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### **Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Conflict Handling Styles**

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## **Relation between demographic characteristics and conflict handling styles**

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### **Abstract**

Various researchers have studied individual characteristics such as age, sex, and physical characteristics and their relation with attitudes or behaviors. However, few have analyzed the relation between attitudes or behaviors and *non-objective* aspects such as psychological perceptions of age, interests and team environments. Also, there are similar research needs to relate attitudes and behaviors on issues such as training, participation in social events, etc. Thus, the main contribution pursued by our research was to shed some light on the relation between the non-objective variables and intentions of treatment of situations that involve conflicts. The relationship between workers and enterprise owners or their representatives seems to be the appropriate scenery for researching these issues. That is, such a relationship has been generally hard all over the world. Workers and owners have historically settled the dispute between themselves. There are several factors that have influenced this. However, the negotiators' conflict handling style supposedly is the main factor that help, or hinder, agreements. So these categories seem to be very appropriate to study the mentioned relation. We intend to touch lightly the ways how laborers and employers' negotiators handle conflict between themselves, and the relation of theirs personality characteristics and conflict handling profile. The

research was done on the airline and journalism sectors. We researched the relationship between negotiator style and the following demographic characteristics: sex, efforts applied to negotiation, education, age, desired or perceived age, experience, marital status, political activities, achievement of information, relationship among researched negotiators and financial funds control. We applied two inventories to do our research: The *EPP Personal Information Inventory* and The *Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. The demographic variables were correlated to the predominant style of the research by employing statistical tests. Findings show that some variables relate and others do not relate to conflict handling styles. Although some variables do not relate as a whole, there maybe some details that show a relation to style profile. So, instead of thinking that there is no relationship between one variable and conflict handling style, one need to step up studies on the details of that variable. In other words, to know the relationship between variables we need to focus on them very closely.

## **A Glance at the Unionisms and at the Economics Environments: the Airline and Journalism Sectors.**

The American Union is composed of the AFL–CIO (American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations) as a central organization, which resulted from the joining of the former AFL and CIO in 1995. The AFL was founded in 1886 and the CIO in 1935.

The AFL–CIO basically performs lobbies with the State, coordinating and divulging the policies and mobilizations of the affiliated organizations as well as carrying out research related to Labor. Its conventional scope of actions goes beyond the borders of the United States.

As to the airway transportation in the United States, it has been verified that this industry follows technological innovations in order to increase productivity.

When, during the last decade, the technological advances became scarce, the airway companies had to handle the consequences of the increase of cost in their cost–benefits relation, going through great economic and financial difficulties in the nineties.

The recently terrorism act to The Trade World Center increased the economic difficulties of the airline sector. However the Bush Government is making an effort to help the airway organizations Companies, mainly the bigger ones. have been invariably resorting to unions in search of solutions for their problems. Although the participation of the employees, as

shareholders, has temporally relieved the industry's economic and financial problems, some of these organizations went through such serious crises that they could not count on other viable alternatives to avoid bankruptcy.

The economic environment of the American journalistic sector has been uncertain and vulnerable in the past decades. While some enterprises have obtained gains through increasing technology; others have only obtained benefits based on the reduction of costs and others have been in deficit.

If the economic perspectives foresee modest scenery, the technologic ones, on the other hand, are very bold. The journalistic enterprises are investing in electronics, aiming at increasing the speed of receiving and distributing information as well as the reduction of costs.

The relation between capital and the labor in the United States has, rendered the administration of business both difficult and easy. Some strikes have been decisive in changing the direction of some of the biggest enterprises of the sectors analyzed. Other movements – mainly in the airway sector – have culminated in agreements that included the participation of employees in economic improvement, through reduction of their financial compensations.

### **Methodology Applied to Research**

We sent two inventories to participants: The *EPP Personal Information Inventory*<sup>3</sup> and The *Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. The first one, based on Likert's (1967)<sup>4</sup> recommendations, was employed for raising demographic variables such as: citizenship, sex, marital status, education and perceived

or psychological age. In the surveying of ways the negotiators deal with conflicts the study resorted to the MODE Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974)<sup>5</sup>.

