

SOCIAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL CONFLICTS:
THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR OPTIMAL CONFLICT LANGUAGE

A Thesis Presented by

BASYE HENDRIX

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

June 2014

Conflict Resolution Program

© 2014 by Basye Hendrix

All rights reserved

SOCIAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL CONFLICTS:
THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR OPTIMAL CONFLICT LANGUAGE

A Thesis Presented

by

Basye Hendrix

Approved as to style and content by:

David Matz, Professor
Chairperson of Committee

Leslie Ramos Salazar, Assistant Professor
California State University, Fresno
Member

Eben Weitzman, Chairperson
Conflict Resolution Department

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL CONFLICTS: THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR OPTIMAL CONFLICT LANGUAGE

June 2014

Basye Hendrix, B.S., University of Colorado
M.A., University of Massachusetts Boston
M.S., Fitchburg State University
M.A., University of Massachusetts Boston

Directed by Professor David Matz

Personal conflicts have the potential to be nonviolent, positive, and productive. Likewise, optimal conflict language can produce optimal solutions and help people feel more connected and attuned in their personal relationships. Two studies were conducted to determine whether people from an individualistic society, the United States, are more inclined to engage in ineffectual conflict language or optimal conflict language. Prior studies in psychology suggest that those with a secure attachment

style are more inclined to use constructive and integrative strategies during personal conflicts. On the other hand, studies also conclude that the preponderate language in the United States is violent and hypercompetitive. Likewise, quick problem-solving solutions and advice, as well as win-lose debates, are not only viewed as the norm, but also perceived as “best” practices. These thinking, speaking, and listening approaches, however, lead to premature solutions, promote hypercompetitiveness, and reduce the possibilities for fresh and creative thinking, and thus beget ineffectual conflict language.

The results of the first study showed a strong use of ineffectual conflict language and Conventional (Violent) Communication. The study consisted of two groups and all participants have a secure attachment and have lived in the United States for 10 or more years. The control group was comprised of undergraduates and graduates who had 0-2 courses or related training in conflict resolution while the participants in the experimental group were current students or alumni of a graduate program in conflict resolution. The second study found that the participants use constructive strategies, which supports prior studies regarding secure attachment styles; however, the used of integrative strategies received minimal support. Nevertheless, the use of constructive and integrative strategies in personal conflicts could provoke ineffectual conflict language. It is concluded that the potential for optimal conflict language requires more research. Concomitantly, the acquisition of optimal conflict language might require interdisciplinary knowledge, skill, and motivation in the areas of conflict resolution, relational communication, and critical and creative thinking.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My graduate studies began in 1988 when I was accepted in the Critical and Creative Thinking program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I did not know at the time where this degree would take me; I only knew that the acquired knowledge would help me become a better person. My first graduate professor, Dr. Arthur Millman, philosophy professor and professor of several of the critical and creative thinking graduate courses, immediately became my role model as well as my adviser for my Master's project. It was his teaching style, support, and modeling of critical and creative thinking that encouraged me throughout the program. Thanks to the tutelage of Dr. Millman, Dr. Nina Greenwald, and Dr. Delores Gallo my thinking, speaking, and listening approaches took a dramatic positive turn. To say the least, it was a transformational experience. I would not be where I am today if it were not for the experience, encouragement, and knowledge bestowed by those professors in the Critical and Creative Thinking graduate program. From 1999 to current day, I have shared their pedagogical approach to teaching critical and creative thinking in all of the collegiate level courses that I have taught...my deepest gratitude to you all.

Next, I would like to thank Dr. Sheree Conrad. At the time when I met Dr. Conrad, she was not only an Associate Professor in the Psychology department but also the Director of the Communication department at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Dr. Conrad shifted my focus to relational communication. In our first meeting she shared her vision. She wanted me to teach relational communication by incorporating the connections of people's critical and creative

thinking to their approaches to relational communication. Dr. Conrad led me to my calling. It was her guidance, encouragement, and support that motivated me to pursue a second Master's degree in Applied Communication.

While searching for the perfect Communication's degree program, Dr. John Chetro-Szivos, Professor and Director of the Applied Communication department at Fitchburg State University, offered to individualize my studies to accommodate my focus on relational communication. I greatly appreciate his flexibility and wisdom within the field of communication. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Robert Carr, Communications Professor. Professor Carr has a gift for bringing out the best in his students. He is a consummate facilitator and role model of reflective and generative dialogue. Dr. Carr was my professor in the Professional Communication course, the adviser for my independent study course, which focused on argumentation, civility, rhetoric, and dialogue, and the adviser of my Master's project on relational communication. In all three contexts Dr. Carr embraced, enriched, and expanded my thinking. Dr. Carr will always be a powerful role model for me, thank you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Leslie Ramos Salazar, assistant professor in the Communications Department at California State University, Fresno. With similar interests in the language of compassion, I was thrilled that she agreed to be my outside adviser. After reviewing my rough draft, she sent me a series of thought-provoking questions that helped me completely restructure my thesis and hypotheses. As I answered her questions everything became incredibly clear. Her questions not only helped me better organize and clarify my thinking, but also construct meaning at

a higher level. I will continue my research in the area of optimal conflict language and hope to work with her again in the future. I see a strong component of compassion and self-compassion interlaced with optimal conflict language.

Last, I would like to thank the professors from the Conflict Resolution program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I was fortunate enough to take the Conflict Theories course from Dr. Susan Opotow. Dr. Opotow's passion for conflict resolution, extensive research, and deep concern for humanity was inspiring. Likewise, Dr. Eben Weitzman's extensive knowledge, experience, and research constantly challenged and enlightened my understanding of conflict resolution. Last, my deepest gratitude to Professor David Matz. Professor Matz's energy in the classroom made complicated information enjoyable. His knowledge and experience in organizational and international conflict is exceptional. In one of his classes he commented on how he enjoyed conflict and its potential for positive changes. Even though I was uneasy with managing my own and other people's conflicts at the time, Prof. Matz's conviction and passion influenced my desire to understand optimal conflict language and explore its potential. I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to gain knowledge, experience, and support from all of these professors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	12
LIST OF GRAPHS	13
CHAPTER	Page
1. OVERVIEW: FIRST STUDY	14
First Study: Purpose	14
First Study: Problem	15
Defining Personal Conflict	16
CHAPTER	Page
2. LITERATURE REVIEW: FIRST STUDY	18
Ineffectual Conflict Language: Theoretical Perspectives	19
Negative Aspects of Constructive and Integrative Strategies	30
Attachment Theory: Secure Language.....	35
Conclusion	38
CHAPTER	Page
3. METHODS	39
Participants.....	39
Procedures	40
CHAPTER	Page
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	42

	Data Coding	42
	Results.....	42
	Discussion.....	44
	Conclusion	45
CHAPTER		Page
	5. OVERVIEW: SECOND STUDY.....	46
	Second Study: Purpose	47
	Second Study: Problem.....	47
	Defining Optimal Conflict Language	48
CHAPTER		Page
	6. LITERATURE REVIEW: SECOND STUDY.....	56
	Optimal Conflict language: Theoretical Perspectives.....	56
	Conclusion	62
CHAPTER		Page
	7. METHODS AND RESULTS	64
	Methods.....	64
	Data Coding	64
	Results.....	65
CHAPTER		Page
	8. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	77
	Discussion	77
	Limitations and Strengths of Both Studies	78
	Future Implications	83

APPENDICES	86
A: Communication Roadblocks and Blockers	86
B: Verbal Abuse.....	87
C: Hypercompetitive and Defensive Listening Styles	89
D: Uncritical Thinking Dispositions.....	91
E: Cooperative Listening Styles.....	93
F: Critical and Creative Thinking Dispositions	94
G: Personal Conflict Questionnaire	97
G IRB Consent Form	102
REFERENCES	104

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1. Ratio Females to Males Per/Group	40
2. Group Statistics CVC and ICL	43
3. Group Statistics: Constructive Strategies	65
4. Total Sum One-way ANOVA: Constructive Strategies	65
5. Group Statistics: Integrative Strategies.....	66
6. Group Statistics: Integrative Strategies + Brainstorming	67
7. Group Statistics: Root-Oriented Problem Solving Questions.....	68
8. Multiple Comparisons: Optimal Conflict Language Multiple Choice Options 7 Possible Points	71
9. CVC/ICL and OCL Response Totals.....	72
10. OCL and ICL Individual Totals and Differences	73

LIST OF GRAPHS

GRAPH	Page
1. Means Plots: CVC and ICL	44
2. Means Plots: Integrative Strategies + Brainstorming	68
3. Means Plots: Root-Oriented Problem Solving Questions.....	69

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW: FIRST STUDY

In 1977, Albert Bandura put forth the theory of social learning. According to Bandura: “Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling...” (p. 22). Furthermore, social constructionists claim, “People, together, construct their realities as they live them” (Freedman & Coombs, 1996, p. 23). Together these theories confirm the fears of Foucault (1986): “The discourses of a society determine what knowledge is held to be true, right, or proper in that society...” (p. 19). Does this, however, included the speaking, listening, and thinking styles of a society? Could an individualistic society evolve into a hypercompetitive environment where violent communication and ineffectual conflict language become so dominant that people become unaware of its damaging nature? In the first study, I will argue that the dominant discourses in the United States beget ineffectual conflict language and resolution.

First Study: Purpose

This study attempts to identify the degree to which ineffectual conflict language might supersede positive, nonviolent, optimal conflict language. Participants that might be most likely to engage in optimal conflict language were chosen to be part of the study. Thus, people with secure attachment styles were chosen to be part of the study. Extensive studies have shown that those with secure attachment styles use more constructive and

integrative strategies than those with insecure attachment styles during personal conflicts. It seems to follow that if those with a secure attachment are found to use more violent and ineffectual conflict language then those with insecure attachments would also be prone to the same during personal conflicts and maybe even at higher levels. In addition, another group that could be more apt to use optimal conflict language might be those who have received education and training in conflict resolution. Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine in what ways people's secure attachment style and level of conflict resolution training play a role in their ability to use optimal conflict language during personal conflicts.

First Study: Problem

In individualistic societies such as the United States, people have socially learned a language that is known to be hypercompetitive and representative of ineffectual conflict language. According to scholars, people who have embraced the American way tend to have direct, competitive, "I-oriented" speaking and listening tendencies (Canary & Lakey, 2013; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006; Rothwell, 2013; Ting-Toomey, 1991) "outcome oriented" conflict goals (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006), negative face needs (a need to do their own thing with limited impositions) and a desire to focus more on themselves (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006), as well as goals focused on power, success, and/or maintaining autonomy, and dualistic right-wrong, acceptable-unacceptable, and good-bad thinking (Dainton & Zelle, 2005; Isaacs, 1999; MacNair, 2003; Triandis, 1994; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006). The above types of speaking, listening, thinking, and behaving have potential to create conflicts, escalate conflicts, hinder people's ability

to generate “fresh thinking” and creative win-win solutions, and spawn negativity, resentment, and mistrust in close relationships (Isaacs, 1991; Rosenberg, 2003 & 2005; Rothwell, 2013; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007; Young, 2011). Thus, the above types of speaking, listening, thinking, and behaving approaches could overtake people’s attempts for optimal conflict language. Furthermore, having the proclivity to engage in constructive and integrative strategies, however, does not guarantee that optimal conflict language will take place during a personal conflict. In fact, constructive and integrative strategies could perpetuate ineffectual conflict language. Thus, personal conflicts present many challenges.

Defining Personal Conflict

Conflict has a range of different definitions. Many conflicts scholars suggest that conflict can involve: incompatible goals, goal interference, and scarce resources (Canary & Lakey, 2008; Deutsch, 1973; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). In personal relationships, conflict is inevitable because relationships have an interdependent “we-orientation.” Even in healthy, interdependent relationships conflict is ineluctable. Personality theorists claim that people are unique. They can have many things in common but the combination of nature and nurture make people unique. The uniqueness of people generates an overabundance of different goals, beliefs, feelings, concerns, and/or perceptions, which impact and influence people in vast ways. People’s perceptions and interpretations can spark conflict. Most often, people’s perceptions and interpretations are influenced from social learning. In fact, some people might believe a conflict exists when the other does not. Additionally, some might believe a specific conflict is a huge issue

while the other perceives it to be a simple fix. Therefore, different interpretations of the level of a conflict can create more conflict. Moreover, various beliefs regarding conflict can be even more problematic. Likewise, if the definition of conflict conjures up negative thoughts and emotions, this can be a catalyst for ineffectual conflict language. To add to the challenges, all of these interpretations and perceptions have been learned through prior experience or socially learned. Not only do scholars have different definitions of conflict, individuals also have different definitions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: FIRST STUDY

In accordance with the theories of social learning and the individualistic language that engulfs the United States, it would seem that ineffectual conflict language would take the forefront during a personal conflict. Marshall Rosenberg (2003/2005) claimed that the majority of communication in the United States is violent. In 2011, Lissa Young focused her Psychology dissertation primarily on Rosenberg's argument about violent communication. Young (2011) referred to this type of communication as "Conventional (Violent) Communication." CVC is a language in which responsibility is denied, observations are evaluative and judgmental, needs and feelings are expressed in a violent manner, and demands and orders are put forth (Rosenberg, 2003/2005; Young, 2011). This type of language perpetuates inappropriately timed problem-solving (typically initiated too early in a conversation), and demands, and strategy ("a targeted approach or plan intended to get a need met, without necessarily identifying the need" (Young, 2011, p. 34). Likewise, Bultena, Ramsler, & Tilker (2013) include that defensiveness and incivility are growing at a rapid rate in American culture.

If, "Conventional (Violent) Communication" [CVC] and incivility permeate the United States then social learning theorists would posit that people in America are possibly engaging in CVC without even knowing this is taking place. Cozolino (2006) claims that two key factors contribute to unconscious and/or implicit choices of conflict strategies and tactics: social learning and brain-wiring. When a style of thinking,

speaking, listening, and/or behaving has been socially learned and that learning does not represent the language of optimal conflict conversations then ineffectual conflict language will most likely be the result.

Ineffectual Conflict Language: Theoretical Perspectives

Ineffectual conflict language is a language that prematurely stops a conversation, inhibits “fresh thinking,” avoids resolution, increases negativity, devalues another person, and/or causes psychological damage. Copious reasons exist for why this type of language hinders optimal conflict resolution. In this section, I will present theories from the fields of conflict resolution, relational communication, and critical and creative thinking to support my argument.

Conflict Resolution

Hundreds of conflict resolution books and journals are written to help people understand and manage the ubiquity of conflict. If it were natural to deal with conflict in an optimal manner books, journals, courses, seminars, graduate programs, etc. in mediation and conflict resolution might not be necessary. Unfortunately, whether it is due to nature, nurture or a combination of both, ineffectual conflict language exists. Sometimes ineffectual conflict language exists because of the ineffective strategies that people choose. Some of those strategies are unconsciously chosen due to implicit memory such as with attachment styles, social learning, and/or habit. When people choose a strategy, for example, such as being direct and nasty or indirect and nasty

(Canary and Lakey, 2008) or competing, avoiding, accommodating, and even compromising, it can lead to ineffectual conflict language and resolution.

Inappropriate use of power and devaluing core concerns. Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language also take place when the receiver feels the use of power is inappropriate and one or more of his five core concerns have been devalued. People have five core concerns: appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, status, and role. When one or more of these core concerns is being devalued, conflict will most likely manifest (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005). Wilmot and Hocker (2007) also profess that one of their tenants is that all conflicts are about power and/or self-esteem. If so, then CVC and ICL will result when a person consciously or unconsciously chooses a conflict style that is deemed to the receiver as being an inappropriate power choice or one that negatively affects a person's global or implicit self-esteem contingencies. If in a romantic relationship, for example, the girlfriend makes a decision about where they will go for a vacation without checking with her boyfriend, and he felt as if he should have had a voice in the decision-making process then an escalated, negative conflict could occur. Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro (2005) would describe this as an example of the girlfriend not meeting some of her boyfriend's core concerns such as affiliation, autonomy, and status. When people devalue another person's core concerns this would not only represent CVC, but also ineffectual conflict language. Additionally, when people invalidate another person's core concerns, it can be perceived as a conflict of incompatible goals or scarce resources.

