

ASSIGNMENT 5 - CHAPTER 9

1. Give three situations in which intervention would be appropriate.

One situation in which intervention would be appropriate is when divorced people continue to fight. In such instances, it would be preferable for the former couple to seek outside intervention rather than involving friends or family. A trained counselor will be better equipped to help people resolve their issues. In the case of a couple already divorced, intervention may be more serious and include legal issues. In such a situation, each person would be wise to seek legal help with their ongoing conflict. This choice would at least be an attempt at alleviating the stress created from the argument between the divorced couple. As well, third party mediators have the advantage of keeping their clients focused on the situation rather than allowing them to become fixated on minute details that may interfere. (Wilmot, 2007, 271) As well, this situation calls for more formal intervention given the seriousness of the matter rather than informal intervention. Informal intervention would be more appropriate in a situation such as children arguing about which show to watch on television.

Another situation where intervention would be especially appropriate is the same students fighting at school repeatedly. Although formal intervention to the level of divorced people is not necessary, serious intervention is necessary to stop the constant fighting to assure the safety and wellbeing of all students. If the students fighting are individuals, then the principal, designated teachers and guidance counselors can intervene to address the situation. Counselors may be able to help each student sort out their problems in an informative manner. (Wilmot, 2007, 275) However, if the fighting is between groups of students, then it is possible that the

transgressions could be gang-related. At this level, the police would need to get involved in the intervention. If the problem is gang-related, then a criminal investigation may ensure, leading to a court case. At this point, a judge or jury would be responsible for intervening to determine a resolution to the problem.

A third situation in which intervention would be appropriate is when neighbors become upset about other neighbors neglecting to upkeep their property. If the neighbors live within an official community, they may be able to present their grievances to a committee of their fellow neighbors. The neglectful neighbors may be considered in violation of the community's code for requisite yard maintenance. As long as the neighbors who complained have not threatened their neighbors or vandalized their property, then the situation can be resolved according to a code. If the conflict is more serious, then a court of law may have to get involved. In this case, intervention would be at the hands of a judge.

2. In the workplace, what role do you believe a manager should have in intervention?

In the workplace, the role a manager should have in intervention is to pursue his or her employer's best interests, while seeking an ethical outcome. Prior to becoming engaged in an intervention, a manager should clearly indicate to the people involved what his role is. (Wilmot, 2007, 274) By giving this indication, the manager establishes immediate respect among the people involved in the conflict. It also allows the manager to intervene on behalf of his employer to ensure that the conflict does not become detrimental to the company. In the case of a situation where one or more employees have a dispute with executive decisions, the manager may need to intervene on behalf of the employees even if it jeopardizes his career. If

the decisions are unethical, the manager has a duty to play the role of referee.

3. In what situations do you believe intervention should be mandated? Voluntary?

Intervention should be mandated in situations where an individual is granted responsibility. In the case of a classroom setting, it is a teacher's responsibility to intervene when students argue or fight. If a teacher does not intervene, they will not be in control of their classroom. The intervention may be verbal until the teacher finds it necessary to recruit assistance in intervening between unruly students. In the military, a drill instructor may need to intervene if new recruits become engaged in physical conflict. He would need to intervene and discipline these recruits to prevent them from fighting again. Further up in the ranks, military superiors are obligated to ensure that the lower ranks conduct themselves in an orderly, professional fashion. Another situation where intervention should be mandated is when conflict happens between nations, especially when a larger, mightier country acts aggressively towards a smaller, weaker nation. An example of this scenario happened in 1990, when Iraq initiated conflict with Kuwait. Iraq possessed a powerful military, while Kuwait was a much smaller nation. The situation mandated that somebody step in and liberate the smaller country, which the United States did in 1991. In this case intervention was needed immediately.

