THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES AND USE
OF MEDIATION

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

April 2008
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This study examined the conflict handling styles (CHS) of Hispanics and Whites (non-Hispanic) in a Department of Army organization. The study also explored whether CHS influenced willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. This quantitative study, adopting a descriptive-correlational design, used Rahim’s Organizational Conflict Instrument to assess CHS and a supplemental questionnaire to glean attitudes toward mediation. Independent sample t tests and analysis of variance techniques were used to test the means between the sample groups. Small sample size warrants caution in results interpretation. While findings indicated no statistical differences between CHS or willingness to use mediation, there were correlations between the two variables. This is one of few studies examining the association between CHS and conflict resolution methods.
DEDICATION

The energy that I put into this dissertation reflects the discipline, love of learning, focus and drive that have been integral parts of who I am. In every moment that I spent working on this study - sweating over it and sometimes having serious doubts of my ability to see this journey through to the end, - I heard the echo of my grandchildren calling me Dr. Nani. Those two words from little people who think you that are invincible and can do anything were enough to catapult me to success.

I dedicate this work to my children, Philip, Aric, and Tanisha, and my grandchildren, Andrea, Alia, Kane, Xander, Isaiah, and Luke. My legacy to you is that you grow up knowing that with love and support, all things are possible. All of you have given me both gifts generously.

I also dedicate this work to two of the most important people in my life. My dad, Falcon Hollinger, Jr. and my grandmother, Eddie Mae Hollinger shaped, to a large extent, the person I am today. Although they are both watching me from beyond, the spirit, determination, and penchant for hard work that they instilled in me have prevailed. I know they are smiling.

Finally, I dedicate this effort to anyone who dreams big, hits a brick wall, and begins to lose hope. Remember all things are possible. As Lao Tzu so wisely said, “The journey of 1000 miles begins with one step.” The key to realizing your dream is making the commitment to take that one step.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have accomplished this tremendous undertaking without the love, support, and well wishes of countless individuals. First and foremost, I thank God for reminding me each day of what is possible and for placing the right people and circumstances in my path to get me to the end.

I want to give heartfelt thanks to my mentor, Dr. William Shriner, for his gentle prodding, watchful eye, and patience, especially during those times in the process when I could not see my way out of a fog. I also add my special thanks to my committee members, Dr. Marcia Muirhead and Dr. Eugene Lee.

I will not forget how understanding my family has been, especially Ang and Don. They provided constant encouragement during the last four years while my life was more focused on being a “doctor” than a part of the family. Too many to name, I love you all.

Thanks to all of my friends who called constantly to check on me. I could not have survived the last year without the support of my boss and my team (“One”) who absorbed a lot when I could not. I could not have completed the study without the support of PSST (D), and my friends at the Department of Army, especially those at headquarters and the study location.

Finally, the support of my Power Kix family contributed to a successful final outcome. Here I was introduced to a delightful distraction that sustained me through this challenge but I am reminded that I still have yet another to complete.

To all who have helped me, prayed for me, thought about me, or asked about my progress during the last four years, I thank you.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Organizations are becoming increasingly more diverse, global, and interconnected (Ohlott, Chrobot-Mason, & Dalton, 2004) and are recognizing the value of a multicultural workforce (Pless & Maak, 2004). The resultant diversity provides a wide array of benefits to organizations, including (a) new perspectives; (b) substantial contributions to enhanced organizational performance; (c) increased opportunities for effective group functioning; and (d) creative approaches to teamwork (Giovannini, 2004). As leaders develop strategies to leverage diversity effectively as a business platform and encourage diverse individuals and teams to interact to generate promising solutions, conflict is certain to arise.

The primary goal of this study was to explore the dyadic, fused relationship between cultural diversity and conflict management. The importance of this connection will become evident to organizational leaders who need to overcome the challenges presented by a changing workforce (Dreachslin, 2007). An essential organizational staple for leaders is the ability to manage conflict (Hendel, Fish, & Galon, 2005). The early resolution of conflict is critical to organizational health and contributes to increased productivity and a concentrated focus on achievement of strategic goals.

Current demographics will continue to shift as the Hispanic population rapidly increases. The U.S. Census Bureau (2004) predicted that from 2000 to 2050, the Hispanic population will increase by 187.9%. Marshall and Heffes (2006) cited a Grant Thornton survey of business leaders indicating that business leaders identified changing demographics as one of the biggest challenges faced in corporate growth. Because increased cultural diversity translates into profitability and performance for organizations
(Ricaud, 2006), leaders must become more engaged in cultural awareness (Dreachslin, 2007) and more proficient in conflict management.

As this cultural dynamic transforms organizations, leadership concerns will center on maximizing productivity and optimizing business goals. Leaders will be challenged to create an atmosphere where relationships can develop and differences are not only tolerated but valued. In the midst of this imperative, conflict is inevitable (Chan, Monroe, Ng, & Tan, 2006; Eckert & Rinehart, 2005; White & Lee, 2004) as the leadership mandate includes the guidance of both individuals and diverse teams (Kravitz, 2005; Winter, Neal, & Waner, 2005). The building, maintenance, and sustenance of relationships are skills required in a complex global business environment (Crossan, Fry, & Killing, 2005).

Leaders may take comfort in knowing that a wide array of vehicles exists for the resolution of workplace conflict and a number of strategies have been developed to reduce conflict within organizations. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) encompasses a variety of methods to resolve workplace disputes and has been gaining increased attention (Stipanowich, 2004). One ADR process, mediation, has been touted as an efficient and effective means of resolving organizational conflict (Keppler, 2003). As leaders introduce ADR techniques into their organizations and encourage employees to use them, familiarity with conflict management styles, as they relate to cultural differences, can be a helpful determinant as to whether individuals will have a propensity to accept or decline participation in these processes. Awareness will allow leaders to design conflict resolution programs that best serve their organizations and minimize organizational disruption.
Chapter 1 provides an overview of a study designed to examine if a nexus existed between the variables of culture, conflict handling styles, and willingness to use mediation. A comparison of the conflict handling styles of two major workforce segments within the Department of Army was used to provide a framework for analyzing workplace conflict and developing meaningful organizational conflict management strategies. This quantitative study used a comparative, descriptive-correlational design to compare the conflict handling styles of two culturally diverse groups and further investigated whether either of these styles influenced group members’ willingness to use mediation as a conflict resolution process. The significance of the study was to provide insight on how conflict is handled and resolved by the diverse groups who will have considerable, continued interaction in the global organization. The study presented leaders across organizational disciplines with information that may be helpful in developing tools to facilitate the resolution of conflict involving individuals and teams.

As mediation is more commonly used as a means to promote conflict resolution (Keppler, 2003), the results of the current study generated further options on how information about the process should be presented to potential participants.

Background of the Problem

Organizations are formed to achieve a specific purpose or goal. Dual forces motivate individual members of organizations: self influence and influences based on role in the organizational system (Barnard, Goldstein, & Hazy, 2006). The coordinated and integrated efforts of individuals are required for effective organizational performance (Barnard et al., 2006) This entity relies on a variety of resources to accomplish its designed objectives, the most essential being people (De Kluyver & Pearce, 2003).
Leaders face significant challenges in their efforts to manage their human resources. Diverse needs, experiences, temperaments, and other factors challenge even the most experienced manager. The path to success is contingent upon the leader’s ability to steer a highly diverse group of individuals toward the joint accomplishment of organizational objectives and the creation of a synergistic environment. Inherent in the organization’s ability to achieve its goals are individual interpretations and perspectives on how to bring goals to fruition; conflict is a natural consequence and is inevitable (Haraway & Haraway, 2005; Taichert, 2006).

This research focused on the proliferation and resolution of conflict among diverse groups, with an emphasis on the federal sector workforce. An overview that outlined the emergence of diversity and equal opportunity provided a foundation fortifying the significance of culture, conflict, and conflict resolution within a public sector organization. The background of this study was derived from the federal government’s integration of diversity in the workplace, the possible ramifications of cultural conflict as evidenced by the filing of equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints, and the introduction of ADR as a sanctioned process for resolving workplace conflict.

The Emergence of Diversity and Equal Opportunity in the Federal Sector

The concept of diversity and the principles of equal opportunity emerged as the result of the inevitability of merging diverse cultures in the United States. At the height of the civil rights movement, minorities struggled to gain full access to public services and garner a share of the employment market. The inevitable influx of African Americans, then the largest minority group, into the workforce, prompted Congress to pass legislation
that set the foundation underlying many of the current principles that promote the integration of diverse cultures into both mainstream society and the workplace. The most prominent, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended in 1972 to include the federal sector workforce), prohibited discrimination in employment. Section 703(a)(1) of the law made it illegal for an employer to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. (Public Law 88-352, 1964; Public Law 92-261, 1972)

The provisions of Section 705(a) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended in 1972) enumerated conditions for creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This agency was charged with the oversight of discrimination in employment. Within the federal sector, the focus of this research, the Office of Personnel Management and the EEOC jointly administer policies that promote a culturally diverse workforce. Policies include efforts to ensure that all employees, with emphasis on the status of minorities and women, have equal opportunity in hiring and employment. In subsequent legislation, Congress reinforced the importance of diversity to public sector policy. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 effected additional policies to promote diversity (Adhia, 2005) and reflected the federal government’s commitment to the recruitment of minorities and women in an effort to diversify the federal workforce (Dolan, 2004).
The continuation of federal mandates to promote inclusiveness is complicated by the gradual darkening of the complexion of the workforce. What originated in the civil rights era as an effort to integrate African Americans seamlessly into the workforce (Kogut & Short, 2007) has now progressed into attention on other nonmajority groups. The U.S. Census Bureau has projected that between 2000 and 2050, the number of Whites (non-Hispanic), hereafter referred to simply as *Whites*, will decrease from 69% in 2000 to 50% in 2050 and Hispanics will be the fastest growing group (Andrews, 2006; U. S. Census Bureau, 2004). The Census Bureau has predicted that by 2050, Hispanics will comprise almost one-quarter of the population, and the growth of this community has made the U.S. the third largest Spanish-speaking country in the world (Waters, 2006). In sum, between 2000 and 2050, Hispanics will double their share of the population, while the majority population, Whites, will decrease by approximately 19% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Hispanic population growth corresponds with forecasts of an increase in the Hispanic labor pool. Projections for 2020–2050 predicted the entry of 21 million new Hispanics into the workforce and the decrease of Whites by 6 million (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). This statistic reflects the workforce heterogeneity that leaders will face and raises the possibilities for dilemmas associated with cross-cultural organizational conflict.

*Diversity and Conflict*

Accompanying the change in the complexion of the workforce will be differing values, norms, customs, and languages. These aspects may manifest themselves in different ways within the workplace. Interaction between two individuals or two cultures,
at some point, may result in conflict (Susskind, 2004; Xu & Davidhizar, 2004) and can pose a threat to relationship satisfaction (Nauta & Kluwer, 2004). The highly interactive nature of goal attainment has highlighted management of the diversities associated with individuals as an organizational imperative. With conflict as a possible detraction from optimum organizational performance, proactive organizations will need to take steps to engage in increasing cultural awareness as a means of minimizing disruption.

The Manifestation of Conflict within the Federal Sector

The organizational disruption generated by conflict, especially between cultures, can manifest itself in the use of a formal process to file complaints against the organization. The tenets of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended in 1972) prohibit discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin (Public Law 88-352, 1964; Public Law 92-261, 1972). Individuals who perceive that they are victims of discrimination may use the equal employment opportunity (EEO) process prescribed by Congress and the EEOC to resolve or adjudicate these matters. Unresolved EEO complaints that enter the system as informal complaints may potentially convert into formal complaints that consume valuable agency resources. Table 1 reflects the number of complaints initiated in the federal sector from fiscal year 2002 to fiscal year 2006, as reported by the EEOC (2007).

The EEOC, in its guidance to federal sector agencies, encourages reasonable efforts to resolve complaints informally (EEOC, 1999). Unsuccessful resolution attempts result in the filing of formal complaints against the head of the agency, which are then processed and adjudicated. The costs to agencies of unresolved conflict include the diversion of personnel, time, and monetary resources from mission accomplishment. The
EEOC reported that in fiscal year 2006, $43.7 million in costs and awards were paid to complainants as a result of EEO activity; $66.7 million was paid out in fiscal year 2005 (EEOC, 2007).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal year</th>
<th>Informal complaints</th>
<th>Formal complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>56,275</td>
<td>21,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>45,030</td>
<td>20,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>42,412</td>
<td>19,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>41,070</td>
<td>18,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>38,824</td>
<td>16,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-year average</td>
<td>44,722</td>
<td>19,187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the federal government aggressively seeks to make the federal workplace more reflective of the national population, leaders must continually develop strategies to resolve issues before they evolve into formal complaints. Effective organizations cannot afford the loss of cohesiveness, time, morale, productivity, and performance that accompanies the filing of EEO complaints. The federal government is continuing its drive to increase the number of Hispanics in the workforce (Office of Personnel
Management, 2006). The susceptibility of cross-cultural interaction to disagreements (Chen, Tjosvold, & Fang, 2005) may lead to an increase of complaints based on cultural differences. The likelihood that this scenario may emerge as reality in any workplace increases the necessity for leaders to master conflict resolution techniques attendant to cultural differences.

Alternate Dispute Resolution and Diversity

Conflict is a natural product of organizational interpersonal communication within organizations (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004). To manage this phenomenon, employees are offered options, such as ADR, to resolve employment disputes. ADR processes, most especially mediation, have been offered as viable techniques for rapid resolution of employee issues (Bryce, 2007; Keppler, 2003; Stipanowich, 2004). Mediation is the most commonly used process to resolve workplace disputes in the federal sector (EEOC reports, 2007). Federal sector agencies have an added stake in dispute resolution. ADR usage complies with the EEOC requirement that federal agencies “establish or make available an alternative dispute resolution program” (EEOC, 1999, Section 102b[2]).

The Department of Army, Diversity, and the Use of ADR

The Department of Army, the organization that will be highlighted in this study, is one of the nation’s oldest, most traditional organizations. Mirroring national demographics, the Army’s workforce is diverse and multicultural (EEOC, 2006). As the Army executes its plan to transform into a more relevant and ready force (The Way Ahead, 2004), the composition of its workforce will continue to change. While the military-civilian dynamic presents its own unique challenges, changes in cultural
demographics will also provide opportunities for improvements in the development of organizational relationships.

During the 5-year period from fiscal year 2002 to 2006, the Hispanic representation in the federal government and the Department of Army workforces has slowly but steadily increased (EEOC, 2007). The changes are displayed in Table 2. A continued increase in the number of Hispanics in both the federal government and the Department of Army workforces is expected as a result of the continued adherence to President William J. Clinton’s Executive Order 13171, which advocates that federal agencies adopt additional policies to eliminate the under-representation of Hispanics in the federal workforce (Office of Personnel Management, 2006).

Table 2
*Hispanic Representation in the Federal Sector and the Department of Army (Fiscal Years 2002–2006)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal year</th>
<th>Hispanic representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federal sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>7.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Department of Army uses mediation to facilitate disputes between managers and employees (Army Regulation, 2004; EEOC, 2007). Recognition that cultural differences may result in the use of distinct methods of resolving problems in the workplace is an essential component of any conflict resolution program. To increase communication and focus the agency’s resources on mission accomplishment and less on participation in costly and time-consuming complaint procedures, an understanding of these differences will not only be valuable but will also be a human resource imperative. As the federal government and the Department of the Army strongly advocate the use of ADR procedures to resolve conflicts (O’Leary & Raines, 2001), conflict resolution proclivities influenced by culture may impact on an individual’s willingness to use the mediation process.