Distributive strategies. Besides devaluing a person's core concerns and engaging in inappropriate power plays, distributive strategies, also known as "claiming value"

epitomizes CVC and ineffectual conflict language and resolution. Violent language such as “threats, demands, and prescriptions; coercion, hostility, and intimidation; personal criticisms, put-downs, and ridicule; defensiveness and hit – and – run tactics; sarcasm and contempt” are common when people use distributive strategies (Cupach & Canary, 1997, p. 44). Obtaining power-over or power-against another person is a common feature of distributive strategies (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Additionally, inappropriate ways of gaining power-over or power-against another person matches the construct of Conventional (Violent) Communication. Observations mixed with judgments, for example, are representative of someone believing that his judgment is the correct one and others should act according to how he thinks they should act. Thus, “I-oriented” behaviors put the “I” over the “we,” which is a power play. Furthermore, “I-oriented” thinking and behaving can lead to problematic, independent self-images.

Self-image and reciprocity problems. People can see themselves as being an “I,” a “we,” or a combination of “I” and “we.” In interdependent relationships, however, “I-oriented” self-images create conflicts (Willmot & Hocker, 2007). In fact, it could be that the pervasiveness of “Conventional (Violent) Communication” steers people to be more “I-oriented.” For example, the desire to present a self-image as being tough, mean, controlling, and/or having power over or against people is representative of CVC and most likely lead to ineffectual conflict language and resolution. With that type of self-image and identity quest, people would more likely endorse hypercompetitiveness as the better option over cooperation (Deutsch, 1973). Even more problematic, the reciprocity effect purports that people will think, speak, listen, and behave in a similar manner (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987; Sillars 1980). If a person, for example, puts forth competitive

and/or hypercompetitive strategies the other person will reciprocate. This vicious cycle perpetuates ineffectual conflict language and resolution as does the social learning and role modeling of power-plays, distributive strategies, and conflict strategies such as avoidance, accommodation, and compromising, which all can reinforce an “I-oriented” self-image.

Summary. This section highlighted significant factors that are catalysts to conflict, sources of triggered, negative emotions, and prototypical of Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language. The choice of a conflict approach can set the tone for the conflict conversation. Additionally, the initial conflict strategy can influence the other person’s responses. In the realm of reciprocation, ineffectual and CVC approaches typically foment the same in others...ICL begets ICL; CVC begets CVC. A vicious cycle escalates and creates negative conflict histories, perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes.

Relational Communication

The ways in which people speak and listen to each other perpetuates ineffectual conflict language and resolution as well as Conventional (Violent) Communication. From 10 years of teaching relational communication to over 2,000 undergraduate students, in New England, I have not only found “Conventional (Violent) Communication” to be the norm, but also problematic when trying to teach nonviolent speech acts. Students were not happy when they could recognize from the course material that their socially learned speaking styles represented CVC and ineffectual conflict language. Nevertheless, being cognitive of one’s relational communication choices can help people gain a better

understanding of why a conflict did not become resolved or not resolved in a positive manner. Likewise, they could obtain a better perspective of why a relationship might be dissolving. Many negative, relational communication transactions transpire without people's full awareness such as communication roadblocks.

Communication roadblocks. First, communication roadblocks can create conflict, stymie conflict conversations, and perpetuate ineffectual conflict resolution. Additionally, they represent Conventional (Violent) Communication and can cause damage to relationships. These roadblocks, as put forth by Bolton (1979) and Scheingold (2003), stop the flow of conversations, create defensiveness, and even induce negative reciprocation such as complain-complain, complain-defend, attack-attack, and defend-attack (Ting-Toomey, 1983). Robert Bolton (1979) and Lee Scheingold (2003) created similar lists of "Communication Roadblocks" and "Communication Blockers" (see Appendix A). They asserted that certain speaking and listening techniques could stop the process of a positive conversation (i.e., advising, preaching, patronizing, reassuring, offering a logical argument, and asking 'why' questions).

If the receiver perceives these speaking and listening techniques, consciously or unconsciously, as violent and stop him from sharing his interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns then these techniques would be problematic for optimal conflict language. Moreover, these listening and speaking techniques could also create conflict because most of the communication roadblocks have a power element to them. If I give someone quick advice, for example, it can be perceived as "I know better" or "You will not be able to figure this out for yourself, so I need to think for you." Even if a person did not intend to display power over the other person, the power play took place. Furthermore, even if

the other person did not perceive advice or other roadblocks as a drop in his/her power level it still took place. The following section further clarifies other problematic speaking styles.

Speaking styles. Four common speaking styles within the United States can trigger negative emotions, create conflict, and escalate a conflict if the other person perceives the choice of speaking styles as inappropriate. Even if the receiver does not perceive the style as inappropriate, all four of these styles will lead to ineffective conflict resolution. The four speaking styles that are most representative of CVC are, assertive-competitive, aggressive-hypercompetitive, passive-aggressive, and passive/non-assertive language.

Assertive – competitive language. Ineffectual conflict language takes place when people competitively assert their own needs with a disregard for the other person. When the assertive-competitive speaking style is “I-oriented” and used as a means of having power over someone, especially when power levels are supposed to be more balanced, then conflict can ensue and escalate. Assertive- competitive language in this context is a speech act where one person asserts his/her interests, needs, feelings, ideas, and/or concerns and then expects the other person to accommodate. Thus, assertive-competitive language could resemble an inappropriate order or demand, which Young (2011) defines as CVC. Additionally, assertive-competitive language could be in the form of advice. Advice is not only a communication roadblock (Bolton, 1979; Scheingold, 2003) but also indicative of a premature solution (Rosenberg, 2003/2005; Young, 2011). When people choose an assertive–competitive language, they speak with nice nonverbal communication, but incivility and CVC still take place. For example, telling a significant

other to take out the trash and do the dishes even in the sweetest tone, is still an example of an order and a demand. When the initial speaker does not invite the other person into the conversation, this would be indicative of CVC. Moreover, “I-oriented” orders/demands, solutions, and decisions in interdependent relationships are large contributors to ineffectual conflict language.

Aggressive language. This speaking style takes the form of talking tough, talking over someone, and using threatening, non-verbal communication such as speaking in an escalated tone, standing close to invade someone’s space; and blaming the other person (Brounstein, Bell, and Smith, 2007). When people use aggressive language this also represents CVC and is a form of power-against someone. Verbally abusive tactics such as name-calling, attacking the other person’s competence or character, threats, put-downs, and any type of wording that is used as a direct conversational weapon fits both aggressive language (direct-nasty) and CVC (Beatty, et al, 1999; Evans, 1992). Verbal abuse is a violent speaking approach (see Appendix B). When people say whatever they think, such as employing brutal honesty, it is “I-oriented” and displays little or no regard to the feelings of the other person. Brutal honesty/verbal abuse usually is a reaction without reflection; where people choose their own self-preservation over the relationship, which accentuates their egoistic or psychological needs (Rancer and Avtgis, 2006; Rosenberg, 2003).

Passive-aggressive language is another tactic that is pervasive in American culture and representative of CVC. If the other person perceives this indirect language as inappropriate, it can cause psychological damage to the receiver’s sense of self-worth and thinking capabilities (Beatty, et. al, 1999; Evans, 1992). Passive- aggressive language

involves expressing anger, resentment, and/or hostility indirectly. Even nice people (Bach & Goldberg, 1974) may use passive-aggressive language because they have socially learned that it is not nice to engage in conflict. Not wanting to engage in conflicts, however, is one reason why situations can become worse and relationships do not improve. Not wanting to be direct in conflicts and choosing to engage in an indirect aggressive way also leads to ineffectual conflict resolution.

Passive/non-assertive language is another indirect form of communicating that is ineffectual during a conflict conversation. Passive communication is not violent in its nature; but on the other hand, quickly agreeing, not speaking up, and not sharing one's own interests, needs, feelings, ideas, and/or concerns can induce negative, escalated emotions, especially if the other party is interested in working together (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Additionally, it promotes premature solutions. Thus, in this aspect, people can perceive passive communication as ineffectual conflict language.

Summary. Many common speaking styles in the United States such as those listed above are representative of not only CVC, but also ineffectual conflict language. Moreover, Wood (2008) claims, when we tell people that their thinking, feelings, and/or actions are wrong, we are not acknowledging the other person and simultaneously disconfirming the person. Continuously disconfirming a person could cause emotional and psychological damage (Evans, 1992). Due to social learning, people might not recognize the problems of the common, negative speaking styles because of they are used to a hypercompetitive communication environment (Rothberg, 2013). These socially learned speaking styles not only have a negative impact on people's ability to engage in

conflicts, but also can negatively affect a person's self-concept and self-esteem.

Furthermore, people's listening styles can render additional problems.

Listening styles. People's listening styles can be violent, indicative of ineffectual conflict language, and socially learned. Numerous hypercompetitive and defensive listening styles (see Appendix C) plague the United States and conform to Young's (2011) description of "Conventional (Violent) Communication." Rosenberg (2003/2005) and Young's (2011) notion of violent listening also parallels to Rothwell's (2013) description of hypercompetitive communication.

Hypercompetitive and defensive listening responses. These listening responses occur when people reply in a manner to attack, verbally abuse, devalue, and/or gain power against or over someone (Rothwell, 2013; Deutsch, 1973). These listening styles are not always intentional. They can originate from social learning and not represent an intentional attempt to attack, destroy, and/or gain power against or over someone. For example, people might listen and respond in a hypercompetitive or defensive manner because they are modeling other people and thus, consider their response appropriate and correct. The following are examples of hypercompetitive and/or defensive listening responses: ambushing (Wood, 2008), argumentative/devil's advocate listening (Weisglass, 1990), content listening (Duck & McMahan, 2009), evaluative listening (Egan, 1998), fact-centered listening (Egan, 1998), inadequate/egocentric listening (Egan, 1998), reloading (Isaacs, 1999), blaming and mind-reading (Wood, 2008), inflexible and judgmental responses (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007), evaluative, polarized, and rights-based responses (Otzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006), and/or quick rebuttals (Goleman, 1995). Likewise, hypercompetitive replies can include listening responses that communicate

rejection such as "... assuring the receiver that she need not feel bad, that she should not feel rejected, or that she is overly anxious, though often intended as support giving, may impress the listener as a lack of acceptance" (Gibb, 1998, p. 5). Additionally, engaging in a debate is typically an example of taking sides, representing a competitive and/or hypercompetitive win-lose approach. Last, Gibb (1988) explains, "Speech or other behavior which appears evaluative increases defensiveness. If by expression, manner of speech, tone of voice, or verbal content the sender seems to be evaluating or judging the listener, then the receiver goes own guard" (p.2).

Summary. In a competitive and hypercompetitive society, people can be on guard for hidden motives and displays of overt and covert power plays. Additionally, if people feel another person has devalued their thoughts, feelings, and/or actions this occurrence can create conflicts and damage relationships (Deutsch, 1973; Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Gibb, 1998). Therefore, much evidence confirms that hypercompetitive and defensive speaking and listening styles will not engender optimal conflict language and hinder creativity and problem-solving skills.

Critical and Creative Thinking

Scholars of critical and creative thinking are extremely concerned about people's unanalyzed thinking and mindless thinking habits. A natural response is a learned habit and a habit "naturally implies mindlessness" (Langer, 1989, p. 16). Paul (1993) explains, "We have to recognize, as every sociologist since William Graham Sumner has pointed out, that most human behavior is a result of unanalyzed habit and routine based on unconsciously held standards and values" (p. 311). Langer concurs as she posits, "If we

think we know how to handle the situation, we don't feel a need to pay attention” (Langer, 1989, p. 34). When conflict communication styles become a natural response, this could be an indication of mindless thinking. When people think, speak, behave out of habit and this mindless occurrence represents CVC and ICL then negative and ineffectual conflict language and resolution is predicted.

Uncritical thinking. Additionally, when people are not mindful of their thinking and others have inculcated them in the areas of CVC and incivility, they are more likely to engage in uncritical thinking, and give and accept premature solutions (Langer, 1989; Paul & Elder, 2001). Uncritical thinking can also result from unconscious incompetence: you do not know what you do not know.¹ When ineffectual speaking and listening styles have become a habit, people might not be aware or concerned with the corresponding connection to their ability to engage effectively in critical and creative thinking. Concomitantly, when uncritical thinking takes place during personal conflicts, people can become stubborn and narrow-minded, project unfounded truths, and create inaccurate inferences from unanalyzed assumptions. Likewise, they can be blinded by their biases and defensive reactions, improperly calculate the strength and weakness of data, claims, and solutions, use dualistic, either/or, polarize thinking also known as fallacious reasoning, and have judgmental views/interpretations (Chaffee, 1999; Paul, 1993) (see

¹ Theory of Competence: “Initially, this theory was described as “Four Stages for Learning Any New Skill”, the theory was developed at the Gordon Training International by its employee Noel Burch in the 1970s. It has since been frequently attributed to Abraham Maslow, although the model does not appear in his major works. Kuta, J. & Nyaanga, D.M. (2014). The effect of competence of contractors of the construction of substandard buildings in Kenya. Prime Journal of social science (PJSS), Vol. 3(3), pp. 637-641, February, 25th, 2014.

Appendix D). Furthermore, uncritical thinking that triggers dualistic thinking hinders people's ability to see the complexities of a conflict.² Even though people can trace fallacies such as false dilemmas, hasty generalizations, and fallacies of false cause all the way back to Aristotle, they are also indigenous of the United States due to their persuasiveness and emotional appeal (Chaffee, 1999). Moreover, anxiety before and during a conflict can negatively affect people's thinking.³ Uncritical thinking might also be a reason why communication roadblocks and hypercompetitive and defensive speaking and listening styles are common in the United States.

Summary. In a society plagued with ineffective conflict speaking, listening, and thinking styles, people could utilize conflict strategies known to be beneficial for conflict resolution, but use them in a manner that results in ineffectual conflict language and even CVC. When people have socially learned these speaking, listening, and thinking styles, it challenges the acquisition of optimal conflict language.

Negative Aspects of Constructive and Integrative Strategies

Scholars from various disciplines commonly view constructive and integrative strategies as beneficial conflict resolution strategies. These strategies can yield positive

² "Avoiding the use of words that evoke dualism, in favor of words that describe a given conflict in its true complexity, can reduce tension and lead to solutions" (Del Collins, 2005, p. 272).

³ "... Excessive tension reduces the intellectual resources available for discovering new ways of coping with a problem or new ideas for resolving a conflict. Intensification of conflict is the likely result as simplistic thinking and the polarization of thought push the participants to view their alternative as being limited to victory or defeat" (Deutsch, 1973, p. 355).

results, (Coser, 1956; Chapman & McBride, 1992; Deutsch, 1973; Shantz & Hobart, 1989; Emery, 1992; Ury, 1993 & 2007; Stone, et. al., 1999; Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007) and are in line with Rosenberg (2003/2005) and Young's (2011) view of nonviolent communication. Nonetheless, constructive and integrative strategies can also yield ineffectual results.

Constructive Strategies

People could engage in constructive strategies and not simultaneously engage in collaboration and/or expanding the pie. Likewise, people could engage in collaboration and/or expanding the pie but not have engaged in constructive strategies. To start, constructive strategies include people's positive views of each other (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991; Hazan and Shaver's 1987; Jones, 2005; Simpson, et al., 1996; Young & Acitelli, 1998) being warm and supportive (Jones, 2005); emotional support skills (Burlison, 2003) being less rejecting (Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989); expressing positive emotions and reassurance about relational stability (Simon & Baxter, 1993); and compromise (Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989). Likewise, Rancer and Avtgis (2006) suggest that constructive strategies such as "openness and self-disclosure, listening, feedback, supportive communication, empathy, trust, and perspective taking ability" are key factors in "interpersonal communication competence" (p. 6). Moreover, these types of constructive language choices positively correlate to people's relationship satisfaction.