Intervention should be voluntary in situations where an individual feels a personal responsibility to become involved. In a situation where three friends are roommates, one of the friends may decide to assume the role of mediator and intervene when the other two friends experience conflict. The intervening friend would have to be fair and not take one side over the other. He would have to see the greater good of the situation that the

friends should all enjoy living together. Another situation where intervention should be voluntary can be witnessed when two young siblings quarrel over a toy. An older sibling may take it upon herself to intervene and help the younger siblings to take turns playing with the toy. Although this situation could be handled by parents, the older sibling saw it as her personal responsibility to take initiative and achieve a peaceful end to the fighting. An additional situation that warrants voluntary intervention is when opposing basketball players engage in pushing and shoving after a foul has been called. Players not involved in the skirmish may decide to intervene and hold back their teammates. This way, they can prevent the shoving from becoming a full-blown fight. They feel a personal responsibility to their team's greater good of winning the game without their teammates getting ejected by the officials.

#### 4. What should be the goal of mediation?

The goal of mediation should be to encourage two parties engaged in a conflict to come to a final agreement. Aside from achieving a resolution, the main purpose of mediation is that the parties resolved their conflict rather than it being decided by a third party. (Wilmot, 2007, 281) Mediation between two parties can include a third party's influence, but not their decisions. A mediator can help the conflicting parties find common ground in an attempt to achieve a peaceful solution. They can make suggestions about what the parties might do to resolve their conflict. Ideally, mediation does not push either side into agreeing to a deal when they are uncomfortable with it. (Wilmot, 2007, 281) In the situation where the conflict is being considered through a court system, the mediator may be required to take on a more active role. He or she may be tasked with getting the parties to a consensus in a shorter time frame.

5. What is arbitration? Give an example of when it would be appropriate.

Unlike mediation, arbitration is a process of resolving conflicts that grants a third party the power to settle the dispute. (Wilmot, 2007, 280) The process of arbitration happens when each side of a conflict voluntarily agrees to settle through the process. While binding arbitration equates to a final judgment, nonbinding arbitration allows a conflict to continue to be debated through court. (Wilmot, 2007, 280) Unlike other areas of conflict resolution, arbitration often involves a third party who specializes in this process of resolving disputes. An example of when arbitration would be appropriate is in contract negotiations between professional athletes and sports franchises. If the two sides cannot agree on terms, financial and otherwise, through their own discussions, it may be necessary to bring in third-party help in the form of an arbitrator. An arbitrator can help the team and the player get to monetary terms that are agreeable in addition to other aspects of a contract. On a larger scale, arbitration is appropriate when a sports league's labor union is in contractual conflict with the owners of the league's franchises.

## CHAPTER 6

1. Describe, in some detail, a conflict (approximately 1 - 2 pages). This can be a real conflict or one that you create.

The following conflict is based on real conflicts that are a major contributing factor to the breakdown of marriages in the United States. Bill and Mary have been married (without children) for ten years and, for most of their marriage together, they have been happy. Although they argue from time to time, they have been mostly content with the exception of one topic: money. They have always disagreed about financial matters but were able to get past arguments and move on to happier times. In recent months, however,

arguments have intensified, as Bill received a significant pay decrease at work. The change in pay has affected their lifestyle in ways that caught them off guard. Bill and Mary stopped going out to eat as frequently, cut back on going to the movies, and decided to forego their annual vacation to Florida. Some things, however, have not changed. Mary was always a major shopper and continued her shopping trips despite the decrease in income. Bill continued golfing at the expensive country club where he and Mary had been members for more than five years. Bill and Mary each drove expensive cars that both still had many months of payments remaining. Furthermore, their house was beginning to feel like more of a liability than a home, as they thought adding the extra room would increase the house's value.