The following are the definitions of styles according to Thomas–Kilmann, 1974:

‘Competing’ is assertive and uncooperative – an individual pursues his or her own concerns at another person’s expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to in one’s own position – one’s ability to argue, one’s rank, economic sanctions. ‘Competing’ might mean “standing up for your rights,” defending a position that you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

‘Accommodating’ is unassertive and cooperative – the opposite of ‘competing’. When ‘accommodating’, an individual neglects their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. ‘Accommodating’ might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person’s order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another’s point of view.

‘Avoiding’ is unassertive and uncooperative – the individual does not immediately pursue their own concerns or those of the other person. They do not address the conflict. ‘Avoiding’ might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue instead of better digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative, which meets both sets of concerns.

‘Collaborating’ between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other’s insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

‘Compromising’ is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution, which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between ‘competing’ and ‘accommodating’.

'Compromising' gives up more than 'competing' but less than 'accommodating'. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than 'avoiding', but does not explore it in as much depth as 'collaborating'. 'Compromising' might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

'Collaborating' is both assertive and cooperative – the opposite of 'avoiding'. 'Collaborating' involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution, which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means

Twenty-eight representatives of workers answered our inventories. That is, nineteen of the Air Line Pilots Association (19.4% of negotiators' population) and nine of The Newspaper Guild (3% of negotiators' population).

The organizations that represented the enterprise owners were the Newspaper Association of America Foundation and the Airline Industrial Relations Conference.

Eight negotiators from Newspaper Association (23.5% of the population) answered our inventories and eight of the Airline Industrial (24.2% of the population) did the same.

To analyze the data we used the Thomas-Kilmann typology – we called it 'isolated styles' – as well as styles that we composed which we have named 'combined styles' or profile.

The predominant isolated style is the one that received the highest score out of the five items included in the Thomas-Kilmann typology, that is, competing, accommodating, compromising, collaborating, avoiding. The two first ones together we named 'distributive combined styles' and the two last ones were called the 'integrative combined styles'.

In the analysis of the dependency between demographic characteristics, environment perception and styles, the chi-square

test, the Yates Correction and the Fischer Exact Test were employed. The first one predominated over the other two methods.

## **RELATIONS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES.**

We researched the relationship between negotiator' profile and the following demographic characteristics: sex, efforts applied to negotiation of the category' concerns, education, age, desired or perceived age, experience, marital status, political activities, achievement of information, environment and financial funds.

### **Sex**

The research on the **sex variable** has brought little understanding about the relation with styles, attitudes, performance, etc.

Some studies have verified meaningful relations between sex and other variables, mainly when focusing on the relationship of sex and profession. Other research has verified independence.

Our study has verified a non-significant relation between these variables. However, in view of the few number of answers to this question, mainly from the female sex, some caution in considering the result is suggested.

Our findings agree with Rahim's (1983d)<sup>6</sup>. The author has verified some non-significant differences between the 50 male managers and 50 female managers as well as between 170 male students and 95 female students.

In Bergamini's study (1979); we can see An example that shows the difficulty in arriving at a conclusion of this theme. She has found independence between the variable sex and style, in a situation of ascending or productive performance. However, the author has verified a significant relation in decreasing performance conditions. She, therefore, leaves the conclusion unfinished.

Many authors have attributed the differences verified between men and women to other factors rather than sex itself (Olson, Frieze and Good, 1987<sup>7</sup>; Blau and Ferber, 1991<sup>8</sup>).

Gathering from the results of the studies carried out by these authors, it has been verified that, in practice, women's work situation differs from that of men. The former expect to occupy functions expected to "belong" to men and receive similar salaries, at least in the beginning of their careers. Men, however, have preserved a macho society where they do not wish to occupy functions normally done by women.