Groupthink. Even though constructive strategies can improve and strengthen personal relationships, these strategies, without the combination of other optimal conflict language, can lead to groupthink. Irving Janis (1982) described a myriad of problems of

groupthink when it comes to higher-level problem solving. One problem in particular in personal relationships is the desire for cohesiveness. When people feel or want to feel a sense of interconnectedness it can lead to premature and possibly inadequate solutions. When people are supportive, kind, empathetic, respectful, and compassionate and have not received sufficient amount of training in conflict resolution and critical and creative thinking it can be problematic. It could lead them to capitulate and accommodate too quickly, compromise when more opportunities of expanding the pie are available, make bad or superficial decisions, and/or forgo the opportunities for reflective and generative dialogue. Constructive strategies foster a cooperative communication environment (Rothwell, 2013); nonetheless, groupthink and premature solutions can hinder optimal conflict language and resolution.

Premature solutions. Young (2011) includes premature solutions in her Conventional (Violent) Communication list. Morton Deutsch (1973) also concurs, as he believes cooperation is not enough; instead, he states, “imaginativeness, experience, and flexibility” are vital (p. 364). In addition, premature solutions can create “superficial, unsatisfying, and unstable agreement” (Keiffer, 1968, in Deutsch, 1973, p. 364). Premature solutions/strategies can also take place when people give quick advice and/or do not spend enough time deciphering their own and other people’s interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns during personal conflicts. A superficial view of positions as described by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991), also aligns with the negative notion of premature solutions/strategies. If solutions to a conflict neglect to address root causes new or more intensified conflicts could manifest (Deutsch, 1973; Fisher & Shapiro,

2005). Integrative strategies are also beneficial in personal relationships but just as problematic as constructive strategies.

Integrative Strategies

Integrative strategies promote the weaving together of each other's interests, needs, and/or concerns to find an optimal or best solution for all involved (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Just because people are employing integrative strategies this does not indicate or guarantee that people will embrace optimal, conflict language. People can listen to each other's ideas, consider both sides, and still not engage in brainstorming. Likewise, people can consider another person's ideas and engage in one-way problem solving. Furthermore, people can integrate each other's ideas and not validate or take into consideration the other person's feelings. In addition, integrative strategies can help people collaborate but collaboration does not always lead to generative dialogue or even an "expanded pie" solution.

Collaboration. Although many definitions of collaboration exist, most conflict scholars concur that collaboration is about integrative, joint problem-solving and finding mutually beneficial solutions for all parties involved (Fisher, et. al., 2005; Tutzauer & Roloff 1988; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Conflict scholars who promote collaboration also tend to emphasize the advantages of operating in good faith due to word-of-mouth, the 6-degree theory, and the resilience of the chosen solutions (Fisher, et al, 2005; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Nonetheless, people could engage in collaborative negotiations but not for relational reasons. Some scholars contend that trust is an element of collaboration; however, it is possible that some people can collaborate and agree on a solution but the

relational bond might not have become closer and/or stronger. Imagine for example, a negotiation started with one or more parties using CVC and putting the other party down by the use of sarcasm, manipulative techniques, and/or attacking the other person's competence or character. Nonetheless, the parties eventually ended with a win – win solution; this process might not have concluded with the parties feeling closer and more trusting of each other. Additionally, some people might not feel as if the ends always justify the means. Likewise, if one person in the conflict conversation felt as if the process was inappropriate and hurtful, but everyone used integrative strategies and they reached a win-win solution, this represents collaboration but is not an example of optimal conflict language. Mediators, for example, can persuade two people to collaborate and use integrative strategies, and help them find a win-win solution, but this does not guarantee the relationship between the conflicting parties will improve and trust will be transacted. Moreover, integrative strategies and collaboration could occur, but these strategies do not guarantee an optimal procedure or outcome will ensue.

Therefore, it is possible that people could have constructive and integrative strategies such as those with secure attachment styles, but they could also have ineffectual conflict language and resolutions because they have socially learned the predominate language that runs rampant throughout the United States: Conventional (Violent) Communication.

Attachment Theory: Secure Language

According to extensive studies in attachment theories, those with a secure attachment are more likely than others to engage in constructive and integrative strategies during a personal conflict (Levy & Davis, 1988; Pietromonaco, Greenwood, & Barrett, 2004); Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000; Pistole, 1989; Rholes, W. S. & Simpson, J. A. (2004).

Scholars from various disciplines confirm that people want to connect to others. Various events take place in people's lives starting at infancy that influence the ways in which they become attached not only to their caregiver but also to people close to them throughout their lives. Some infants develop healthy secure attachments to their caregiver and as the age they continue to develop secure attachments with other people. On the other hand, some infants develop insecure attachments with their caregiver that causes them to hyperactivate (hyper-attach) or deactivate (de-attach) when their implicit memory of attachment experience is triggered. Thus, these attachments and the implicit memories and behaviors infants develop continue throughout their lives.

According to John Bowlby, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst (1973/1988/ 2005) and Mary Ainsworth (1973), creator of the Strange Situation experiment,⁴ theorize that different infant-caregiver attachments occur based on the level of attunement between the caregiver and the infant. When the caregiver is attuned to the infant, then infant will feel his or her needs are being acknowledged and met. Attunement is the ability to

⁴ Strange Situation Experiment: In Ainsworth's Strange Situation experiment, she was able to identify an infant's level of attachment based on the child's reaction when his/her caregiver left the room and then returned. An infant that was upset when he noticed his caregiver had left the room, but easily comforted when the caregiver returned was identified as having a "secure attachment." Infants that were not easily comforted or remained distant from the caregiver were identified as having "insecure attachments."

demonstrate empathy, compassion, comfort, and genuine care. When an infant feels scared, for example, an attuned caregiver will be able to recognize that the infant is scared and will be able to comfort the infant. From this type of attunement, an infant will develop a sense of security and safety. In addition, by holding and comforting the infant this feeling of protection builds an infant's sense of trust and confidence. For those with a secure attachment, it is theorized that an implicit memory of trust, comfort, security, and safety are implicitly wired in their brain when they are an infant and that brain wiring continues into their adult life unless something dramatic takes place (i.e. death of the caregiver) (Cozolino, 2006). Cozolino (2006) shares that "Bowlby believed attachment schema to be summations of thousands of experiences with caretakers that become unconscious reflexive predictions of the behaviors of others" (p. 141).⁵

Moreover, scholars claim attachment styles to be strong predictors of the language and behaviors that occur during a personal conflict. When people, consciously or unconsciously, feel a threat to their personal relationships this experience has the potential to activate attachment orientations (Rholes, et al., 1989). Leary (2009) also explains, "A person's attachment style has also been related to the methods couples adopt to manage interpersonal tensions and conflicts (e.g., Gaines et al., 1997; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995). Specifically, secures rely more heavily on "effective conflict resolution strategies – compromising and integrating their own and their partners' positions. They also display greater accommodation when responding to partners' anger

⁵ "These schema become activated in subsequent relationships and lead us either to seek or avoid proximity" (Cozolino, 2006, p. 141). Furthermore, Cozolino (2006) states, "These implicit memory schema are obligatory; that is, they are automatically activated before we are even conscious of the people with whom we are about to interact" (p. 141).

or criticism” (p. 69). Additionally, Jones (2005) reports: “Secures are comfortable expressing their difficult emotions in a constructive manner by acknowledging their distress and turning to others for support and help” (p. 235).

Furthermore, studies suggest that those with secure attachment styles not only use integrative strategies during conflict but also help to reduce the other person’s distress, which could mitigate the chance for his/her attachment style to be activated (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). Moreover, "Kobak and Duemmler (1994) assert:

Conflict increases an individual’s need for emotional support from his or her attachment figure... Under such circumstances, individuals who have positive perceptions of self and others (i.e., secure persons) should engage in direct and open communication in which their partners' perspective in the conflict is recognized and discourse remains constructive and coherent (Simpson & Rholes, 1998, p. 182).

Additionally, Cozolino (2006) concludes that those with a secure attachment style have also developed “optimal sculpting of the prefrontal cortex” (p. 14). "Optimal sculpting of the pre-frontal cortex through healthy early relationships allows us to think well of others, trust others, regulate our emotions, maintain positive expectations, and utilize our intellectual and emotional intelligence in moment – to – moment problem-solving” (p.14). On the other hand, is this optimal sculpting of the prefrontal cortex enough to counteract the social learning of Conventional (Violent) Communication? This study questions whether those with secure attachments can rise above Conventional

(Violent) Communication. Nonetheless, some people might be less prone to use CVC due to their attachment style and/or experience and knowledge in conflict resolution.

Conclusion

In summary, according to current research, “Conventional (Violent) Communication” can contribute to ineffectual conflict language. Additionally, even positive, relational actions can engender ineffectual conflict language such as employing inefficient constructive and integrative strategies. The social learning influences of CVC along with a lack of training, sufficient motivation, and lack of practice in the areas of conflict resolution, relational communication, and critical and creative thinking, might thwart people’s ability to be fully engage in optimal conflict language. For these reasons, the hypothesis for the first study is as follows: H1: Secures with little or no training in conflict resolution will use more Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language during personal conflicts than those with training in conflict resolution.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The first study focused on people who have a secure attachment style and live in the United States. Via IRB approval, (Assurance #FWA00004634) professors from various disciplines at a New England University emailed a letter inviting students to participate in the study. The IRB also permitted me to send the same letter to my current and prior collegiate students from the same university.

Participants

Eighty-six people took both surveys; however, only 53 fit the criteria of having lived in the United States for 10 or more years and had secure attachments (10 males 18.87%, 43 females 81.13%). The control group was comprised of 35 participants. Participants were recruited from various majors at a North Eastern University. Participants from the control group were undergraduates who had taken anywhere from 15-123 credits, while others were currently part of a graduate program or were graduate alumni. Eight of the graduates in the control group either were in the Critical and Creative Thinking program or had received a Master's degree in that program. One graduate had a MA and a MBA, and one was in a PhD program. Due to the various levels of the participants in the control group, the analysis of the data was presented for the experimental group and the control group as well as various combinations between the

control groups. The control group was divided as follows: C1 were undergraduates with no training in conflict resolution; C2 were undergraduates who had taken 1-2 courses in conflict resolution or other relevant outside training; and C3 were graduate students who had taken 0-2 courses in conflict resolution.

Table 1. Ratio Females to Males Per/Group

Group	Females	Males
Total	43	10
Experimental Group	15	3
Total Control Group	28	7
C1	14	2
C2	5	4
C3	9	1

The experimental group was a combination of 18 participants who were either current students or alumni of a graduate program in conflict resolution. Nine of the participants were alumni. One participant was a PhD candidate and a mediator; four of the participants had received a Certificate in Conflict Resolution as well as an additional advanced degree, such as a JD, an EDU, a MSW, and a MA; the other four participants had received a Certificate in Conflict Resolution.

Procedures

Participants agreed to take two anonymous online surveys: a web-based designed survey to evaluate a person's experience in close relationships (ECR-R) and a survey created on SurveyMonkey to explore people's listening, speaking, and thinking styles during personal conflicts.

Attachment Style Questionnaire

The initial letter instructed participants to take a five-minute online attachment style questionnaire developed by R. Chris Fraley, Psychology Professor, at the University of Illinois. The questionnaire was developed specifically for identifying adult attachment styles and stayed within the questions presented in the Adult Attachment Interview [AAI] <http://www.web-research-design.net/cgi-bin/crq/crq.pl>. Dr. Fraley has been involved in extensive research regarding the reliability and validity of various attachment style surveys.⁶

Personal Conflict Questionnaire

The questions presented in the second questionnaire, regarding personal conflicts, were designed to determine the degree in which participants' speaking and listening responses during a personal conflict represented "Conventional (Violent) Communication" [CVC] and ineffectual conflict language [ICL]. The survey comprised of open-ended and multiple-choice questions (see Appendix G). This survey was available on SurveyMonkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2014attachment>.

⁶ See: Roisman, G. I., Holland, A., Fortuna, K., Fraley, R.C., Clausell, E., & Clarke, A. (2007). The adult attachment interview and self-reports of attachment style: An empirical rapprochement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2007, Vol. 92, No. 4, 678-697.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Coding

Participants' responses were coded based on whether those responses were indicative of CVC and ineffectual conflict language. Responses that demonstrate: polarized language, rights based language, justification in support of a position (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006); quick solutions/advice, moral judgments, judgmental evaluations (right/wrong, good/bad, acceptable/not acceptable, etc.), demands/orders, blaming the other for how she/he feels, thinks, or behaves (Young, 2011); unsupported generalizations presented as facts, dismissive problem-solving responses: "responses that minimize the significance of the problem" (Burlison, 2003, p. 11); verbal abuse and dismissing feelings and/or ideas (Evans, 1992, see Appendix A2), will be coded as Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language responses. Thus, a SPSS program was created, which included nine variables: aggressive/verbal abuse, orders, one way problem solving, advice, dismissing another person's thoughts or emotions, defensive, debate, avoiding, indirect communication, and communication roadblocks.

Results

H1 predicted secures with little or no training in conflict resolution would use more Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language during

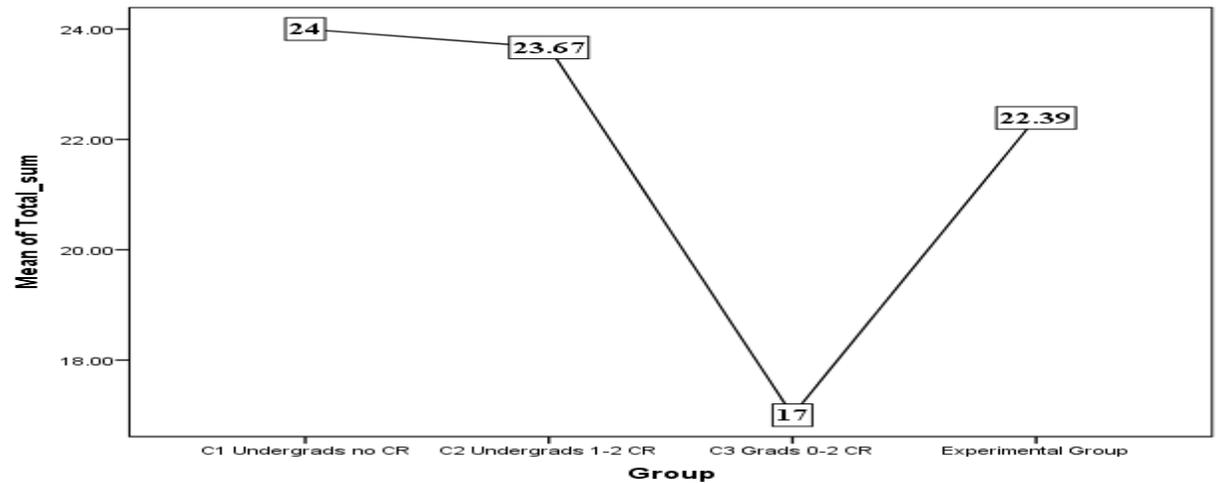
personal conflicts. As seen in Table 2, the mean sum from the group statistics revealed no significant difference resulting in a null rejection of the hypothesis. Nevertheless, the results indicate a high use of CVC and ineffectual conflict language within both groups, which supports the implications of social learning. The CVC and ICL responses from the open-ended and multiple-choice questions on the personal conflict survey were coded as follows: aggressive/verbally abusive responses, orders, one-way problem solving, advice, dismissing another person’s emotions, defensiveness, debate, avoiding, indirect communication, and communication roadblocks.

Table 2. Group Statistics CVC and ICL

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Sum	Control Group	35	21.9143	6.35874	1.07482
	Experiment CR Grads	18	22.3889	8.28989	1.95395

On the other hand, as indicated in the mean plots graph from the one-way ANOVA analysis, a significant difference resulted between the third control group, the graduate students with 0-2 courses in conflict resolution, as this group responded with less CVC and ineffectual conflict language (M= 1.7); however, this was a small group having only ten participants. Nonetheless, C2 was the smallest group, with 9 participants and that group had the second highest mean score of 23.67. The results that showed significant differences from the one-way ANOVA analysis are as follows: a large significant difference resulted between C3 and C1 (.013), C3 and C2 (.035), and less of a significant difference between C3 and the experimental group (.047); whereas, the experiment group only revealed a slight significant difference between C1 (.488).

