurate way to deduce how women experience and define conflicts. Essentially asking women “How would you fight this fight?” instead of whether they would fight the fight

at all, why or why not, and if so, how, does not offer information about what a woman would actually do.

Women's responses to conflict have limited explanation in the literature because of the ways it was tested. The narrow parameters of how and where the studies define conflict, and the effects of study designs present an image of women in conflict that is incomplete, inaccurate, and may not truly represent women. In addition, conflict settings beyond spousal relationships and work scenarios get overlooked. The data presented does not represent all women. Articles rarely reported demographic information on the women involved in the study. They do not report participants' age, ethnicity, and life-status, thus, conclusions about women's behaviors are generalizations that overlook the intersectionalities of women's identities. In sum, women's voices have not been allowed to emerge.

Chapter 2

Methods

My approach to research on conflict as it is defined and experienced in women's lives is feminist in that it recognizes gender as an essential category of analysis (Worell, 1996; Kimmel & Crawford, 1999). I examined women's views of conflict through pilot focus groups and individual interviews. The design was non-directive and qualitative in order to assure that participants' concerns and understandings about conflict developed spontaneously.

Pilot Focus Group

To understand what women had to say about conflict: I conducted three focus groups in collaboration with Susan Opatow, Beckie Peyton, Anne Vargas-Prada, and Mendi Njonjo. These groups explored the meaning of conflict for women.

1. Flyers stating, "UMB [University of Massachusetts Boston] WOMEN: Let It Out! Come to a discussion on women, by women and about women" were placed throughout the university. The flyers listed the date, time and place for the focus group, no other details were mentioned.
2. One of the university's female newspaper reporters saw the flyer and wrote an article in the school paper titled "Let What Out?" The article questioned a need for women to "get together and bitch" and commented that the "Battle of the sexes was our mother's war." (Appendix) The author did not attend the focus group, but her article highlights some common perceptions about women complaining. For me personally, the article helped me to understand the value of this research. This reporter had "explored feminist thought and came out on the

- other side,” and therefore did not see a need for women to talk exclusively among themselves.
3. Eighteen women, ranging in ages from 18 to 66, attended the focus group. Each woman was asked to sign consent forms and were asked on tape for their permission to record the session.
 4. The focus group began with a brainstorm, in which participants were invited to give their personal definitions of conflict. After the brainstorm each woman took a turn describing a recent conflict. In a debriefing session at the conclusion, participants expressed relief and excitement and urged that similar focus groups be convened in the near future. The session lasted one and a half hours and was tape-recorded and transcribed.

The positive responses from the women prompted two more focus groups: one was centered on “guilt” and the second centered on “women-to-women conflicts.” Flyers were hung throughout the university inviting women to attend (there was no requirement to attend all three sessions). Fifteen women attended each of these two sessions. The same procedures were followed as in the first session, each lasted one and a half hours, and was tape-recorded and transcribed.

The Interviews

To further examine women and conflict, I conducted ten one-on-one interviews. I wanted to take a “bottom up” approach to the research and allow the subjects to tell me about conflict, instead of me directing them (Merrick, 1999).

1. Flyers posted around the university asked people to participate in a one-time, one-hour interview for a research project and directing them to call me for details.
2. Over the course of one month I scheduled and held ten interviews. When participants called they were asked questions about their demographics (gender, age, education level, and living arrangement) over the phone. I accepted all women in the order in which they responded. I explained to every participant, over the phone, that I was a graduate student, and that the purpose of the study was to learn about what conflicts people faced. They were then told that the interview would be tape-recorded, that it would be confidential and that they would be asked to describe a recent conflict to me. Every woman that I spoke with agreed to those requirements and were then instructed to meet me at the campus coffee-shop.
3. I conducted one-on-one interviews with ten women, asking them to describe a recent conflict. The average age of the participants was 24, and the majority were undergraduate and graduate university students. Demographic data, such as age, ethnicity and living arrangements are summarized in Table 2 (p.30). The interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face in order to help the women feel more relaxed so they would be best able to disclose personal information (Creswell, 1994). The average interview time lasted forty-five minutes.

4. Each interview was held in a closed, private room with only myself and the interviewee present. I went over the consent forms with each participant and asked them to read through it on their own and sign it. Next, they were asked to complete the Thomas-Kilmann Questionnaire (Appendix) while I set up the tape-recorder. The beginning process took approximately ten minutes.
5. Once the participant finished writing I asked if they were ready to start and if I could begin taping, with their consent I pressed 'record' and began. I asked them to "describe a recent conflict." The women were not given an explanation of what a "conflict" was, and when asked, were told that they could interpret the question however they saw fit and that there was no wrong answer. It was decided that only minimal information would be given to the subjects in order to avoid demand characteristics as much as possible (Creswell,1994).
6. The interview design utilized oral history methods: subjects were given as much time as they wanted and were interrupted only to get clarification on something they had mentioned. I wanted to allow the women to describe what they thought was important and relevant for themselves, rather than lead them in a specific direction. They were not told until the conclusion of their interviews that my study was specifically looking at women. My list of probes were used only when needed, when their response was unclear or when the issues had not been directly or indirectly mentioned by the interviewee.

7. At the end of every interview the participant was debriefed. They were told that my study was specifically looking at women and the ways women experience and define conflict. I explained that talking about conflicts can surface emotions and that the University Counseling Center was available should they need to talk more about their conflict.

Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. The data was then coded in categories of 1) *identity*: how did the interviewee see herself, what did it mean for her to be a woman, how did she perceive others were seeing her; 2) *context*: what was the conflict about, who was it with, what happened; and 3) *process*: how was the conflict handled.

Chapter 3

Results

Interviews were conducted to explore how women define and experience conflict. Through their stories I hoped to better understand the meaning of conflict for women. Specifically, I wanted to understand how women see themselves in conflicts, what settings they experience conflicts in, and what actions they take to navigate through their conflicts.