These results seems to reinforce the concept that, considering work, women's performance and preferences differ from the ones expressed by men, not really due to their sexual differences but due to the norms that society imposes upon the sexes.

### **Effort dedicated to concerns**

Analyzing the answers to our research the following indications have been verified:

1. The less effort dedicated to concerns, which are the object of work negotiations demands, the more the 'compromising' style predominates.
2. The frequencies of the 'competing' style surpass the 'accommodating' style regarding more intense effort applied to

the health insurance variable and to the three types of discrimination, namely: sex, race and age. Thus one can suspect that the negotiators that fight with more intensity for some types of variables, mainly the ones concerning discrimination, are the ones that prefer competitive ways of dealing with conflicts.

3. It seems that there is a direct relation between the effort dedicated to social questions and the 'distributive' style. That is, almost all the individuals that prefer the 'avoiding' style have got involved very little in the fight and defense of social questions. More than half of the ones classified in the styles 'collaborating' and 'compromising' have also shown a similar attitude. So, when someone defends social questions his style tend to be distributive, instead of integrative. That is, we against you.

## **Education**

We found a significant relationship between education and the following styles:

1. The isolated 'competing' style.
2. All the five styles together.
3. Both combined styles together – integrative and distributive.

From the people researched that declined preference towards the distributive style, 40% have up to University degrees and 60% some level above University degrees. Out of the ones classified in the integrative style, 75% have undertaken up to University degree and 25% have gone beyond.

Among the negotiators that have up to a University degree 48% declined 'compromising' preference, 21% 'competing', 21% 'avoiding', 5% 'collaborating' and 5% accommodating.

Among the negotiators that undertook post-graduate courses 39% declined 'competing' style, 39% 'compromising' style and 22% 'collaborating' style.

Considering that 'compromising' is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness, lets exclude it from the analysis. So, while up to graduate degree negotiators basically negotiate 'competing' and 'avoiding', the post-graduate negotiators basically bargain 'competing' and 'collaborating'.

Since 'competing' has a higher score, one can conclude that post-graduate bargainers are more competitive than theirs peers.

We found a similar conclusion analyzing the 'competing' style itself. That is, the preference for this style it was displayed by 36% of negotiators that have up to a University degree, and by 64% that have some level above University degrees.

Gathering from the data, it thus appears that the ones that have not gone beyond university degree differ from the ones that have followed post-graduate courses. The majority of latter have declined preferences towards a distributive way of dealing with the conflict, while the majority of the former have revealed integrative orientations. In other words, it seems that there is a significant relation between the educational level and combined styles of dealing with the conflict.

Some agreement with the observed dependencies was encountered by Day and collaborators (1988)<sup>9</sup>, who, researching 329 buyers, used the same instrument we applied. They verified a significant relation in one of the five styles of the Thomas-Kilmann typology.

Rahim's findings (1983d)<sup>10</sup> also confirm the relation of style to education. He has verified relations of dependencies among some styles and level of education, researching 2,377 managers and 557 students.

The majority of the research relating education to other demographic variables has found a significant relationship.

Out of eleven **training courses**, strategies and tactics of collective work negotiations related significantly to isolated and combined styles.

Negotiators who took 31 to 246 strategies and tactics training course hours were classified as: 43% 'compromising', 36% 'competing', 14% 'collaborating', and 7% 'accommodating'.

All bargainers who took 61 to 246 strategies and tactics training course hours were classified as 'distributive'.

From the results, it seems that this type of course tends to influence negotiators. That is, to influence them to follow distributive ways to deal with conflicts.

Thus, it seems that there is some significant relationship between some types of training received and conflict handling styles.

Researchers have practically neglected the impact of **social activities** in the labor environment.

None of the six researched variables have related significantly to any isolated or main combined styles. Although, the study verified that three of them have had some variable level of relationship with the main isolated style, namely: (1) inferior and medium inferior level of participation in neighborhood activities; (2) the set of moderate, high and very high levels of team sports practice; and (3) high and very high levels of participation in association memberships.