Despite Bill and Mary's conscious efforts to cut back in certain areas of their budget, they still continued to spend. However, Bill became increasingly frustrated by Mary's shopping habits. He had always been somewhat annoyed by the amount of money Mary spent at fashionable clothing stores, but times were tight. Many arguments about money began with Bill finding receipts for recent shopping trips. He would launch into complaints about Mary's buying sprees. She would retort that Bill continued to go golfing at such an expensive country club. Mary would also indicate to Bill that most of her shopping was done when items were on sale. Bill argued that Mary already had plenty of shoes and clothes. The arguments had steadily gotten worse over the last several months, as the couple saw their level of debt remain. All of their extravagances were eating away at their financial wellbeing. It was also taking its toll on their emotional state. Their marriage was fracturing, and their arguments were spiraling out of control. They began arguing about other things, including each other's family and friends. The stress from work made Bill come home frustrated on a regular basis. Mary tried to calm him down, but they usually ended up arguing.

As time passed, Bill and Mary continued fighting and grew less happy with themselves and each other. The past decade of being mostly happy marriage seemed like a distant memory. Mary decided to take a break and go stay with her parents for a few weeks, while Bill remained at the house, going about his regular routine. During these weeks, their phone discussions would end up in arguments frequently about the topics of work, money, and other things. Bill and Mary's ongoing conflict was getting close to making them both secretly contemplate the inevitable: divorce. They each wondered how things had gotten so bad and were unsure of what to do.

2. Respond to each of the questions in the Wilmot-Hocker Conflict Assessment Guide. Your responses should be based on the information given in your conflict. (approximately 5 - 10 pages)

#### I. Nature of the Conflict

- a. What are the triggering events that brought this conflict into mutual awareness?

The triggering events that brought this conflict into mutual awareness include the recent pay cut, the continued monetary habits, the arguing, and Mary leaving for a few weeks.

- b. What is the historical context of this conflict in terms of (1) the ongoing relationship between the parties and (2) other, external events within which this conflict is embedded?

The relationship between the parties includes ten years of marriage in addition to a couple of years of dating beforehand. Bill and Mary have had what appears to be a loving relationship on the surface, but it is one that might have been going on for years without any serious tests as to its durability during tough times. In terms of external events, this conflict has been affected by the sudden change from Bill's job, his company's financial struggles, and the worsening economy. Like many people, Bill and Mary are living in difficult times given the state of the economy. Any cracks in the surface of a relationship will quite possibly be opened to

reveal serious problems that couples have chosen to avoid in the past. In better times, they were able to overlook the problems and focus on enjoying their lives rather than carefully managing their finances.

c. Do the parties have assumptions about conflict that are discernable by their choices of conflict metaphors, patterns of behavior, or clear expressions of their attitudes about conflict?

It is clear by the actions of Bill and Mary that they blame each other for their problems rather than placing blame on themselves. For them, conflict is basically arguing with each other and getting upset with each other. Instead of calmly talking through their problems, they engage in conflict that involves fighting. Bill and Mary assume that conflict is stressful and involves anger and frustration. None of their words or actions suggests that they accept blame for the fighting.

d. Conflict elements

1. How is the struggle being expressed by each party?

The struggle is being expressed in angry tones by each party. They could be discussing the problem calmly to reach a favorable resolution. Instead, they are reacting emotionally to each other's complaints. The struggle is also being expressed by each party from an individualistic perspective. It makes both Bill and Mary appear to be selfish, as they place blame for their predicament on each other rather than accepting a portion of it.

2. What are the perceived incompatible goals?

The perceived incompatible goals include monetary habits and agreement. Bill and Mary each perceive that the goal of agreement about spending is impossible. Bill believes that the goal of agreement is unreachable, because Mary should see the error of her ways and go along with what he wants. Mary thinks that Bill is unfair and won't be agreeable until he stops complaining about her shopping. Separately, the perceived incompatible goal of common



monetary habits also pushes Bill and Mary apart. Bill and Mary have the same common goal of adjusting their spending habits to accommodate their reduced income. Each of them believes the other should cut back rather than individually denying their spending urges. This argument will continue to hold incompatible goals until Bill and Mary decide to cooperate with each other.

