TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF INTRAORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT: DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

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This paper presents the theoretical rationale for further development of a model for the assessment and management of intraorganizational conflict. The purpose of such a model would be to assist employees, managers, human resources practitioners, and external service providers in selecting the most appropriate conflict management strategy for a given conflict. The framework presented builds on the previous work of Sheppard (1984) and Elangovan (1995, 1998) in suggesting that a contingency-based model of strategy selection must include attention to characteristics of the conflict, desired outcomes of the participants, and awareness of available conflict management strategies. By expanding the range of conflicts and conflict management strategies typically included within a single model, the framework presented here forms the basis of a comprehensive model for dealing with intraorganizational conflict.

This paper presents the theoretical underpinnings for a comprehensive model for the assessment and management of intraorganizational conflict. The purpose of the model is to provide members of non-union organizations with guidelines for selecting appropriate conflict management strategies for different forms of conflict. Unlike previous models which have been largely confined to discussions of grievances (Costantino & Merchant, 1996; Ewing, 1989) or limited to the activities of managers as third parties (Elangovan, 1995, 1998), this model incorporates a broad definition of conflict as well as a variety of conflict management strategies and third parties. This article presents a review of the literature used to develop the initial framework and describes on-going research efforts to refine this framework

Table 2
Desired Outcomes of Conflict Management

	Third Parties	Disputants
Fairness	Institute better rules and procedures (Prein, 1987)	Set a precedent (Sander & Goldberg, 1994) Obtain a neutral opinion (Sander & Goldberg, 1994)
Satisfaction	Fully acceptable solution (Prein, 1987) Maintain desired amount of privacy (Sheppard, 1984)	Keep dispute private (Sander & Goldberg, 1994) Make dispute public (Sander & Goldberg, 1994) Get vindication (Sander & Goldberg, 1994) Minimize/maximize recovery (Sander & Goldberg, 1994)
Effectiveness	Improve the relationship (Prein, 1987) Prevent repetition (Prein, 1987) Teach parties to manage future conflicts (Prein, 1987) Create more clarity (Prein, 1987) Learn from the conflict without resolving it (Prein, 1987) Create a workable solution (Prein, 1987) Find a pragmatic solution (Prein, 1987) Alter work structure (Prein, 1987; Putnam, 1994) Decision quality (Thomas, 1982)	Improve relationship (Sander & Goldberg, 1994)
Efficiency	Settle conflict in a timely manner (Prein, 1987; Sander & Goldberg, 1994) Minimize costs & use of resources (Prein, 1987; Sander & Goldberg, 1994; Thomas, 1982)	Settle conflict in a timely manner (Sander & Goldberg, 1994)

given conflict. The theoretical framework that results from this literature review is depicted in Figure 1.

Table 3
Intraorganizational Conflict Management Strategies

	Informal	Formal
Interests		
No third party	Negotiating	
Intervening manager	Advising	
	Facilitating	
	Mediating	
Intervening other	Advising	
	Facilitating	
	Mediating	
External third party	Advising	Mediating
	Facilitating	
	Mediating	
Rights		
No third party	Adversarial intervention	
Intervening manager	Inquisitorial intervention	
Intervening other	Advisory ADR	Fact-finding
		Internal Adjudication
External third party	Advisory arbitration	Advisory ADR
		Binding arbitration
Power		
No third party	Threats	Striking
	Coalition building	Voting
Intervening manager	Autocratic decision	
	Providing impetus	
	Restructuring	
Intervening other	Autocratic decision	
	Providing impetus	
	Restructuring	
	(assuming a higher status third party)	
External third party		