Statement of the Problem

Culturally diverse organizations are becoming the norm in the global economy (Broome, DeTurk, Kristjansdottir, Kanata, & Ganesan, 2002), and “conflict management skills are important if individuals are to function effectively at any level within organizations” (Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002, p 78). Continuing changes in workforce demographics will add a new dimension to the leadership challenge of building and managing a cohesive organization. Recent demographic predictions through 2050 indicated a continued increase in the number of minorities in the labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). As this number rises, it is anticipated that cultural differences will engender increased conflict as the mix of cultures will result in differing values, behaviors, and workplace norms.
This study explored the problem that cross-cultural conflict inflicts immense damage on organizations, including decreased employee morale and diminished overall organizational performance (Milliman, Taylor, & Czaplewski, 2002; Nauta & Kluwer, 2004) and that leadership ignorance of cultural conflict handling styles may exacerbate the resolution of conflict situations within an organization. The current study aimed to alleviate this problem by providing leaders with information on how two varied cultures within one organization handle conflict and how this knowledge may be valuable if taken into account when attempting conflict resolution. This study attempted to show how culture, conflict handling styles, and conflict resolution are intertwined and are essential competencies for leaders at all levels.

The current workplace is comprised of a growing number of Hispanics. Although organizations have increased focus on how to integrate factors and mitigate disruption relating to this change to the face of the workplace, little research is available on how Hispanics, the largest minority and a significant part of the labor force, manages workplace conflict. Data for this study was gathered using a comparative, descriptive-correlational approach that showed how this group’s conflict handling style relates to that of the White majority. The results may prove useful to an organization’s ability to quickly and effectively resolve conflict.

Mediation has become a popular method to resolve employee disputes (Raisfeld, 2007). An examination into whether consideration is given to individuals’ inherent modes of handling conflict, prior to offering mediation, may provide insight that may further increase and encourage the use of mediation. Because of divergent cultural tendencies in conflict resolution, certain cultures may be reluctant to participate in a face-to-face,
interactive process dealing with contentious issues. The focus of this quantitative problem was on workplace disputes in the federal sector. In-depth attention to this topic, which is vital to any organization’s successful functioning, may assist leaders in all organizational venues in a global context and may accentuate mediation as a more powerful conflict resolution tool.

Purpose of the Study

Conflict management is a difficult but necessary skill for effective leaders (Davidson, 2001). The purpose of this study was to provide leaders with additional insight into how to manage conflict among culturally diverse individuals and teams. The study provided leaders with a baseline for assessment of conflict handling styles to determine appropriate conflict resolution responses.

Hispanics currently represent the largest minority group in the United States and Whites still retain their status as the majority population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). This study compared the conflict handling styles of these groups using a self-administered instrument designed to evaluate conflict handling styles. The study tested the premise that the conflict handling styles of the two groups may have an impact on the decision to use mediation as a means of dispute resolution.

This quantitative research examined the theories of conflict, culture, and conflict resolution, as they relate to two segments of a workplace population within a Department of Army organization located in the Southwestern United States. The independent variable of culture and the dependent variables of conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation were explored. The choice of a comparative, descriptive-correlational design facilitated the comparison of conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites.
within the Department of Army and helped to determine whether a nexus existed between
the style and the willingness to use a process to resolve the conflict situation.

Extemporaneous to the hypotheses proffered, the research also examined the impact of
the variables of gender, age, and supervisor status on the dependent variables.

Significance of the Problem

The concepts of cross-cultural management and conflict transcend boundaries.
This mix has global implications and crosses societal and organizational limits. Attaining
an understanding of how different cultures inherently handle conflict can substantially
impact relationships in organizations (Holt & DeVore, 2005). Conflict occurs in all
relationships, especially those involving individuals of different cultures (Xu &
Davidhizar, 2004). The inevitable interaction between cultures presents an opportunity
for organizations to identify the methods that differing cultures may use to resolve
workplace disputes and apply this knowledge to develop conflict resolution strategies.

When developing strategic objectives, organizations have cited the importance of
demographics as direct contributors to productivity and profitability (Jenson, 2005).
Demographic predictions indicate that the global complexion will darken over the next
few decades. The population in the United States is continuing to transform and now
includes a new majority minority. Hispanics now comprise a larger sector of society and
their numbers will continue to increase through 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).
Consequently, organizational issues that affect this group’s existence cannot be ignored.
The continued rapid growth of the Hispanic population is opening up new opportunities
for this group but, at the same time, is presenting challenges for leaders who must adjust
to a change in the cultural dynamic within not only their small workgroups but also within their organizations at large.

Demographic changes may provide the impetus for the study of cultural conflict. In organizations, cultural differences can affect the quality of relationships. Conflict, while an inevitable part of relationships (Nauta & Kluwer, 2004; Taichert, 2006), need not deter the attainment of positive results within organizations. Organizations that do not consider the seriousness of conflict in a rapidly changing environment are neglecting a major component of their responsibility to their stakeholders. Conflict, if not appropriately managed, can disrupt operations and create enormous deficits in organizational resources that ultimately lead to employee job dissatisfaction and increased turnover (Almost, 2006). Conflict can create personal animosities and poison the organizational climate for long periods of time. The increase in global and organizational cultural diversity requires an urgent understanding of conflict management styles and how conflict is managed within culturally diverse groups.

Conflict resolution is a crucial element of organizational strategy. Over the last 10 years, since the passage of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 1996, using alternative methods to resolve disputes has proved to be an effective, less adversarial strategy (Twomey, 2006). ADR has been used in a wide number of applications, including as a means to resolve personal matters, family disputes, civil litigation, EEO complaints, and employee grievances. Mediation, one of the many forms of ADR, is recognized as one of the most widely used and successful dispute resolution processes (Mareschal, 2002; Twomey, 2006). The highly interpersonal nature of mediation requires that two parties work together for a mutually agreeable solution. Although organizations
aggressively attempt to encourage managers to use mediation to resolve disputes, there appears to be little or no emphasis on whether or not cultural factors play a role in the actual participation rate. While many organizations establish standing policies requiring managers to participate in a resolution process, it appears that they do not consider conflict resolution styles that may be attributed to culture. Knowledge of cultural nuances in handling conflict may increase awareness of attitudes toward use of mediation and may be a contributing factor to successful dispute resolution.

The nexus between conflict management styles and the success of the mediation process becomes more significant in the global context. While understanding how different groups manage conflict is only one component of the vast array of factors included in culture, it is an essential element in building a solid foundation to successful partnerships (Homan, van Kneppenberg, van Kleef, & de Dreu, 2007). The continuing mandate to interact across national borders is accompanied by the requirement to expand interpersonal communication skills and exhibit competency and sensitivity in resolving disagreements.

Few researchers have studied the area of conflict management as it relates to Hispanics, a growing segment of the workforce (Stohl, 2001). Specifics that enhance appreciation of how this growing segment of the population handles conflict may mitigate organizational disruption. This study has supplemented the limited empirical research in this area, provided information that can assist leaders globally in any level of the organizational hierarchy, and included suggestions for opportunities for future research. The influx of Hispanics into the global workforce and their interaction with the majority population segment in individual, team, and group settings demand that leaders
pay attention to specifics that will allow for adjustment and adaptation to the appropriate conflict resolution strategy.

Significance of the Study to Leadership

Within organizations, leaders manage a wide range of resources; the most important is people (De Kluyver & Pearce, 2003). One of the most challenging human resource issues is dealing with increased cultural diversity. The seamless achievement of organizational goals demands the minimization of the conflict resulting from cultural diversity. Conflict minimization requires skill in understanding human interaction (McGuigan & McMechan, 2005), knowing how various cultures process conflict (Xu & Davidhizar, 2004), and promoting educational awareness to those involved. The fusion between leadership and cultural awareness will further strengthen as the U.S. Census Bureau’s projection becomes a reality. In the first 5 years of the current decade, Hispanics have accounted for 50.3% of the change in the U.S. population. In the non-Hispanic segments, Whites have accounted for 20.4%, African Americans for 16.1%, and Asians for 16.5% (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006).

As leaders strive to manage individuals and integrate the use of cross-functional teams as a means of accomplishing organizational objectives, the propensity exists for increased conflict (Kravitz, 2005; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Staples & Zhao, 2006). Leaders are responsible for dealing with conflict (Ramos, 2006), and how they respond can affect the amount and intensity of future conflict (Meyer, 2004). The ability to manage conflict is a standard leadership requirement (Kelley, 2006). Lack of knowledge about cultural differences and ways used by members to resolve problems that may arise can adversely impact on operations, which, in turn, may also have an adverse effect on
the organization as a whole. The management of organizational interpersonal conflict may be hampered by ignorance of cultural norms (Davidson, 2001). Cultural competence, or the understanding and awareness of culture and how it shapes values and beliefs (Rosenjack-Burchum, 2002), is a prerequisite for future leaders. As the number of Hispanics grows, not only must leaders engage their individual talents and skills but leaders must also stipulate that the probability of including Hispanics as team members increases. This dynamic creates the need for leaders who are attuned to the possible tension that may result from differences and who are alert to possible variances in how distinct cultural groups manage conflict.

Theorists in the field of conflict management have conducted studies that indicate specific cultures show propensities toward using a particular style of conflict management (Cai & Fink, 2002; Friedman, Chi, & Liu, 2006; Kozan, 2002). The awareness of the tendencies associated with particular subgroups can serve as a useful aid to leaders as they work to promote organizational cohesion and foster an environment of open communication, collaboration, and camaraderie. Leadership behavior emanates from the leader’s depth of understanding of challenges, strengths, and values of employees and peers (McGuigan & McMechan, 2005). Leaders can better analyze the dynamics of the conflict by using conflict management style as a starting point for diffusion and resolution of differences. Peterson, Ranganathan, Chi, Sai, and Chen (2006) suggested that leaders must be sensitive to employee values prior to determining intervention strategies. The dynamic organizational environment of the future calls for innovative, relationship-focused leaders who are aware of both the positive and negative effects of the mixture of culture and conflict in interpersonal relations.
This study supplemented the limited literature on conflict handling styles associated with two major segments of the federal workforce. Focus was placed on the shifting dynamic that will be caused by an increase in the Hispanic population into the workforce. The cultural accessories borne by this rapidly emergent segment of the population may add another dimension to interaction within the workforce. Study results yielded information that may assist global leaders at all levels of the organization, as well as those within the organization responsible for conflict resolution, with enhancement of the core organizational skills of cultural competence, conflict management, and conflict resolution.

Nature of the Study

A quantitative research design was employed for this research. A comparative, descriptive-correlational approach and a self-administered validated instrument provided the framework to explore the relationship between the conflict handling styles of two diverse groups in a Department of Army organization and their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes. Unlike qualitative research, where the focus is on a central phenomenon, quantitative research describes trends or the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2005). At its conclusion, this research provided leaders at all levels with additional perspectives into how individuals within the largest majority and the largest minority groups handle conflict and provided information as to their inclination to use mediation.

A quantitative approach was determined to be the most appropriate method for conducting this study. The choice of a survey instrument as the means for collecting data and the number of study participants were the prime determinants in the selection of this
strategy. Efforts to solicit responses from 200 personnel in a span of five weeks were not conducive to the researcher’s use of a qualitative methodology. A mixed methodology approach was considered and rejected because in-depth information about the attitudes of the participants as they related to use of the mediation was not the goal of this study.

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) Part C was used. This instrument consists of 28 questions and is designed to measure the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict (Rahim, 2004). The ROCI-II was sent to a sample of 100 Hispanic and 100 White employees from a federal sector organization in the Southwestern United States. Demographic data, information on conflict handling styles, and data on willingness to use mediation was collected via the use of a supplemental questionnaire.

Qualitative studies are suitable when the variables are unknown (Creswell, 2005). In this study, the variables were clearly defined. The independent variable of culture and the two classes of dependent variables--conflict handling styles and willingness to use mediation--were at the forefront of this study. Quantitative research was, thus, more appropriate for this research.

Convenience sampling was used to select Hispanic participants in the study. Convenience samples consist of participants chosen because they are “willing and available to be studied” (Creswell, 2005, p. 149). The Hispanic component comprises 6.86% of the Department of Army’s workforce (EEOC, 2006). A location within the Department of Army that had a denser concentration of Hispanics within its workforce was required for sampling. The location that served as the site for the study is located in the Southwestern United States.
To match the Hispanic sample size, the comparator sample, Whites were chosen by using the systematic random sampling method. To obtain an equal number of participants from this group, “every nth individual or site in the population” (p. 147) was chosen until the desired sample size was reached.

The survey was sent to a sample of 100 Hispanic employees and 100 White employees at the selected Department of Army site. The goal of the research was to apply the results to the population. Creswell (2005) maintained that quantitative research is more appropriate when seeking to identify trends in large populations.

Data analysis methods incorporated the use of a series of statistical tests. The t test for independent samples and the analysis of variance techniques explored differences between the means of the two sample groups. Pearson’s correlation coefficient examined whether a relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables.

**Research Questions**

This quantitative study examined the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army?
2. Is there a significant difference in the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes?
3. Do the conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes?
4. Do the conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes?

Hypotheses

Hypotheses predict the outcome of the study. The null hypothesis ($H_0$) denotes no change in relationship between variables. The study tested the null hypotheses and examined the relationship between the independent variable, culture, and the dependent variables, conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation. The following hypotheses were presented to support the research questions:

$H_01$: There is no significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_a1$: There is a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_01a$: There is no significant difference between the integrating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_a1a$: There is a significant difference between the integrating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_01b$: There is no significant difference between the obliging styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_a1b$: There is a significant difference between the obliging styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.
$H_{0c}$: There is no significant difference between the dominating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{A1c}$: There is a significant difference between the dominating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{0d}$: There is no significant difference between the avoiding styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{A1d}$: There is a significant difference between the avoiding styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{0e}$: There is no significant difference between the compromising styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{A1e}$: There is a significant difference between the compromising styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{02}$: There is no significant difference in the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes.

$H_{A2}$: There is a significant difference between the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes.

$H_{03}$: The conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army do not influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
$H_3$: The conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army do influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{03a}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between a having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3a}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{03b}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3b}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{03c}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3c}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
\(H_{03d}\): For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

\(H_{A3d}\): For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

\(H_{03e}\): For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

\(H_{A3e}\): For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

\(H_{04}\): The conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army do not influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

\(H_{A4}\): The conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army do influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

\(H_{04a}\): For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
HA4a: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

H04b: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

HA4b: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

H04c: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

HA4c: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

H04d: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

HA4d: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
$H_04e$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_A4e$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporated a combination of frameworks. Most notably were the concepts of conflict, cultural diversity, and conflict resolution. The interrelated nature of these concepts formed the basis for the current research.

Conflict

The ever-changing relationships between two individuals make conflict an unavoidable occurrence and an important component of organizational diagnosis. The literature contains a wide array of definitions of the term *conflict*. Conflict has been characterized as the competition between human beings over scarce resources or the sharing of different goals and time constraints (Labovitz, 1980). De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & Dijkstra (2004) described conflict as “a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between oneself and another individual or group about interests, beliefs or values that matter to them” (p. 8).

The essence of social conflict is interaction and the implication that there are unequal relationships between individuals and groups. Individuals belong to a variety of groups and are required to play a number of roles to successfully function within these groups. Group conflict derives from group competition over limited resources, and
hostility results from differing goals—whether real or perceived (Campbell, as cited in Brief, Umphress, Deitz, Burrows, Butz, & Scholten, 2005). The dispersion of internal resources may cause individuals and groups that are more powerful to use their advantages to exploit the less powerful. Positional and relationship conflict emanate from this power inequity.