3. What are the perceived scarce resources?

The main perceived scarce resource is money, as Bill and Mary each believe it is the main subject of the arguments. If they had more money, they might argue less. However, the main problem would remain as it is control, not money that is the scarce resource over which Bill and Mary have been arguing. They each want control over spending as much money as they wish and do not want the other person to determine their spending limits. Rather than working together to determine an appropriate level of spending, they each want to control how their shared income is spent.

4. In what ways are the parties interdependent? How are they interfering with one another? How are they cooperating to keep to conflict in motion?

The parties are very interdependent, as they are a married couple. They depend on each other for love and emotional support. Mary relies on Bill to earn an income, while Bill counts on Mary to make a livable home. They depend on each other for friendship, as they enjoy being with each other. Bill and Mary both depend on one another as exercise partners. They are interfering with one another by attempting to take control. Instead of working together to resolve their problems, they try to control. Although Mary and Bill may not realize it, they are cooperating to keep their conflict in motion. If they chose to simply ignore their financial problems, they might have a more disastrous result. Instead, they have brought the problem

out in the open. Doing so puts them on the path to ultimately resolving the problem.

e. Has the conflict vacillated between productive and destructive phases? If so, which elements were transformed during the productive cycles? Which elements might be transformed by creative solutions to the conflict?

Although it may not seem like it, the conflict between Bill and Mary has vacillated between phases that are productive and destructive. The conflict was productive when they worked together to cut back on expenses, such as eating out, going to the movies, and going on vacation. However, all too often, the conflict between Bill and Mary is destructive. This phase involves much arguing about money and how it has been spent. During the productive phase of the conflict, nothing was truly transformed. Rather, Bill and Mary more or less shifted their spending to other areas. Elements that might be transformed by creative solutions are Bill and Mary's approach to each other regarding arguing, their understanding of one another, and their marriage itself. In fact, creative solutions could go a long way toward saving Bill and Mary's marriage.

## II. Orientation of the Conflict

a. What attitudes toward conflict do participants seem to hold?

The participants seem to view conflict as explosive win-lose situations. They equate conflict with fighting rather than seeing it as a way to resolve existing issues. Bill and Mary both view conflict as a way to assume innocence and assign blame. Their attitudes make conflict appear to be hostile and unwelcoming. They consider conflict stressful, without realizing that they are creating the stress.

b. Do they perceive conflict as positive, negative, or neutral? How can you tell?

Bill and Mary definitely perceive conflict has negative, which is evident given their constant arguments. It might take a third party to work with Bill and Mary to help to realize that conflict can be positive.

c. What metaphoric images do conflict participants use? What metaphors might you use to describe the conflict?

Metaphoric images conflict participants use include physical fighting and violence when the conflict is negative. If the conflict were positive, participants' metaphors might include peace treaties between nations. To describe this conflict, I would use metaphors, such as two children arguing over a toy or two animals competing for territory.

d. What is the cultural background of the participants? What is the cultural context in which the conflict takes place?

The cultural background for both Bill and Mary is white upper-middle class, as they both were raised by parents who were able to adequately provide for their needs. Bill's father worked while his mother was a homemaker, which was the same for Mary's parents. Mary's parents paid for her to attend an expensive college, as did Bill's parents. They have always been accustomed to the nicer, more affluent things in life. Thus, it makes sense that they felt compelled to continue this lifestyle as adults. Both Mary and Bill wanted to spend the money necessary to pay for their affluent lifestyle as adults.

e. How might gender roles, limitations, and expectations be operating in the conflict?

Gender roles, limitations, and expectations are important factors in the conflict between Bill and Mary. Many women like to shop, and Mary is no different. She feels that, given her economic status, it is her duty to keep up appearances through clothes, accessories, home furnishings, and any other matters. Mary feels that she is expected to fulfill her womanly role, which includes shopping. As a man, Bill understands that he has the expectation or

earning an exceptional paycheck to pay for all the trappings that he and Mary enjoy. Bill also feels that it's expected of him to drive a luxury car and maintain a membership at an expensive country club to keep up appearances. Bill and Mary both allow their environment to limit how they live their lives.