Table 2 – Participant Demographics

	Primary Conflict with	Age Range	Ethnicity	Education Level
JANE	Client at work	25-27	Caucasion	Graduate School Completed
MEGAN	Husband	25-27	Caucasian	Currently in Graduate School
OLIVIA	Male Friend	25-27	African	Currently an Undergraduate
COLETTE	Self	22-24	Bi-racial	Currently an Undergraduate
EMILY	Maid of Honor	28-30	Caucasian	Undergraduate completed
SERA	Husband	22-24	Bi-racial	Currently an Undergraduate
ISABELLE	Sister	22-24	Asian	Currently an Undergraduate
JOSLYN	Professor	25-27	Caucasian	Currently in Graduate School
ADRIANA	Boss	19-21	Caucasian	Currently an Undergraduate
BELINDA	Parents	22-24	Indian	Currently in Graduate School

* All names have been changed to protect confidentiality

The ten women participants ranged in age from 19 to 30. Their ethnicities included Caucasian, African, African-American, Native American, Hispanic, Asian, and

Indian. Education levels ranged from undergraduates to completed graduate education. Four of the women were either engaged or married. Their living arrangements varied from spouses, to family members, to non-related roommates. All of the conflict's they spoke about were interpersonal; none discussed a group conflict. Sixty percent of the conflicts discussed were with people outside of the women's homes.

At the start of each interview the women were asked to complete the Thomas-Kilmann (TK) conflict questionnaire. Based on her answers, each woman was categorized by which conflict style she was most likely to employ. (See Table 3)

Table 3 – Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Results

	Jane	Megan	Olivia	Colette	Emily	Sera	Isabelle	Joslyn	Adriana	Belinda
Compete	5	<u>11</u>	4	1	<u>9</u>	3	6	2	3	9
Collaborate	5	10	<u>7</u>	8	5	8	6	8	5	2
Compromise	5	3	6	<u>10</u>	6	<u>11</u>	6	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	4
Avoid	7	0	<u>7</u>	4	3	2	2	8	<u>8</u>	<u>11</u>
Accommodate	<u>8</u>	6	6	7	7	5	<u>8</u>	2	6	4

Style assigned to bolded and underlined.

(n= amount of times out of 30 the style was chosen)

Analysis of the TK. The TK results show clearly that there is no one style that these participants used. The largest consistency in first choice conflict style was compromise, with four women being assigned to it. The least likely style to be used first was collaboration, with only one woman assigned. Two women were evenly matched in two different styles. Olivia was found to be most likely to either collaborate or avoid, and Adriana results tied between compromise and avoid. The point variation between first assigned and second styles was two and less for ninety percent of the women. The small

point variation is important to notice because it shows that there is no clearly dominant style for any of the women. For half of the women the second assigned style was collaboration.

Identity

The images that each woman carried of herself came out through her story. The women's uniqueness and similarities were displayed in the ways they defined themselves and in their self-imposed expectations. The women's sense of identity surfaced in their descriptions of strength, self-expectation, visibility, responsibility, and emotion. Two of the women volunteered that they didn't experience much conflict. Joslyn said, "I think it's [conflict] pretty foreign for me, I think I probably am pretty unconflictual." Adriana, remarked, "I don't usually get into a lot of conflicts... a lot of times when I hear people arguing I just don't take them seriously."

Strength and self-expectation. Strength and self-expectation were present in each description. Half of the women commented proudly on their abilities to address conflicts head-on.

MEGAN: I view myself as sort of very, um what do you call non-conflict avoidant? I don't know, direct, get to the point, say what's on my mind, say what's on my heart immediately.

EMILY: I'm I can be pretty, you know I'm pretty much the opposite of that [holding conflicts in], I would definitely um, get it out, you know and sometimes in an abrupt way where I'm definitely abrasive towards people. But for me, I'd rather do that and then apologize and be like well I'm sorry if that came out the wrong way, but then it's out and it's out.

ISABELLE: I get in people's face when I yell at them.

Other self-identified labels given were: friendly, successful, peaceful, emotional, stubborn and giving: "I'm just the kind of person that kind of goes all out for people, um,

overboard, I totally go overboard with people in my life and do a lot for the people I care about” [Emily], “my mother used to tell me, when I jump into a thing I jump in wholeheartedly. I put forth a lot of myself, I, I compromise, I sacrifice. That’s just me, I go out of my way for people” [Colette].

Ironically, these self-assigned, positive identities fueled self-criticism for how they behaved in conflicts. Megan criticized herself strongly for being direct and tough with her husband, labeling herself as “manipulative” and “evil.” She felt she was going against the ideals of being a “good wife” simply because she had a conflict with her husband.

MEGAN: I feel like it causes me some anxiety because I feel like I’m just, I’m not being fair to him and because he is, he’s such a transparent person, like he really is like, defenseless in a lot of ways, because it doesn’t occur to him to put on defenses. Like he’s just this honest... and he’s transparent and like what you see is what you get, because of that I feel like what -- sort of -- you know, -- damage am I doing to my poor husband.

It is not always easy to live up to who you think you are. In the women’s discussion of their identities, they also talked about who they wanted to be and there was some contradiction here as well. Colette identified herself as someone who approaches conflict saying, “I don’t believe in getting upset at someone and not telling them why you’re upset. That’s foolish because they can’t read your mind.” Later in the interview, as she discussed expectations that she has for herself, she stated several times that she wished she didn’t show emotions, “I wish I could like tuck my feelings away so it, they, it doesn’t show, or as a matter of fact so that they don’t affect me.” Throughout the interview, she struggled between whom she identifies as, a strong person who will not allow herself to be taken advantage of, and who she desires to be, an emotionless person.

“If I get mad that’s like admitting that I have my feelings, that’s like wearing my emotions on my face. And I don’t want to do that” [Colette].

Ninety percent of the women also expressed the importance of finding ways to stay calm in their conflicts with other people. There was a theme as each woman identified ways she thought she should be behaving. Each expressed a desire to be ‘better:’ a better daughter, a better employee, a better wife, a better friend, and a better student. Megan, expressed her expectation of improving, “I don’t think I can become that perfect human, but I think, um in many ways I can sort of learn to make better decisions for me and Kevin [husband], learn to appreciate his decision making more, learn how to be less manipulative and how to um, I don’t know, like gain respect for the decisions that he makes.” Belinda, too, expressed an expectation she places on herself in her conflict with her parents, “I know my reaction is going to have an effect on their reaction so at least if I can keep my cool in it, then that’s just one thing better for the situation, even if they’re not keeping their cool.” The women consistently placed strong burdens on themselves to make the conflicts less devastating, or even to banish them completely.