Conflict theory has often been broached as incompatibility (Bartos & Wehr, 2002). The conflict theory proposed by Bartos and Wehr included the dyad of incompatible goals and hostility. Individuals “use conflict behavior against each other to attain incompatible goals and/or to express their hostility” (p. 13).

Pondy (1967) suggested that each conflict includes “a sequence of interlocking conflict episodes; each episode exhibits a sequence or pattern of development, and the conflict relationship can be characterized by stable patterns that occur across the sequence of episodes” (p. 298). Further, Pondy elaborated on the five stages manifested in conflict:

1. Latent: Conflict arises under one of three conditions. It may occur because of competition for scarce resources, because one party wants to exert control over another, or because parties are unable to agree in goal-setting or decision-making.

2. Feeling: Conflict engenders affective responses within individuals.

3. Perception: Parties in a conflict may cognitively know that conflict exists but may suppress behaviors related in stage 4.

4. Manifest: There are behaviors associated with conflict. This stage refers to how individuals express or act out conflict behaviors.
5. Conflict aftermath: Conflict may either be suppressed or resolved. The conflict aftermath equates to the condition of the organization after conflict. Researchers have reported that conflict, despite its negative connotation, can provide benefits to an organization (Labovitz, 1980; Pondy, 1967). Authors in the literature have expounded on the positive aspects of conflict and its ability to promote innovation within social systems (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004). Task conflict has been credited with generating creative solutions to complex organizational problems (Chen, 2006; Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004).

Cultural Diversity

Organizational leaders have identified diversity as an essential contributor to successful performance (Bassett-Jones, 2005). Diversity includes more than demographics; it includes “differences in culture and intellectual capability” (p. 170). The wide array of perspectives, cultures, and ideas enhance an organization’s ability to develop innovative solutions to problems (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

While the more common approach to diversity entails maximum inclusiveness, cultural diversity is an often targeted component. Cultural diversity assumes the “existence in a community or organization of people from different backgrounds, or race or ethnicity, or different genders, with different beliefs, and values, with different expectations and at different stages of life” (Richardson, 2005, p. 24). While the potential for conflict is high, leaders must shift their paradigms to view conflict as an opportunity and embrace the concepts of conflict and culture collectively (Nauta & Kluwer, 2004).

When merged, the notions of conflict and culture provide fertile ground for research. Any study of conflict must take into account cultural norms (Zhang, Harwood
& Hummert, 2005). Culture plays a significant role in individuals’ perception of conflict (Hofstede, 1980) and their chosen conflict handling style (Davidhizar, 2004; Tjosvold & Wong, 2004). This research focused on the outcome of the amalgamation of the components of conflict and culture in the form of an identified conflict handling style.

**Conflict Resolution**

Leaders must engage the concepts of conflict and culture in the realm of organizational behavior. The conflict that exists between individuals is inevitable (Mannix & Neale, 2005). To accomplish organizational objectives, resolution is not optional and is contingent upon an understanding of how individuals process the conflict, and an understanding of culture may assist individuals and organizational entities in discovering methods to resolve issues quickly before they fester.

From a theoretical perspective, the field of conflict resolution is relatively new (Wessells, 2001). Scholars look to the work of Deutsch as the foundation. Deutsch (1961) ascribed success in a bargaining situation to the ability of parties to maintain face. The motivators of cooperation and competition are integrated into ultimate conflict resolution, and reaching an agreement is dependent upon the strength of the motivation. “Bargainers are more likely to reach an agreement, the stronger are their cooperative interests in comparison with their competitive interests” (Deutsch, 1961, p. 888). From a resource perspective, often a cause of conflict, Deutsch added that individuals are more likely to reach agreements “the more resources they have available for recognizing and inventing potential bargaining agreements. . .” (p. 888).

As the number of organizational conflicts increases and is accompanied by increased litigation, organizations have viewed alternative dispute resolution as a popular
option for settling workplace issues (Keppler, 2003; Stipanowich, 2004). The use of mediation as an alternative dispute process is growing (Mignogna, 2007). Those charged with designing conflict resolution systems have lauded mediation as a quick, cost-effective method for resolving disputes at the lowest organizational level possible (Mareschal, 2002). That organizations may be able to achieve additional benefits from the process of mediation was one of the underlying themes of this research.

The framework for this study was centered on how important it is for leaders to appreciate cultural diversity and its accompanying positives and negatives in the context of managing and resolving conflict. Relying upon previous work in the theories of conflict, culture, and conflict resolution, the researcher attempted to link these theories with the aim of fortifying the use of alternative dispute resolution as a means to resolve organizational disputes between diverse cultural groups. This study offered an additional perspective on the increasingly relevant issue of conflict and rapidly changing demographic dynamics in the global workplace.

Definition of Terms

*Alternative dispute resolution.* Alternative dispute resolution (or alternative means of dispute resolution) (ADR) is defined as “a range of options for resolving conflict, typically with the intervention of a trained-third party professional whom both sides to the conflict view as neutral” (Raisfeld, 2007, p. 30). ADR methods include, but are not limited to, fact-finding, mediation, neutral evaluation, ombuds, and arbitration (Raisfeld, 2007; Zanglein, 2007). When discussing ADR, the current study focused on the method of mediation.
Avoiding. Individuals who use this mode of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and low concern for self (Rahim, 2004). They assume an unassertive and uncooperative posture. They adopt measures to withdraw intentionally from the conflict (Paul, Samarah, Seetharaman, & Mykytyn, 2004).

Compromising. This style of handling conflict is moderate in concern for all involved (Rahim, 2004). Each party is intermediate in assertiveness and cooperativeness, giving up a portion of its own interests in an attempt to satisfy the other.

Conflict. Conflict is “the process which begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his” (Thomas, 1992, p. 265). Rahim (2004) defined conflict as “an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities” (p. 7). While conflict is generally categorized as task conflict or relationship conflict (Jehn, 1997), the primary impetus of this study is relationship conflict. Relationship conflict encompasses personality disagreements and issues of a more personal nature (De Dreu et al., 2004), which include individual diversity (Ohbuchi & Suzuki, 2003).

Conflict handling style (or conflict management style). Individuals adopt a strategy for dealing with conflict. There is a style of behavior by which interpersonal conflict is handled (Rahim, 2002). This study discussed conflict handling styles as presented by Rahim (2004): avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging. The terms conflict handling style and conflict management style were used interchangeably.

Culture. Hofstede (2001) considered culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from
another” (p. 9). Culture refers to the “shared values and beliefs relating to fundamental issues” (Casson, 2002, p. 409). Rohner (as cited in Earley, 2006) described culture as “the totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next” (Section 3, ¶6). Consideration was given to the use of the variable, race, in lieu of culture. Because one of the sample groups, Hispanics, can be of any race, culture was designated as the independent variable. The term was applied at a macro level, similar to the definitions proposed by Hofstede and Rohner, to accentuate differences between Hispanics and Whites.

Diversity. Diversity has been described from multiple perspectives. The Office of Personnel Management (2005) described diversity within the federal government as a program component that includes valuing the differences within an organization and responding to the needs of diverse groups of employees. While the definition of diversity has been expanded to include other than the traditional demographic factors of race/culture and gender (Shackelford, 2003), this research concentrated more specifically on cultural diversity.

Dominating. Rahim (2004) noted that those who use this mode of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and high concern for self. It is similar to the assertive and uncooperative behavior described by Thomas and Kilmann (1974) as aggressive. Individuals who engage in this style are more interested in fulfilling their own interests at all costs.

Hispanic. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), individuals of Hispanic origin originate from a Spanish-speaking country. The U.S. Census Bureau describes
Hispanics as persons who may be of any race but classify themselves in one of the following categories: Mexican, Puerto-Rican, Cuban, Spanish-speaking Central or South American, or of other Hispanic/Latino origin. As defined by the Office of Management and Budget’s Statistical Directive 15, a Hispanic is “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). Because this study was conducted within the context of a federal organization and prevailed upon literature associated with the federal sector, the term more generally used in that environment was adopted. The term Hispanic, as used throughout the study, referred to individuals whose origin is from a Spanish-speaking country, regardless of race.

**Integrating.** Similar to those who use the collaborating style, individuals who engage in this mode of handling conflict exhibit high concern for both self and others (Rahim, 2004). They attempt to work with others to find a mutually agreeable solution to the conflict. This style encompasses assertive and cooperative tendencies to resolving issues and fully addresses the needs of both parties.

**Mediation.** The American Arbitration Association defines mediation as “a process for resolving disputes in which a neutral third person . . . trained in mediation techniques helps the disputing parties negotiate a mutually acceptable settlement” (Employment Arbitration Rules and Mediation Procedures, 2006).

**Obliging.** Individuals who engage in this mode of conflict resolution exhibit high concern for others and low concern for self (Rahim, 2004) and tend to satisfy the needs of others at their own expense. The obliging mode of handling conflict is similar to the unassertive and cooperative style of *accommodating.*
Rahim Organizational Conflict Instrument-II (ROCI-II). This instrument, developed by Rahim, identifies the styles used by individuals and groups to handle conflict. The ROCI-II categorizes conflict handling into five predominant styles: avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging (Rahim, 2004).

White (non-Hispanic). The Office of Management and Budget’s Statistical Directive 15 (1997) defined “White” as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) has adopted this definition and noted that individuals are considered “White” if they claim origin such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Near Eastern, Arab, or Polish. Whites are also referred to as Anglo-Americans. The intent is not to use pejorative terms; however, because this study used the federal government environment, the more commonly used federal government designators were adopted. Throughout the research, it was assumed that those who self-identified as White were not Hispanic. For consistency and simplicity throughout the study, Whites (non-Hispanic) will be referred to as Whites.

Assumptions

The sensitive nature of the subject of conflict has made some individuals reluctant to participate in conflict research (Nauta & Kluwer, 2004). The instrument used for this research contains 28 statements that instructed participants to respond using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ascertains their level of agreement with statements about how they handle conflict with peers. The assumption was made that respondents who opted to participate in the study did so voluntarily, understood the questionnaire statements, and were forthright in their responses.
Limitations

The study was limited to the subjects who agreed to participate, the earnestness with which they responded to survey questions, and the amount of time potential respondents had available for participation. The ability to find a sufficient concentration of Hispanics for sampling drove the choice of study location, but the process of sample selection may possibly hamper generalizability. While potential subjects in the selected location were not limited solely to one subculture, the choice of the Southwestern U.S. environment may predispose itself to a concentration of Mexican Americans. Because the research relied upon a convenience sample of Hispanics, there was a possibility that the results may not be representative of the population (Creswell, 2005).

The validity of survey results was limited to respondents’ understanding and interpretation of statements in the instrument. This may have been a potential problem for the Hispanic participants because of possible language barriers. The study site was situated in the area defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the Western United States. This area contains 20% of the population and 37% of non-English speakers, the highest in the nation. Of the 14 million non-English speakers, 9.9 million speak Spanish and almost 2 million responded that they spoke English less than very well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). A study limitation may manifest as difficulty with clarity and consistent interpretation of the self-administered instrument.

Delimitations

This study was confined to surveying individuals within one Department of Army organization. The sample consisted of 100 and 100 White employees. The study was
focused on the independent variable of culture and the dependent variables of conflict-handling style and willingness to use mediation.

The independent variable of this study was identified as culture. From a broader perspective, this may be a misnomer. The terms *culture, race, ethnicity,* and *national origin,* while not synonymous are sometimes confused in daily English vernacular and conversation. The two groups examined in the current research may be distinct in one or more of these attributes. The term *culture* was chosen as the broadest descriptor for this study.

The study focused on Hispanics within a particular Department of the Army organization. The all-encompassing federal government definition of Hispanics adopted for this research may be further refined in future studies. In terms of the Census Bureau definitions, the Hispanic population is diverse and consists of a number of subgroups, including Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Central Americans (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). This study, one of the few to focus on the conflict handling styles of Hispanics in the workplace, was designed to provide general information on the matter within a small organizational purview. There was no intention to insinuate that all Hispanic subgroups handle conflict identically.

The distinct sub-classifications within the second focus group, Whites, were acknowledged throughout the research. As with Hispanics, the results of this study can be further dissected and future research could project the conflict handling styles of the various categories of those who identify themselves as White. This study provided a generalization as it pertained to the results gleaned from the sample population.
The study, while conducted within a Department of Army environment, used a civilian sampling. Although the military contingent is the primary population within this organization, focus on the civilian component was chosen so as to limit the study context. Study results might differ if the military population were to be included in the sample.

Summary

Chapter 1 presented an overview of a study designed to provide leaders with a means to deal with the changing face of the organizational workforce in light of increased diversity. Although the research thrust focused on a Department of Army organization, the study laid a foundation for the exploration of the potential conflict that changing demographics may have on macro-level organizational performance (Hold & DeVore, 2005) and the significance of leaders’ expanding awareness of conflict and conflict management styles. As the infusion of Hispanic workers alters the dynamic in many organizations, leaders must view the importance of understanding conflict resolution modes as a strategic imperative. The use of alternative dispute resolution, specifically mediation, as a conflict-management tool is becoming increasingly more common (Mareschal, 2002; Twomey, 2006) and an analysis of the conflict handling styles of managers and employees may assist in more effective use of this process. Chapter 2 will present an in-depth review of the literature related to conflict, culture, conflict handling styles, and conflict resolution.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In chapter 1, the pervasive and inevitable nature of conflict in relationships and organizations was highlighted (Chan, Monroe, Ng, & Tan, 2006; Eckert & Rinehart, 2005; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2005). The background of the study, problem and purpose statements, research questions, variables, and the significance of this research to the field of leadership were delineated. Chapter 1 provided a roadmap for the current research on conflict management styles and their possible relationship to culture and individuals’ willingness to use mediation.

Inherent in the fiber of successful organizations lies the ability to manage and resolve conflict. Marked changes in global demographics herald a change for organizational leadership. Future shifts in cultural dynamics present challenges in the area of conflict management and highlight the significance of diversity factors on conflict management styles as a topic for further study.

This chapter provides a foundation for research in the area of organizational conflict management styles in a public sector environment and their relationship to culture. Research was conducted to address the additional question of whether conflict management styles associated with Hispanics and Whites influence the use of mediation as an alternate dispute process for conflict resolution.

Chapter 2 begins with a historical overview originating with the major civil rights legislation in the 1960s and its impact on the federal government’s efforts to increase cultural diversity in the present-day workplace. The chapter continues with a review of the literature on the topic of conflict and conflict management styles and their relationship to culture. A discussion on the importance of conflict resolution and
alternative dispute resolution follows. The chapter ends with an examination of diversity within the federal sector, and more specifically the organization that is the subject of this research, the Department of Army. The Department of Army’s use of mediation as its preferred method of conflict resolution is highlighted.

A gap in the literature exists. Although conflict has been an intensely studied topic, few researchers have investigated its link to the conflict handling styles in the workplace of the two groups that are the focus of this research. The literature fails to deal with the subject of whether conflict handling styles are associated with a person’s willingness to use mediation. An overview of available literature on mediation as it relates to culture is provided, but the paucity of information on its relationship to conflict handling styles and culture accounts for the gap in the literature. A goal of this study was to present findings in the areas of conflict management and conflict resolution as they relate to the interaction of Hispanics and Whites within a Department of Army workplace and to provide a foundation upon which subsequent research can be based.

Documentation

The researcher relied on articles from a variety of online databases for this literature review. The Questia Online Library, the Central Rappahannock Library, and the EBSCOhost, ProQuest, InfoTrac OneFile, and SAGE Full-Text Collections databases in the University of Phoenix’s Online Library were primary sources of information.