Graph 1. CVC and ICL



Discussion

Even though the results from this study identified a strong use of ineffectual conflict language and Conventional (Violent) Communication from both groups, this does not confirm that this language negatively affects personal relationships of those with secure attachment styles. Canary and Spitzberg (1987) define a competent communicator as one who is both effective and appropriate. They contend that the sender of a message determines the effectiveness of the message; but the receiver determines the appropriateness. Thus, it is possible that some people in a society accustomed to CVC and ICL might not perceive that type of communication to be negative and a form of relational distancing. In fact, the receiver might regard CVC as appropriate. It would be interesting, however, to explore the possible reasons why C3, the control group, which was comprised of graduate students mostly from the Critical and Creative Thinking program, had significantly less CVC and ICL responses. Nonetheless, even if CVC is not

damaging a relationship, ineffectual conflict language most likely is not allowing an opportunity for fresh thinking, generative dialogue, and value creation.

Conclusion

Even though a follow up interview and more participants would have greatly helped the researcher draw more conclusions, these results prompt an interesting discussion regarding the questions of nurture and nature. A psychoanalytical perspective of those with secure attachment styles would not have theorized that social learning could have had such a strong influence. On the other hand, a rigid Behaviorists' point of view, might contend that people's environment/social learning shapes their speaking, listening, and thinking approaches. Nevertheless, to gain a better understanding of the potential for optimal conflict language a second study was necessary.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW: SECOND STUDY

The first study focused on the social learning of Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language. In this study, however, the focus is on identifying the ways in which people might already embrace the concepts of optimal conflict language even in an individualistic society such as the United States. Psychiatrist Milton Erikson reveals, “People can continually and actively re-author their lives” (Freedman & Coombs, 1996, p. 11). Freedman and Coombs (1996) also explain: “Within the new stories, people could live out new self-images, new possibilities for relationship, and new futures” (p. 16). Moreover, neurobiologists confirm that the brain can rewire itself and does so when people consistently practice a new skill and/or experience; they refer to this neuroplasticity (Goleman, 2003; Siegel, 2011).⁷ Hence, if people have the ability to choose a better conflict language than what they might have socially learned, would they choose it? To be able to address that question, a study needed to be designed to explore the positive speaking, listening, and thinking styles that people incorporate during their personal conflicts.

⁷ “By harnessing the power of awareness to strategically stimulate the brain's firing, mine site enables us to voluntarily change of firing pattern that was laid down and voluntarily” (Siegel, 2011, p. 42).

Second Study: Purpose

Identifying types of ineffectual verbal and nonverbal techniques that occur during a personal conflict is important. Nevertheless, it is just as important to explore the ways in which people already embrace verbal and nonverbal techniques that play a role in optimal conflict language. Numerous scholars from various disciplines such as conflict resolution, relational communication, critical and creative thinking, and psychology report that optimal procedures and outcomes for personal conflict are possible but typically training is necessary. Optimal conflict language can oftentimes change an escalating conflict into a de-escalating conflict. In addition, effective and appropriate communication before, during, and after a conflict can build people's confidence in their ability to engage in more positive, conflict conversations. Furthermore, the use of optimal conflict language can improve relationships. With all of these benefits, it seems that people who have engaged in optimal conflict language would be more apt to use it in most all of their conflicts. Additionally, according to the attachment theory, those with secure attachments might have more potential to embrace and use optimal conflict language. If secures already have a proclivity to engage in constructive and integrative strategies then they might be impervious to the social norms of CVC.

Second Study: Problem

A caregiver's attunement with a child might provide him with a sense of love and security, which leads him to use constructive and integrative strategies. Nevertheless, optimal conflict language might require more training. Additionally, Conventional (Violent) Communication could override people's motivation to use optimal conflict

language during personal conflicts even those with secure attachments. Due to the wide spread use of CVC in the United States, it is even questionable whether those with secure attachments and training in conflict resolution could resist the temptations of conventional violent language during personal conflicts.

It would seem, however, to become well versed and fluent in optimal conflict language people would need interdisciplinary training in the areas of conflict resolution, relational communication, critical and creative thinking, and possibly awareness of some of the germane constructs from psychology. It is predicted that for some people, optimal conflict language could look like a completely new language, a language that they are not fluent in, and a language that their friends, family, and/or romantic partner might not know how to speak. Likewise, they might fear that this language would not work; people would take advantage of them; they would lose respect; and people would gain power over or against them more easily during personal conflicts. All of these concerns are valid. Therefore, the second study will explore the degree to which those with secure attachments use optimal conflict language during personal conflicts.

Defining Optimal Conflict Language

Optimal conflict language [OCL] is a language that allows people to speak their truths nonviolently by sharing their interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns in a nonviolent manner (Rosenberg, 2003/2005; Young, 2011). Additionally, OCL is a language that generates fresh thinking and new ideas to augment creative win – win solutions (Bohm, 2005 & Isaacs, 1999). Furthermore, positive, nonviolent conversing during a conflict can change how people perceive conflict (Canary & Lakey, 2013).

When a conflict surfaces and people are positive, supportive, and nonviolent before, during, and after the conflict conversation, and find solutions that make them both happy, this can create positive views of conflict. Imagine taking a bite out of a piece of fruit that you have never tasted and then experiencing it to be incredibly delicious. The positive experience would make you want to take another bite. An optimal conflict conversation and outcome can be a similar experience. Imagine having a personal conflict and engaging in a positive, compassionate, non-violent discussion. Next, imagine finding fun and exciting solutions that make you and the other person happy. If this were a highly enjoyable experience, you would be happy to experience another conflict and take another conflict bite. This section offers insights regarding the potential for optimal conflict language, and guidance on engaging in optimal conflict language. It all starts with positive thinking.

Positive Thinking

Many studies attest to the benefits of positive thinking. Positive thinking helps people to be “flexible, creative, integrative, and open-minded” (Zeigler-Hill, 2013, p. 135; Goleman, 2003; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987; Isen, 2001).⁸ These positive thinking dispositions also assist integrative conflict strategies, reflective and generative

⁸ “... many studies found, using a variety of affect inductions in a variety of ways of measuring creativity and creative problem-solving, the positive affect facilitates creativity, cognitive flexibility, innovative responding, and openness to information” (Isen, 2001, p. 76). “People in whom positive affect has been induced tend, more than controls, to take a problem-solving approach to interpersonal problems and disputes, and come up with the kind of solution that involves thinking creatively about how to obtain the most for both sides” (Isen, 2001, p. 77).

dialogue (Isaacs, 1999), and nonviolent language. Furthermore, positive emotions can surface when people are able to speak in positive, nonviolent ways. Moreover, positive emotions increase people's attention and creative thinking (Fredrickson, 2004). Thus, optimal conflict language has three stages that help to maximize positive thinking. Skipping a stage might result in premature solutions, escalated emotions, or a form of hypercompetitiveness such as described in the first study.

Stage One: Broaching a Conflict Conversation

An emotionally difficult aspect of conflict revolves around initiating the conversation. If it starts in an aggressive, volatile way, it could negatively affect not only the process and outcome, but also the relationship. On the other hand, if the conflict conversation begins in an effective and non-violent manner, it could potentially lead to an optimal outcome and more importantly, develop a stronger, more connected relationship. This section describes a way in which people can broach a conversation in a non-violent manner to help the involved parties express an appropriate balance of compassion, empathy, and respect for the other person as well as for themselves. For this to take place, five steps are recommended: (1) reflective dialogue/metacognition (Bohm, 2004; Isaacs, 1999), (2) a soft emotion start (Green, 2008; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007), (3) a small, neutral, specific observation (Rosenberg, 2003/2005; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007), (4) a positive "we-statement" (Rosenberg, 2003/2005), and (5) an invitation to encourage the other person in the conflict to share his/her interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns (Ury, 2007).

Step one, reflective dialogue/metacognition. David Bohm (2005) and William Isaacs' (1999) encourage generative dialogue; however, they assert that generative dialogue starts with listening. To start with listening, people first need to listen to and explore their thoughts and feelings before they speak. Fisher and Shapiro (2005), for example, put forth the concepts of the five core concerns: affiliation, appreciation, autonomy, status, and role. As they explain, when a person feels as if one or more of his core concerns are not being met then conflict could occur. Instead of starting with a shout out of those negative emotions or start a "topic-conflict" discussion that would not completely address crucial underlying elements such as a person's core concerns (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007), the person instead would metacognitively reflect on the bigger core issues of his/her thoughts and emotions. When people listen to the deeper meaning of their thoughts and emotions they have the potential to express their interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns in a way that does not attack the other person (Goleman, 2003).

Step two, a soft emotion. After the metacognitive process takes place, and people have a more objective understanding of their thoughts and emotions, they might find it easier to initiate a conflict conversation with a soft emotion. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) and the Internal Family Systems therapy (Green, 2008) recommend starting a conflict conversation with a soft emotion. By starting with a soft emotion such as, "Part of me is worried...", a person can begin a conflict conversation with a nonviolent approach. The initial practice of metacognition and mindfulness can help people understand the origins of their emotional reactions. In addition, people are less likely to perceive this soft-emotion-start as an attack. Nevertheless, it is not enough to state a soft emotion; an explanation of the issue/situation helps the conversation to remain positive.

Step three, a small, neutral, specific observation. Describing a situation in a neutral, specific, small manner serves two essential purposes. First, it might decrease the emotional intensity and/or negative perception of the person who wants to initiate the conversation. By eliminating drama adjectives, negative and blaming “you- statements,” or words of self-righteousness, people’s perception of the event/situation might simultaneously become smaller and more neutral. Drama, negativity, and escalated emotions activate the amygdala; the area of the brain that activates fear and aggression and triggers the flight and flight response in the brain stem (Goleman, 2003). Describing a situation in a small, soft, neutral way is more likely to activate the left frontal cortex; the left frontal cortex is the area of the brain involved with creative and positive thinking (Goleman, 2003). Second, this approach is less likely to activate the other person’s amygdala. In these descriptive observations, people avoid stating judgments and/or critical slams. Rosenberg (2003) and Wilmot and Hocker (2007) concur that people should share their feelings but share them in a soft, nonviolent, non-attacking manner. Wilmot and Hocker further recommend that the conflict conversation should start small. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2007): “Rather than making huge, grand gestures, conflict is reduced or prevented by learning to look for ways to make intensity lessen, threats vanish, and complex issues ultimately more simple” (p. 328). When people start a conflict conversation in an intense and large way it is like throwing bricks. Typically, if you throw a brick at someone, he might throw it back at you (attack-attack). He also could decide to defend himself from the incoming brick (attack-defend). Another option would be to withdraw, walk away from your attack (attack-withdraw). If people, however, would like to find a win-win solution, the attack-collaborate combination does

not typically occur (unless someone is highly trained in nonviolent collaboration). Thus, when a conflict conversation starts with escalated, negative emotions and large accusations, optimal relational outcomes are less likely to take place. If, for example, a wife says to her husband, in an exasperated tone and with a display of contempt, “You never help; I have to do everything; you are so selfish”; this would be an example of a large start as well as a judgmental accusation. Instead, by combining interpersonal conflict recommendations from Green (2008), Rosenberg (2003), and Wilmot and Hocker (2007), people can initiate an optimal conflict conversation by choosing to start the conversation with less intensity and negativity. These scholars contend that when people share a neutral, small, descriptive observation as well as a soft emotion to broach a conflict conversation it will be easier for the other person to hear. With this approach, people are able to not only state how they feel, but also express their feelings in a nonviolent manner. For example, a person could broach a conflict conversation by saying something such as, “When I was alone for 30 minutes in the downtown parking lot last night I started to feel scared.” Another approach would be to say something such as “Part of me was concerned when I didn’t know when I would be picked up tonight. In both of these examples, there was no blaming or scolding “you- statements,” and no large accusations.

Step four, a positive “we-statement.” Rosenberg (2003/2005) believes that to be nonviolent in one’s explanation of a problem, people need to share why broaching this particular conflict conversation is relevant and important to those who are involved. A “we-statement” shares a larger notion of what you want for the relationship; it can remind people that they are in an interdependent relationship. If you have a relationship with

another person, you do not have an individual conflict. Therefore, you have a “we-conflict,” not a “me-conflict.” Here are a few examples of positive “we statements”:

- “I want us to have a great relationship where we feel comfortable discussing our concerns.”
- “I want us to feel secure in our relationship.”

Step five, an invitation to share. Even though Rosenberg (2003/2005) recommends that people include a request after stating a positive “we statement,” I worry that in a hypercompetitive society, people’s request will turn into demands. Instead, I recommend that people follow Ury’s (2007) notion of asking an open-ended question that will encourage the other person to share his/her interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns. For example, a person could say “However, I want to hear your interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns.” Alternatively, “What are your thoughts?”

If this stage goes well, the other person will focus his or her comments back to the positive “we statement” as opposed to defending himself or becoming aggressive about the feeling and/or observation that were put forth. Moreover, if the initial speech act as described above goes well then all parties involved in the conflict conversation would have suspended their judgment, avoided CVC and other ineffectual conflict language, and would be ready to begin the second stage.

Stage Two: Brainstorming and Generative Dialogue

When people acknowledge their own and others thoughts and emotions with a genuine display of empathy and compassion, it is easier to proceed to a fun brainstorming session. In a positive and productive brainstorming session, people would accept all ideas

with no rebuttal; they would allow time for silly, goofy, fun ideas, as well as ideas that weave together everyone's interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns. Additionally, Bohm (2005) and Isaacs' (1999) vision of generative dialogue is included in this stage. Generative dialogue is about inspiring "fresh thinking." Instead of people reporting to each other on what they already know such as prior memories, knowledge, experiences, and/or old feelings ("felts"), people would engage in plural questions and tentative comments of curiosity. Brainstorming and generative dialogue help people expand their thinking in a fun, nonviolent manner.

Stage Three: Decisions and Reassessing

The third stage includes the collaborative choosing of win-win solutions. After generating many integrative ideas, people would group their ideas into categories, narrow their choices, and choose one or more of the options. It is important to note that even though they are choosing one or more of the options, the goal is to remain flexible about the chosen options. To keep generative dialogue going, people would continue to have an open dialogue so they could add new ideas and/or reassess the solution(s) if new and better ideas or information evolved. Once people have experienced this type of conflict conversation, it would seem that it would be as enjoyable and rewarding as biting into a new, delicious piece of fruit. Even though some might see this as a new language and possibly not feasible, a myriad of empirical support suggests that optimal conflict language is not only recommended, but also attainable.

CHAPTER 6
LITERATURE REVIEW: SECOND STUDY

Optimal Conflict Language: Theoretical Perspectives

I have put forth that optimal conflict language is the combination of three conversation stages. People might view this optimal conflict language, as described in the prior section, as a relatively new approach to relational conflict conversations. Young (2011) posits, “To date, nonviolence has not been adequately conceptualized or emphasized as a positive, distinct construct within either psychology or U.S. culture” (p. 118). Due to the newness of this construct, without sufficient training, it would seem difficult for those even with a secure attachment style to escape the social acquisition of “Conventional (Violent) Communication.” Nevertheless, in this section, I will provide empirical data to support the value of and potential for optimal conflict language.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution theorists provide copious support for the use of optimal conflict language. Additionally, knowledge and training in conflict resolution can possibly mitigate the social learning of CVC. Most scholars in conflict resolution assert that optimal outcomes in conflict take place when the parties involved reach mutually beneficial solutions. More importantly, optimal conflict signifies that trust was transacted and value was created due to the process and outcome of the conversation (Bultena,

Ramser, Tilker, 2013; Canary & Lakey, 2008; Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Coser, 1956; Cupach & Canary, 1997; Del Collins, 2005; Deutsch, 1973; Fisher & Brown, 1988; Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Sebenius, 2000; Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999; Ury, 1993 & 2007; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007).