Visibility and negativity. Visibility was also an issue the women expressed in their conflicts. Each woman hypothesized that other people involved, or bystanders to the conflicts, were viewing them negatively. Not one of the women interviewed expressed any confidence that others would see their own feelings as legitimate. Jane’s conflict involved being sexually harassed by a client that her law firm was trying to impress. She discussed visibility as directly influencing her responses to his offenses,

JANE: I’m more concerned with my image among my peers and these people who hold my being employed in their hands and hold my getting work and my opportunity to interact with clients, those that have control over my destiny, I’m more interested in how they feel about it [the clients remarks].

Jane felt violated. In her mind she was harassed. But how she wanted other people to see her forced her to minimize the client's crudeness and to literally laugh off the event. She openly joked with her supervisors about the situation, deliberately trying to minimize her discomfort, "I am trying to have a game face about it and be like the boys, letting this roll off like water off a duck's back... I am also afraid that they're gonna be like 'Fema-nazi,' worried about sexual harassment, worried about these feminist issues." Concerns about visibility proved a strong influence on the actions the women took in their conflicts and in the shaping of the opinions they had of themselves.

Responsibility. Guided by their chosen and ideal identities, the women also showed a tendency to place responsibility for the conflicts on themselves. Ninety percent of the participants spent some time during the interview trying to explain how they had contributed to either creating or maintaining the conflict. They seemed to believe that the conflict was their fault. They openly struggled with what they could be doing to resolve them, or what they should have done to avoid them. The volunteered, disapproving self-reflection and attention that each woman gave to her actions continued the themes of self-criticism and guilt that were displayed across the interviews.

SERA: I always worry about that, I worry about pushing him [her husband] too far, it's like a balance for me between like what are my goals and my needs and what are um, his, you know because part of my goals and needs is for us to you know, be together as a family and us to be happy, for him to be happy, but part of them are individual things that might compete with you know, what makes things easy for him. Um, so I have to balance that, I try not to push him too hard

ISABELLE: I should stop yelling at her, I know that. The thing is, I should control my temper, I can't control my temper around her, I don't know why, she just makes me very mad.

EMILY: She really failed on a lot of levels, I feel like. I mean not just with that, with a lot of different things. Um, but I mean then again, I never really clearly

communicated to her what I wanted from her.

BELINDA: That's the conflict I'm in basically is how do I, how do I make sure that I'm happy and I've satisfied all my needs and some how keep my parents happy and satisfy their needs when our needs are so completely different.

MEGAN: Maybe this is part of my personality flaw is that I'm just like anticipating like what he's gonna say, and I know that he doesn't argue in the way that I argue, like so its really, I think not fair for me to, to sort of go right at the throat with him, because he doesn't rally have the defense mechanisms.

JANE: I think the conversation was too sexualized and that I need to avoid that, because as the only woman I'm the only one that's really gonna have negative repercussions for.

JOSLYN: Part of the tension is just me like not taking what she's saying seriously, or not being open to taking what she's saying seriously or not um, you know, I find like just even trying to make a connection with her in class, when she is saying something, it's like I don't really want to make eye-contact with her and I don't really want to and I know that is just kind of me being stubborn. And so I'm wondering why the kinds of negative like crappy emotions, why I'm harboring them. Cause it'd be easier just to forget about it.

Emotion. As was expected, the women also talked about the way they felt about what was happening. Each of the women offered lists of various emotions they were feeling as a result of their conflicts. The feelings stated expressed anger, stress, frustration, fear, disappointment, anxiety, tension, pain, nuisance, regret, satisfaction, and discontent. None of the women were directly asked to describe their emotions, but all but one, intertwined their narrative with descriptions of how she felt. Sera, was the exception. In her interview she remained pragmatic, and somewhat removed from her emotions. The conflict she discussed was on-going between her and her husband regarding whether she was allowed to purse her Bachelor's Degree full-time. The context of the conflict was very important to her and may be what caused her to be so dispassionate.

SERA: I would call it maybe a logical process, because you're, you're not just experiencing an argument emotionally but you're trying to look you know, [at] what's happening and how could I problem solve. But um, but you have to

use, I mean it's not like you know, like solving a math problem... yeah, like I would call it maybe like, you know both intuitive because whatever you're dealing with you know, a human being, you're trying, or two human beings, and you're trying to figure out, you know what's going on for these people and also like I guess logical, or maybe analytical, you're trying to analyze the problem that you're having. So, yeah, so that you can solve it. Um, cause yeah, it's not good to have unsolved problems in a relationship.

Feeling strongly about what was happening did not mean that the women would express those emotions to the other person involved. They remained considerate of the other, and continued to censor themselves.

EMILY: I would get to the point with her where I would be so angry that I would, you know rather than, cause I just knew it would just be a bad conversation so I would just not have it, you know or have it to a very superficial level because I wasn't able to have a big fight with her, I just didn't want that.

There is ample evidence to support that conflict shapes identity and identity shapes conflict for women. Each woman spent considerable time reflecting on her own responsibilities to the conflicts. "I need to try to get on the right track for myself in relating to him, and then only after I do that will I see sort of our decision making and conflict sort of resolution to be smoother and sort of happier" [Megan]. The women held themselves up to idealized standards and strived to be "better" in the eyes of others and themselves. In a segment of Jane's interview it becomes obvious that even though she was sexually harassed, she saw herself as responsible:

JANE: So I don't feel like I was dressed inappropriately, but I wonder if rolling with the punches and sinking to his rudeness

RESEARCHER: if that was a good thing?

JANE: if that was bad thing.

RESEARCHER: a bad thing?

JANE: yeah, because at first I was like ok, I'll just keep the conversation going, because the two guys from [her firm] they were like ugh! They didn't know what

to do with it, and in an immediate sense, I think it was good, but I need to either get out of the conversation immediately after that or move on.