Historical Overview

Organizations are comprised of a conglomeration of individuals united to perform the designated mission and achieve specified goals (Barnard, Goldstein, & Hazy, 2006). The development and sustenance of healthy relationships will increase the chances of
organizational success. Conflict is a byproduct of interpersonal relationships and, as such, should be monitored and managed to avoid potential detriments to mission accomplishment.

Organizational members determine individual methods for conflict resolution, based on a multiplicity of factors. This research will add to the literature that contends culture may be one such factor that influences an individual’s behavior when confronted with conflict (Bercovitch & Elgström, 2001). As environmental forces place organizations in a constant state of change, leaders must continually renew their skills to successfully handle the various causes of internal conflict.

The topic of conflict continues to evolve over the years. A number of theorists have proffered ideas that have contributed to conflict’s emergence as an intensely studied topic (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Labovitz, 1980; Pondy, 1967; Rahim, 2004; Thomas, 1992). One area of concentration has been the conflict that has arisen because of cultural differences (Hofstede, 2001; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Cultural diversity in the American workplace can trace its derivatives to the civil rights movement and equal employment opportunity statutes. To understand the origin of the significance of cultural diversity in the workplace and the public sector more completely, the contribution of the civil rights era and associated legislation warrants attention. Although Congress passed a number of civil rights laws in the 1960s and 1970s, the following section will highlight only those directly affecting the issue of workplace diversification.
The Civil Rights Era and the Underpinnings of Organizational Diversity

In the late 1950s, the United States of America found itself mired in an era of racial divisiveness. Segregation was the norm in several areas of the country, and many frowned upon interaction along racial lines. The issuance of the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954 by the Supreme Court (37 U.S. 483) catapulted a movement to end racial segregation in America. The ensuing civil rights movement resulted in the passage of historical civil rights legislation and the birth of the principles of affirmative action and diversity.

Civil Rights Era Legislation

President John F. Kennedy inherited the repercussions associated with the nation’s civil rights distress. While racial discrimination permeated almost every aspect of individual public interaction, the President concentrated his efforts on ending discrimination in public accommodation, voting issues, and employment. This research was concerned with efforts surrounding the realm of employment.

In 1961, President Kennedy, in Executive Order (EO) 10925, established the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (Section 101). With regard to employment in the federal sector, the EO called for the Committee to scrutinize and study employment practices of the Government of the United States, and to consider and recommend additional affirmative steps which should be taken by executive departments and agencies to realize more fully the national policy of nondiscrimination within the Executive branch of the Government (Executive Order 10925, 1961, ¶201)
With respect to contractors conducting business with the federal government, the President implemented stronger measures and specifically used the term *affirmative action*. He mandated that contractors take affirmative action to ensure that applicants were employed and treated during employment without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin (Section 301[1]). This term was later extended into the realm of federal employment with the passage of subsequent civil rights legislation.

The concepts of equal employment, nondiscrimination in employment, and affirmative action were more broadly applied in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or Public Law 88-352. This act, 42 United States Code 2000, became effective on July 2, 1964 and made it unlawful for an employer to discriminate on the bases of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Sec. 2000e-2, Section 703[a][1]). Despite the subsequent contentiousness regarding the meaning of affirmative action, the Civil Rights Act clearly prohibited the granting of preferential treatment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin because of an imbalance in total employment numbers (Section 703(j)).

Following the adoption of several executive orders signed by Presidents Johnson and Nixon, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was amended in 1972 to apply to the federal sector. The newly passed Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Act (Public Law 92-261) required federal agencies to “maintain an affirmative program of equal employment opportunity” (Sec 717[b][1] for employees and applicants. Congress later passed the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, codified as Public Law 94-454. This is the first law
that expressly announced the intention of creating a “Federal work force reflective of the Nation’s diversity” (Title IX, Sec 3[1]).

From Affirmative Action to Diversity

In the United States, diversity has evolved from equal opportunity policies (Bassett-Jones, 2005; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). The affirmative action requirements imposed by civil rights legislation later morphed into the voluntary adoption of the premise of diversity for strategic positioning (Jayne & Dipboye). The benefits of organizational diversity have been lauded as essential contributors to excellence in performance and a sustainer of competitive advantage (Pless & Maak, 2004).

In the literature, diversity has a broad array of definitions. The more inclusive definition of diversity entails such considerations as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, experience, culture, and values (Dreachslin, 2007; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004; Mannix & Neale, 2005). Organizational strategists have been careful to note the differences between the legislative requirement of equal opportunity, affirmative action’s attempt to remedy past discrimination, and the voluntary notion of inclusiveness engrained in the concept of diversity (Jayne & Dipboye).

The results from a recent study of corporate decision makers represented the wide range of attributes that diversity incorporates. The majority listed the traditional EEO characteristics of culture, ethnicity, race, color, gender, age, religion, and national origin. Factors such as language, regional origin, physical ability, and sexual orientation were among the top attributes identified (Carrell, Mann, & Sigler, 2006).

Schiele (2007) discussed Spencer, Lewis, and Gutiérrez’s work on the evolutionary stages of diversity, beginning with the era of the 1960s. From 1965 to 1974,
diversity was defined in terms of race and ethnicity. The definition expanded from 1975 to 1984 with the addition of gender. The next 10 years incorporated sexual orientation, and in 1995, attributes such as physical and mental ability and social class were added.

Attention to cultural diversity has increasingly surfaced as culturally diverse environments become the norm (Broome et al., 2002). Minimization of the effect that values, experience, and background related to cultural differences may have on the work environment could be a crucial leadership mistake. This study was focused on the cultural aspect of diversity and its relationship to conflict.

Organizational Conflict: An Overview

Conflict is an intrinsic component of the existence of living beings. Individuals, families, communities, and nations have navigated throughout history with the goal of peaceful and cooperative coexistence. Although the word conflict generally has a negative connotation, in some instances, conflict has been determined to be healthy and productive (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004).

Conflict has been widely defined from a multitude of perspectives in the literature. Conflict occurs when one individual perceives differences with another about interests, beliefs, or values that are important (Starks, 2006) or perceives interference with the realization of goals (Greenberg, 2003). Rahim (2002) suggested that conflict is “an interactive process manifested in an incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities” (p. 207). Labovitz (1980) characterized conflict in economic terms, noting that it is generated when individuals compete for limited resources. Conflict occurs when symptoms of problems continue to surface and acceptable solutions are not reached. As a result, individuals are negatively impacted.
People have differing perceptions of conflict based on individual assumptions (Schein, 2004). The commonality in all definitions of conflict encompassed inequality or the perceived fear or threat that a personal outcome will not be achieved.

The main impetus for this research was organizational conflict. Because organizations are comprised of individuals, each with unique experiences and backgrounds, these settings are fraught with opportunities for conflict because of divergent interests and goals. Conflict in organizations is a normal, natural result of interpersonal interaction. This phenomenon is a part of every relationship and requires individuals of all cultures, races, and ethnicities to acquire skills to manage it. Effective conflict management results from leaders’ understanding of the nature of conflict (Bacal, 2004; Pondy 1967).

Conflict has been hailed as an inevitable component of organizations (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004) and a useful element in a dynamic system (Pondy, 1967). In early research, Sethi (1962) posited that conflict may result in “organizational disharmony, ill-defined communicational pattern, and disintegration of the information flow” (p. 218). Managers spent about 20% of their time dealing with organizational conflict and noted that conflict management is a topic of increasing importance (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976).

Within organizations, conflict has been discussed as dual-natured. Although commonly identified as a pejorative term, many researchers have noted that conflict can have a positive impact on the organization. Conflict has the potential to destroy relationships (Pondy, 1967) but constructive conflict can be an indicator of a healthy organization (Labovitz, 1980, Pondy, 1967). Conflict within organizations has been
known to spark creative dissent that results in innovative solutions to problems (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004).

Conflict management has contributed to the successful functioning of organizations (McGuigan & McMechan, 2005) and has promoted social, cultural, and personal development of organizational members. The ultimate goal is to achieve a metamorphosis from destructive, divisive interaction to a positive, mutually beneficial relationship. Because its management is essential to a high-performing organization, top and mid-level managers within the organization have exhibited a growing interest in the subject of conflict management (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976).

Models of Conflict

The study of conflict as an element of organizational behavior is not new. Within the organizational context, many theorists have proposed characterizations that describe the dual nature of conflict. The literature is replete with dynamic interpretations of this complex phenomenon.

The dyad of task and relationship conflict has been explored. Researchers have cited the tension between concern for task (cognitive) and concern for emotional aspects of interpersonal relations (affective) as two major types of conflict (De Dreu et al., 2004; Jehn, 1997). Cognitive conflict, considered healthy, stems from differences in individual perspectives and judgment (Amason, 1996) and is more task related. This style of conflict involves disagreements about the allocation of resources (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005) and relates to goal accomplishment and how best to achieve shared organizational objectives (Edmundson & Smith, 2006). Task related conflict results in synergy and innovation in the completion of complex organizational assignments (Amason, 1996) but if not
managed, may have a negative outcome on overall organizational performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003).

Affective conflict, or relationship conflict, is focused on a person, not an issue (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). This style of conflict is conceptualized as dysfunctional, unproductive, and resulting in personal attacks (Edmundson & Smith, 2006; Lankau, Ward, Amason, Ng, Sonnefeld & Bradley, 2007). Affective conflict is detrimental in top team decision making and organizational performance (Bucholtz, Amason, & Rutherford, 2005). It is not unusual for cognitive and affective conflict to occur together (Amason, 1996).

Conflict has been discussed as the opposition between concern for self and concern for others (Rahim, 2004). During conflict, an individual may exhibit a high or low orientation toward satisfying self or other concerns (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Theorists have also framed the assertive and cooperative natures of conflict (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 2004). Assertiveness parallels with concern for self, while cooperativeness parallels with concern for others.

Researchers have proposed models describing conflict in the context of participant behavior in specific conflict situations. Papa and Canary (as cited in Gross & Guerrero, 2000), in their competence model, measured conflict against three dimensions: effectiveness, relational appropriateness, and situational appropriateness. Effectiveness is more closely related to the conflict style used. A particular conflict management style is determined to be effective if it serves the needs of the individual. It is deemed to be appropriate if it meets the needs of the situation and adheres to proper social behavior.
High competence in communication is directly associated with high levels of effectiveness and appropriateness (Gross & Guerrero, 2000).

Conflict Handling Styles

When dealing with conflict, individuals use different styles and skill sets to develop solutions to problems. The lack of understanding between individuals with different conflict management styles may sometimes lead to lack of respect and personal disagreements. Conflict management styles assist in providing expectations and a general attitude on how individuals will respond when confronted with conflict (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 2004). While individuals may have a predominant conflict management style, responses to conflict may vary with the situation (Callanan, Benzing, & Perri, 2006). Adherents to the conglomerate conflict theory assumed that an individual incorporates more than a single style in a conflict incident (Euwema, Van de Vliert, & Bakker, 2003). Perceived power of individuals may influence the choice of conflict handling style (Callanan & Perri, 2006). In this study, it was suggested that analysis and identification of the various styles provides useful information which may allow for organizations to craft conflict resolution strategies.

During the evolution of conflict theory, a number of theorists have contributed to the literature in the area of conflict handling styles. While common themes are evident, distinct manifestations in the identification of specific conflict management modes are noted. One of the dependent variables in this research was conflict handling styles, and as such, a discussion to heighten understanding of the various styles, as labeled by conflict management theorists, was important to this research.
One of the foremost thinkers in the human relations era, Parker Follett, included conflict as a major theme in various writings. Parker Follett discerned three primary ways of handling conflict: domination, compromise, and integration (as cited in Sethi, 1962). Together with other theorists in this era, Parker Follett maintained that organizational objectives will be achieved only through a congruence of the organization’s goals with individual needs (Labovitz, 1980).

Blake and Mouton expanded on the domination, compromise, and integration methods espoused by Parker Follett (Sethi, 1962). Parker Follett’s construct spawned the concern-for-people versus concern-for-production model proposed by Blake and Mouton, which later theorists refer to as the foundation for a discussion of organizational conflict and conflict handling styles. Many researchers look to this classic taxonomy as an early framework for a conflict management model and the genesis of commonly used conflict management styles. Blake and Mouton’s (1964) model utilized two independent variables, concern for production and concern for people. These variables formed the basis of their managerial grid. Five management styles emanated from the grid: (a) withdrawing (low concern for people and production), (b) smoothing (high concern for people and low concern for production), (c) forcing (low concern for people and high concern for production), (d) problem solving (high concern for people and production) and, (e) compromising (moderate concern for people and production). Blake and Mouton contend that the team management or problem-solving style is the most effective style.

In subsequent literature, Robbins and Judge (2005), in an analysis of the stages of conflict, defined stage 3 as intention. In this stage, individuals decide whether to adopt an assertive or cooperative posture. Examining conflict further, on the dimensions of
assertiveness and cooperativeness, Thomas (1992) recognized five conflict management styles. In another prevalent taxonomy, Thomas identified (a) avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative), (b) accommodating (unassertive and cooperative), (c) competing (assertive and uncooperative), (d) collaborating (assertive and cooperative) and, (e) compromising (intermediate assertive and cooperative). Thomas’s designations correlated closely with those of Blake and Mouton and are the metrics for the later developed Thomas-Kilmann Inventory used to quantify conflict management styles (Thomas, 1992; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

Rahim (2004) derived five conflict handling styles from the dual dimensions of concern for self and concern for others. Rahim proffered the following strategies for managing conflict: (a) avoiding (low concern for self and others), (b) obliging (low concern for self and high for others), (c) dominating (high concern for self and low for others), (d) integrating (high concern for self and others) and, (e) compromising (intermediate concern for self and others). The definition of conflict handling styles in this study will conform to the definitions proffered by Rahim.

Characterization of conflict management styles continued to evolve. Kozan (1997) introduced a trio of conflict resolution techniques: confrontation, harmony, and regulation. Hwang (1997), in an effort to align conflict methods more closely with the Eastern cultural traditions, developed a new model which labeled the five styles as confrontation, obey publicly/disobey privately, compromise, endurance, and severance. Euwema, Van de Vliert, & Bakker (2003) addressed the complexity of conflict manifestation and asserted that conflict stems from a mixture of behaviors. This
complexity prompted Euwema et al. to present a 7-prong taxonomy, which added process controlling as a way to manage conflict.

The final model presented in the delineation and evolution of conflict management modes emerged from the increased focus on the individualist-collectivist dichotomy. Using the dimension of harmony that is significant in collectivist cultures, Leung, Koch, and Lu (2002) defined conflict management along the axis of value harmony and instrumental harmony. The proclivity of the two sample groups in this study to adhere to either collectivist or individualist values make this model one worthy of examination for this research.

The various taxonomies illustrating conflict handling styles share common characteristics. The degree that one seeks to satisfy self interest versus the interest of others heavily influences the mode of dealing with conflict. Table 3 depicts a comparison of the models presented by the theorists in this section.

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Table 3
Comparison of Conflict Handling Style Taxonomies
Conflict and Culture

Conflict is inevitable as organizations aim to increase diversity. Members of organizations decide how to frame and respond to conflict as a result of their respective cultures (LeBaron & Zumeta, 2003). Culture contributes to the conflict dynamic. As a known factor in the conflict among work groups (Paul, Samarah, Seetharaman, & Mykytyn, 2004-5; Vodosek, 2005), cultural differences heavily impact on interpersonal interaction within organizations. The work of Hofstede provided a framework for the discussion of culture and conflict that was explored in this study.