Almost half of negotiators (45%) who are involved in neighborhood activities display 'compromising' as the main style. The second most common incidence on this subject is 'competing' (27%).

We found similar rankings among negotiators who are involved in team sports practice ('compromising' 47% and 'competing' 33%), and in association memberships ('compromising' 50% and 'competing' 25%).

Thus, it seems that people somewhat involved in social activities tend to prefer 'compromising' and 'competing' conflict handling styles.

## **Age**

When carrying out the thesis project we hypothesized a relation of independence between age and conflict handling style.

Our findings show a non-significant relation between them.

Similar results we can see in Bergamini's findings (1979)<sup>11</sup>. She verified a non-significant relation between style and productivity, researching 950 Brazilian workers.

McEvoy and Cascio (1989)<sup>12</sup> looked at 96 studies that investigated the relationship between employee age and job performance of 38,983 people and verified that there is no significant relation in the majority of investigations.

Similar results were reached by Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel (1990)<sup>13</sup> researching 24,219 people. That is, they found a weak relation between age and performance in non-managerial jobs.

In spite of the non-significant relationship between age and style variable as a whole, we found a significant relation between

'compromising' style and age. That is, 25% of negotiators up to 40 years old and 75% of older negotiators demonstrated to prefer such style.

Similar conclusions to the latter findings were displayed by two studies. Posner (1986)<sup>14</sup> verified a significant relation between conflict handling styles and age, researching 287 Project Managers, mainly when he included the variable project experience. Leach (1991)<sup>15</sup> verified, researching 204 professional trainers, that older trainers tend to express less aggressiveness than younger ones who tend to be more competitive, assertive, etc.

Speculating a little about Leach's findings, it is possible that as time goes by the person reflects upon his actions, achievements and failures and ends up shaping his own ways of dealing with the many daily situations, mainly the ones that are conflicting or annoying. By observing this, we do not wish to imply that the individual changes significantly his personality or that he shapes behavior towards conditioning, but, rather, that he develops his perception towards his own environment and comes to employ a more convenient way or in a way that the psychological outcome is positive for him.

For instance, in determined times or situations in life, the person can be more intransigent than in other periods, making, thus, little use of cooperative ways. As the person grows older and more mature, he perceives better the strength of the other styles that he has and can give them priority – provided that he has a satisfactory level in his *repertoire* of styles, enabling him to relatively comfortably use various styles. The individual comes to use a/some backup(s).

The reverse in practice of the mentioned order can also happen, as well as a preference to a single way – which can be maintained throughout the lives of certain individuals.

Gathering our findings and the majority of research, we can conclude that as a whole age does not relate significantly to most demographic variables, but it seems to be a little bit different in terms of styles. Specifically, 40 year olds people may differ from younger peoples in terms of 'compromising' style, according to the results we reached.

We asked negotiators three kinds of questions to find out their **age perception**: "How old do you feel comparing yourself to your peers during negotiations?" "How old do you feel comparing yourself to your age in years?" "How old do you feel comparing yourself to society's perception of your age?" Three kind of answers was defined: 'younger', 'same age', 'older'.

As a whole the results show non-significant differences. Although, we verified some significant relation between 'isolated styles' and two answers.

The 'younger' answer related to 'isolated styles' in the three comparative situations: comparing to the peers; comparing to own age; comparing to society's perception of age. The 'older' answer related to 'isolated styles' while comparing to the peers .

It is important to point out that all the rates come close to zero, resulting in very statistically significant relations.

Going into details, analyzing the situation "comparing yourself to your peers during negotiations" we found that: (1) the 'compromising' mode is the one preferred by 60% of the negotiators that feel they are younger than their peers; (2) among the negotiators that feel they are at the same age the styles preferences have non-significant difference among the five styles;

(3) the 'compromising' style is the one preferred by 83% of negotiators that feel they are older than society's perception of age.