Context

Each woman held different beliefs and definitions for “conflict.” The women spoke about how conflicts played out in different settings. They also suggested that hidden, underlying conflicts were contributing to the dynamics in the scenario they discussed. And, unexpectedly, laughter surfaced as an important component of conflict.

Conflict definition. The women presented definitions of conflict that went beyond disputes between two people over incompatible goals. Some spoke of conflict as something that happened within them, only labeling something as a “conflict” once they realized they were struggling with it internally.

BELINDA: When I feel angry or irritated, um, I like I don’t know how to deal with it, I don’t know how to deal with the situation, I don’t know what to do. That’s when like, that’s how I know. Like when I feel these things that’s when I know I’m in like a conflict.

COLETTE: I guess it’s a bit of confusion cause it’s like obviously you can relate and I understand both sides or else it wouldn’t be a conflict in the first place...obviously when you have a conflict you obviously see both sides of it. Otherwise there wouldn’t be a conflict, you’d know what’s right and what’s wrong, not right and wrong but what you should do or shouldn’t do.

Others talked about conflict as existing only in the aftermath of a disagreement. For Joslyn, conflict is defined by the presence of tension, and how much she thinks about the situation after the incident happened.

JOSLYN: To me, I think conflict is when it becomes more than a disagreement, or more than a heated discussion, it’s when tension still lingers, and I feel like it is a conflict between us because nothing was resolved, so it’s like there’s a confrontation and then nothing, you know nothing’s kind of settled because of what happened.

Adriana began her interview saying, “I don’t usually get into a lot of conflicts.” She continued on explaining that she doesn’t take people seriously when they are arguing. Adriana’s definition of when conflict exists highlights the issue of importance [of the issue at hand] in determining how the situation gets categorized. For Adriana, conflict is about expressing ideas and getting what you need.

ADRIANA: Trying to at least let people know your point. Like you don’t need to persuade them, but that’s when it’s good [conflict], is if both sides realize that they’re not trying to change each other’s minds unless there is like a goal, like if my manger said like, I don’t have time to give you your raise and I said well I want a raise that wouldn’t be like the end of it, it would have to go somewhere, in that kind of conflict. But I guess like a conflict of ideology or something with the Watermark [Artist’s compilation book], that’s different, like you can’t come to a conclusion really unless people are willing to be wrong.

Conflict context and relationships. The women talked about conflicts in all kinds of relational settings. The characters of the conflict stories ranged from parents, to male friends, to clients, to husbands, to employers, to female friends, to strangers, to siblings, to teachers and finally, to within the women themselves. That is, although the women identified other parties in their conflicts, their focus largely remained on themselves. The conflicts seemed to consume the women’s psyche, regardless of how they were dealing with it publicly. If they outwardly belittled the conflicts, by laughing them off or minimizing them to others, through their interviews it was obvious that they had not forgotten about the conflicts on an internal level. The conflicts remained prominent and unresolved in their private thoughts, regardless of public declarations they had made about them. Each of the women’s descriptions demonstrated how conflicts became “ a monster in our heads” [Sera].

Belinda’s conflict story told of her parents pressuring her to get engaged and married to a man of their choosing. The discussion of who and when Belinda would

marry had been continuing for months. She expressed how she felt to her parents, and what she wanted. From an outsider, the conflict looks like it's happening between two parents and a daughter, but Belinda's description shows that she is experiencing the conflict primarily within her self:

BELINDA: I think a lot happened internally ... like I don't want to deal with this...that's how this conflict usually goes, it's a lot of um, it's more internal I think and like...sometimes like very little will be said, but the impact of what was said will be like so big...so it's just kind of a lot of frustration, inside of me that I can't be open with them and that when this topic comes up I can't tell them what's going on. So inside it's like as I hear my mom saying whatever she's saying all these thoughts are running through my mind...I feel crappy, I'm like, oh man, I'm such a failure, I'm disappointing my parents.

Hidden conflicts. In seventy percent of the women's narratives underlying, hidden conflicts emerged, which were contributing to or influencing their situations. The women's hidden conflicts were existing components of their present or past lives that were affecting the way that they thought about and responded to their primary conflicts. I label them as "hidden" because the women were not always aware of them or their influences. It is important to note when hidden conflicts surfaced in the interviews because they also illuminate each woman's self-perception. The hidden conflicts show the places where the women felt validated in their actions. When the hidden conflicts surfaced the women realized some support avenues they had and noticed something about themselves that they were not ashamed of.

JANE: Prior to the reception we'd not, well there had been many discussions among female associates, in my department there it's mostly men in the partnership, there's female counsel, and two female equity partners and a female non-equity and then there's like two female mid-levels and then first through third year are all women and then there's this whole gap. So all the guys controlling projects are all men, the guys all networking are all men.

SERA: For him it's an experience and you should sit down for dinner together

and have a nice meal and stuff. And life here is more fast-paced and it's just hard to keep up with that but also you know I think people just don't have the cultural value. And I like that about him, but at the same time, he mixes it in with the idea that like women should cook for him, and I don't, I didn't grow up with those, you know with that idea. And I just can't accept that. So he thinks that I don't cook only because of that I, you know [that I] don't want to cook for men and somehow that upsets him.

MEGAN: Just with relating to other people too, like other couples and um, wanting to go out and do stuff, we just relate really differently because like he'll not look forward to, for example some sort of professional event at the law school...and so I feel like socially, it's sort of impeded some of our growth with other couples.

JOSLYN: I was just angry, particularly being kind of a young woman, because these are things that I've been told from my stepfather before and it just kind of, you know, I think that's why I reacted so passionately about it as well.