Hofstede and Individualism

Hofstede (2001) defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p. 9). Further expounding on this topic, Hofstede (2001) identified five dimensions of culture that are widely referenced in the literature:

1. Power distance: What is the degree of power equality between individuals?
2. Uncertainty avoidance: What is the degree of preference for structured over unstructured activities?
3. Individualism: What is the degree to which people prefer to function as individuals as opposed to in a group setting?
4. Masculinity: What is the degree to which stronger values prevail over tenderness?

*Leung, Koch, & Lu’s model contains only four styles; smoothing was used twice because it was the style that most accurately compared to the smoothing–accommodating–obliging style in the comparator models.
5. Long-term orientation: What is the degree of focus on the future instead of the present?

Of Hofstede’s five dimensions, only the individualism dynamic was given further attention in this study.

The greatest distinctions in the study of culture are centered on the principles of individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1995; Triandis, 2004). Triandis (1995) asserted that individualism occurs when “loosely linked individuals. . .view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; [and] give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others” (p. 11). On the other hand, Triandis (1995) maintained that collectivism occurs when closely linked individuals who view themselves as part of one or more collective entities “are motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives” (p. 11). The individualistic nature focuses on the concerns and goals of the individual (self) and the collectivist focuses on relationship (Triandis, 2004) and the concerns and goals of others (group) (Cai & Fink, 2002). Within the individualistic-collectivistic range, two subcultures have been identified. Idiocentrics abide by individualistic norms in a collectivist society. In contrast, allocentrics adhere to collectivist norms in an individual society (Kozan, 2002).

A review of the literature reveals that cultures have been categorized as either displaying individualistic or collectivist tendencies. Researchers have labeled societies, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and most European countries as
individualistic and those with African, Arab, Asian, south European, and Latin roots as
collectivist-oriented (Cai & Fink, 2002; Chiu, Wong, & Kosinki, 1998; Hofstede, 2001).
Collectivists focus on group harmony; as a result they use an indirect, avoidant conflict
communication style while individualists prefer a more dominating style (Cai & Fink,
2002). Individualist societies, such as the United States, tend to be more direct, solution-
oriented, and adversarial (Chiu et al., 1998).

Conflict Handling Styles and Culture

When organizations resolve to make their workforce populations mirror the mix
of America, a change in the racial and cultural dynamic results. Pelled, Eisenhardt, and
Xin (1999) conducted a study which determined that race contributes to an acceleration
of emotional conflict within a workgroup. They noted that because race is an
impermeable attribute and cannot be changed, people tend to have an easier time forming
stereotypes which can lead to highly emotional exchanges in workgroups. Because of
changing demographics, this study expanded the definition of the race variable to include
attributes of culture. Although this study identified the independent variable as culture, it
was suggested that some of the same stereotypes and emotional exchanges tied to race are
applicable.

The topic of conflict handling styles, as it relates to various cultural, ethnic, and
racial groups, is gaining interest in the research arena. As diversity in these areas
increases, there are profound benefits to leaders and organizations in understanding the
dynamics between individual, team, and group interaction in the workplace (Bassett-
Jones, 2005). Within the organizational context, group membership influences and shapes
the way individuals interact with others (Mannix & Neale, 2005). The following section will summarize some of the research that has already been conducted in this area.

Conflict Handling Styles and African Americans

Conflict management styles, in conjunction with race, ethnicity, and/or culture, have been investigated in previous research. In the United States, the White/Black dynamic has been the primary dyad. African Americans have been characterized as collectivist (Mackey & O’Brien, 1998) but some research on African Americans has indicated that the confrontational or dominating conflict handling style is prevalent (Davidson, 2001; Mackey & O’Brien, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1986; Turner, 2001). The emotionalism and confrontation attributed to African American conflict resolution have created a recurring negative stereotype (Davidson, 2001). In a study of a diverse group of married couples, Mackey and O’Brien (1998) observed that African Americans used the confrontational conflict management style more frequently than their White or Mexican American counterparts. When in conflict with individuals of the same race, African Americans appear to be less confrontational (Turner, 2001).

Conflict Handling Styles and Asians

A plethora of studies have investigated the individualistic and collectivist phenomenon in both individual and team environments. The research in this area, especially as it pertains to Eastern cultures, appears to be more plentiful than that of other cultural groups. The increase of Asian American employees in the workforce has made this a continuing topic of interest and relevance.

In general, Asians and Asian Americans prefer to use a less direct and less confrontational conflict management style (Davidhizar, 2004). They opt to maintain
group harmony and their needs are rarely separated from those of the group (Leung, Koch, & Lu, 2002; Xu & Davidhizar, 2004). With outsiders, however, Asians have been known to use a more confrontational style (Leung et al., 2002).

The subcultures within the Asian group exhibited further differences when studied. The Chinese tended to be less confrontational (Tinsley & Weldon, 2003) and preferred accommodating and problem-solving (Zhang et al., 2005). Koreans used the dominating style with subordinates (Kozan, 2002), the compromising style with peers, and an obliging/accommodating style with superiors (Lee, 2002). A study of Korean government workers rejected the contention that the obliging style is more commonly used with superiors. This study validated the notion that avoidance is more commonly used with superiors (Lee, 2002).

The literature identifies differences between the Chinese and Japanese. In a study of managers, Chiu et al. (1998) determined that Japanese managers tended to be more competitive and collaborative than their Chinese counterparts. The notion of harmony at the expense of self-happiness was more important to the Chinese, who scored higher on the avoidance and accommodation scales (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Research comparing the conflict management styles of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean supervisors indicated that dominating was the least used style in all groups, with the Japanese the least likely to use the dominating style (Kim, Wang, Kondo, & Kim, 2007). In a comparison of the conflict handling styles of Japanese, Hong Kong Chinese, and Thai managers, Onishi and Bliss (2006) found that of the three groups, Japanese were more apt to use competing: the Thais, integrating; and the Hong Kong Chinese, avoiding.
Boonsathorn’s study comparing Thais and Americans related Thais’ greater use of the avoiding and obliging styles (2007).

**Conflict Handling Styles and Hispanics**

The literature as it relates to how Hispanics handle conflict in the workplace has been less thoroughly explored. The recurring theme is that Hispanics are collectivists (Hofstede, 2001) and generally use a more nonconfrontational, less direct mode of managing conflict.

Recent studies examining conflict management styles associated with Hispanics have exhibited similarities. Mexican students showed more concern for others and scored higher in accommodating and collaborating than their U.S. counterparts (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). In a study comparing three groups of economics students, Mexicans were shown to use a less assertive style of handling conflict than their White counterparts (Sadri & Rahmatian, 2003). A study by Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson, and Villareal (1997) compared the conflict handling styles of Mexican and American students; the results indicated a higher use of the obliging style by Mexican students. Lenartowicz & Johnson (2003) suggested that Latin managers place a higher value on values that serve group needs. A study comparing Mexican American and U.S. teams found consensus more prevalent in the former group (Mejias, Shepherd, Vogel, & Lazaneo, 1996-1997).

**Conflict Handling Styles and Whites**

The literature characterizes Whites as individualists (Hofstede, 2001). They are viewed as looking out more for individual goals and ways to achieve personal objectives. Whites tend to be competitive and assertive when compared to Asians (Brew & Cairns,
2004; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001), African Americans and Latinos (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). In a study comparing African American and White females, however, White females were seen to be less direct and more action- and solution-oriented (Ting-Toomey, 1986). Turner and Shuter (2004), in an examination of metaphors used by European American women, found that they were more optimistic and positive about resolution than their African American counterparts. Overall, the literature points to Whites as using a more direct style (Sadri & Rahmatian, 2003; Tinsley & Weldon, 2003). When Whites were members of more racially diverse organizations, they reported poorer quality in their work relationships with other groups (Brief et al., 2005).

Conflict Resolution and ADR

The inevitability of conflict in organizations mandates the development of organizational conflict resolution strategies. Through the design of conflict resolution systems, organizations are investing heavily in improving their capacity to deal with conflict (Bryce, 2007). ADR is a process widely used throughout industry to dispense quickly with a variety of organizational disagreements. The creative and collaborative problem solving that results from ADR assists organizations in sustaining skills conducive to maintaining mature, continued relationships (Bryce, 2007; Haraway, 2005). Early resolution of disputes, accompanied by cost and time savings, provides great benefits to organizations (Bryce, 2007; Haraway, 2005). Leaders, as they focus their energies on attaining organizational objectives, analyze issues to determine their resolution potential or the degree to which the conflict can be resolved (Jehn, 1997). Personality conflicts are perceived as more difficult to resolve (Jehn, 1997).
Culture shapes the way individuals resolve conflict (Bercovitch & Elgström, 2001; LeBaron & Zumeta, 2003). While some scholars place more emphasis on the power and party-interest aspects of conflict resolution and disagree that culture plays a major role (Bercovitch & Elgström, 2001), the ingrained natures of culture, identity, and conflict management strategies make it difficult to accept that premise. The complexity of the role of culture in all aspects of interpersonal relationships makes a compelling case for its consideration in conflict resolution.

Mediation

Issues in the mediation arena have primarily centered on the process, the qualifications for mediators, and outcome measurement (Noll, 2001). The popularity of mediation has been accompanied by a more diverse clientele (Goldstein, 1988) and discussion has shifted to the nature of the participants in the process. The complexity of the nature of culture contributed to it being a factor that conflict resolution architects formerly did not consider in mediation training, design, and intervention (LeBaron & Zumeta, 2003). This notion is changing, and the variable of culture is becoming more recognizable in its impact on the conduct and outcome of the mediation process. A recent study, while not focusing on the mediation process, investigated the whether conflict handling styles was an indicator in predicting behavior in negotiations. The Chinese participants in this study appeared to use a more avoiding style than their Canadian counterparts who preferred the compromising style (Ma, 2007).

Efforts to resolve disputes between two culturally diverse groups, such as those identified in this study, bring to the surface issues not only with regard to the cultural background and conflict handling style of the participants but also those of the mediator.
In one study, Asian American and European mediators exhibited similar conflict handling styles (Goldstein, 1998). This is of interest considering that the literature indicates that Asian Americans and European Americans do not generally use the same style in handling personal conflict. The literature has not adequately examined the impact of the mediation community’s efforts to diversify to meet the needs of its culturally diverse customer base (Goldstein, 1998).

Several factors may inhibit successful resolution in mediation. Differing manager and mediator assumptions about the parties and their expectations may complicate agreement. It is important to recognize that relationship and identity goals are significant parts of the mediation process (Noll, 2001). Concerns surrounding self-esteem and “face” are relevant, especially in light of possible cultural divides. Proponents of the theory that culture plays a large role in the mediation process assert that differing cultural norms and behaviors may (a) condition perception of reality, (b) block out any information inconsistent with cultural assumptions, (c) project meaning to the other’s words and actions, and (d) force observers to incorrect attribution of motive (Fisher, as cited in Bercovitch & Elgström, 2001). In a study where the participants in mediation were of different cultural backgrounds, the results indicated a strong relationship between cultural differences and the outcome of mediation (Bercovitch & Elgström, 2001).

Mediation is a voluntary process that seeks to engage participants into a dialogue that allows them to reach a mutually agreeable solution to the issue at hand. A third party neutral facilitates the dialogue. Mediation is a process that promotes autonomy in decision making among participants (Noll, 2001; Taichert, 2006) and is encouraged
where there is a continuing relationship among parties (Fryling & Hoffman, 1998). It is estimated that 85% of mediated cases are resolved (Newhall, 2004; Taichert, 2006).

The individualist-collectivist paradigm has been studied in the dispute resolution process. White and Lee (2004) compared the fundamental thinking of the individualist United States with the collectivist Korea. Because conflict resolution goals are different, the processes are different. In the United States, participants enter conflict resolution processes with a win-lose mentality, with the purpose of determining who is right. In Korea, on the other hand, participants believe that both sides are partially right and tend to adhere to indirect and nonconfrontational modes of resolving the issues (White & Lee, 2004). Examination of the conflict intervention strategy of Turkish managers, generally considered to be collectivists, revealed a preference in the use of mediation to maintain harmony (Kozan, Ergin, & Varoglu, 2007).

Cultural Diversity, Conflict, and ADR in the Department of Army

Leadership within the federal government has paid heed to the U.S. Department of Labor’s (2007) forecast that by 2050, over 50% of the workforce will be composed of people belonging to minority groups. The public sector has recognized that diversity is a critical ingredient for organizational success (Riccucci, 2002). The organization that is the subject of this research, the Department of Army, is following suit and is attempting to diversify its civilian workforce. The composition of the Department of Army’s civilian workforce, however, has not experienced a significant change from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2005. The number of Whites has decreased by 1.5% from 71.5% of the force to 70%, and the number of Hispanics has increased by .6%, growing from 6.2% to 6.8% (Department of the Army, 2007). While these numbers do not yet reflect current
civilian labor force statistics, the Department of Army has recruiting targets aiming for a diverse, multi-skilled workforce. The presidential challenge presented by EO 13171 may influence future workforce statistics.

Conflict resolution tools have been essential to the continued success of the Department of Army’s critical national security mission. Equal employment opportunity complaints, administrative and negotiated grievance procedures, and civil court proceedings have the capability to divert valuable resources away from the achievement of organizational objectives. Within the Department of Army, a number of avenues are available for employees (and customers) to file grievances or engage in litigation.

Recognizing the high cost of time, monetary, and human resources that erode the fiber of organizations in conflict, the Department of Army has taken measures to implement conflict resolution strategies based on Congressional, Department of Defense, and EEOC guidance. Department of Army employees have access to ADR programs designed in response to the passage of the Administrative Dispute Resolution Act (ADRA) of 1990 and its amendment, which declared that “administrative proceedings have been increasingly formal, costly, and lengthy resulting in unnecessary expenditures of time an in a decreased likelihood of achieving consensual resolution of disputes” (Public Law 104-320, Section 2 [2]). The law further directed each agency to establish an alternate dispute resolution policy and designate a senior official to oversee the program.

In 1996, the Department of Defense issued its own directive, DoD Directive 5145.5, which ordered all Defense components to implement ADR programs (Fryling & Hoffman, 1998). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was one of the earliest users of ADR and had been using ADR prior to the enactment of the ADRA of 1990 (Fryling &
Hoffman, 1998). In 1999, the EEOC revised its guidance on the processing of EEO complaints in the federal sector. This guidance, encapsulated in 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1614, incorporated the use of ADR into the EEO discrimination program. The EEOC mandated that all federal agencies establish and/or make available alternate dispute resolution to complainants (EEOC, 1999, 102b[2]). The Department of Army reinforced this guidance in its EEO community. Army Regulation 690-600, the Army’s guidance on complaint processing, directed all subordinate organizations to develop and implement an ADR program (Army Regulation, 2004). The Department of Army cited mediation as the preferred method of ADR.