Answers on "comparing yourself to your age in years" revealed that among the negotiators who perceive themselves as younger 48% show 'compromising' as the main style and 24% the 'competing' one. There is no significant difference in both other variables (same age; older).

Answers on "comparing yourself to society's perception of your age" revealed that among the negotiators who perceive themselves as younger 55% prefer 'compromising' negotiation style and 20% 'competing' style. There is no significant difference in both of the other variables (same age; older).

The following questions arise for future investigations: Why does the fact that a person perceives himself younger or older lead him to prefer more 'compromising' ways of dealing with conflicts? Why are there no significant differences among negotiators who perceive themselves at the same age?

Gathering from the results on age, we found out that the majority of negotiators over 40 and the ones who perceive themselves younger or older than their chronological age have in common the use of 'compromising' as the main conflict handling style.

## **Experience**

All of the nine studies we looked at showed some significance in the relation of experience to several variables. One of them was led by Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel (1990)<sup>16</sup> who studied the

relationship between experience and performance of 24,219 people. Results showed a moderate relation.

We researched the relationship between style and six types of experience: as professional, as manager, as negotiator, as the main negotiator, as not the main negotiator, relating to number of negotiation.

The statistical results show that the relation between experience and style has not been significant in any of the mentioned types. However, some levels among the five variables showed significant relationship.

We found out that:

1. 61% of the negotiators who have 21 years to 30 years of working experience prefer 'compromising' as the main conflict handling style.
2. 63% of the negotiators who have 13 years to 20 years of managerial experience prefer 'compromising' as the main conflict handling style.
3. 54% of the negotiators who have up to 3 years of negotiation experience prefer 'compromising' as the main conflict handling style.
4. 50% of the negotiators who have 19 years or more of negotiation experience prefer 'compromising' as the main conflict handling style.

As we can see, out of four experiences types that relates significantly to style three are at the higher period of time and show 'compromising' as the main negotiators style. Displaying the same main style, one kind of experience is at the lower period of time relating significantly to style. Thus, the data does not allow for a conclusion.

Displaying a different result, Day, Michaels and Perdue (1988)<sup>17</sup> concluded that the industrial negotiators that have had 16 years of experience or above demonstrated preferences towards 'collaborating' and 'compromising' attitudes.

A finding that somewhat supports the latter comes from Montgomery and Benedict (1989).<sup>18</sup> The authors observed that the more experience the negotiators of both sides – teacher and public school administration representatives – the less frequent strikes happened. Emphasizing, "the study supports the hypothesis that the negotiator's experience is an determining factor for the incidence and duration of strikes. The results strongly suggest that experienced negotiators can update their previous beliefs about the real concessions of their opponents more rapidly than the inexperienced ones" (p.391).

### **Marital status**

From the many studies on the relation of the individual's demographic characteristics that came to our knowledge, we have found only two that studied the marital status.

To make the formulation of a hypothesis based on the existing findings even more difficult, one of the studies found a significant correlation between marital status and intentions of job dismissals (Pooyan and collaborators, 1988)<sup>19</sup> and another study found a non-significant correlation between marital status and work efficiency (Carroll and Gmelch, 1922)<sup>20</sup>.

The relation between marital status and style was not significant either in relation to the main isolated or combined styles.

## Political Concern

As we did not encounter any study relating political concern to style, we adopted the hypothesis that the individuals that demonstrate a determined ideological or political concern differ from the person who does not follow any.

The results, as a whole, demonstrated the non-dependence between conflict handling style and:

1. Political affiliation: Democratic Party member; Republican Party member; Independent Party member or Affiliated with no party.
2. Political party activity: Very low, low, moderate, high, very high.

However, we verified a more significant relation between political affiliation and conflict dealing styles we verified between the Democratic Party and Republican Party members. More specifically, from the party affiliates:

? Democrats (36% of the total population): the highest portion is classified as the 'competing' style (54%), followed by those categorized as the 'compromising' style (30%).