Emily's conflict was with her Maid of Honor who had relocated 300 miles away three months before her wedding. During the interview Emily explained how her Maid of Honor did not meet any of her expectations and how difficult it was for her (Emily) to deal with that. Nearing the end of the interview, she brings out her hidden conflict and laughs about it, "I was angry because I felt that she was forgetting about our relationship that she wasn't putting enough stock in our relationship and that was valid. But I do think maybe I should have addressed the fact, you know it was also that I didn't really approve of her move up there [300 miles away], I think that had a big part in how I felt, you know it was just kind of the background of the conflict [she's laughing]"

Laughter. Laughter not only showed up when the women talked about hidden conflicts, but it also surfaced throughout each of the interviews. Once all the interviews were coded, the "laugh" code frequency was eight times higher than the second most frequent code. Sometimes women laughed when they identified something hidden, as in Emily's case above. Others used laughter in the context of something serious that was

being done to them. Belinda talked about her mother's insistency on her choosing a fiancé, "She's not doing it in a very effective way and it's making me run away from her [laughing]. So you know, maybe she needs to try another approach [laughing]." The women's laughter punctuated places where they felt emotion: nervous, sad, or guilty.

MEGAN: I sense that maybe he [husband] can't play on even keel with me. Just because of like the funk he's in. and so I feel like an awful person [she's crying] for like even engaging him on my terms, knowing that I can pretty much eviscerate him in an argument, or you know, get my way for the most part [laughs on top of crying].

Laughter was one of the ways that the women dealt with their conflicts.

Process

How each woman identified herself and what the context of her conflict was directly influenced her actions. There is a continuum of conflict process described in the women's stories that begins with initial reactions to what was happening and ends with a reflective look back. They spoke about support systems, understanding the other, defining a plan, and what actions they took. Ninety percent of the women reported that the conflict they spoke of was not resolved.

EMILY: I still think about it, its not something I've forgotten about I would say that it's you know, it's definitely filled away but um, we haven't discussed it since. I mean maybe we should now that it's over; it might be a good conversation to have. But it was really unpleasant; it was an unpleasant conflict, so um. But that doesn't necessarily mean it shouldn't be dealt with. I'm not sure.

Support. Eighty percent of the women identified various support outlets: relatives, friends, faith, classmates and co-workers. For two of the women there was no one available to help them, or no one who they saw fit to turn to. The women did not always seek support or help, others just offered it: "after this happened, people in my class said, you know 'yeah, that was really crappy' [Joslyn]. For the most part the support was

welcomed and received as kindness. Jane's thoughts on her support system were different. She felt the company was "covering their ass," and their interest in making sure she was alright had to do with them not wanting to be sued. Later in her interview she commented, "I need to talk to someone" [Jane], she did not view her company's formal dispute system as helpful at all.

Another avenue of support was advice, solicited and unsolicited. People's comments and suggestions were an integral part of the conflict process for half of the women. Both Olivia and Isabelle talked about advice they were given as children, which taught them how to behave in conflicts.

OLIVIA: because like sometimes when I was a kid they used to tell us that if by mistake death has to call them away, like if you are still young, like when I was 16 they used to tell me that if ever you are so sick, you can't get up anymore, you should try to always pray to god to forgive you, and forgive your sins, pray to god to give you the strength to talk to people that you haven't been talking to right before you die.

ISABELLE: my grandmom always told me that you know, you should never speak louder than um, the guests or the host.

Three of the other women expressed a need to seek advice from friends and others in order to make any decisions: "I'm the type of person that like, I don't make decisions without discussing it with ten other people, well not ten but I mean my inner circle of friends, I'll definitely share a lot, cause I need um, feedback. Um I feel like I just need feedback and reassurance that what I'm doing is right" [Emily].

Understanding the other. Eighty percent of the women spent time explaining what was happening for the other person involved in the conflict. They were aware of the stressors the other people were facing. They also expressed desires not to make matters worse for the other person involved. Megan explained that she didn't want to "further

burden Kevin who's already pretty burdened with stuff." Understanding the other person seemed to contribute to each woman's feeling of responsibility for the conflicts. Belinda offered an understanding of what must have been going on for her mom, "my mom was probably like, 'I'm never gonna get this girl married, I don't understand what's wrong with my daughter'." Attempts to explain the other were prevalent in the interviews; the other person's feelings and personality were mentioned several times in each interview.

Highlighting what was going on for the other person may have brought clarity to the situation, but it also led to the woman minimizing how she felt and what she needed.

JOSLYN: She was saying, 'I'm sorry but sometimes I forget I'm a teacher, you know?' She was making excuses so she was like half-heartedly apologizing, that's how I felt. Anyway, so it ended up you know, that was fine.

EMILY: She just felt like she couldn't do this, this wasn't her thing, she wasn't gonna do well with it, and she didn't do well with it...so it ended up, she ended up really failing me. Um, but I mean, I've gotten over it

ADRIANA: It was just, I knew that if I got mad at him, it would only, because he did have a lot of stress, a lot of work to do, he probably would rather put it off more.

Conflict approach and avoidance. All of the women talked about their plans for the conflicts and what was shaping their approaches. Olivia was the only one of the women who voiced a desire to approach her conflict head on. She was also the only participant who was not born or raised in America. Her conflict approach was much different than the others.

OLIVIA: It's not always good to keep people in your heart, you have a problem with somebody you want to talk it out or solve the problems. So to me I don't like to keep grudges in my mind, right, so I cannot get worried when I think about it because now I have it in my mind. I believe that there's a conflict between myself and that guy and I don't want it, because in my mind it worries me a lot, to think about, like to have a problem with somebody and then they are not able to solve the problem, then the problem keeps eating you up in your heart. You don't want to keep people's problems in your heart, you don't want to keep your worries to

yourself, you don't want to keep things that you can solve, because a conflict is something that can be solved.

The other women did not seem to share the same conflict style. Seventy percent of the women decided to either avoid the conflict or not to engage in any future dialogue over it: "I plan on delaying it and avoiding it basically" [Belinda]; "We have no plans to have further conversation" [Megan]; "I'm just gonna stay at the University, study more, just stay here and then just go home, just to sleep" [Isabelle]. Despite their emotions around the conflicts and the degree of influence just being in a conflict was having on each of the women, ninety percent of them did not intend to address the conflict.

Conflict residue. All of the women offered some reflection back on the conflict and on what had happened. Several of the women expressed that it had changed them in some way. They all seemed saddened by the conflict and not very optimistic.