The Department of Army has increased its focus on the use of mediation. From fiscal year 2004 through fiscal year 2005, the agency’s offering of ADR for informal complaints increased from 51.9% to 55%. While offers increased slightly, ADR participation rates dropped from 35.8% to 23% (EEOC, 2006). As the Army continues to devise strategies to engage Hispanic participation in the workforce and encourage complainants and managers to take advantage of available conflict resolution processes, the question arises as to whether or not individual demographics play a role in people’s willingness to participate. Because mediation is a process that requires face-to-face communication, it is relevant to question whether culture may play a role in an individual’s decision to use the process. Cultural preferences pertaining to conflict may partially account for the gap between offer and participation rates.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided an in-depth review of the literature on conflict theory, culture, and alternative dispute resolution. The literature expounded on conflict as an inevitable
component of organizations (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004) and evidenced its connection
to culture noting that members of organizations decide how to frame and respond to
conflict as a result of their respective cultures (LeBaron & Zumeta, 2003). The literature
review, while replete with studies on the topics of conflict, culture, and alternative
dispute resolution in the broad sense, is limited with regard to the focus of the current
study--conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites in a Department of Army
workplace--and is void of information connecting this relationship to willingness to use
mediation. The following chapter will include an outline of the methodology used to
conduct the research and a discussion on the research design, variables, and sample.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to determine the conflict handling styles of two major segments of the workforce in a Department of Army organization and explore whether the resultant styles influence the use of mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes. The study used a quantitative, comparative, descriptive-correlational research methodology. The research provided leaders with insight into the ways in which individuals in the workplace resolve conflict and their preferred manner for dealing with workplace disputes.

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the study and stressed the importance of culture in the management and resolution of conflict. Increasing cultural diversity has been referred to as one of most challenging human resource and organizational issues of our time (Bassett-Jones, 2005). The first chapter placed emphasis on the problems facing organizations as they are challenged with adjusting to changing demographics, which include a rapidly growing Hispanic population and the unique cultural values and behaviors associated with dealing with workplace conflict. Chapter 2 incorporated a review of the literature in the broad areas of conflict theory, diversity, conflict management styles, and alternative dispute resolution. The current chapter explores the framework used to investigate the problem, including a detailed discussion of the research design, sample population, instrument reliability and validity, and data collection and analysis processes.

Research Design

This quantitative research study used a comparative, descriptive-correlational research design. A self-administered questionnaire determined the conflict handling
styles of two diverse groups within a Department of Army organization in the Southwestern United States. The study examined the independent variable of culture and the dependent variables of conflict handling styles and willingness to use mediation. As expected, the data highlighted the conflict handling styles of the two groups and provided insight into whether conflict management style influences the use of mediation.

Independent and Dependent Variables

Research is used to explore the relationship between variables (Gilner & Morgan, 2000; Myers & Well, 2003). This study investigated one independent variable and two classes of dependent variables. The variables were viewed in the context of their statistical significance between the two groups that were the focus of the study. The strength of the association between the independent variable, culture, and the dependent variables, conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation, was also assessed.

Independent Variable

The research explored the independent variable of culture. Two cultures within the Department of Army were examined, Hispanics and Whites. A reiteration of the definitions of the term *culture* and the parameters of each specified group follow:

1. *Culture*: Culture refers to the collective mental programming that is shared with other members of one nation, region, or group but not with members of other nations, regions, or groups (Hofstede, 2001). Culture includes “shared values and beliefs relating to fundamental issues” (Casson, 2002, p. 409). The term *culture* will be used throughout the study to accentuate the inherent differences between Hispanics and Whites based on an inclusion of the
broader parameters of conduct and values rather than limiting the definition solely to ethnicity or race.

2. *Hispanic*: According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), Hispanics are individuals whose origin is Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spanish-speaking Central or South American countries, or other Hispanic/Latino origins, regardless of race.

3. *White*: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. The U.S. Census Bureau (2002), using the Office of Management and Budget’s (1997) definition, notes that individuals are considered “White” if they consider themselves to be of origins such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Near Eastern, Arab, or Polish.

An understanding of the definition of the independent variable, as defined in the research, is critical to gaining a sense of the purpose of the study. The terms *race*, *ethnicity*, and *culture* all have common boundaries, and to some, the distinctions are vague. Race takes into account biology and physical traits (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin (1999). Ethnicity has been referred to as a social construct engendered in response to the influx of cultural diversity (Conzen et al., as cited in Savory, 2007). Ethnicity is discussed in concert with country of origin. Culture, on the other hand, may take into account race, ethnicity, and other factors that include values, beliefs, and norms of behavior. The term encompasses a broader range of attributes.

The participants of this study who identified themselves as *White* may be associated with a wide cultural base that reflects components deriving from national origin. Those identifying themselves as *Hispanic* may be of any race and have similar
cultural values; however, there are a number of additional cultural distinctions within the varying sub-categories of the Hispanic population (Gonzalez & Topf, 2007; Campbell & Rogalin, 2006). Many Hispanics self-identify as such but do not further self-identify along racial categories (Angel & Angel, 2006). In the determination of conflict handling styles, the joint elements of ethnicity and culture are better predictors of conflict handling styles than ethnicity alone (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

Dependent Variables

Two classes of dependent variables were explored, for a total of six dependent variables. The first class is conflict handling style which will be broken down into five different styles. The second class is willingness to use mediation.

Conflict Handling Styles

The conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army were determined via the use of a self-administered instrument. Conflict handling styles were derived from the Rahim Organizational Conflict Instrument (ROCI-II). As defined by Rahim (2004), the five styles are as follows:

1. Obliging: This style manifests when individuals exhibit low concern for self and high concern for others when involved in conflict.
2. Avoiding: The avoiding style encompasses low concern for both self and others in conflict.
3. Compromising: Individuals who compromise show intermediate concern for both self and others.
4. Dominating: Those displaying this style of conflict management show high concern for self and low concern for others.
5. Integrating: High concern for both self and others is manifested by those who handle conflict using this mode.

Willingness to Use Mediation

One of the purposes of the study was to determine if a person’s conflict handling style has any influence on willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes. Respondents completed the ROCI-II instrument to determine conflict handling styles. They were asked to supplement the instrument by answering a series of questions about mediation and their willingness to participate. The researcher investigated whether or not a connection existed between conflict handling style and willingness to use the mediation process.

Appropriateness of Design

Factors Influencing Selection of Quantitative Methodology

The research problem drives the choice of design (Creswell, 2005; Karami, Rowley, & Analoui, 2006). Bagdoniené and Zemblytė (2005) asserted that, prior to conducting research, researchers should formulate the answers to a series of questions to determine the appropriate methodology. One of the questions posed by Pellemens (as cited in Bagdoniené & Zemblytė, 2005) concerned the approach used for the study—subjective or objective. Quantitative research was determined as the method that would best answer the study’s proposed research questions. The focus of this study was to take an objective approach to explain how specific groups handle conflict in the workforce.

The study’s goal was to determine if there were any similarities between the methods used by Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to deal with a conflict situation. The most effective means of doing so was via the use of a quantitative
methodology with a self-administered instrument. The content homogeneity of the instrument served as a common baseline for all participants to measure their conflict handling styles. In addition, the number of participants selected as the study sample, 100 Hispanics and 100 Whites, rendered the use of quantitative methods more appropriate.

The quantitative research methodology was appropriate because the identification and comparison of conflict handling styles required the use of inferential statistical analysis. The designer of the instrument used in the study, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II), has used statistical methods for analyzing data (Rahim, 2004) similar to the data that will be collected in this study. The guidance provided in Rahim’s manual for use of the ROCI-II instrument suggests a quantitative methodology, further supporting the rationale for the appropriateness of using this method.

When the intent of research is to predict an outcome or describe a problem, as in the present study, quantitative research is more appropriate (Creswell, 2005). Quantitative research involves the testing of research questions or hypotheses developed by the researcher that predict a relationship between one or more independent and one or more dependent variables. Quantitative research requires a higher volume of data collection and numeric analysis (Bagdoniené & Zemblytė, 2005). The present study used a specified sample in an effort to predict and generalize conflict behaviors to a wider population, and quantitative methodology was the most efficient means of accomplishing this goal.

Qualitative research has been characterized as exploratory. It entails a close relationship between the researcher and the participant (Bagdoniené & Zemblytė, 2005). Because of its exploratory nature, the small number of participants, and the lack of
statistical analysis, the result of qualitative research cannot be applied to a population. The ultimate goal of the current research was to apply the results to a larger population; as a result, qualitative research was eliminated as the preferred methodology.

Time constraints precluded the use of a mixed methodology. Mixed methodology prescribes the use of qualitative and quantitative data collection, procedures, or research methods to answer the research questions (Tashkkori & Teddlie, 2003). The dual nature of this approach offers benefits to researchers in that the combination of methods is complementary and provides varied perspectives on the topic (Hammond, 2005). Barring time constraints to conclude the study and slightly altering the primary focus of the study, a mixed methodology approach may have allowed the researcher the opportunity to conduct interviews with participants to gain additional insight into analysis of the dependent variable, willingness to use mediation as a process for dispute resolution.

Factors Influencing the Use of Questionnaire and Comparative, Descriptive-Correlational Design

This study integrated a combination of approaches. The research questions and hypotheses drove the selection of a cross-sectional, nonexperimental, comparative, descriptive-correlational design. To glean demographic information, the participants answered several pro forma questions regarding employment status. Descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation examined the five styles of handling conflict, as identified by Rahim (2004) in his instrument. Use of a comparative design allowed a comparison between groups (Gilner & Morgan, 2000); the correlational design allowed an evaluation of the variables to determine if they influence each other (Creswell, 2005).
To understand the values and actions of groups of people, it is necessary to compare them to others. Comparative studies include independent attribute variables, and the aim of the research is to compare two groups (Gilner & Morgan, 2000). The designation of the independent attribute variable, culture, as the basis for comparing distinctions between Hispanics and Whites, characterized the present study as comparative. The primary purpose of the study was to determine if there is a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of two groups whose primary difference is evidenced by the independent variable of culture.

The impetus behind most research is to investigate the predicted relationship between variables (Myers & Well, 2003). This study examined the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army. Once the respective styles were measured, tests were performed to discover if there was a relationship between that style and the willingness to participate in meditation. Creswell (2005) suggested several characteristics attributable to correlational studies: (a) correlation of two or more variables, (b) collection of data at one point in time, (c) analysis of participants as a single group, (d) availability of two scores for each individual in the group, (e) use of correlational statistical method, and (f) conclusions drawn from statistical tests. The current study conformed to Creswell’s attributes in their totality. Because of the multiple relationships that the study explored, a correlational design seemed most suitable. The aim was to determine if relationships existed in several areas within the Department of Army: (a) conflict handling style of Hispanics and Whites, (b) comparison of conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites and their willingness to use mediation, (c) conflict handling style of Hispanics and willingness to use mediation,
and (d) conflict handling style of Whites and willingness to use mediation. The intent of
the study supported design appropriateness.

A self-administered questionnaire was chosen as the design to test the relationship
between the conflict handling styles of the two groups. The self-administered
questionnaire, possibly the most commonly used mechanism for self-report, affords a
modicum of privacy for respondents (Durant & Carey, 2000). The primary reason for the
use of questionnaires in this study is that they provide ease of administration for the
research (Carey & Durant, 2000) and allow the researcher to reach a larger sample (Carey
& Durant, 2000; Nauta & Kluwer, 2004). The social desirability factor, which the
researcher cannot control, may have an impact on the use of a self-administered
instrument. Social desirability, or a respondent’s tendency to present himself or herself in
a favorable light to gain approval, may threaten validity when information is self-reported
(Abrams & Trusty, 2004).

Research Questions

This quantitative research study explored the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of
   Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army?

2. Is there a significant difference in the willingness of Hispanics and Whites
   within the Department of Army to use mediation to resolve workplace
   disputes?

3. Do the conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army
   influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of
   resolving workplace disputes?
4. Do the conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes?

Answers to these questions helped to fill a current void in the literature regarding how Hispanics and Whites manage conflict in the workplace. The information gleaned from responses to these research questions provided insight into the complexities and challenges that accompany conflict management among two groups who work closely together in the current and future workplace. The research contributed to an understanding of whether mediation as a vehicle for conflict resolution is attractive to either of these groups.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses posed in a research study predict the relationship between variables (Gilner & Morgan, 2000). The following null hypotheses were tested:

\( H_01: \) There is no significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

\( H_{A1}: \) There is a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

\( H_{01a}: \) There is no significant difference between the integrating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

\( H_{A1a}: \) There is a significant difference between the integrating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

\( H_{01b}: \) There is no significant difference between the obliging styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

\( H_{A1b}: \) There is a significant difference between the obliging styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.
$H_{A1b}$: There is a significant difference between the obliging styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{01c}$: There is no significant difference between the dominating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{A1c}$: There is a significant difference between the dominating styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{01d}$: There is no significant difference between the avoiding styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{A1d}$: There is a significant difference between the avoiding styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{01e}$: There is no significant difference between the compromising styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{A1e}$: There is a significant difference between the compromising styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army.

$H_{02}$: There is no significant difference in the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes.

$H_{A2}$: There is a significant difference between the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes.

$H_{03}$: The conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army do not influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
$H_A3$: The conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army do influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{03a}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between a having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3a}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{03b}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3b}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{03c}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3c}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
$H_{0d}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3d}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{0e}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A3e}$: For Hispanics within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{04}$: The conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army do not influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A4}$: The conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army do influence their willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{04a}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
$H_{A4a}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an integrating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{04b}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A4b}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an obliging style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{04c}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A4c}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a dominating style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{04d}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A4d}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having an avoiding style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.
$H_{04e}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is no relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

$H_{A4e}$: For Whites within the Department of Army, there is a relationship between having a compromising style and exhibiting a willingness to use mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

Population

The current study focused on an organization within the Department of Army, one of the federal sector’s largest organizations and the largest component within the Department of Defense. The population of the organization consists of 1,130 employees: 575 males and 555 females. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the population was as follows: American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.26%; Asian, 4.78%; Black or African American, 10.50%; Hispanic or Latino, 10.90%; and White, 72.45% (Department of Army, 2006). Given that the independent variable for the study was culture, participants were selected specifically from the Hispanic and White segments of the population.

Participants

Two hundred employees ($N = 200$) were selected as participants in the study. The participant groups consisted of one half Hispanic and one half White members. The organization’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Manager served as a point of contact and provided a list of the names and electronic mail addresses of the assigned Hispanic and White employees for the research.

The EEO Manager initially provided information on 123 Hispanic employee names. After review, the determination was made that only 100 contained sufficient
information for use as potential participants in the study. As a result, questionnaires were sent to 100 Hispanic employees \((n = 100)\). To match the sample number in the comparator group, every \(n\)th person from the list of White employees was randomly selected to receive the survey. The final outcome was the selection of 100 White \((n = 100)\) employees.

An a priori power analysis for the difference between two independent means (two-tailed) was conducted to determine the minimum number of participants needed to observe a medium effect size \((d = .50)\). With an alpha of .05 and a power of .95, power analysis revealed that a total of 210 participants \((n = 105\) per group\) would be needed to detect a medium effect (critical \(t(208) = 1.97\)). A second priori power analysis was conducted using a point-biserial (correlation) model. With an alpha of .05 and a power of .95, power analysis revealed that a total of 134 participants would be needed to detect a medium effect (critical \(t(132) = 1.98\)).

Informed Consent

Study participants were provided with a Letter of Introduction prior to completing the self-administered survey instrument. The letter stated the purpose of the research, the foreseeable risks for participation, and the benefits of the study, and it outlined the level of commitment required from participants. The letter also informed respondents of the level of confidentiality and their ability to cease participation in the study at any time, as well as providing contact information for the researcher. To acknowledge consent to participate in the study, respondents read and signed the informed consent notice, which indicated that they had been advised of the nature of the study, the risks as a participant, and the means by which their identities would be kept confidential.
Sampling Frame

Because the study location depended upon finding an ample number of Hispanics, organizations within the Department of Army were scoped to locate those that had a denser concentration of Hispanic employees. The result was the usage of a convenience sample at an installation in the Southwestern United States. After the location was chosen and the population size of 1,130 employees was confirmed, it was determined that for the Hispanic population, 100 employees would receive a survey instrument. Members of the White comparator group were selected via the use of random sampling methods.