? Republicans (28% of the total population): the highest proportion is classified as the 'compromising' style (60%), followed by those categorized as the 'avoiding' style (20%).

Considering that, the results can suggest that the different preference of styles between Republicans and Democrats nears significance, it is important to point out that low levels of expected frequencies in various cells was verified. Research involving more affiliates can, thus, be suggested in order to achieve a more accurate conclusion.

Significant differences among the levels of political party activity and conflicts dealing styles were verified.

Among the negotiators who have very low and low activities we found the following styles preference: 'compromising' (45%), 'competing' (23%). Among the negotiators who have high and very high activities we found the following styles preference: 'compromising' (40%), 'competing' (40%).

Thus, we can conclude that there are a little bit more negotiators involved in political activities displaying competitive profile than the ones less involved.

### **RELATION BETWEEN PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT AND CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES**

Two of ten environmental variables researched<sup>21</sup> – relationship, financial resources, information availability, amounts of information and decision process control – related significantly to conflict dealing styles (Note that each variable was asked twice. That is, in different ways).

#### **Availability of Information**

Regarding the unions on behalf of which the negotiators have negotiated we found significant dependencies in terms of combined styles.

All the participants who revealed that the availability of information from their own work group has been difficult were classified in the distributive profile.

It seems that when the information is hard to get, even on behalf of those who negotiate, people tend to act competing or accommodating.

It is important to emphasize that due to legal mechanisms, the American labor negotiators are obliged to share among themselves the necessary information for the negotiations.

### **Relationship with unions**

Regarding the relationship with which the negotiators have bargained we found significant dependencies. That is, 73% of negotiators who answered that the relationship between their groups and the groups with which they have negotiated was hard to deal with expressed the distributive way of conflict handling profile.

Thus we can conclude that the more unsatisfactory the relationship, the bigger the tendency of reduction of the integrative attitudes of negotiation and emphasizing the distributive ones.

In other words, the negotiators who perceive the environmental variables as unsatisfactory during their careers tend to use competitive ways of dealing with conflicts a little more than those who consider their environmental variables satisfactory.

In the majority of the sentences employed by the negotiators to explain the reasons why they have perceived the environment as cooperative or competitive – in their relations with their affiliates as well as with the spokesmen –, their words generally agree with the theoretical expressions of the styles where they were classified (Thomas-Killmann Conflict Mode Instrument). Thus, it seems that there is a tendency for people to judge their surroundings from their own styles, more emphatically, to judge the environment from the projection of their styles.

Bradbury and Solano's study (1982)<sup>22</sup>, points out that the non-coercible and objective tactics are more efficient for the maintenance of relations.

### **A WORD ON CONTROLLER OF FINANCIAL FUNDS**

Researching the negotiator's perceptions about the financial funds that the "other side" has controlled, we found: (1) some tendency to project their own style; (b) some demonstration of impotence before the control of power sources, and (3) a tinge of revolt towards the capitalist ideology and practice.

Considering that, it seems that the judgment that the negotiators made regarding environmental relations tended to reflect their very styles or lack of encouragement.

### **Conclusions**

Summarizing the main findings of this study:

1. The research carried out on the sex variable has brought to light little information regarding the relation to styles, attitudes, performance, etc. However, there is a slight indication that the development and preferences among some men and women differ, not specifically due to sex differences but rather due to stereotypes and norms that society has imposed on them.
2. In terms of effort applied to negotiations, this study verified that the less effort dedicated to defend interests, objects of labor negotiations, the more the 'compromising' style predominates. The more effort applied, the more the intensity

of the 'compromising' style decreases – though still ahead of others – and the more the 'competing' style increases.