BELINDA: It's very interfering [the conflict] you know, it just makes me feel bad, I don't want to disappoint them and ah, I wish they could just understand and be happy for me, I wish they could actually be supportive.

JANE: I think these kind of scenarios are going to come up again and again and I think one way to keep them from happening in the future would be to be less outgoing, to be less cute... I already know that it's [the conflict] going to make me worrier about going into business development opportunities and networking functions. I'm more aware of the image I project and what message I send about what's appropriate to talk about with me. I just hope that doesn't stifle my willingness to go to these events, or my willingness to try to maintain connections with people.

MEGAN: It'll subside, the cycle will repeat itself [crying] the way that we manage the conflict and I will not think about it for like a month and then it might come up again and maybe this time the outburst isn't quite as bad and maybe this time he makes some like, you know, trite compromise that placates me.

COLETTE: There's also the whole it kind of manifesting itself in me, becoming like an emotional kind of struggle

EMILY: It hurt me and I just feel like I, I have been very emotionally involved in

her life and I just feel like um I won't be as emotionally involved anymore and that's not necessarily a bad thing because I don't know that it was necessarily healthy for me to be so concerned with what she was doing. Um but I think a lot of it was that I felt like she was a vulnerable person and um I just wanted to be there for her as a friend you know be a mirror for her sometimes and how she was acting, just to help her get out of her shell, she's the type of person that internalizes.

JOSLYN: I've still been participating in class but I noticed that I haven't been putting as much effort into you know, just kind of the group discussions and stuff because part of me just feels like it's not worth it.

ADRIANA: it wasn't very positive [the conflict] because if he, like I've only seen him that one time, I'd never seen him before. But if I saw him again he would probably try to start arguing with me about the same thing.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Conflict literature defines conflict as something that exists between two or more people. This generalization, however, may not be accurate for women. These data show that women have a tendency toward self-criticism and guilt and suggest that for women, conflict is as much or more of an *intrapersonal* phenomenon than an *interpersonal* one. Each of the women took her conflicts, which to an outsider could be perceived as an interpersonal breakdown in communication, and re-wrote the conflict script predominantly as a one-woman narrative in which others were minor players. Possibly as a result of this women carry significant amounts of guilt for being in conflicts, they minimize their conflicts, and they do not address their conflicts directly. The study also shows that women experience conflict in many different contexts of their lives and that they choose to soldier on through their conflicts largely on their own. Three aspects of women's conflicts: identity, context, and process help explain these findings.

Identity

Each of the women displayed deep concern with who she thought she was, who she wanted to be, and how she wanted others to see her. Identity impacted each woman's conflict experience. The idealized self that each woman strove for assisted in making conflict something each woman felt guilty about.

Each woman's ideal identity surfaced through her story. The narratives shared a consistent theme of guilt, responsibility, and emotion. The strongest points where identity shaped the conflict for the women emerged through the degree of responsibility they placed on themselves for their conflicts.

Guilt. It was striking that the women felt disproportionately responsible for their conflicts. The conflicts seemed to burden each of them with a scolding voice, reminding them that they had done something wrong. Jane's example of sexual harassment typifies the guilt felt by each woman: "I am having some identity issues with, did I bring this on? Did I cause or stimulate this behavior in some way? Is it something, did something I did give him the impression that I wasn't professional and that I was a tramp?" Although the advances toward her by a company client were unwelcome and inappropriate, during the interview she expressed guilt about what she had done and ruminated about why it was her fault. Each of the women spoke as though she had disappointed herself in some way: "Cause it's so often that I listen to my heart instead of my head. And that's what gets people into a lot of trouble, me, anyway" [Colette]. They were not upset about what initiated the conflicts; instead, they were frustrated with themselves simply because they had a 'conflict.' They worried that they had no right to feel the way they did, and were extremely hard on themselves for being in a conflict. They were consumed in self-criticism. The guilt they were experiencing caused them to internalize their conflicts deeply.

This inordinate focus on the self reveals that conflict, as experienced by women, is different than the literature would suggest. In most cases, the literature on conflict does not consider how guilt contributes to conflict. Each of the women in this study showed deliberate mindfulness about her conflicts, which contrasted with idealized images she held of herself, suggesting that guilt was *the* dominant and defining element of conflict.

This persistent inward reflection highlights what conflict is like for women. Because women internalize their conflicts and their identities are so interwoven with who

they are in conflict situations they do not openly express their feelings during or after the episode.

Emotion. Throughout the interviews, the women talked about a range of emotions they were experiencing as a result of the conflicts. The majority of the women also noted that they were not discussing their emotions with anyone involved in the conflict. Their emotions became another point of self-criticism. Colette's concentration and disgust with her own emotions during her interview illustrates how obtrusive the women view their own feelings to be. Belinda expressed many different emotions about her mother's intrusion into her personal life: "I got angry"; "I'm just so frustrated"; "I'm afraid"; "I got stressed out"; "I feel so threatened"; "it makes me feel bad". The situation clearly caused her stress and consumed her; still she kept those emotions to herself. It was more important to her to be a "good daughter" than to be acknowledged and heard. The women experienced frustration with their emotions and wished they could banish them. The emotions each woman felt only propelled her further into guilt and self-exclusion. None of the women showed any validation or confidence in the way she felt about the conflict.

Conflict has been defined as a competition over incompatible goals and it is generally assumed that those goals exist between two different people. The women in this study however suggest that conflict in many cases, and especially for women, is a competition within oneself over being perfect. For these women, conflict was shaped largely by an inner struggle over self-definition.

Context

The women in this study defined conflict as a problem that the woman herself created and must suffer through alone. There was a range of conflict settings presented

through the interviews. It is clear that women experience conflicts in contexts other than marriage and work. The stories that each woman told did not have the same characters, but (despite their differences) they had a similar theme; the women minimized their conflicts.