Confidentiality

Palys and Lowman (2006) maintained that “... pledging and maintaining strict confidence provides the foundation of trust and rapport that allows researchers to gather valid data to promote understanding of the human condition. . .” (p. 163). Palys and Lowman’s statement highlights the imperative of protecting the confidentiality of research participants and all associated information collected during the course of research. All information regarding the research participants for this study, as well as their individual results, will remain confidential.

Participants were contacted via electronic mail and all communication was directly between researcher and participants. Information to explain the purpose of the study and the extent of their participation was provided prior to any active involvement. Assurance of confidentiality was also provided to each participant. Participants were informed that they may opt out of the study at any time and the individual decision to participate or decline would remain confidential. Throughout the present study, the
organization’s identity was not disclosed but was referred to by location only. This served as an added safeguard to assure confidentiality.

A separate electronic mailbox used solely for the study was established. Thirty days after completion of the data collection period, all results were downloaded and maintained in a locked file by the researcher. The electronic mailbox was dismantled and the downloaded data, which included the consolidated survey instrument and consent form, will be maintained for 3 years after the dissertation is approved. At that point, the downloaded results will be destroyed.

Geographic Location

The increased attention focused on the growing Hispanic population influenced the choice of this group for the study. Predictions indicate that by 2050, Hispanics will comprise approximately 25% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Efforts to increase the Hispanic representation in the federal government continue, however, progress remains slow. Hispanics within the Department of Army in fiscal year 2006 comprised 6.88% of the population (Department of the Army, 2007).

The representation of Hispanics provided a challenge for the research and directly influenced the choice of the study’s location. There was a requisite to locate an organization within the Department of Army that had a sufficient concentration of Hispanic employees to provide an adequate sample. The location in the Southwest sufficed as it contained an organization with over 100 Hispanic personnel.

Instrumentation

A number of instruments have been designed to evaluate conflict handling styles. The Thomas Kilmann Instrument (TKI) and the Rahim Organizational Conflict
Instrument-II (ROCI-II) appear frequently in studies designed to measure conflict handling. Both instruments identify the five predominant modes of handling conflict. The TKI measures conflict on the dimensions of assertiveness and cooperativeness (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974), while Rahim uses the dimensions of concern for self and concern for others (Rahim, 2004). This cross-sectional survey used the ROCI-II, an instrument that measures the five conflict handling styles identified by Rahim (2004): accommodating, avoiding, compromising, dominating, and integrating. These styles are similar to those measured in the TKI: accommodating, avoiding, compromising, forcing, and collaborating.

The ROCI-II instrument consists of 28 questions. Responses are captured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The instrument measures how supervisors handle conflict (Form A); subordinates (Form B); and peers (Form C). In this study, participants completed Form C. Sample statements from the instrument relating to each conflict handling style are shown in Table 4.
Table 4
Sampling of ROCI-II Statements by Conflict Handling Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict handling style</th>
<th>ROCI-II statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Integrating             | I try to investigate an issue with my peers to find a solution acceptable to us.  
                          | I exchange accurate information with my peers to solve a problem together. |
| Obliging                | I usually accommodate the wishes of my peers.  
                          | I usually allow concessions to my peers. |
| Dominating              | I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.  
                          | I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue. |
| Compromising            | I try to find a middle course to avoid an impasse.  
                          | I use “give and take” so that a compromise can be made. |
| Avoiding                | I usually avoid open discussion of differences with my peers.  
                          | I avoid an encounter with my peers. |

*Note.* Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II.

The ROCI-II instrument was chosen because of its reputation and extensive use in similar research studies. Rahim developed the instrument which has been used in at least 63 doctoral studies and 17 master’s theses (Rahim, 2004). It has been referred to in at least 84 journal articles and 28 conference papers (Rahim, 2004).

Data Collection

Collecting too much data is a mistake often made in research and is the result of an unclear objective (Hart, 2006). For the current study, a quantitative, descriptive-correlational approach was applied to explore the conflict handling styles of Hispanic and White employees in a Department of Army organization in the Southwestern United
States. The researcher identified 200 employees as participants: 100 Hispanic and 100 White.

To facilitate ease of survey administration, the researcher had a single point of contact to assist with obtaining the required information on sample participants. The installation’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Manager agreed to serve as the liaison between the researcher and the installation. The EEO Manager provided information on the sample participants and provided the means of communicating electronically with them. Electronic mail addresses were available for all members of the White sample. Thirty-eight members of the Hispanic sample did not have access to electronic mail; the remaining 62 members of the group had access to electronic mail.

For those were able to receive electronic mail, the researcher sent an email which included: (1) an introductory letter outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality safeguards, and the benefits of the study; (2) the informed consent form; (3) the ROCI-II instrument (Part C); and (4) the supplemental questionnaire. For the 38 members of the Hispanic sample without access to electronic mail, the aforementioned information was placed in a sealed envelope and taken to a centralized location for distribution by a member of the EEO Office or designee. Included in the sealed envelope was an envelope addressed to the researcher to facilitate survey returns.

To improve sample response, the researcher made regular communication with the organization’s designated point of contact. The purpose was to obtain accurate contact information on possible respondents and to confirm delivery of the 38 surveys to individuals without access to electronic mail. The point of contact confirmed delivery of these surveys to an appropriate central location but, because of respondents’ varying
work hours, to include shift work, there was no guarantee that all of the respondents received the survey materials.

The ROCI-II instrument (Part C), designed to measure the five categories of conflict handling styles with peers, was distributed to the members of the targeted samples. The survey instructions directed respondents to think of a conflict situation and rate themselves on how they would respond to certain statements (Rahim, 2004). The instrument consisted of 28 statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

In addition to the ROCI-II, respondents completed a supplemental questionnaire consisting of 12 questions. The purpose was to identify further demographic information and to discern their preferences for the use of mediation as a means to resolve workplace disputes. Appendix D contains a sample of the supplemental questionnaire.

The initial survey period was three weeks. The low response rate at the close of the three-week timeframe warranted the extension of the survey period for an additional two weeks. Once the surveys were completed and submitted to the researcher, they were reviewed for completeness. The results then were catalogued into a database in preparation for statistical testing. SPSS 15.0 for Windows was the statistical software used to conduct the analysis.

Data Analysis

The research questions and hypotheses presented were analyzed via the use of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to discern the basic characteristics of the modes of handling conflict. Measures of central tendency (mean, mode), and measures of dispersion (standard deviation) were used to describe the characteristics of each group’s conflict handling style.
Inferential statistics are used to reach a conclusion about a population from a sample (Myers & Well, 2003). Prior to any inferential analyses, all continuous variables were examined to ensure that the assumption of normality was not violated. For all inferential tests, the standard alpha level of .05 was used. The \( t \) test for independent samples is used to determine the mean differences between groups; it explores whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other (Myers & Well, 2003). The \( t \) test statistic was used to determine if there was a difference between the conflict handling styles of the two sample groups. The analysis of variance (ANOVA), another technique used to discern if there is a statistical difference between means of two (or more) distinct samples, was used to test for distinctions in conflict handling styles across different age groups. Pearson’s coefficient of correlation (\( r \)) was used to test the strength of the relationship between the independent variable of culture and the dependent variables of conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation. The larger the correlation, the stronger is the association between variables (Kault, 2003).

Validity and Reliability

Validity

The standard for validity is that what is intended to be measured is measured. Drawing sound conclusions about a population through analysis of the sample (Creswell, 2005) is the goal of research. Hart (2006) maintains that the researcher should be clear about what will be measured. In the current study, conflict handling styles were measured conflict handling styles. To this end, Nauta & Kluwer (2004) recommended that existing surveys be used to enhance validity.
Internal validity relates to the assurance that the research result can be attributed to forces under the control of the researcher: “Internal validity is about the extent to which causal inferences can legitimately be made about the nature of the relationship between the treatment and the outcome” (Gilner & Morgan, 2000, p. 83). Every effort was made to maximize internal validity by ensuring simplicity and clarity in the administration of the instrument.

A key concern of external validity is generalizability. Generalizability deals with whether the research can be applied to other groups or settings and the different ways of operationalizing the variables (Gilner & Morgan, 2000). Generalizability refers to the extent to which identified relationships will recur at different times and places under different conditions (Crano & Brewer, 2002). The goal of research is to draw conclusions that are applicable to the population at large (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Crano and Brewer (2002) noted that results applicable to “particular persons at a particular time or place are of little value to a scientific endeavor that aims at achieving general principles of human behavior” (p. 34). An inadequate sample can precipitate problems with the generalizability aspect of external validity (Hart, 2006). To counter this problem, attempts were made to engage an adequate sample in number and representation. Efforts to reduce bias were made by taking steps to gain a maximum participation rate.

When discussing the use of questionnaires in conflict research, Nauta and Kluwer (2004) maintained that the wording of questions can be a threat to validity. Behavior may be difficult to measure through questionnaires because they measure perceptions of behavior and not the behavior itself (Nauta & Kluwer, 2004). Results from the factor
analysis used to assess construct validity provided support for the instrument (Rahim, 2004).

**Reliability**

The principle of reliability occurs when an instrument is administered multiple times by multiple researchers in multiple environments, and there exists a reasonable assurance that the scores will be consistent (Creswell, 2005). Reliability tests for the ROCI-II instrument “compare quite favorably with those of other existing instruments” (Rahim, 2004, p. 43). Statistical tests revealed that the five scales of conflict measured by the instrument are void of the social desirability bias that could potentially affect reliability (Rahim, 2004).

**Summary**

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research methodology for this study. The use of a comparative, correlational design allowed for a comparison of the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army and an evaluation of the variables (Creswell, 2005; Gilner & Morgan, 2000). Chapter 3 iterated the specifics of this quantitative study to include (a) rationale for chosen methodology, (b) details about the population and sample, (c) description of research instrument, (d) information on validity and reliability of the instrument, and (e) mode of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The goal of this research was to identify the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army and to determine if there was a nexus between the way they handle conflict and their willingness to use mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes. In chapter 1, an overview of the research was presented. That chapter provided the background of the study, outlined the problem statement and the purpose statement, and enumerated the research questions and hypotheses. A review of the literature, as discussed in chapter 2, indicated that there was a paucity of existing research (a) focusing on the conflict handling styles of these groups in the workplace and (b) exploring the connection between a preferred conflict handling style and the willingness to use mediation as an alternate dispute resolution process. Chapter 3 disclosed the rationale for the selection of a quantitative methodology and its appropriateness for the study.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data using appropriate statistical techniques. The following descriptive statistics depict the demographics of the sample groups: frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics were used to determine the relationship between variables; techniques included a Pearson correlation, independent $t$ tests, and a one-way ANOVA. Chapter 4 examines the results in light of the proffered research questions.

Survey Return Rate

Survey instruments were distributed to 100 Hispanic and 100 White employees ($N = 200$) within a Department of Army organization in the Southwestern United States. Results at the conclusion of the survey period indicated that of the 200 surveys sent,
12.5\% were undeliverable (n = 25). This number included employees whose e-mail addresses were not valid, employees who were not available during the study period, and employees who had retired or left the organization.

Two attempts to increase the survey return rate were made. The initial survey period extended over a three-week span. At the end of the three-week period, survey returns were minimal (n =16). The minimal returns may have been partially caused by the fact that the survey period coincided with a holiday period. As such, an email was sent to those members of the sample having a valid email address to inform them of a two-week extension of the survey period. Attached to the email was a copy of the survey materials sent with the original notice. A number of additional responses (n =13) were received during the second period.

Of concern was the return rate attributed to that segment of the Hispanic sample without access to electronic mail. The final returns, however, indicated successful delivery of survey materials. Approximately 35\% of the returned surveys were from the group without access to electronic mail. Table 5 shows the return rate for the entire sample.

Table 5
Survey Return Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Number sent</th>
<th>Not used</th>
<th>Adjusted sample</th>
<th>Number returned</th>
<th>Adjusted return rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post hoc power analysis for the difference between two independent means (two-tailed) was conducted to determine the achieved power of the inferential tests, based on the obtained sample size. With an alpha of .05, a medium effect size of $d = 0.50$, $n_1 = 15$, and $n_2 = 14$, power analysis revealed an achieved power of 29% (critical $t(27) = 2.05$). A second post hoc power analysis was conducted using a point-biserial (correlation) model. With an alpha of .05, a medium effect size of $r = 0.30$, $n_1 = 15$, and $n_2 = 14$, power analysis revealed an achieved power of 37% (critical $t(27) = 2.05$).

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to compare the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army and to explore whether a connection existed between their conflict handling styles and their willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. The results of the data analysis follow, and to address the four research questions, the researcher has presented the descriptive and inferential outcomes as they related to (a) the overall combined study sample, which included both the Hispanic and White respondents; (b) the Hispanic sample; and (c) the White sample. The study focused on the independent variable of culture and the dependent variables of conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation. Additional analyses were also conducted on the demographic and employment related variables of age, gender, and supervisor status.

Demographics and Supervisory Status

The combined sample included 29 respondents. The two groups, Hispanics ($n = 14, 48.3\%$) and Whites ($n = 15, 51.7\%$), were similarly represented. Eight participants (27.6\%) did not provide an ethnicity identifier as requested in the supplemental
questionnaire, but of those who did, the majority of Hispanic employees self-identified as Mexican American ($n = 7$, 33.3%), and the majority of White employees self-identified as European ($n = 7$, 33.3%). The sample also included those reporting their ethnicity as Mexican ($n = 3$, 14.3%), Central American ($n = 3$, 14.3%), and Puerto Rican ($n = 1$, 4.8%).

The majority of the sample was female ($n = 16$, 55.2%), and a majority ($n = 22$, 84.6%) was, at a minimum, 45 years old. Most were in the National Security Personnel System YC2 ($n = 6$, 40.0%) and YA2 ($n = 5$, 33.3%) grades. Most participants reported that they were not supervisors ($n = 17$, 70.8%). Table 6 provides a more complete representation of the demographic results.
Table 6
Sample Demographic Characteristics and Supervisory Status ($N = 29$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture/Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central American</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–44</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–54</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YC2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YA2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS02</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS07</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS09</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Familiarity With Mediation

Members of the sample groups were asked a series of questions about their familiarity with mediation. Table 7 shows that the majority \( (n = 21, 80.8\%) \) reported that they were familiar with mediation. Participants were asked if they had ever participated in a mediation session, and most reported that they had not \( (n = 16, 61.5\%) \). A slightly higher number \( (n = 18, 69.2\%) \) reported that they had not participated in a mediation session to resolve a workplace dispute. Almost unanimously, 96.2\% reported that they would favor using mediation as a means to resolve a workplace dispute. Participants who responded that they would not favor using mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes indicated reluctance because of an unsuccessful prior experience.

Table 7
Combined Sample Familiarity With and Participation in Mediation \( (N = 29) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiar with mediation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in mediation session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in mediation session to resolve workplace dispute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to use mediation to resolve workplace dispute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>96.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conflict Handling Styles and Willingness to Use Mediation

The ROCI-II instrument (Part C) was administered to participants to determine their preferred method of handling conflict. Possible scores for each of the five modes of handling conflict ranged from 1.00 (least inclined to use a particular conflict handling style) to 5.00 (most likely to use a particular conflict handling style). A comparison of the mean of the five conflict handling styles revealed that participants averaged highest in the integrating style, with a mean of 4.38 ($SD = 0.69$), and lowest in the dominating style, with a mean of 2.73 ($SD = 0.87$). Modes for the integrating and compromising styles were highest, with a score of 5.00, whereas the mode for avoiding was at the lower end of the scale, with a value of 2.17. The descriptive statistics for the five conflict handling styles for the combined sample are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8
Sample Conflict Handling Styles ($N = 29$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive statistic</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>OB</th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>CO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. IN = integrating; OB = obliging; DO = dominating; AV = avoiding; CO = compromising.

