

Mars? Venus? Earth?

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COM120: Interpersonal Communication

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November 15, 2020 23:59:59 MDT

Abstract

Overview

Many people believe that there are distinct differences between how men and women communicate and deal with conflict. Entire books have been written on the subject, such as John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*.

In this assignment, you will research conflict and conflict resolution with a focus on gender, and you will make your own determinations about the impact of gender and cultural differences on interpersonal communication.

You should spend approximately 6.5 hours on this assignment.

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Abridged List of Conflict Resolution Styles

There are *many* different conflict resolution styles and methods with plentiful literature surrounding each one. Here, I will discuss a few of the more notable ones as outlined by Schellenberg in his publication “*Conflict Resolution: Theory, Research, and Practice*” as well as through Fisher’s text “*Sources of Conflict and Methods of Conflict Resolution*”.

Fisher’s Methods of Conflict Resolution

Fisher outlines three distinct methods of conflict resolution in his text: (a) *win-lose* (b) *lose-lose* (c) *win-win* (Fisher, 2000, pp. 4–5).

The Win-Lose Approach

Utilizing the *win-lose* strategy is the most common situation in day-to-day life (Fisher, 2000, pp. 4–5). This includes many situations common when starting out in certain industries where competition and domination (i.e. stepping on peers to get to the top) reign supreme. This sort of situation tends to lend itself to justifying using fellow peers throughout life as a means rather than an end.

The Lose-Lose Approach

In the *lose-lose* strategy, the two parties reach an agreement by essentially compromising without either one necessarily getting what they needed from the conversation or conflict (Fisher, 2000, pp. 5).

The Win-Win Approach

With a *win-win* strategy the conflict is “seen as a problem to be solved, rather than a war to be won” (Fisher, 2000, pp. 5). The two parties are more open-minded and willing to compromise with a higher degree of each side getting what they needed to resolve the conflict.

Schellenberg's Conflict Resolution Methods

Schellenberg's conflict resolution methods are more geared towards *international* conflict, but many have a place in interpersonal conflict resolution (simply just to a lesser degree in intensity). These methods include: (a) *Coercion* (b) *Negotiation and Bargaining* (c) *Adjudication* (d) *Mediation* (e) *Arbitration* (Schellenberg, 1996, pp. 117–213).

Coercion

Coercion and the use of force tend to be an effective method of conflict resolution, albeit usually short-lived (Schellenberg, 1996, pp. 134). When two parties are engaged in communication surrounding any particular conflict and one party chooses to use fear and intimidation to reach their desired outcome, this is not the same as reaching an understanding. A lot of people may have heard the term “it is better to be feared than it is to be respected”, and this is simply not the case. Specifically, this is not the case when regarding personal conflict with closer relationships.

Negotiation and Bargaining

Negotiation is the most common form of conflict remediation used throughout industry as well as within personal conflict. It also tends to be the most effective when both parties are level-headed and more open minded to resolving a conflict together. Negotiation is *not* as effective when either party is focused on winning or losing rather than on a solid compromise for the situation (Schellenberg, 1996, pp. 154).

Adjudication

Adjudication is a conflict-resolution method which utilizes the State's Judicial System. This tends to be viewed in an incredibly adverse light and requires the use of a skilled lawyer in the specific realm of the situation causing the conflict (Schellenberg, 1996, pp. 172).

Mediation

According to Schellenberg, mediation is a method of conflict resolution with, “aside from a few root principles”, varies greatly from situation to situation (Schellenberg, 1996, pp.

192). He also says that it is the fastest growing methods of mediation throughout the United States with how it is more easily fit to a certain situation and far less expensive than something like adjudication.

Arbitration

Arbitration is sort of the in-between method with benefits taken from both mediation and adjudication. Mediation, as well as arbitration are tend to be favored for their attention to privacy as well as their customization to specific situations (Schellenberg, 1996, pp. 205). Like adjudication, arbitration also provides what some may consider to be a more “authoritative” decision when compared to mediation, as the States Court of Law is involved (Schellenberg, 1996, pp. 205).

Gender’s Impact on Conflict Resolution Methods and Styles

One major difference between how women and men conduct themselves during conflict lies in the fact that females tend to have a much higher degree of empathy than male peers (Wied et al., 2007, pp. 51). Having a higher degree of empathy tends to lend oneself to a higher degree of emotional intelligence, allowing the listener to truly relate to the speaker and grasp a better understanding of what they are trying to convey during a conflict (Morgan, 2002, pp. 6).

Analyzing Brooke and Gary’s Conflict

To me, it seemed as though Gary and Brook were in a *lose-lose* situation from the beginning, as both began the confrontation in a more “standoff-ish” manner. In the end of the conflict, Gary had left and Brooke did not get what she needed out of the conversation (Reed, 2006). This allowed the conflict to cease (obviously, only for the time being) and at least getting one another out of the conflict for the short-term (Fisher, 2000, pp. 5).

In terms of what role each one played in how they handled the conflict, we see Brooke take on the dead-horse-beaten level of the “nagging wife”, and Gary taking on the usual “absentee husband” role. In fact, Gary even *mentions* this in the video clip (Reed, 2006).

The main issue between Gary and Brooke was their lack of an attempt at understanding one-another when it came to hearing the other out during their part of the conversation.

On the matter of how I, myself, would react I really do not want to get into too much detail on personal relationships. Unfortunately, all good things come to an end, as did the five year long relationship I had built with my previous significant other. This is a painful topic for me currently.

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