Self-responsibility and blame affected the evaluations that each woman made of her conflict situation. There was a strong tendency for the women to minimize the seriousness of what was happening to them. Their guilt over being in a conflict contributed to their saying that the situation was insignificant. At one point Megan, for example, talked about how much the conflict she and her husband were having was affecting her. She commented on the amount of time she was spending worrying about it. Then, just a few sentences later she reconsidered saying that she should just forget about it. Several of the women shrugged off the seriousness of what had happened, belittling themselves and their feelings in the process.

Laughing. Laughter was an important component of every interview. I was surprised at how frequently each woman started laughing, particularly at the points where she was expressing an emotion so opposite of what laughter typically represents, like sadness or frustration. Belinda's conflict was about her parents' pressuring her to get married. She laughed at various points during the interview, especially in places where she was upset: "I said 'Dad, tell mom to leave me alone' [laughing]. He's like 'oh no, she's after you again' [laughing]. I'm like 'yes, [laughing] she's driving me nuts.'" Berlyne (1969) talked about laughter as a vehicle to help people with nervousness, relieve stress, and minimize the seriousness of a situation, "humor [is used] where a person makes light of his own misfortunes" (p. 799). These data concur; in the women's

interviews laughter was used as a coping mechanism. The laughing seemed, in some cases, to assist the women in not getting upset about their realities.

I believe that the laughter is detrimental to the women because it continues to feed into their beliefs that their conflicts are insignificant, and that they shouldn't feel the way they do. By laughing a thought off, the woman manages to minimize her feelings and the importance of the situation, which essentially traps her within herself, alone with the conflict. If a woman makes something silly enough to laugh about it is highly unlikely that the same woman, so acutely aware of her visibility, would present that same scenario as a dilemma to her peers or anyone else.

The women's tendency to minimize their conflicts highlights another area where the conflict literature is incomplete. Coser's (1956) definition, for example, identifies a conflict only once a person perceives an action against them as unjust. For these women, it is not their interpretation of an action against them that causes them to see themselves in a conflict, instead the conflict is a manifestation of personal failure.

Process

Both identity and context combined to form the plans and actions that the women took in response to their conflicts. By and large, the women dealt with the conflicts on their own. Several reported not seeking support in their conflicts. This lack of effort to attain appropriate support is consistent with the women's tendencies for guilt and minimization. They felt selfish and wrong for feeling the ways they did about their conflict.

Approach and action. Some of the women described themselves as confident and strong. When asked about a hypothetical conflict it is likely that these women would

form a firm position against the opposition and not let themselves be exploited. Yet, when each of them described their conflicts, they seemed to abandon the plan they were most likely to make based on their own stated identities and the conflict style assigned to them through the Thomas-Kilmann. Emily, for example, classified herself as someone who addresses conflicts head on and was also matched with a “competitive” conflict style. In her conflict, Emily never actually addressed her Maid of Honor with the way she felt. There was a consistent contradiction between how the woman described her anticipated conflict responses and how she truly responded to the conflict she spoke about. The majority of actions taken toward the conflicts involved avoidance and accommodation.

Some of the women’s direct actions were consistent with the conflict style assigned to them from Thomas-Kilmann. Jane formally put her conflict into the hands of her superiors, accommodating to their wishes. Reporting the conflict did not free Jane from thinking about it. Isabelle evaluated her situation and decided to accommodate (as the Thomas-Kilmann suggested she would), “I have no control in the conversation, regardless of what happens she does own the apartment and she does pay for everything, so therefore the only way I could get through with her is to be calm.” Belinda blatantly discussed her intention to avoid her conflict with her parents for as long as possible.

The Thomas-Kilmann did not accurately predict half of the women’s conflict behaviors. Megan did not compete with her husband; she accommodated and made plans to avoid their conflict. Olivia was predicted to be either collaborative or avoidant, instead she was openly aggressive in trying to resolve her conflict, “I got mad. I called the boy one day at one a.m. in the morning, I told him that I wasn’t the one that was doing it, but

he didn't want to believe...I kept calling his house threatening him that I was gonna, if he continued accusing me I was gonna call the police on him." Finally, the determination in Sera's approach created more of a competitive style than a compromising one.

The women each presented a second action other than just responding interpersonally. Each of the women talked about what was happening for them internally. Their self-focus showed an internal struggle acting as a second action that each woman took as response to the conflicts they were facing.

No matter how engaged each of the women were with their conflicts internally they rarely confided in others. Again, the women's tendencies to delegitimize and minimize their emotions and reactions make conflict a phenomenon that they experience largely alone. Even when support systems existed, the women chose not to use them.

Implications

By utilizing the critical incident method that allows participants to select their own scenario this study encouraged women's true voices to emerge. The findings illuminated women's real-life tendencies to internalize conflict. For women it would be helpful if they were aware of their tendencies to overburden themselves with responsibilities and their hesitancy to advocate for themselves or seek out sound support. For conflict theory, this study presents an important dimension of conflict that must be more heavily evaluated. Guilt is a defining factor of conflict for women and it should be concentrated on and represented in conflict literature. For practice, conflict resolution practitioners should design interventions and trainings that are sensitive to women's tendencies to internalize their conflicts. For further research in this area, researchers should maintain an open design that allows participants to lay the foundation of what

constitutes a conflict. Seventy percent of the women in this study asked for clarification on what a 'conflict' was, asking what type of conflict I was looking for, and could I describe a typical conflict. They didn't want to give a wrong answer, "can you give me an example of a conflict...just to be sure, I just want to be on a borderline, I don't want to go like off, or something" [Olivia]. Their struggle with giving the 'right' answer exemplifies how crucial it is that the participants, themselves, define what *is* a 'conflict' for any researcher to truly learn how people experience conflict. Finally, this study was conducted with young women ages 19 to 29. Future research may want to repeat this study with women of all ages as well as men.