Expanding the pie. Creating value is a process of “*expanding the pie.*” When people use integrative strategies, they have the potential to reach not only a mutually beneficial solution, but also solutions that “expand the pie” (Fisher & Brown, 1998; Lum, et. al., 2003; Ury, 1993). Expanding the pie/creating value occurs when all parties involved have obtained a better deal/solution than they had originally tried to achieve. Imagine a 5-inch pie and then splitting that pie in different size ratios. The ratios could be something such as 90-10; 70-30; 50-50, etc. Now imagine taking the 5-inch pie and making it into a 10-inch pie. Now when you begin to divide the pie, it is already more pie per ratio than the 5-inch pie. Even with similar divisions, as mentioned with the 5-inch pie, with a 10-inch pie, everyone would still receive more pie. Ten percent of pie from a 10-inch pie, for example, is double the size of ten percent from a 5-inch pie. Expanding the pie most often takes place when people brainstorm multiple ideas and engage in generative dialogue. At least ten or more minutes of brainstorming and generative dialogue are essential for people to achieve optimal conflict language. Most brainstorming procedures include the following guidelines: accept all ideas; be open to any suggestions; make time for silly, fun, offbeat, and even goofy ideas; allow extra time for more ideas to surface (silence is beneficial and can allow time for creative thinking); produce a minimum of 5 to 10 more ideas than you think is feasible; facilitate the

conversation so the goal is kept in sight; allow everyone a voice and the necessary time and encouragement to create new ideas; and generate as many feasible and non-feasible ideas as possible. The longer a brainstorming session continues, the greater the potential for the “pie” to expand. Furthermore, brainstorming possible solutions can mitigate defensiveness (Gibb, 1998). In addition, fun, silly, goofy brainstorming can lighten the mood, activate the left frontal cortex, which promotes creative thinking, and help people feel more connected to each other.

It is difficult to imagine, though, that people could have a natural proclivity during a personal conflict to engage in value creation, effective brainstorming, and generative dialogue. Nevertheless, people can learn these skills. By cultivating the knowledge and recommendations from the conflict resolution scholars, people might feel more comfortable being authentic, genuine, and transparent in a non-violent manner.

Relational Communication

Relational communication theorists also encourage the use of optimal conflict language. Relational communication theorists promote positive, cooperative, and nonviolent speaking and listening styles, which also minimize CVC and ICL.

Optimal speaking styles. The speaking style that is most conducive for optimal conflict language is assertive-collaboration. People may also perceive cooperative leadership, assertive-competitive, and aggressive-collaborative speaking styles appropriate depending on the situation. These three styles, however, might not help people advance through all of the optimal conflict language stages in the way that assertive-collaborative speaking has the potential to do.

Assertive-collaborative language. This speaking style displays respect and concern for others' perspectives as well as their own. Assertive-collaborative speaking indicates that all involved in the conflict will share their interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns. The language is "we-oriented" and people brainstorm to find solutions that are mutually beneficial for both. People can also use this speaking style for optimal conflict language as long as the other people involved perceive the language as appropriate, positive, and nonviolent.

Cooperative leadership. This speaking style takes place when leaders, (e.g. the person with designated or reverent power) encourage and take into consideration input from others. Even though the leader makes the final decisions, the focus is "we-oriented." Additionally, this speaking style includes brainstorming and the leader revisits the solutions to see if they are working well for those involved. This speaking style is representative of nonviolent communication when the receivers deem the speaking style and power level as appropriate.

Assertive-competitive. This speaking style can also be "we-orientation." A firefighter, for example, can tell people to leave the building; a mother can tell her child to grab her hand before she crosses the street. In both of these examples, the person is giving an order to help other people. This style is appropriate when there is an emergency or safety issue. On the other hand, people can view the assertive-competitive speaking style as inappropriate, if the receiver feels collaboration and optimal conflict language were feasible.

Aggressive-collaborative. It is possible for people to collaborate while speaking with aggressive non-verbal language such as with a loud tone of voice. Sometimes this is

a cultural matter; if the other person feels as if the aggressive non-verbal language is appropriate and does not view the speaking style as hypercompetitive or abusive then this type of language would not negatively affect some of the stages of optimal conflict.

Optimal listening styles. Besides optimal speaking styles, communication theorists share their empirical data regarding positive, cooperative, constructive, and nonviolent listening techniques (see Appendix E). Several listening styles are essential for optimal conflict language such as active listening (Weisglass, 1990), empathy listening (Egan, 1998), engaged listening (Duck & McMahan, 2012), relational listening (Wood, 2008), authentic listening (Stone, et. al., 1999), and listening that displays open-mindedness, suspension of judgment, and willingness to consider multiple ideas (Fisher & Shairo, 2005; Stone, et. al., 1999; Ury, 1993; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). These listening styles improve people's perception of conflict, aid in the management and outcomes of a personal conflict, and strengthen relational bonds (Cupach & Canary, 1997; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Moreover, these listening styles are required in all three stages of the optimal conflict language.

Critical and Creative Thinking

Critical and creative thinking theorists offer additional support for the three stages of optimal conflict language. Likewise, the edification of critical and creative thinking can help to minimize CVC and ICL. Critical and creative thinking have an enormous influence on the ways in which people speak, listen, and behave (Chaffee, 1999; Freeman & DeWolf, 1992; Paul, 1993; Tishman, et. al., 1995). According to Paul (1993), critical thinking is "a unique kind of purposeful thinking in which the thinker systematically and

habitually actively develops traits such as intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, fair-mindedness, intellectual empathy, and intellectual courage” (Paul, 1993, p. 21; See Appendix F). The cultivation of these thinking dispositions is necessary for optimal conflict language. Tishman, Jay, and Perkins (1995), claim: “Thinking dispositions are abiding tendencies toward distinct patterns of thinking behaviors” (p. 39). They also claim that these thinking dispositions can be cultivated. Moreover, when people cultivate the dispositions of a critical and creative thinker they simultaneously foster essential dispositions for productive and effective conflict resolution because creative problem solving is a key element in value creation, expanding the pie, and flexible solutions.

Critical and creative thinking are also key components of reflective dialogue/metacognition and generative dialogue. “Metacognition,” according to Haller, Child, and Walberg (1988), “is generally used to refer to the awareness, monitoring, and regulating of one’s cognitive processes” (p. 5). Osborn, Jones, and Stein (1985), have also described metacognition as “individuals’ knowledge of, and control over their own thinking and learning” (p. 11). Generative dialogue, on the other hand, is about “fresh thinking” (Isaacs, 1999), and the creation of new ideas and solutions that remain open to new insights (Bohm, 2005; Isaacs, 1999). Del Collins (2005) theorizes “... conflicts require a frame of reference that recognizes pluralism and interconnectedness” (p. 266). These features are fundamental elements of reflective and generative dialogue. Moreover, reflective and generative dialogue, as well as critical and creative thinking is central elements of optimal conflict language. Nevertheless, to engage in reflective and generative dialogue as put forth by David Bohm (2005) and William Isaacs (1999) knowledge, training, practice, and motivation are necessary.

Two other aspects that enhance people's critical and creative thinking capabilities are positive emotions and positive affect. Studies have demonstrated that positive affect increases cognitive abilities such as problem-solving, and innovative and flexible thinking; it also decreases defensiveness (Isen, 2001). Moreover, Fredrickson (2004) states, "...when positive emotions are in ample supply, people take off. They become generative, creative, resilient, ripe with possibility and beautifully complex" (p. 1375).

Conclusion

These theories clarify the need for critical and creative thinking during personal conflicts and confirm why critical and creative thinking skills and dispositions are a vital part of optimal conflict language and resolution. The combination of optimal conflict resolution procedures, proficiency in critical and creative thinking, and competence in effective and appropriate verbal and nonverbal language are all part of the actualization of optimal conflict language. Speaking habits that convey the language of optimal conflict resolution can produce "fresh thinking," generate creative ideas and/or solutions, and improve relationships. If those with secure attachment styles are known to respond positively to people that are close to them and employ constructive strategies to maintain and/or strengthen their close relationships⁹ then it would follow that secures would be most interested and motivated to implement optimal conflict language.

⁹ "That is, secure individuals forego the impulse to distance themselves from the partner, and instead react with constructive, proximity-promoting acts—they reduce distance between the self and the partner and attempt to solve interpersonal problems by asking outsiders for advice, talking things over with the partner, suggesting ways of resolving incompatibilities, or modifying the circumstance from which interpersonal problems have arisen" (Gaines, et al. p. 111).

Therefore, this study sets out to identify the degree to which those with a secure attachment style engage in optimal conflict language. The second study consists of five predictions. H1: Both groups will exhibit constructive strategies. H2: The experimental group will exhibit more integrative strategies than the control group. H3: The experimental group will ask more “root-oriented” problem-solving questions than the control group. H4: Both groups will choose the “Optimal Conflict Language,” when it is provided in the multiple-choice answers on the questionnaire. Last, H5: Both groups will respond with more CVC and ICL responses than OCL.

CHAPTER 7

METHODS AND RESULTS

Methods

The first study's methods, participants, and procedures were also applicable for the second study. The personal conflict questionnaire was designed to gauge CVC and ICL as well as the positive strategies such as constructive and integrative strategies, brainstorming, “root-oriented” problem-solving techniques, and optimal conflict language (see Appendix G).

Data Coding

For this study, a second SPSS chart was created. The control and experimental groups are the same from the first study; however, the variables were different. The optimal conflict language responses were coded as OCLmc if they were from the multiple-choice answers and optimal conflict language responses that were generated from the open-ended questions were coded as OCLoe. The constructive strategies were grouped and coded as active listening (AL), empathy listening (EL), respectful listening (RL), calm, supportive, and defusing. The integrative strategies were coded as (Int). Last, the other two variables that were included to represent optimal conflict language were brainstorming and “root-oriented” problem-solving questions.

Results

The second study consisted of five predictions regarding participants' use of constructive and integrative strategies, root-oriented problem solving inquires, brainstorming initiatives, optimal conflict language choices, and overall combined use of optimal conflict language, "Conventional (Violent) Communication," and ineffectual conflict language.

Constructive Strategies

H1: Both groups will exhibit constructive strategies.

Table 3. Group Statistics: Constructive Strategies

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Sum	Control Group	35	7.3429	5.62004	.94996
	Experiment Grads with CR	18	8.7778	5.49391	1.29493

The group statistics confirm the hypothesis that both groups exhibited constructive strategies: control group (M=7.3429), experimental group (M=8.7778). The variables included for the constructive strategies' analysis were: calm, defuse, supportive, active listening, respectful listening, and empathy listening, along with responses that were coded as optimal conflict language, which participants wrote in the open-ended responses.

Table 4. Total Sum One-way ANOVA: Constructive Strategies

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
C1 Undergrads no CR	16	6.6250	5.41449	1.35362	3.7398	9.5102	1.00	23.00
C2 Undergrads 1-2 CR	9	5.6667	5.47723	1.82574	1.4565	9.8768	.00	17.00
C3 Grads 0-2 CR	10	9.3000	6.21915	1.96667	4.8511	13.7489	2.00	22.00
Experiment Grads/ CR	18	9.1667	5.22719	1.23206	6.5672	11.7661	2.00	20.00
Total	53	7.8302	5.56685	.76467	6.2958	9.3646	.00	23.00

In the ANOVA test, however, the constructive strategies presented by the graduate level students in the C3 control group (M=9.3000) and experimental group (M=9.1667) resulted in more use of constructive strategies than both of the undergraduate groups: C1 (M=6.6250) and C2 (M=5.667). Additionally, the LSD multiple comparison analysis displayed (.235) significant difference between C3 and C1 as well as a (.158) difference between C3 and C2. Concomitantly, the experimental group revealed (.186) significant difference with C1 and (.127) difference with C2, revealing a possible connection between education, age, critical and created thinking, and/or conflict resolution training and the use of constructive strategies during personal conflicts. Nonetheless, even though both groups offered constructive responses, the results also show that only a limited number of the participants' responses fit the criteria for constructive strategies.

Integrative Strategies

H2: The experiment group, the group with graduate training in conflict resolution, will exhibit more integrative strategies.

Table 5. Group Statistics: Integrative Strategies

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Sum Control Group	35	.5429	1.03875	.17558
Experiment Grads with CR	18	.6667	.68599	.16169

The second hypothesis predicted an increase in integrative strategies from the experimental group; nonetheless, an independent t-test resulted in no significant difference between the control and experimental group resulting in a null rejection. Even

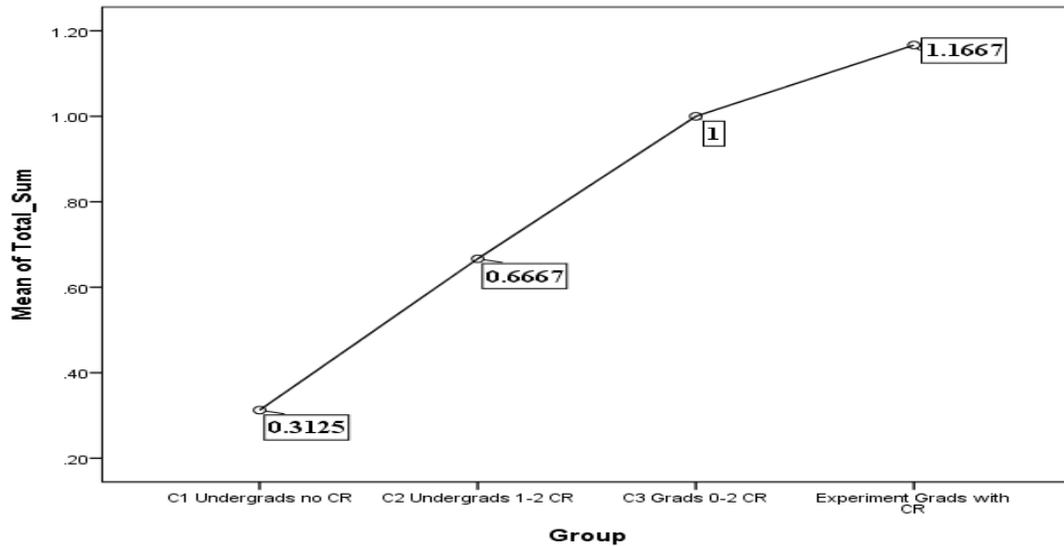
with the additional calculations after adding in the brainstorming variable, this only produced a slight significant difference of .421.

Table 6. Group Statistics: Integrative Strategies + Brainstorming

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total	Control Group	35	.6571	1.34914	.22805
Sum	Experiment Grads with CR	18	1.0556	.99836	.23532

Nevertheless, Graph 2, shows from the LSD multiple comparison chart revealed a significant difference between C3 and C1 (.202) as well as the experiment group and C1. C1 was the only group that did not have any training in conflict resolution, which might indicate that conflict resolution training could prompt people to use more integrative strategies. Nonetheless, the overall use of integrative strategies was small. All of the control groups' use of integrative strategies was below 1.0 (M=.6571). Likewise, the experimental group only fared slightly better with the mean sum of 1.0556. The limited number of integrative strategies could be due to the questions in the personal conflict survey. More questions in the survey and/or a follow-up interview might have helped to reveal more integrative responses.

Graph 2. Means Plots: Integrative Strategies + Brainstorming



Root-Oriented Problem Solving Questions

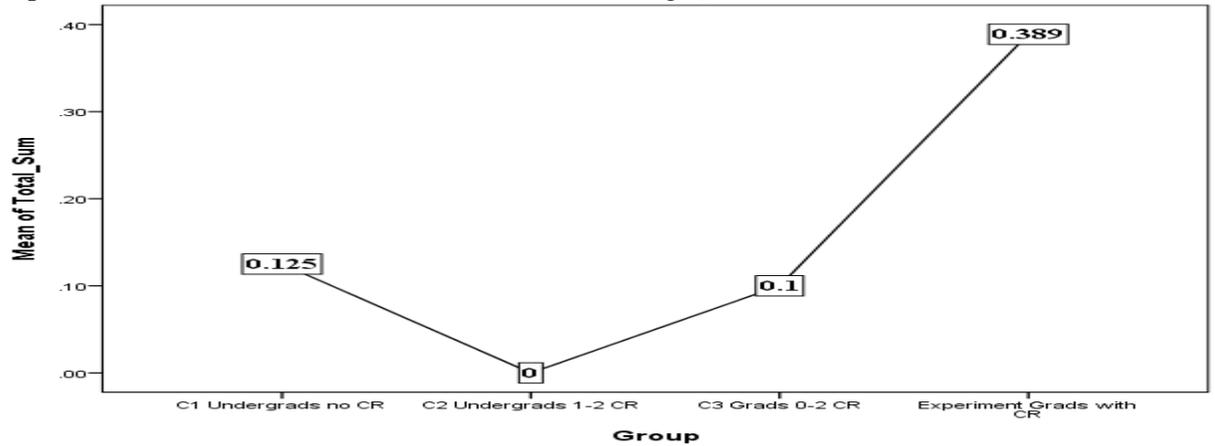
H3: The group with graduate training in conflict resolution, the experimental group, will ask more “root-oriented” problem-solving questions than the control group.