### III. Interests and Goals

a. How do the parties clarify their goals? Do they phrase them in individualistic or systemic terms?

Instead of calmly discussing what they would like to spend their money on, Bill and Mary loudly proclaim or yell about their goals in order to clarify them. They clearly phrase their goals in terms of individualistic terms by referring to what they want individually.

b. What does each party think the other's goals are? Are they similar or dissimilar to the perceptions of self-goals?

Each party thinks the other's goals are different. Bill knows Mary wants to continue spending a lot of money shopping, while Mary knows Bill wants to keep his expensive country club membership. Mary also thinks that Bill wants to stop her from shopping. Bill is convinced that Mary wants him to stop golfing entirely. The ideas that Bill and Mary have of one another's goals are dissimilar to the perceptions of self-goals. Bill does not want Mary to stop shopping entirely, but rather to limit the amount of shopping she does. Mary wants Bill to enjoy golfing, but would like to see him find a less expensive country club to join.

c. How have the goals been altered from the beginning of the conflict to the present? In what ways are the prospective, transactive, and retrospective goals similar or dissimilar?

The goals have hardly been altered from the beginning of the conflict to the present. Bill and Mary both want to spend money however they see fit without the other person controlling them. Thus, both Mary and Bill maintain prospective goals, as they knew what they wanted before the conflict began.

(Wilmot, 2007, 83) Neither transactive nor retrospective goals develop during their ongoing conflict.

d. What are the content, relational, identity, and process goals?

The content goals include Bill spending money in his way, on the country club of his choice among other things. The content goals also include Mary spending money in her way, including the clothing stores of her choice. For relational goals, Bill and Mary both want to have their extracurricular wants respected by the one another or at least accepted. Constantly bickering about each other's spending habits does not contribute to the relational goals. Throughout Bill and Mary's conflict, they have both maintained the identity goal of wanting respect for the positions in life. Bill wants Mary to understand his identity goal of being a successful young businessman, while Mary wants Bill's respect in her identity goal of being a young, affluent, upper-middle class woman. Unfortunately, both Bill and Mary want the process goal of keeping their relative power in the marriage. Rather than giving in to a certain degree and admitting that their individualistic spending habits need to change, Bill and Mary refuse to change.

e. How do the TRIP goals overlap with one another?

The TRIP goals all overlap one another in that the content, relational, identity, and process goals all suggest that Bill and Mary are individualistic in their desire to maintain the status quo. Although they have compromised on other issues, their status in society is very important to them. The TRIP goals all show that Bill and Mary both feel that they cannot just give up certain things.

f. Which goals seem to be primary at different stages of the dispute?

Throughout the conflict, the goal that seems to be of primary importance to Bill and Mary are getting each other to respect their status needs.

Status appears to play a more important role in each of Bill and Mary's self-esteem than does the need to maintain a happy marriage. Status makes them seem more like a pair of individuals than a couple.

g. Are the conflict parties specializing in one type or the other?

Bill and Mary are not specializing in one type of conflict. Rather, they are both acting assertively toward one another. They both are willing to use force to get the other to accept their wants and goals rather than finding middle ground by compromising.

h. Are the identity and relational issues the drivers of this dispute?

Although on the surface, Bill and Mary appear to be arguing about golfing and shopping, the drivers of this dispute are clearly the identity and relational issues. Bill enjoys golfing, and Mary loves shopping. These activities support their desires to appeal to others in their statuses. The need to have one another respect their statuses causes the conflict.

i. Are any of the goals emerging in different forms?

The goals of Bill and Mary are individualistic in nature and continue to be so during the more intense times of their conflict.

j. How do the goals shift during the prospective, transactive, and retrospective phases?

The goals are beginning to make it apparent that perhaps both Bill and Mary are more interested in themselves than their marriage. Their marriage had worked so far, because they had been able to live the lives they had always known. Throughout the phases, it appears that Bill and Mary maintain that status goals even if it is at the expense of their marriage.