References

- Averill, J.R. (1982). Anger and aggression: An essay on emotion. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Berlyne, D.E. (1969). Laughter, Humor, and Play. The Handbook of Social Psychology, (3), pp.795-852.
- Brody, L. (1997). Gender and emotion: beyond stereotypes. Journal of Social Issues, 53 (2), pp. 369-394.
- Bush, R.A. B., & Folger, J. P. (1994). The promise of mediation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Campbell, A. (1993). Men, Women, and Aggression. New York: Basic Books.
- Carr, J., Gilroy, F., & Sherman, M. (1996). Silencing the self and depression among women. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20, pp. 375-392.
- Cook-Huffman, C. (2000). Who do they say we are? Framing social identity and gender in church conflict. In Coy, P. & Woehrle, L. (Eds.), Social Conflicts and Collective Identities (pp. 115-132). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Incorporated.
- Coser, L. (1956). The functions of social conflict. New York: The Free Press.
- Creswell, J.W. (1994). Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications
- Crosby, F. (1991). Juggling. New York: The Free Press.
- Cupach, W. & Canary, D. (1995). Managing conflict and anger: investigating the sex stereotype hypothesis. In Kalbfleish, P. & Cody, M. (Eds.), Gender, Power, and

Communication in Human Relationships (pp. 223-252). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Deutsch, F. (1999) Having it all: how equally shared parenting works. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Deutsch, M. (1973) The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Donnellon, A., & Kolb, D. M. (1994). Constructive for whom? The fate of diversity disputes in organizations. Journal of Social Issues, 50 (1), 139-155.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). Sexing the Body. New York: Basic Books.

Fisher, B., & Tronto J. (1990). Toward a feminist theory of caring. In E.K. Abel & M.K. Nelson, Circles of care: Work and identity in women's lives (pp. 4-34). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Gwartney-Gibbs, P. & Lach, D. (1991). Workplace dispute resolution and gender inequality. Negotiation Journal, 7 (2), pp. 187-200.

Jenkins, S. (1996). Self-definition in thought, action, and life path choices. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. 22 (1), 99-111.

Keashly, L. (1994). Gender and conflict: what does psychological research tell us? In Taylor, A. & J.B. Miller (Eds.), Conflict and Gender. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press. Pp. 167-190.

Kolb, D. & Coolidge, G. (1993). Her place at the table: a consideration of gender issues in negotiation. In W. Breslin and J. Ruben, Negotiation theory and Practice (pp. 261-277).

Kimmel, E., & Crawford, M. (Eds.) (1999). Innovations in feminist psychological research. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.

Lax, D. & Sebenius, J. (1986). The Manager as Negotiator. The Free Press.

Lewicki, R., Minton, J., Saunders, D., & Irwin, R. (1997). Essentials of Negotiation. New York: Richard Irwin

Mackey, R. & O'Brien, B. (1998). Marital conflict management: Gender and ethnic differences. Journal of the National Association of Social Workers, 43(2), pp. 128-140.

Madden, M. & Janoff-Bulman, R. (1981). Blame, control, and marital satisfaction: Wives' attributions for conflict in marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 43 (1), pp. 663-674.

Minow, M. (1997). Not only for myself: Identity, politics, and the law. New York: The New Press.

Mulac, A. & Bradac, J (1995). Women's style in problem solving interaction: powerless, or simply feminine. In Kalbfleish, P. & Cody, M. (Eds.), Gender, Power, and Communication in Human Relationships (pp. 83-104). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Napholz, L.(2000). Balancing multiple roles among a group of urban midlife American Indian working women. Health Care for Women International, 21, 255-266.

Newsday, February 10, 2002

Nevill, D. & Damico, S. (1974). Development of a role conflict questionnaire for women: some preliminary findings. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 42 (5), 743.

Nevill, D. & Damico, S. (1977). Developmental components of role conflict in women. The Journal of Psychology, 95, 195-198.

Nevill, D. & Damico, S. (1978). The influence of occupational status on role conflict in women. Journal of Employment Counseling, 15 (2), 55-61.

Opotow, S. & Khaminwa, A. (September 2000). Women and conflict. Paper presented at the VIII Biennial Conference of the International Society for Justice Research, College of Management, Rishon LeZion, Israel.

Pearson, J. & Cooks, L. (1995) Gender and power. In Kalbfleish, P. & Cody, M. (Eds.), Gender, Power, and Communication in Human Relationships (pp. 331-349). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Pondy, L. R. (1992). Reflections on organizational conflict. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13, 257-262.

Rosenberg, M. (1999). Nonviolent Communication. Del Mar, California: PuddleDancer Press.

Rosenthal, R. (1963). On the social psychology of the psychological experiment: The experimenter's hypothesis as unintended determinant of experimental results. American-Scientist, 51,(2), pp. 268-283.

Rostow, E. (1971). Conflict and accommodation. In Lifton, R. (Ed), The Women in America (pp. 211-235). Boston: Beacon Press.

Rosenweig, L. (1991). "The anchor of my life": Middle-class American mothers and college-educated daughters 1880-1920. Journal of Social History, 25 (1), pp. 5-25.

Rubin, J.Z., Pruitt, G., & Kim, S.H. (1993). Social conflict: Escalation, stalemate, & settlement. New York: McGraw Hill.

Shields, S. (1998). Gender in the psychology of emotion: a selective research review. In Anselmi, D. & Law, A. (Eds.), Questions of Gender: Perspectives and Paradoxes, (pp. 376-385). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Sperberg, E. & Stabb, S. (1998). Depression in women as related to anger and mutuality in relationships. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 22, pp. 223-238.

Stefani, G. (1995). Just a girl. On *Tragic Kingdom* [CD]. Santa Monica, CA 90404: Trauma/Interscope Records.

Steil, J. (1997) Marital equality: Its relationship to the well-being of husbands and wives. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Tannen, D. (1990). You just don't understand. New York: Ballantine Books.

Thomas, K.W. (1993). Conflict processes in organizations. In M.D. Dunnette (Ed.). Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology. New York: Wiley.

Tiedje, L., Wortman, C., Downey, G., Emmons, C., Biernat, M., & Lang, E. (1990). Women and multiple roles: Role-compatibility perceptions, satisfaction, and mental health. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52 (1), pp. 63-72.

Worrell, J. (1996). Opening doors to feminist research. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20, pp. 469-485.

APPENDIX

1. Frames and questions for analyzing the data
2. One-on-one interview participation flyers
3. Focus Group flyers
4. Mass Media – “Let Out What?” article