Table 7. Group Statistics: Root-Oriented Problem Solving Questions

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Sum Control Group	35	.1429	.42997	.07268
Experiment Grads with CR	18	.2778	.57451	.13541

The analysis confirmed a positive correlation between training in conflict resolution and the tendency to ask root-oriented questions. Even though participants only responded with a small number of root-oriented problem-solving questions in the open-ended responses, there was still a significant difference between the control subgroups compared to the experimental group as seen in Graph 3. Nonetheless, all of these mean totals are less than one.

Graph 3. Means Plots: Root-Oriented Problem Solving Questions



Optimal Conflict Language: Multiple Choice Options

H4: Both groups will choose the “Optimal Conflict Language” when it is provided in the multiple choice answers on the questionnaire. Questions 18 and 20 were created purposely to include optimal conflict language options. Question 18 from the personal conflict survey asked the participants the following question: When in a personal conflict, do you tend to: (Check all that apply.) (1)“Say exactly what you are feeling even if it’s an escalated emotion”; (2)“Not discuss how you are feeling”; (3) “*Start by saying a soft emotion such as, “I’m a little concerned.”*”; (4)“Tell the other person what he/she did wrong”; (5)“*Explain in a small, specific, non-judgmental manner what you observed*”; (6)“*Ask the other person to share his/her feelings and/or concerns*”; and/or “Other.” Responses 3, 5, and 6 (they were not in italics on the survey) represented the optimal conflict language choices. For calculation purposes, when a participant chose an optimal conflict language response I calculated that as a point. Thus, three points were available for question 18.

Likewise, in question 20, one of the multiple choice options was an example of the first stage of optimal conflict language, “How to broach a conflict conversation.”

Q20: Someone that you are close to is late again and now you both will be late for an event. Would you say...? (1) “I’m sick of you always being late. Don’t you care about how I’m feeling?” (2) “Late again! Thanks for caring.”; (3) “When you are always late it makes me angry and then neither of us enjoy the rest of the night.”; (4) *“Yesterday I was a little concerned because I wanted to be at the event 15 minutes early so we could get a good seat. I want us to enjoy going to events together. What are your thoughts?”* or “Other.” The first multiple-choice response is a “you” statement indicative of verbal abuse. The second multiple-choice response represents sarcasm and indicative of indirect verbal abuse. The third multiple-choice response option is also a blaming “you” statement and includes a large accusation. The last multiple-choice option (the one in italics) was the optimal conflict language response as described in the optimal conflict language section. This choice included four parts of the OCL first speech act: a small, neutral, specific description of the event, a soft emotion, a positive “we” statement, and an open-ended question to invite the other person to share his/her interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns. Because this response included four parts, if a participant checked this choice it counted it as four points. Some participants, however, wrote their own response in the “Other” option. Either way, I calculated a point for each phrase or sentence that represented one of the four parts to the optimal conflict speech act. Thus, seven points for questions 18 and 20 were available.

Surprisingly, the hypothesis proved to be a null rejection. Interestingly, the subgroup C1 achieved the highest mean sum 3.8750. Even more surprisingly, the experiment group had the lowest mean sum 2.889.

Table 8. Multiple Comparisons: Optimal Conflict Language Multiple Choice Options 7 Possible Points

LSD Total Sum

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
C1 Undergrads no CR	C2 Undergrads 1-2 CR	.09722	.95365	.919	-1.8192	2.0137
	C3 Grads 0-2 CR	.07500	.92263	.936	-1.7791	1.9291
	Experiment Grads with CR	.98611	.78640	.216	-.5942	2.5664
C2 Undergrads 1-2 CR	C1 Undergrads no CR	-.09722	.95365	.919	-2.0137	1.8192
	C3 Grads 0-2 CR	-.02222	1.05161	.983	-2.1355	2.0911
	Experiment Grads with CR	.88889	.93438	.346	-.9888	2.7666
C3 Grads 0-2 CR	C1 Undergrads no CR	-.07500	.92263	.936	-1.9291	1.7791
	C2 Undergrads 1-2 CR	.02222	1.05161	.983	-2.0911	2.1355
	Experiment Grads with CR	.91111	.90270	.318	-.9029	2.7252
Experiment Grads/ CR	C1 Undergrads no CR	-.98611	.78640	.216	-2.5664	.5942
	C2 Undergrads 1-2 CR	-.88889	.93438	.346	-2.7666	.9888
	C3 Grads 0-2 CR	-.91111	.90270	.318	-2.7252	.9029

Without a follow-up interview, it is impossible to surmise why participants did and did not choose the optimal conflict language choices. Hearing their feedback would have greatly increased the richness of the data. Therefore, no conclusions can be made from the fourth hypothesis.

Comparison ICL and OCL

H5: Both groups combined will respond with more CVC and ICL answers and comments than OCL. Table 9 displays the overall totals as well as the group totals.

Table 9. CVC/ICL and OCL Response Totals

	CVC/ICL Responses	Participants	OCL Responses
Totals	1170	53	653
Experiment group	403	18	245
Control group	767	35	408
C1	348	16	175
C2	213	9	91
C3	170	10	142

The data confirms the prediction for the fifth hypothesis. Table 9 displays the breakdown of optimal conflict language responses [OCL], which included constructive and integrative strategies, root-oriented questions, brainstorming, and optimal conflict language responses from the multiple-choice options, and open-ended questions. The chart also shows the results for CVC and ICL responses, which included aggressive/verbally abusive responses, orders, one-way problem solving, advice, dismissing another person's emotions, defensiveness, debate, avoiding, and direct communication, and communication roadblocks. Both the experimental and control groups provided more CVC and ICL responses compared to the optimal conflict language. Additionally, all of the control subgroups displayed more CVC and ICL responses compared to the OCL responses.

Similarly, Table 10 displays the total number of optimal conflict language responses as well as the total number of CVC and ICL responses from all 53 participants. The control group is separated into its subgroups: C1, C2, and C3. Table 10 also displays the calculated differences between each participant's OCL responses compared to their CVC/ICL responses.

Table 10. OCL and CVC/ICL Individual Totals and Differences

C1	OCL	ICL	Total
	9	24	-15
	8	26	-18
	11	20	-9
	7	23	-16
	8	19	-11
	3	28	-25
	28	18	10
	10	26	-16
	3	36	-33
	6	27	-21
	15	28	-13
	10	15	-5
	17	20	-3
	17	25	-8
	16	27	-11
	7	22	-15
C2	13	29	-16
	12	31	-19
	1	28	-27
	24	10	14
	11	26	-15
	2	34	-32
	18	17	1
	1	25	-24
	9	13	-4
C3	6	20	-14
	13	17	-4
	16	19	-3
	19	16	3
	5	23	-18
	24	15	9
	28	13	15
	20	13	7
	5	19	-14
	6	15	-9
Experimental Group			
	17	11	6
	6	19	-13
	20	15	5
	19	15	4
	17	34	-17
	10	15	-5
	5	32	-27
	18	28	-10
	14	26	-12
	10	12	-2
	18	19	-1
	22	22	0
	7	19	-12
	32	20	12
	9	43	-34
	9	27	-18
	2	21	-19
	10	25	-15

Table 10 also offers interesting insights. First, optimal conflict language exceeded ineffectual conflict language from only one participant in the control subgroup C1 (28/18), one participant in C2 (24/10), two participants in C3 (24/15 and 28/13), and four participants in the experiment group (17/11, 20/15, 19/15, and 32/20). With more participants in all of the subgroups as well as the experimental group, the ratios might be different.

Second, it is also of interest to examine the maximum numbers of CVC and ICL responses. For example, the following is a calculation of the highest number of CVC and ICL responses from the Personal Conflict Questionnaire. The undergraduates with no training in conflict resolution, C1, had eight participants that responded with 25 or more CVC and ICL responses (25, 26, 26, 27, 27, 28, 28, and 36) with 36 responses being the highest sum count for that group. The undergraduates with 1-2 courses or relevant training in conflict resolution, C2, had six participants respond with 25 or more CVC and ICL responses (25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 34) with the highest sum count being 34 for this group. Interestingly, the graduate sub-group, C3, did not have any participants in their group that provided 24 or more CVC and ICL responses. The largest number of CVC and ICL responses was 23; nevertheless, that was a small sub-group of only having ten participants. Surprisingly, the experimental group had seven participants that wrote over 24 CVC and ICL responses (25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 34, and 43) with the highest sum count being 43.

Again, without a follow-up interview it is difficult to deduce an accurate understanding of the participants' CVC and ICL responses. The participant in the experiment group wrote a comment that seems to indicate a notion of being proud of

passive – aggressive responses. For example, Q6 asks: Write a few sentences detailing how you would tell someone close to you the following if this represents how you feel: I'm sick and tired of doing all the work around the house while you just do what makes you happy. One participant in the experiment group, the one that had 43 CVC and ICL responses, wrote:

First, I would wait till my significant other was doing a solitary relaxing activity like watching TV or playing videogames. Then I would begin to loudly and angrily clean the house, trying to interrupt him as much as possible. When he complains about me vacuuming in front of the TV, I will proceed to pick a fight about how he never cleans, and thus can't complain about when and where I decide to clean. Passive aggression at its finest.

Initially, I considered the response might be a joke. Nonetheless, Q8 asked, In what ways do you speak and/or listen differently or the same during a personal conflict compared to your parents, siblings, romantic partner, and/or close friends? The same participant responded by saying, *“Despite having a degree in Dis Res I am utterly terrified of confrontation in my personal life. I know better but I stick to my old patterns of wildly non-productive behavior in my own personal conflicts.”* In addition, this participant did not choose any of the optimal conflict language options in questions 18 and 20. It is problematic though to decipher with such a small group size whether other people with training in conflict resolution would offer similar responses regarding their personal conflicts. Moreover, this participant did not reveal any constructive or integrative strategies so it is possible that the person does not actually have a secure attachment style. Interestingly though, many of the responses resembled the description

of an insecure, avoidant – dismissive attachment style. Thus, another problem with the data revolves around whether the participants accurately and honestly answered the attachment style questionnaire, and if so, whether they honestly revealed their attachment style on the personal conflict survey. On the other hand, no responses for Q6 from any of the 53 participants fully represented optimal conflict language; so maybe their attachment style was correctly assessed. For example, one participant wrote that she would reflect on her feelings first before she spoke, which received a positive mark for engaging in metacognition. However, after engaging in a metacognitive thought process she proceeded to use CVC by describing that she would state a large description of all the chores that bothered her and then concluded with a statement explaining what the other person should do to meet her needs (ICL: premature solution and “I-oriented”).

Nonetheless, one undergraduate student, who had taken COMSTU280 Relational Conflict and Negotiation, wrote the optimal conflict language response that I had taught in that course. That participant wrote, *“I'm starting to feel a little concerned, because yesterday after work i had to clean the kitchen from your lunch. i want us to share a wonderful and clean environement together. what are your thoughts :)?”* Otherwise, the majority of responses for Q6 were orders, aggressive demands, “I-oriented” solutions, and/or premature solutions. Except for the example from the undergraduate student, none of the other participants’ comments indicated a concern for the other person’s thoughts, concerns, and/ or feelings that might lead to integrative strategies, brainstorming, and generative dialogue.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The results from the second study were surprising and useful. Even though H1 predicted that participants would use constructive strategies, it is questionable as to whether those responses would lead to all three stages of optimal conflict language. In addition, either due to the types of questions asked or an issue of not being thorough in their responses, it is difficult to gauge what else they would say during a personal conflict and whether the rest of their conversation would resemble CVC, ICL, or OCL. Nonetheless, only 3 out of 53 participants offered 20 or more constructive responses and the highest mean score of the constructive responses was 8.7778.

Even more surprising, was the limited number of integrative responses. The open-ended questions allowed for examples of integrative responses; yet, the mean scores were below 1. Moreover, 30 out of 53 participants did not have any responses that indicated that they took into consideration the other person's interests, needs, ideas, feelings, and/or concerns. Again, it is difficult to conclude why this took place. I intentionally did not include words in the initial multiple-choice questions that would suggest the use of specific constructive or integrative strategies. I wanted the participants to answer according to what popped in their mind. The scenarios were created to trigger a prior

memory of a personal conflict so participants could share how they would normally respond. The goal was not to offer “better” response ideas.

According to the self-serving bias, however, especially for questions 18 and 20, I had expected the majority of participants to respond with “positive” responses such as constructive and integrative ones as well as the optimal conflict language choices. I was more worried that I would not be receiving genuine ways in which people speak, listen, and think during personal conflicts because I had anticipated that the participants would respond in ways to make themselves look proficient. It seems as if, however, that the majority felt comfortable “telling it as it is.” Additionally, it was especially surprising that the majority of participants did not choose all of the optimal conflict language choices when they were presented in the multiple choice answers. Nevertheless, participants might not have viewed those responses as being the “better approach” and instead viewed the more CVC responses as the “normal” and accepted response. More research might help to examine why the participants did not choose all of the constructed OCL answers.

Limitations and Strengths of Both Studies

The studies were limited in several ways. First, due to challenges involved in acquiring participants, the number of questions in the survey was reduced. If more questions were asked, people might have been less willing to participate in the surveys. Clearly, more questions would have garnered richer data. Additionally, an interview, or a follow-up interview might have provided more insight. For example, it would be helpful to hear more in-depth explanation as to why people chose CVC responses. Second, it is

difficult to conclude why they chose to respond the way in which they did. For example, it is impossible to determine whether the participants chose CVC out of habit, lack of training, lack of understanding that their response represented CVC and/or ICL, and/or whether their response for a scenario presented on the questionnaire represented their intentional strategy to gain power or win an argument over the other person.

Additionally, some respondents mentioned that they compromised. Interpreting this data is problematic for a few reasons. Initially, it is difficult to know whether they chose to compromise because they did not have enough time to collaborate. Furthermore, it is unknown as to whether they intentionally did not choose to collaborate or whether they did not consider it an option. Additionally, maybe they did not discuss each other's interests, needs, feelings, and/or concerns long enough to generate multiple options to help them find collaborative win – win solutions. Finally, it is possible they described their interaction as a “compromise,” but it was actually collaboration.

Third, some of the responses need further clarification. Numerous participants mentioned that they were good listeners; however, people have various interpretations of the definition of a good listener. Peoples “good listening” styles could possibly represent examples of hypercompetitive or ineffectual listening. By not asking more in-depth questions, these responses remain ambiguous. An interview might have helped to clarify some of this information.

Fourth, it appeared that some participants might not have understood the meaning of one or more of the questions on the personal conflict questionnaire. One question, for example, asked if they used indirect communication during a personal conflict. Indirect communication could be representative of passive/nonassertive communication or

passive-aggressive communication. Both, however, are representative of ineffectual conflict language; nevertheless, a response of a yes from the participant does not allow the researcher to know whether they were referring to passive/nonassertive, passive-aggressive, or both. Additionally, some of the participants' responses contradicted other responses. Many participants said that they had used sarcasm and nonverbal signs of contempt during a personal conflict, which are forms of indirect aggression, but proceeded to respond on question number 19 that they did not engage in indirect communication during personal conflicts.

Fifth, some responses were too vague to be interpreted and coded. For example, one participant responded, "We'd have to have a heart-to-heart." There was no way for me to know if this would be representative of brutally honest, CVC, ICL or OCL. Another participant wrote, "I would use lots of skills in communicating effectively." Again, in an interview or a follow-up interview this response could have been clarified; nonetheless, the ambiguity of this response made it impossible to code.