#### IV. Power

a. What attitudes about their own and the other's power does each party have? Do they talk openly about power, or is it not discussed?

Each party believer power can be compromised in certain areas, but it cannot be compromised in what they value very highly: status. Although Bill and Mary do not explicitly discuss the notion of power, it is implied in all of the arguments throughout their conflict. With status comes a certain amount of power in society. This power by status is intoxicating to both Bill and Mary. Rather than living for each other, it is status that they desire. They both are unconcerned with other's power, which is obvious by the nature of their arguments.

b. What do the parties see as their own and the other's dependencies on one another? As an external observer, can you classify some dependencies that they do not list?

Bill and Mary both depend on each other for love, though it is appearing to be largely a materialistic and status love. They cannot be honest that they depend on one another to a significant degree for their individual statuses. Rather, they would both highlight as depending on each other for love. Bill thinks that Mary depends on him for her financial needs, including shopping. Mary believes that Bill would be a slob if it were not for her efforts in organizing their home.

c. What power currencies do the parties see themselves and the other processing?

Clearly, the power currency that the parties see themselves is resource control. Currently, it is held by Bill, as he brings home an income. Mary, however, shares the bank account with Bill. They both maintain an amount of control over resources, and they each understand that the other has this control even if they refuse to admit it.

d. From an external perspective, what power currencies of which the participants are not aware seem to be operating?

The most glaring power currency of which the participants are not aware is the lack of communication skills. Unfortunately, Bill and Mary both exhibit

a deficit in this area. They are not able to easily discuss their most important issues without arguing. They both see the other as poor communicators rather than understanding that about themselves.

e. In what ways do the parties disagree on the balance of power between them?

Although the balance of power between Bill and Mary is fairly equal, they each see the other as being too controlling. While Mary complains that Bill holds greater power because he is the source of income, Bill sees Mary as more powerful. According to Bill, Mary could go shopping all day and drain their bank account if she wanted. Both sides over exaggerate the other side's power throughout the conflict.

f. Do they underestimate their own or the other's influence?

Bill and Mary both underestimate the other's influence over each other. Seeing as they both aspire to achieve a certain level of status, they are very much influenced by each other. Bill admires Mary's sense of taste and elegance even if hasn't felt like admitting it of late. Mary appreciates Bill's sense of status. Unfortunately, when times are tough, they each see their own pursuit of status as most important.

g. What impact does each party's assessment of power have on subsequent choices in the conflict?

Because both Mary and Bill see each other as having more power, it impacts their thoughts and words during the conflict. They both feel that they need to fight back when the other person starts up an argument about spending habits. This fighting back is a defense mechanism. If Mary and Bill both stopped to realize that they each hold power, they might not fight so much.

h. What evidence of destructive power balancing occurs?



Evidence that destructive power balancing occurs can be seen in Mary having left to stay with her parents. She felt the fighting had gone on long enough and decided it was necessary to leave for a while before things became truly destructive. Other evidence of the destructive power balancing can be seen by their friends. Bill and Mary have always appeared to be happy and vivacious to their friends. As hard times hit, however, the conflict between Bill and Mary wore on the faces.

i. In what ways do observers of the conflict agree and disagree with the parties' assessments of their power?

Friends and families try to be supportive of Bill and Mary as they struggle through their conflict. Bill's brothers and closest friends think Mary shops too much, while Mary's sisters and dearest friends believe Bill is trying to show off to his golfing buddies. Mary's friends think Bill controls the situation with his salary. Bill's friends think Mary spends too much of Bill's money. Their parents try to stay out of it, as they disagree with both Mary and Bill's assessments of power.

j. What are some unused sources of power that are present?

Some unused sources of power that are present include the power within both Bill and Mary to see their own selfishness and realize the value of their marriage together. Another unused source of power is God. Mary and Bill could decide to go to church more often and seek help from God during their time of conflict. An additional unused source of power is creative solutions. Bill and Mary could work together to resolve their problem creatively without further damaging their relationship.