3. We found a significant relation between education level and one pair of combined styles. There are more negotiators with a lower educational level are more likely to prefer integration style than the ones with a superior level.
4. The relation between the negotiator's profile and training courses about the strategies and tactics displayed significance both to the main isolated and the main combined style. So, one can conclude that courses on strategies tend to influence the negotiator's style.
5. Out of six, three types of social participation showed a significant relation to the main isolated styles, namely: (1) low level of participation in neighborhood activities; (2) the set of moderate, high and very high levels of team sports practice; and (3) high and very high levels of participation in association memberships. Given that, we recommend researchers to study the relation between types of social activities and style.
6. Chronological age does not relate significantly to style, as a whole. Although, negotiators above 40 years older tend to use 'compromising' style as the main one. The majority of the participants feel younger than the 'social perception of age" and their 'chronological age'. The majority that feels younger as well as the ones that feel older prefer the use of the 'compromising' style more intensely. Gathering from the results, we can observe some relation between the chronological and psychological ages.
7. The relation between six types of experiences and style was not significant either in relation to the isolated or combined styles. Some levels of five variables related significantly, but there was

no common direction of the results. That is, some indicate that the lower experience period relates to style; some indicates the relationship of style and the higher experience period. Thus, data does not allow for any conclusion. However the majority of studies we looked at show a significant relation between experience and some demographic variables, including conflict handling styles.

8. The statistical relation between marital status and style was not significant in relation to the main isolated styles as well as the main combined ones.
9. The results demonstrated a non-dependence between conflict handling style and: (1) political affiliation and (2) political party activity. However, significant differences between political affiliation and conflict dealing styles were verified among the Democratic Party members and Republican Party members. Differences between these parties are significant We also found significant differences among the different levels of involvement in political activities.
10. Regarding the unions on behalf of which the negotiators have negotiated we found significant dependencies in terms of combined styles. All the participants who revealed that the availability of information from their own work group has been difficulty were classified in the distributive profile.
11. Regarding relationship with which the negotiators have bargained we found out a significant dependencies. That is, 73% of negotiators who answered that the relationship between their groups and the groups with which they have negotiated was hard to deal with expressed the distributive way of conflict handling profile. Thus we can conclude that the more unsatisfactory the relationship, the greater the tendency of

reducing the integrative attitudes negotiation and emphasizing the distributive ones.

From the various conclusions that this work verified, we recommend, emphatically: (1) To do detailed investigations of any variables – verification of lines and columns, besides the relation among the variables as a whole; and (2) to research either non-objective variables or less subjective ones of the individual and environmental characteristics.

The MODE as well as the EPP forms turned out to be useful tools for the conclusions of the thesis dissertation, which we have taken to write this article.

Regarding the MODE, the accommodating style is a potential candidate for further studies because only one of the 44 participants was classified in it.

The distribution of the main isolated styles verified in this research was the following: (1) compromising = 37%; (2) competing = 25%; (3) collaborating = 11%; (4) avoiding = 9%; and accommodating = 2%. After completing the sample we verified that 16% of the negotiators were eliminated from the analysis due to displaying more than one isolated style as the main ones.

Thus, the study concluded that 'compromising' and 'competing' are the most significant styles in the analyzed sample.

In comparative terms, the research carried out by Day, Michaels and Perdue (1988)<sup>23</sup>, involving negotiators of the industrial sphere, pointed out that the participants tended to emphasize the collaborating and compromising styles. However, they observed that there were some alterations in the preferences according to the participant.

To conclude, we recommend caution in employing the results for reasons such as:

- ✎ A chi-square statistics method was employed as a support instrument to investigate the relations among the variables. A good part of the cells contains expected frequencies in questionable quantity from a statisticians' point of view.
- ✎ The sample was constituted by people that, based on their characteristics, may be belong to a minority, i.e., among the participants: (1) 71% are university graduates, out of which 45% have post-graduate courses; (2) 59% are older than 45; (3) 72% have above 20 years of professional experience, the majority occupying director' positions; and 51% have above eight years of experience as negotiators.
- ✎ The data was collected in 1994. It may be that since then there have been some changes.

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<sup>3</sup> The authors created the "EPP Inventory".

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