Sixth, it would be helpful to videotape a real conflict conversation. This way, the actual wording and non-verbal delivery could be transcribed and better assessed. In addition, participants could individually view the video and comment on their interpretation of their speaking and listening styles by checking off whether they viewed them as being representative of CVC, ICL, or OCL. Moreover, they could comment on what they would keep, alter, and/or change.

Seventh, including participants' significant other, close friends, and/or family members in the study would have garnered richer data. According to the Johari window theory, people have a blind pane, which indicates that people know specific attributes,

temperaments, speaking, listening, and thinking styles about a person that the person does not know about himself.¹⁰ Creating a study that includes the participants' friends, family, and/or romantic partners can help a researcher obtain a more accurate picture of the communication interactions during a personal conflict.

Last, the number of participants was too small. This was problematic because there was too much discrepancy between the number of participants and the quantity of responses from the control and experimental groups. Likewise, the limited number of male participants does not add for a rich understanding of whether there was a gender difference within the participants' speaking and listening styles.

Nonetheless, one of the strengths of the study was the willingness of the participants to share their examples of CVC and ineffectual conflict language. This might have occurred because CVC and ineffectual conflict language is commonly portrayed so it did not seem as if the comment would reflect badly on them. Second, the open-ended and multiple-choice questions garnered rich data. On average, the experimental group spent 36 ½ minutes answering the questions on the personal conflict survey while the control group spent an average of 27 minutes. Additionally, numerous participants wrote 3-4 sentences for the open-ended questions. For example, **Q8:** In what ways do you speak and/or listen differently or the same during a personal conflict compared to your parents, siblings, romantic partner, and/or close friends? It was surprising how honest some participants were; they shared the positive and negative aspects of their speaking, listening, and thinking styles. Likewise, participants seemed honest with their responses in the multiple-choice questions such as question number **10:** You think your friend or

¹⁰ Johari Window theory was developed by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in 1955.

romantic partner has over reacted to something you did or said. What would you say? (Check all that apply) (1) Chill out, I was just joking; you're too sensitive, (2) Don't get upset; everything is fine, (3) Nothing and you would change the topic, and (4) many included a detailed "other" comment. One participant even shared that on occasions the participant had "hit" other people. Furthermore, some questions on the survey asked participants how they would respond to a conflict that their friend was involved in. Researchers can also gain insights about a person's approach to personal conflict by the ways in which he/she responds to a friend's conflict. For example, many participants quickly gave advice or asked leading questions, which represents premature solutions [ICL]. On the other hand, some participants wrote questions indicating that they were concerned and wanted to know more about their friend's emotional state [OCL]. Overall, participants shared the good and bad aspects of their speaking and listening styles. Even though an interview might have resulted in further explanations of their initial responses, participants might have felt more comfortable expressing their conflict styles via the anonymous online questionnaire.

Last, the addition of an experimental group offered important correlational views of the data. Two groups can help minimize generalizations. Instead of a general claim regarding people's possible use of Conventional (Violent) Communication and ineffectual conflict language, a study designed with a control and experimental group has the potential to garner results that are more specific. Likewise, separating the results with different hypotheses gives a more complete picture of the participants' speaking, listening, and thinking styles. The design of the study helped to determine the possible

differences that higher education, conflict resolution knowledge, and training might have for those who have secure attachment styles.

Future Implications

If people's speaking, listening, and thinking styles shape their reality and CVC and ineffectual conflict language are dominating people's perception of what is appropriate, it would seem that more knowledge, skills, and motivation are needed to change the ways in which people speak, listen, and think within the United States.¹¹ If optimal conflict language has the capability of diminishing CVC and ineffectual conflict language then future questions revolve around what, who, where, and how. First, what should be taught? Do we need to design an interdisciplinary program to address the necessary components of conflict resolution, critical and creative thinking, and relational communication? If so, whom would we first introduce this program to: schools, teachers, parents, children, etc.? Would it be easier to start with those who already have secure attachment styles because they might be more receptive and motivated? Would we need the media to be more involved such as introducing optimal conflict language in TV sitcoms, children's programs, and movies? Would it be better to start in some specific areas of the United States?

Likewise, if interdisciplinary training were to occur to help people develop optimal conflict language, it would need to be determined how long the participants would need to practice those skills to reach a level of unconscious competence or at least conscious competence. Researchers could test participants before, midway, and after the training. In addition, it would be interesting for researchers to study the effects that

¹¹ "Language works in tandem with thought to shape our reality" (Del Collins, 2005, p. 269).

optimal conflict language has on other areas of people's lives such as: self-compassion, compassion, mental and emotional well-being, brain functioning, a person's attachment level, and/or health. Salazar (2013) explains that "emotionally supportive environment[s]" such as those that embrace compassion, can assuage negative ramifications during personal conflicts. Because those with secure attachment styles tend to be more highly person – centered and use more comforting strategies before or after a personal conflict (Jones, 2005), it would be useful to research their interest and motivation to acquiring and using optimal conflict language. It might also be helpful to conduct a research to compare the interests and motivation of those with insecure attachments. If insecure were motivated and did use more OCL during personal conflicts, would it change their attachment level, or levels of compassion, self-compassion, and/or self-esteem?

Moreover, it would be particularly informative if researchers could identify if secures' conflict styles match their beliefs about being supportive in relationships. According to Festinger (1957), consonance occurs when people's beliefs match their actions, while dissonance occurs when people's beliefs do not match their actions. Even though these studies resulted in data that correlated with high levels of CVC and ineffectual conflict language, this might not indicate that the participants' beliefs about relational interaction during a conflict match their actions. This might imply that those with secure attachment styles might experience a sense of dissonance. For example, if after this type of training secures continued to choose more CVC and ineffectual conflict language it could create a dissonance problem.

Finally, a study as described above could help determine when, where, and why people might choose optimal conflict language over less optimal conflict language and

vice versa. This data could also provide researchers with a more thorough understanding of times when optimal conflict language might not be the best choice. Furthermore, researchers could evaluate ways in which optimal conflict language would help or not help people when power level issues arise and/or when people are not acting in good faith during a negotiation. Likewise, if people use optimal conflict language more fluently in personal relationships, it would be of value to see in what ways this language style would or would not transfer over to the language people use in business relationships.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Communication Roadblocks and Blockers

Communication Roadblocks by Robert Bolton¹²

1. **Criticizing:** Making a negative evaluation of another person's actions, or attitudes.
2. **Name-calling:** "Putting down" or stereotyping other people.
3. **Diagnosing:** Analyzing why a person is behaving as s/he is, i.e. playing amateur psychiatrist.
4. **Praising Evaluatively:** Making a positive judgment of another person's actions or attitudes to get them to do something for you.
5. **Ordering:** Commanding someone to do what you want to have done.
6. **Threatening:** Trying to control the other's actions by warning of negative consequences that you will instigate.
7. **Moralizing:** Telling another person what s/he should do. "Preaching" at the other. You shouldn't get a divorce; think of what will happen to the children. You ought to tell him/her you are sorry" (Bolton, 1979).
8. **Excessive/Inappropriate Questioning:** These types of questions can keep a person from telling his/her story. It's not only distracting, but often times it's a manipulative way to control the conversation.

¹² Reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc., from PEOPLE SKILLS by Robert Bolton. Copyright©1979 by Simon & Schuster, INC ...scattered excerpts from pp.15-17.

9. **Advising:** Giving the other person a solution to his/her problems.
10. **Diverting:** Pushing the other's problems aside through distraction.
11. **Logical argument:** Attempting to convince the other with an appeal to facts or logic, usually without consideration of the emotional factors involved.
12. **Reassuring:** Trying to stop the other person from feeling the negative emotions.

Communication Blockers by Lee Scheingold¹³

“These roadblocks to communication can stop communication dead in its tracks:

1. “Why” questions. They tend to make people defensive.
2. Quick reassurance, saying things like, “Don’t worry about that.”
3. Advising — “I think the best thing for you is to move to assisted living.”
4. Digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not talk about.
5. Patronizing — “You poor thing, I know just how you feel.”
6. Preaching — “You should. . .” Or, “You should not. . .”
7. Interrupting — Shows you are not interested in what someone is saying.

Appendix B

Verbal Abuse

Verbally Aggressive, Judgmental, and Critical Discounting Statements¹⁴

¹³ Source: Excerpted and adapted from Lee Scheingold, “Active Listening,” McKesson Health Solutions LLC, 2003. <http://www.mitoaction.org/pdf/tipActiveListening.pdf>

¹⁴ (Directly quoted from Evans, 1992, pp. 84-85).

1. “You’re too sensitive.
2. You’re jumping to conclusions.
3. You can’t take a joke.
4. You blow everything out of proportion.
5. You’re making a big deal out of nothing.
6. You don’t have a sense of humor.
7. You see everything in the worst possible light.
8. You take things too seriously.
9. You feel too much.
10. Your imagination is working overtime.
11. You don’t know what you’re talking about.
12. You think you know it all.
13. You always have to have something to complain about.
14. You’re trying to start something.
15. You’re not happy unless you’re complaining.
16. You take everything wrong.
17. You’re making a mountain out of a molehill.
18. You read things into my words.
19. You twist everything around.
20. You’re looking for a fight

Verbally Aggressive Judgmental Criticizing:

1. Statements which begin with ‘The trouble with you is...’ are judgmental, critical, and abusive.

2. Statements which begin with ‘Your problem is...’ are judgmental, critical, and abusive.
3. Most ‘you’ statements are judgmental, critical, and abusive” (Evans, 1992, p. 89).

Evans, P. (1992). The verbally abusive relationship: How to recognize it and how to respond. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, INC.

Contempt

According to Wilmot and Hocker (2007), “Often contempt is accompanied by sarcasm, ridicule, and outright hostile joking. In healthy relationships contempt is almost never present. Contempt is never justified in a long-term, important relationship, since it functions as a powerful attack on the personhood of the other” (p. 20).

Appendix C

Hypercompetitive and Defensive Listening Styles

Ambushing: When people listen “carefully for the purpose of gathering information to use in attacking a speaker” this is called ambushing (Wood, 2008, p. 128).

Argumentative Listening: Listener speaks up a lot and typically plays the role of the “devil’s advocate.” It is also a form of active critical analysis, where the listener is listening for errors in reasoning (Weisglass, 1990).

Content Listening: “Content listening occurs when people focus on the content level of meaning, or literal meaning, rather than the social or relational levels...[they] fail to recognize or engage in determining deeper levels of meaning” (Duck & McMahan, 2009, p. 97) and “ignoring the relationship level of meaning” (Wood, 2008, p. 128).

Conversational Listening: “The role of the talker and listener alternate –often

frequently, and the person listening is allowed, even expected, to interrupt and express a point of view” (Weisglass, 1990).

Defensive Listening: “Perceiving personal attacks, criticism, or hostility in communication that is not critical or mean-spirited”; this occurs when we assume others don’t like, trust, or respect us. Additionally, some people are just generally defensive and hear criticism at all times; it can also occur when we think we are inadequate (self-perception) (Wood, 1998, p.158).

Evaluative Listening: “We are judging what the other person is saying as good-bad, right-wrong, acceptable-unacceptable, likable-unlikable, relevant-irrelevant” (Egan, 1998).

Fact Centered Listening: where you care more about the facts being presented than the person (Egan, 1998).

Filtered Listening: Listening within our own conceptual framework. It is impossible to be completely unbiased when we are listening. Moreover, words get transform in our brains as we listen (See Life-Box Package pages 31-35).

Inadequate/Egocentric Listening: When “we get involved in our own thoughts, or we begin to think about what we are going to say in reply” (Egan, 1998).

Inattentive Listening: being distracted, or doing or paying attention to something else while someone is talking (Weisglass, 1990).

Informational Listening: “This occurs when a person wants information that someone else possesses and attempts to make sense of the information that is received” (Weisglass, 1990). People might feel as if their feelings are being dismissed if a person cares more about the information than the person.

Mind-reading: This happens when people do not attempt to hear a person's story because they believe they already understand the whole story and they have the right answer.

Passive Listening: "the listener doesn't say anything, but indicates interest and attention by maintaining eye contact and periodically nodding or smiling" (Weisglass, 1990).

Pretend Listening: Pretends to be passively listening while thinking or doing something else (Weisglass, 1990).

Uncritical Thinking Listening: you stop listening because you think you already know what the person is saying and feeling, and you already know the solution (Hendrix, 2012).

Appendix D

Uncritical Thinking Dispositions

1. **Being a victim thinker:** when you think or react like a victim by allowing another person to think for you and to be in control of your decision(s). Victim thinkers tend to accept a decision based on another person's thinking, and if the result of that decision is bad it oftentimes leads to anger or despair.
2. **Bias:** is "a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment" (Merriam-Webster, 1998: 110). Bias occurs when people let their preferences and beliefs interfere with their ability to be reasonable and objective in their thinking.
3. **Blaming:** not taking responsibility for the consequences of your decisions; and accusing something or someone else for event(s) that happen to you.

4. **Defensiveness:** Protecting and supporting your beliefs and/or actions to prove you are right; and not being willing to consider other points of view.
5. **Denial:** consciously or unconsciously refusing to admit to the truth. It's also a means of avoiding the existence of a problem.
6. **Guilt:** believing or deciding something because you feel you are to blame.
7. **Introjections:** accepting information without questioning the values, beliefs, and experience of others.
8. **Jumping to quick conclusions:** believing something to be true or false before you have heard and considered the strength of the reasons and evidence, and before you have considered opposing arguments and reasons that go against the original argument.
9. **Prejudging:** when you believe something to be true due to limited experience, word of mouth, or lack of substantial evidence.
10. **Projection:** claiming to know the motives of another person by considering how you would respond in a similar situation and then concluding that is how the other person would handle the situation.
11. **Rationalizing:** presenting false or lame reasons to justify a belief or action.
12. **Stubborn, obstinate, and hardheaded:** set in their ways, not open to other views.

Appendix E

Cooperative Listening Styles

To be an excellent listener usually takes training and practice. Furthermore, excellent listeners have an important speaking role. The following is a list of listening styles that show respect, compassion, concern, and empathy and expand ways in which can people solve problems and make decisions.

1. **Active Listening:** happens when the listener paraphrases and/or interprets what the speaker is saying. This is useful for clarification purposes and to reassure the listener that you understand what s/he meant (Weisglass, 1990).
2. **Compassionate Listening:** this is a relational and engaged style of listening; it involves consideration of the person's life-box package and caring about the person's interests, needs, and concerns (Hendrix, 2012).
3. **Empathic Listening:** listening to "...understand another person's emotional state and point of view." Making an effort to get in touch with another's frame of reference sends a message of respect" (Egan, 1998).
4. **Engaged Listening:** "involves caring, trusting, wanting to know more, and feeling excited, enlightened, attached, and concerned" (Duck & McMahan, p.91).
5. **Open-Minded, Deferring Judgment, Willing to Entertain Multiple Perspective**
Types of Listening: listening to consider multiple ideas.
6. **Relational Listening:** "Listen to support another person or to understand how another person thinks, feels, or perceives some situation, event or other phenomenon" (Wood, 2008, p. 375).

Appendix F

Critical and Creative Thinking Dispositions¹⁵

The following is a list of 35 critical and creative thinking characteristics/dispositions.

1. **Analytical:** helps people evaluate all aspects of an issue.
2. **Appreciates diversity:** enjoys listening and learning about different points of view.
Realizes that everyone has something to contribute and different values to respect.
3. **Asks relevant questions:** helps people fully explore issues and beliefs.
4. **Authentic/Genuine/Sincere/Honest:** promotes integrity and thoughtfulness. Displays good intentions when communicating, responding, or thinking about what other people believe.
5. **Aware of biases:** helps people understand when their thinking and the thinking of others is affected by past beliefs and experiences.
6. **Confident/High self-esteem:** helps people to respond with interest instead of reacting defensively.
7. **Creative thinking:** initiates peoples' willingness to think of other alternatives and possibilities.
8. **Curiosity:** promotes questions and new discoveries, leading to deeper understanding.
9. **Defers judgment/Non-judgmental:** waiting to form beliefs and making decisions until multiple perspectives and opposing sides have been considered.