V. Styles

a. What individual styles did each party use?

Clearly, Mary and Bill are both using the conflict style of assertiveness to try to achieve their objectives. (Wilmot, 2007, 131) They each believe

their own pursuit of status is by far more important than the other person's. Thus, they feel the need to push the other person into seeing things each other's way. The conflict style of accommodation was actually used by Bill and Mary when they agreed to limit their eating out and movie-going, not the mention giving up their Florida vacation. (Wilmot, 2007, 131) The conflict between Mary was not combative at all times. The tended to avoid the fighting when neither one was feeling up to arguing. The conflict style of avoidance may have helped to cool down their hostility. (Wilmot, 2007, 131)

b. How did the individual styles change during the course of the conflict?

During the course of the conflict the conflict styles fluctuated from assertiveness to collaboration or compromise. At times, they practiced avoidance and at other times they even tended to compete with one another for their own status needs.

c. How did the parties perceive the other's style?

When Bill acted assertively, Mary felt the need to act the same in her arguments with her husband. When Mary suggested that they agree to work on eliminating extracurricular activities, like movies and restaurants, Bill was in a collaborative mood. Thus, both parties perceived the other's style based on however they were acting.

d. In what way did a party's style reinforce the choices the other party made as the conflict progressed?

Both Mary and Bill reacted in kind to the conflict style that each other presented throughout the course of the conflict. When one party was acting more aggressively, the other party responded with aggression. A conflict style of competitiveness brought the competitive side of the other person. Bill and Mary were completely interdependent on each other during the conflict.

e. Were the style choices primarily symmetrical or complementary?

The conflict style choices were largely symmetrical. When one party unconsciously selected a style, like collaboration or compromise, the other party followed in suit. Neither Bill nor Mary took the conflict in a completely separate direction during their conflict.

f. From an external perspective, what were the advantages and disadvantages of each style within this particular conflict?

From an external perspective the assertive conflict style contained more disadvantages than advantages. Sure, it got Mary and Bill to each present what they wanted, but it covered up the true nature of their conflict: control. The assertiveness caused Bill or Mary to react when the other one pressed their concerns. It added unnecessary stress. The conflict style of collaboration was actually much more productive than any other conflict style that Mary and Bill used. They followed through with their commitments to reducing movie nights and meals out. There really were not any disadvantages to using this conflict style. The conflict style of competitiveness was similar to assertiveness. It brought out the negative aspect that both Bill and Mary were competing for their individual goals.

g. Can the overall system be characterized as having a predominant style? What do the participants say about the relationship as a whole?

The overall system can be characterized as having a predominant style of assertiveness, as both Bill and Mary argued constantly to get their way. As the conflict has progressed, both participants have become more negative about the relationship. Their words reflect that they are unhappy in their marriage. They say that the good times were in the past and that each other is selfish.

h. Do the participants appear to strategize about their conflict choices or remain spontaneous?

Bill and Mary are completely spontaneous about their conflict choices, as arguments often happen when a bill arrives in the mail or one of them ventures off to either golf or shop. They are both too busy being consumed with their thoughts of status that they do not carefully strategize about how to deal with their ongoing conflict.

i. How does each party view the other's strategizing?

Neither party really gives much thought to the other's strategizing, as they given very little thought to their own strategizing. They simply see each other reacting to the conflict.

j. What are the tactical options used by both parties?

The basic tactical option that both Mary and Bill take is to try to annoy each other after they have argued. They do so by either shopping more or going out golfing more frequently. They each believe that this will antagonize the other person.

k. Do the tactical options classify primarily into avoidance, competition, or collaboration?

The tactical option that is being used by Bill and Mary classifies clearly into competition, as they are using it to get back at one another.

l. How are the participants' tactics mutually impacting on the other's choices? How are the tactics interlocking to push the conflict through phases of escalation, maintenance, and reduction?

The participants' tactics are obviously mutually impacting each other when they retaliate by doing more of their preferred activities. The tactics are not interlocking very well to push the conflict through the phases of escalation, maintenance, and reduction. The conflict seems to continue to escalate.

## VI. Assessment

a. What rules of repetitive patterns characterize this conflict?

The ongoing conflict between Bill and Mary is characterized by specific repetitive patterns. The most obvious pattern is that they end up arguing about the same things: whose individual status is more important. The other pattern that the conflict adheres to is the constant arguing. Rather than breaking the pattern and trying a new way to resolve their problems, Mary and Bill would rather gratify their egos.

b. What triangles and microevents best characterize the conflict?

The triangles and microevents that best characterize the conflict between Bill and Mary are the same arguments they always have about shopping or golfing or any expensive activity that either party enjoys. The arguments always end the same, with Bill and Mary both frustrated and often upset.

c. How destructive is the tone of the conflict?

The tone of the conflict has grown increasingly destructive as time as passed, especially so in the past couple of months. Both Mary and Bill find themselves complaining about more than just their spending habits and in very negative ways. It is so destructive that Mary decided on voluntarily avoiding Bill for a few weeks.

d. Are there coalitions that affect this conflict?

The coalitions that have tried to affect this conflict include family and friends. They have tried to get Mary and Bill to reconcile. Other friend coalitions have urged Mary or Bill to get what they deserve out of the marriage.

## VII. Personal Intervention

a. What options for change do the parties perceive?

Although it would not be as difficult to change as they think, Mary and Bill do not perceive any options available for change at the moment. They

each believe in going after what they want. They are not willing to change to accommodate the other person.

b. What philosophy of conflict characterizes the system?

The philosophy of conflict that characterizes the system is one of wearing down the other party. Bill and Mary each believe that if they keep making their demands, the other party will give in and accept them.

c. What techniques for self-regulation or system regulation have been used thus far? Which might be used productively by the system?

Bill and Mary have regulated themselves by not going out to eat so often or by not going to the movies as much. Their technique for this aspect has mainly been self-denial. As far as their more treasured activities of shopping and golfing, they have not regulated themselves at all.

d. How might anger be managed more productively?

Anger could be managed more productively by Mary and Bill identifying the source of their anger. By isolating the source of anger, they can attempt control what bothers them. Doing so will be a positive step toward a healthier conflict.

#### VIII. Attempted Solutions

a. What options have been explored for managing the conflict?

So far, Mary and Bill have not explored options for managing their ongoing conflict. They have yet to seriously attempt to control the conflict.

b. Have attempted solutions become part of the problem?

Attempted solutions have not become part of the problem, as Bill and Mary still must try to find out what solutions might be helpful.

c. Have third parties been brought into the conflict? If so, what roles did they play and what was the impact of their involvement?

Although family and friends have suggested to both Mary and Bill that they seek counseling for their marital problems, they have yet to go to a third party.

d. Is this conflict a repetitive one, with attempted solutions providing temporary change but with the overall pattern remaining unchanged? If so, what is the overall pattern?

This conflict is definitely a repetitive one. However, the repetition has not included solutions yet. The overall pattern has been to continue arguing about the same needs for status.

e. Can you identify categories of solutions that have not been tried?

Categories of solutions that have not been tried might be anything. Counseling or third-party help would be a positive step in the right direction. Perhaps, they should share their activities with one another. Bill could go shopping with Mary one week. The following week, Mary could go golfing with Bill, since she is a member of the country club. Another solution might be that Mary pursues a source of income to supplement her shopping. Although Bill believes in the tradition of the man of the house providing income, he would have to be supportive of his wife. An additional solution is that Bill and Mary go ahead and take their vacation but stop shopping and golfing so much temporarily. Perhaps they simply need something to help them reconnect.

## References

Wilmot, W. W., & Hocker J. L. (2007). Interpersonal Conflict. New York:  
McGraw-Hill.