¹⁵ Statements: 17, 20, 23 are cited from: Chaffee, John. 1998. The Thinker's Way: 8 Steps to a Richer Life. Boston. Little, Brown, and Company, pp. 36-37. The rest are adapted from Richard Paul and Linda Elder, 1999; 2001.

For more detailed definitions of critical thinking terms visit:

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/glossary-of-critical-thinking-terms/496>

10. **Disciplined:** helps people respond directly to points being made instead of trying to make their own point.
11. **Empathy:** learning about experiences and beliefs in people's life to understand their reasoning, decisions, and reactions.
12. **Encourages dialogue:** Focuses on increasing understanding by promoting and prompting further conversation.
13. **Encourages clarity:** Expresses their views clearly, provides supporting reasons and strong evidence, and asks for more information for further understanding.
14. **Evaluates ideas objectively, not personally:** not taking sides or allowing past beliefs and experiences to interfere with considering opposing points of view.
15. **Independent thinkers:** think critically about all information presented before they decide what to believe and are responsible for the consequences of their decisions.
16. **Insightful:** searches for different options, meanings, looking beyond the initial meaning and bringing new light to the issue.
17. **Knowledgeable:** "When they offer an opinion, it's always based on facts or strong evidence; they are aware when they lack knowledge of a subject" (Chaffee, 1998).
18. **Limited bias as opposed to strong bias:** helps to allow people to hear and see things objectively without letting their own beliefs and feelings interfere.
19. **Listen to understand, but understanding does not mean you have to agree:** puts their own opinions aside to better hear other peoples' beliefs and opinions.
20. **Mentally active:** "They take initiative and actively use their intelligence to confront problems and meet challenges, instead of simply responding passively to events" (Chaffee, 1998).

21. **Observant:** able to hear and listen to all sides of a discussion and be alert to what's not being said.
22. **Open to multiple perspectives and alternatives:** helps people hear and consider more ideas and options; increases their knowledge about other subjects.
23. **Open-minded:** "listening carefully to every viewpoint, evaluating each perspective carefully and fairly" (Chaffee, 1998).
24. **Passion:** having energy and endurance to think deeply into a subject.
25. **Perseverance:** gives people the necessary endurance and time to arrive at the best decision and/or belief.
26. **Positive coping skills:** keeps negative emotions and factors from taking over people's ability to think, listen, learn, and communicate effectively.
27. **Prioritize:** helps people organize their thinking and to keep them focused on important issues.
28. **Reflective:** ability to review new ideas and beliefs to process the strength, relevance, and accuracy of the information.
29. **Respectful:** willingness to listen to what people reflect back your understanding of what they are saying and validate and honor why they are saying it.
30. **Self-aware:** helps people be in touch with what they know and don't know. It helps them to be aware of their biases and knowledgeable of how their biases could affect their thinking.
31. **Sensitive:** helps people focus on understanding what people are saying and being careful in responding in an appropriate manner.
32. **Skeptical:** listening with caution, searching for the informations' strength/ validity.

33. **Skilled discussants:** are able to generate new and better thinking, concisely get their own point across, and assist others in clarifying their own ideas.
34. **Strong integrity:** allows people to change their beliefs when more substantial evidence is presented and evaluate the moral integrity of their beliefs.
35. **Tolerance:** helps people not be critical, judgmental, and/or prejudice. It promotes acceptance and understanding.

Appendix G

Personal Conflict Questionnaire

Q1: What is your attachment style?

___ Avoidant – Dismissive

___ Anxious – Preoccupied

___ Avoidant – Fearful

___ Secure

Q2: Are you male or female?

Q3: Are you currently in college, if so, how many undergraduate or graduate courses have you completed? If not, describe your education level.

Q4: How long have you lived in the United States?

___ 3 years or less

___ 4-6 years

___ 7-9 years

___ 10 or more

Q5: Have you had any training in conflict resolution, mediation, and/or peace studies? If so, briefly describe.

No

1 course

2 courses

3 courses

4 courses

Other (please specify) _____

Q6: Write a few sentences detailing how you would tell someone close to you the following if this represents how you feel: I'm sick and tired of doing all the work around the house while you just do what makes you happy.

Q7: Your friend is angry with her living situation because no one is helping out.

Write a few sentences describing what you would say.

Q8: In what ways do you speak and/or listen differently or the same during a personal conflict compared to your parents, siblings, romantic partner, and/or close friends?

Q9: When you are in a personal conflict, how often do you use an aggressive tone, sarcasm, and/or attack the other person's competence and/or character?

Never

Occasionally

Most of the time

Always

Other (please specify) _____

Q 10: You think your friend or romantic partner has over reacted to something you did or said. What would you say? (Check all that apply)

Chill out

I was just joking; you're too sensitive.

Don't get upset; everything is fine.

Nothing and you would change the topic.

Other (please specify) _____

Q 11: What strategies do you use in personal conflicts that tend to help the situation?

Q 12: Have you said or done any of the following during a personal conflict? (Check all that apply)

A sarcastic comment

A defensive response

A character and/or competence attack

A non – verbal display of contempt

Other (please specify) _____

Q 13: Your close friend, family member, and/or romantic partner tell you that she or he is going to drop out of college. What would you say?

Q 14: Your romantic partner, friend, or family member tells you what you should or should not be doing. What do you say or do?

Q 15: How often do you tend to give advice during a personal conflict?

Always

Most of the time

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

Other (please specify) _____

Q 16: Someone close to you is upset with his/her relationship and comes to you for advice. Write a few sentences describing what you would say.

Q 17: Do you tend to do any of the following during your personal conflicts? (Check all that apply)

Not discuss or address the other person's feelings

Mock, attack, and/or tell the other person that he/she is wrong

Tell the other person that his/her feelings are silly and/or not important

Disregard the other person's ideas and/or concerns

Other (please specify) _____

Q 18: When in a personal conflict, do you tend to: (check all that apply)

Say exactly what you are feeling even if it's an escalated emotion.

Not discuss how you are feeling.

Start by saying a soft emotion such as, "I'm a little concerned."

Tell the other person what he/she did wrong.

Explain in a small, specific, non-judgmental manner what you observed.

Ask the other person to share his/her feelings and/or concerns.

Other (please specify) _____

Q 19: How often do you indirectly communicate to someone close to you when you have a personal conflict with that person?

Always

Most of the time

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

Other (please specify) _____

Q 20: Someone that you are close to is late again and now you both will be late for an event. Would you say...?

I'm sick of you always being late. Don't you care about how I'm feeling?

Late again! Thanks for caring.

When you are always late it makes me angry and then neither of us enjoy the rest of the night.

Yesterday I was a little concerned because I wanted to be at the event 15 minutes early so we could get a good seat. I want us to enjoy going to events together. What are your thoughts?

Other (please specify) _____

Q 21: How often do you engage in debates during a personal conflict?

Always

Most of the time

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

Other (please specify) _____

Appendix H
Consent Form

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Conflict Resolution
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent Form

SOCIAL LEARNING AND PERSONAL CONFLICTS:

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

You are asked to take part in a research project that examines the integrative and constructive strategies of someone with a secure attachment style during a personal conflict. The researcher, Basye Hendrix, is a graduate student in the Conflict Resolution program. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions, Basye will happy to discuss them with you. Her cell number is 978-973-3742.

You are invited to be in this study to provide information about strategies used during personal conflicts. The researcher is conducting this study in order to better understand the verbal and non-verbal messages that are used by those with secure attachment styles along with the various strategies employed during personal conflicts. Participation includes completing this survey on SurveyMonkey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes and you will not be contacted again in the future.

Your information will be anonymous. As such, no one will be able to link your questionnaire responses to you.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may withdraw at

any time without penalty. If you decide to participate, you can skip any question at any time for any reason.

This study is also designed to be anonymous. That is, the information collected will not include information that specifically identifies you such as your name or telephone number. After you return the research materials, there will be no way of linking your identity to the data collected.

If for any reason you experience any discomfort, distress, or have any other concerns, you can contact the David Matz, the advisor for this research project. The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to ask questions about this research before you agree to this form and at any time during the study. Your questions can be directed to Basye Hendrix or David Matz. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: IRB, Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5374 or at human.subjects@umb.edu.

If you agree to this consent form, please proceed to the questions.

REFERENCES

- Beatty, M.J., Rudd, J.E., & Valenic, K.M. (1999). A re-examination of the verbal aggressiveness scale: One factor or two? *Communication Research Reports*, Vol. 16, Issue, 1, 1999, pages 10-17.
- Bippus, A.M. & Rown, E. (2003). Attachment style differences in relational maintenance and conflict behaviors: friends' perceptions. *Communication Reports*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Summer 2003.
- Bohm, D. & Nichol, L. (2004). On Dialogue. New York: Routledge.
- Bolton, R. 1979. People skills: How to assert yourself, listen to others, and resolve conflicts. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Brounstein, M., Bell, A., & Smith, D. M., (2007). Business communication: Communicate effectively in any business environment. NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bultena, C., Ramser, C. & Tilker, K. (2013). Fighting futility IV: Dealing with defensiveness in mediation. *Southern Journal of Business and Ethics*, Vol. 5, 2013.
- Burleson, B.R. & Greene, J.O. (2003). In Burleson, B.R. Handbook of communication and social interaction skills. , Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, xvi, 1032 (pp. 551-594).
- Canary, D. & Lakey, S. (2008). Strategic conflict. New York: Routledge.
- Canary, D.J. & Spitzberg, B.H. (1987). Appropriateness and effectiveness perceptions of conflict strategies. *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, pages 93-120, September, 1987.
- Chaffee, J. (1999). Thinking critically: A concise guide. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Chetro-Szivos, J. & Gray, P. 2004. *Creating conversational spaces on campus: Connecting students & faculty through appreciative inquiry and circular questioning*. Stillwater, OK: New Forum Press, Inc. Vol. 2, No. 1.
- Coser, L. (1956). The functions of social conflict. New York: The Free Press. [Chapter 2 and Conclusion]
- Cozolino, L. (2006). The neuroscience of human relationships: Attachment and the developing social brain. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Cupach, W., & Canary, D. (1997). Competence in interpersonal conflict. Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Del Collins, M. (2005). Transcending dualistic thinking in conflict resolution. *Negotiation Journal*, Volume 21, Issue 2, pages 263-28. April 2005.
- Deutsch, M. (1982). Interdependence and psychological orientation. In V.J. Derlega & J. Grzelak (Eds.), *Cooperation and helping behavior* (pp.15-42). New York: Academic Press.

- Duck, S. & McMahan, D.T. (2009; 2012). The basics of communication: A relational perspective. Los Angeles: Sage Edition. Boston: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Egan, G. (1998). The skilled helper: A problem-management approach to helping. 6th and Company pp. 36, 38, 43.
- Evans, P. (1992). The verbally abusive relationship: How to recognize it and how to respond. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, INC.
- Festinger, L. (1957). The theory of cognitive dissonance. CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fisher, R. & Brown, S. (1988). Getting together: Building relationships as we negotiate. New York: Penguin Books.
- Fisher, R. and Shapiro, D. (2005). Beyond reason: Using emotions as you negotiate. New York: Viking.
- Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (1991). Getting to yes: How to negotiate agreement without giving in. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Fredrickson, B. (2004). The broaden – and – build theory of positive emotions. Royal Society publishing.org.
- Gaines, S.O., Reis, H. T., Summers, S. Rusbult, C. E., Cox, C.L., Wexler, M.O., Marelich, W.D., & Kljrland, G. J. (1994). Impact of attachment style on reactions to accommodative dilemmas in close relationships. In *Personal Relationships*, 4 (IW7), 93-1 13. Cambridge University Press.
- Gibb, J.R. (1988). Defensive communication.
http://www.geocities.com/toritrust/defensive_communication.htm
- Goleman, D. (2003). Destructive emotions: A scientific dialogue with the Dalai Lama. New York: Bantam Dell.
- Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). How I predict divorce,” in The Seven Principles for Making Marriages Work (Chapter Two, 25-46). New York: Three Rivers Press (Random House, Inc.).
- Green, E.J. (2008). Individuals in conflict: An internal family systems approach. *The Family Journal* 2008, Vol. 16, No. 2, April 2008, 125-131. Sage Publications.
- Infante, D.A. (1988). Arguing constructively. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Isaac, W. (1999). Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together. New York: Random House.
- Isen, A.M. (2004). An influence of positive affect own decision-making and complex situations: Theoretical issues with practical implications. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 11, Issue 2, pp. 75-85.
- Janis, I.L. (1982). Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kobak, R.K. & Hazan, C. (1991). Attachment in marriage: effects on security and accuracy of working models. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1991, Vol. 60, No. 6, 861-869.
- Leary, M.R. & Hoyle, R.H. (2009). Handbook of individual differences in social behavior. New York: Guilford Press.
- Lum, G., Tyler-Wood, I., Wanis-St John, A. (2003). Expanding the pie: How to create more value in any negotiation. Seattle, WA: Castle Pacific Publishing.
- Makau, J.M. and Marty, D.L. (2001). Cooperative argumentation: A model for deliberative community. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

- Oetzel, J.G. & Ting-Toomey, S. (2006). The Sage handbook of conflict communication: Integrating theory, research, and practice. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Paul, R. (1993). Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world. Rev. 3rd.ed. Santa Rosa, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Paul, R. and Elder, L (2001). Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life. Prentice Hall, New Jersey. pp.39-40.
- Pietromonaco, P. R., Barrett, L. F., & Powers, S. I. Adult Attachment Theory and Affective Reactivity and Regulation. In D. K. Snyder, J. A. Simpson, & J. N. Hughes (Eds.), *Emotion Regulation in Couples and Families: Pathways to Dysfunction and Health*, 2006, pp. 57-74. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Pietromonaco, P. R., Feldman Barrett, L., & Holmes, B. (2003). Romantic partners' attachment styles and patterns of emotional reactivity and regulation. Manuscript in preparation. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Pietromonaco, P. R., Greenwood, D., & Feldman Barrett, L. (2004). Conflict in adult close relationships: An attachment perspective. In W. S. Rholes & J. A. Simpson (Eds.), *Adult attachment: New directions and emerging issues* (pp. 267-299). New York: Guilford Press.
- Powers, S., Pietromonaco, P. R., & Gunlicks, M. (2004). Romantic attachment styles and cortisol reactivity during conflict. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Putnam L. L. & Poole, M. S. (1987). Conflict and negotiation. In F. M. Jublin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts, & L. W. Porter (Eds.) *Handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 549-599), Newbury Park, CA; Sage
- Rancer, A.S. & Avtgis, T.A. (2006). Argumentative and aggressive communication: Theory, research, and application. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.
- Rholes, W. S. & Simpson, J. A. (2004). Adult attachment: Theory, research, and clinical implications. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Rothwell, J.D. (2013). In the company of others: An introduction of communication. 4th Ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, R. L. & Cordova, J. V. (2002). The influence of adult attachment styles on the association between marital adjustment and depressive symptoms. *Journal of family psychology*, 2002, Vol. 16, No. 2, 199-208.
- Sebenius, J.K. (2000). *Dealmaking essentials: Creating and claiming value for the long-term*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Siegel, D. J. (2011). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Simpson & Rholes (1998). Attachment theory and close relationships. New York: The Guilford Press
- Stone, D., Patton, B. & Heen, S. (1999). Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most. New York: Penguin Books.
- Thomas, K. W. & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). www.kilmann.com/conflict.html Retrieved 4/8/08. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (Mountain View, CA: Xicom and CPP, Inc., 1974)
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1983). An analysis of verbal communication pattern in high and low marital adjustment groups. *Human Communication Research*, 9, 306-319.

- Tishman, S., Perkins, D. N., & Jay, E. (1995). The thinking classroom: Learning and teaching in a culture of thinking. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ury, W. (1993). Getting past no. Negotiating your way from confrontation to cooperation. New York: Batnam.
- Ury, W. (2007). The power of a positive no: How to say no and still get to yes. New York: Batnam.
- Weissglass, Julian. 1990. Constructivist Listening for Empowerment and Change. *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Summer, 355-356.
- Wilmot, W.W. and Hocker, J.L., (2007). Interpersonal conflict. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Wood, J. T. (2008). Communication mosaics: An introduction to the field of communication. 5th Ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.