The current sample showed some departure from national norms, when compared with Rahim’s (2004) normative data. Participants in the current sample obtained higher scores on the integrating, obliging, avoiding, and compromising styles but lower scores
on the dominating style. Table 9 reports the sample means, the 95% confidence interval for the national means, and the national percentile ranges for the sample means.

Table 9  
*Comparison of Study Sample and National Norms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>IN (N=29)</th>
<th>OB (N=29)</th>
<th>DO (N=29)</th>
<th>AV (N=29)</th>
<th>CO (N=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study mean</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% CI</td>
<td>4.21–4.28</td>
<td>3.19–3.29</td>
<td>3.10–3.23</td>
<td>2.65–2.79</td>
<td>3.52–3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National percentile</td>
<td>55–64</td>
<td>63–76</td>
<td>24–30</td>
<td>76–83</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* IN = integrating; OB = obliging; DO = dominating; AV = avoiding; CO = compromising; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for the national mean (Rahim, 2004).

Respondents were asked to rate their willingness to use mediation on a scale of 1–5. A score of 5 equated to the highest level of willingness to use mediation. Results, as evidenced by Table 10, revealed a mean willingness score of 4.07 (SD = 1.07) and a mode of 5.00.

Table 10  
*Sample’s Willingness to Use Mediation (N = 29)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive statistic</th>
<th>Willingness to use mediation (1–5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

Prior to any inferential analyses, all continuous variables were examined to ensure that the assumption of normality was not violated. Examination of skewness and kurtosis indicated that all reflected a normal distribution (i.e., within +/-2). Thus, no transformation of data was necessary prior to further data analysis.

**Research Question 1: Comparison of Conflict Handling Styles of Combined Sample**

The first research question presented was as follows: Is there a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army?

A series of *t* tests for independent samples were conducted to answer the research question of whether culture had an impact on conflict handling style, that is, whether any differences existed between Hispanics and Whites in the five conflict handling styles. For all dependent variables except integrating, Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance indicated that this assumption was not violated; however, for integrating, there were unequal variances between the groups, leading the researcher to use the more conservative *t* test in examining this dependent variable. Results, as evidenced by Table 9, indicated no differences between Whites and Hispanics in any of the conflict handling styles: integrating, *t*(24.34) = 0.37, *p* > .05, *d* = .14; obliging, *t*(27) = -0.27, *p* > .05, *d* = -.09; dominating, *t*(27) = 0.48, *p* > .05, *d* = .17; avoiding, *t*(27) = 1.35, *p* > .05, *d* = .50; and compromising, *t*(27) = 0.22, *p* > .05, *d* = .07.

The mean for Hispanics was slightly higher in all of the conflict handling styles except obliging. Scores were most similar in the integrating style, for which Hispanics had a mean of 4.43 (*SD* = 0.54) and Whites had a mean of 4.33 (*SD* = 0.83). Scores were
most disparate in the avoiding style, for which Hispanics had a mean of 3.52 (SD = 1.04) and Whites had a mean of 3.04 (SD = 0.88). Whites scored higher in the obliging style, with a mean of 3.43 (SD = 0.71), and Hispanics scored a mean of 3.37 (SD = 0.63). As stated above, none of these results were statistically significant. However, the medium effect size (d = .50) found for the avoiding style, though not statistically significant, suggests some meaningful difference between Hispanics and Whites for this particular conflict handling style, with Hispanics employing a more avoiding style. The results are represented in Table 11.

Table 11
Independent Samples t Test Results for Conflict Handling Styles as a Function of Culture (Comparison of Hispanics and Whites)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict handling style</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>24.54</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>26.93</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>21.49</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>26.83</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2: Comparison of Combined Sample’s Willingness to Use Mediation

The second research question was as follows: Is there a significant difference in the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation? Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance indicated that this assumption was not violated. Results of the $t$ test indicated no significant differences in the groups’ willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes, $t(25.06) = 1.43, p > .05, d = .54$. Hispanics averaged 4.36 ($SD = 0.84$), whereas Whites averaged 3.80 ($SD = 1.21$). However, once again the medium effect size for willingness to use mediation ($d = .54$) suggests some meaningful difference between Hispanics and Whites with respect to their willingness to use mediation, with Hispanics being more willing. Table 12 displays the results of this analysis.

Table 12
Hispanics’ and Whites’ Willingness to Use Mediation to Resolve a Workplace Dispute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>25.06</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 3: Correlation Between Hispanics’ Conflict Handling Style and Willingness to Use Mediation

The third research question presented was as follows: Do the conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes?

A Pearson (point biserial) correlation was used to examine the relationship between conflict handling styles and willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. For Hispanics, the use of a dominating conflict handling style was inversely related to a person’s willingness to use mediation, $r(14) = -0.68, p < .01$, such that those who reported a more dominating style were less likely to report being willing to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. No other correlations between conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation were significant.

Further examination of the results revealed that those who reported a more compromising style also were more likely to use an integrating style, $r(14) = 0.85, p < .01$, and an obliging style, $r(14) = 0.54, p < .05$. Those reporting a more obliging style were more likely to use an integrating style, $r(14) = 0.57, p < .05$, as evidenced in Table 13.
Table 13
Correlation Matrix for Relationship Between Conflict Handling Styles and Willingness to Use Mediation for Hispanics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>CO</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>OB</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>WTUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTUM</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.68**</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.57*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. CO = compromising; AV = avoiding; DO = dominating; OB = obliging; IN = integrating; WTUM = willingness to use mediation (1–5).
* p < .05. ** p < .01.

Research Question 4: Correlation Between Whites’ Conflict Handling Style and Willingness to Use Mediation

The final research question was presented as follows: Do the conflict handling styles of Whites within the Department of Army influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes? Table 14 shows that, similar to the results for Hispanics, the use of a dominating conflict handling style was inversely related to a person’s willingness to use mediation, \( r(15) = -.64, p < .05 \), such that those who reported a more dominating style were less likely to report being willing to use mediation. Those who favored a more obliging style were more likely to report a willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes, \( r(15) = .59, p < .05 \). No other
correlations between conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation were significant.

The data also revealed that those favoring the use of a compromising style were more likely to use an integrating style, \( r(15) = .85, p < .01 \). Those reporting use of an avoiding style were likely to use an obliging style, \( r(15) = .55, p < .05 \). Finally, those using the obliging style also were likely to use the integrating style, \( r(15) = .52, p < .05 \). Table 14 depicts the results.

Table 14
_Correlation Matrix for Relationship Between Conflict Handling Styles and Willingness to Use Mediation for Whites_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>CO</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>OB</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>WTUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTUM</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>-.64*</td>
<td>.59*</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>.85*</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.55*</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. CO = compromising; AV = avoiding; DO = dominating; OB = obliging; IN = integrating; WTUM = willingness to use mediation (1–5). *\( p < .05 \).*

**Additional Analyses**

The supplemental questionnaire used to collect data regarding the attitudes toward the use of mediation to resolve workplace disputes provided enough information to assess
this issue from a perspective that varied from that presented in the research questions and hypotheses. Additional analyses were conducted on the demographic and employment-related variables of age, gender, and supervisory status. Independent t tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if these variables influenced conflict handling style.

**Age**

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in conflict handling styles across age groups. Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance indicated that this assumption was not violated for any of the dependent variables examined. Results indicated no differences in conflict handling style across age groups: integrating, $F(4, 21) = 0.27, p > .05$; obliging, $F(4, 21) = 2.04, p > .05$; dominating, $F(4, 21) = 2.70, p > .05$; avoiding, $F(4, 21) = 1.93, p > .05$; and compromising, $F(4, 21) = 0.46, p > .05$. The results are illustrated in Table 15.

**Gender**

Table 16 depicts conflict handling styles and willingness to use mediation by gender. Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance indicated that this assumption was not violated for any of the dependent variable examined. Independent samples t tests revealed some differences in conflict handling style for men versus women. For instance, women ($M = 3.63, SD = 0.71$) were more likely to use an obliging style than were men ($M = 3.13, SD = 0.48$), $t(27) = -2.14, p < .05$. Women ($M = 3.67, SD = 0.94$) also were more likely to use an avoiding style than were men ($M = 2.78, SD = 0.80$), $t(27) = -2.72, p < .05$. There were no significant differences between men and women in their willingness to use mediation.
Table 15
*Analysis of Variance Results for Conflict Handling Style as a Function of Age*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict handling style</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16
*Independent Samples t Test Results for Conflict Handling Styles as a Function of Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict handling style</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t(27)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>-2.72</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTUM (1–5)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* WTUM = willingness to use mediation (1–5).

**Supervisor Status**

Independent *t* tests were conducted to discern the impact of supervisory status on conflict handling styles. Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance indicated that this assumption was not violated for any of the dependent variables examined. Independent samples *t* tests revealed one difference in conflict handling style on the basis of supervisory status. Supervisors (*M* = 2.57, *SD* = 0.63) were less likely to use an avoiding conflict handling style than were nonsupervisors (*M* = 3.60, *SD* = 0.91), *t*(27) = -2.72, *p* < .05. The complete results are displayed at Table 17.
Table 17  
*Independent Samples t Test Results for Conflict Handling Styles as a Function of Supervisor Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict handling style</th>
<th>Supervisor status</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$t(27)$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-2.72</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTUM (1-5)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* WTUM = willingness to use mediation (1–5).

The current sample was compared with Rahim’s (2004) National Managerial Percentile of Managers and Students to determine whether there were any differences between these two groups. Because the national percentile statistics were divided into supervisors and students, nonsupervisors in the current study were compared to the students group for this analysis. Results revealed that the scores for the supervisors and nonsupervisors in the current study fall outside of the 95% confidence interval for the mean national percentile in every area. Supervisors in the present study preferred the integrating, obliging, and compromising styles more than the national average; they
preferred the dominating and avoiding styles less than the national average.

Nonsupervisors preferred the integrating, avoiding, and compromising styles more than the national average; they preferred the obliging and dominating styles less than the national average. Tables 18 and 19 reveal these results.

Table 18
*Comparison of Supervisor Sample and Rahim’s (2004) National Percentile of Managers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager/supervisor conflict handling style</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Rahim’s range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.21–4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.19–3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.10–3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.65–2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.52–3.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19
*Comparison of Nonsupervisor Sample and Rahim’s National Percentile of Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student/nonsupervisor conflict handling style</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Rahim’s range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.07–4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.46–3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.30–3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.12–3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.85–3.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Chapter 4 presented the results of the study conducted to determine if there was a difference in the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army. The study also examined whether conflict handling styles were related to willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. A series of independent t tests determined that there were no significant differences between the two groups in their conflict handling styles but that there were some associations between the conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation. Chapter 5 provides a full discussion of the results and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify the conflict handling styles of two significant groups in the Department of Army workforce: Whites, the majority, and Hispanics, the majority minority. Once the conflict handling styles were discerned, an attempt was made to determine if there was a correlation between the preferred conflict handling style and the willingness to use alternative dispute resolution, mediation in particular, as a means to resolve workplace disputes.

Chapter 1 laid the foundation for the study and included the purpose, problem statement, and significance of the study to leadership. Chapter 1 discussed the increasing relevance of culture and conflict within organizations and relayed the importance of these factors to the use of alternative dispute resolution as a conflict resolution option. Chapter 2 followed with a review of the literature and expounded on the nexus between the themes of culture, conflict handling styles, and mediation. Chapter 3 explained the choice of a quantitative, descriptive-correlational approach and its appropriateness for this study. Descriptive statistics summarized the data, the independent *t* test for samples and an ANOVA explored whether there were differences in the means between the two sample groups, and tests using Pearson’s coefficient examined the correlation between the conflict handling styles of the two groups and their willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. Chapter 4 presented the statistical summation.

Chapter 5 discusses the study’s findings. The chapter provides an interpretation of the data analyses that were conducted in the previous chapter and shows connections between the findings in this study and previous literature. In this final chapter, the
researcher identifies implications to leadership and provides suggestions for further research.

Findings

Chapter 4 presented an in-depth statistical analysis that focused on the independent variable of culture and the dependent variables of conflict handling style and willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. The results, discussed hereafter in the context of the sample’s low power, may be worthy of attention. The small size warrants that the results must be interpreted with caution.

The results support the premise that, within the Department of Army, there is no significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites. Additionally, there was no significant difference between Hispanics and Whites in terms of their willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. For Hispanics, a dominating style was related to the willingness to use mediation. For Whites, the dominating and obliging styles were related to the willingness to use mediation.

Research Question 1: Comparison of Conflict Handling Style of Combined Sample

The first research question presented in this quantitative study examined whether there was a significant difference between the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army. $H_{01a}–H_{01e}$ predicted no significant differences in the five conflict handling styles between the two groups. The findings supported the null hypotheses, revealing no significant differences between the conflict handling styles of the two groups. In all cases, the null hypothesis was accepted.
Research Question 2: Comparison of Combined Sample’s Willingness to Use Mediation

The second research question in the study examined whether there was any significant difference in the willingness of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. The results indicated that the null hypothesis should be accepted, that is, that there is no significant difference between Hispanics and Whites in their willingness to use mediation when attempting to resolve a workplace dispute.

Research Question 3: Correlation Between Hispanics’ Conflict Handling Style and Willingness to Use Mediation

The third research question explored whether the conflict handling styles of Hispanics within the Department of Army influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes. \( H_0 \) predicted no correlation between Hispanics’ use of a particular conflict handling style and the willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. The findings suggested otherwise. The results showed that Hispanics who preferred the dominating style were less likely to use mediation. Hence, for \( H_0 \), the null hypothesis was rejected. For all other conflict handling styles, the null hypothesis was accepted.

The data revealed additional information on the relationship between individuals’ use of multiple conflict handling styles. There appears to be a connection between use of the integrating and compromising styles. Those reporting a preference for the compromising style were more likely to use the integrating style as well. This is consistent with the nature of the two styles. Those who use the compromising and
integrating styles exhibit moderate to high concern for both self and others (Rahim, 2004).

The data revealed a second relationship amongst the conflict handling styles. Those whose tendency is toward the obliging style also have a propensity to use the integrating style. The preference for exhibiting a high concern for the wishes of others may give rise to this association.

*Research Question 4: Correlation Between Whites’ Conflict Handling Style and Willingness to Use Mediation*

The final research question in the study examined whether the conflict handling styles of Whites influence their willingness to participate in mediation as a means of resolving workplace disputes. $H_{04a} – H_{04e}$ predicted no correlation between Whites’ use of a particular conflict handling style and the willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. For $H_{04a}$, $H_{04d}$, and $H_{04e}$, the null hypothesis was accepted. The results revealed no significant correlations between the use of the integrating, avoiding, and compromising styles and the willingness to use mediation.

However, the data yielded significant results for the obliging and dominating styles. Those who primarily advocated the use of an obliging style were more likely to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes. Thus, for $H_{04b}$, the null hypothesis was rejected. The high concern for others appears here to manifest in a willingness to resolve disputes through the alternative dispute resolution process.

The findings for the dominating style also showed significance and mirrored those for Hispanics. Whites who preferred the dominating style were less likely to use mediation; hence, for $H_{04c}$, the null hypothesis was rejected. An individual whose
primary style is dominating has little interest in the needs of others and is highly motivated to ensure that personal needs are met. This behavior does not lend itself to the collaborative nature of the mediation process.

As with the results from the Hispanic sample, an examination of the relationships between the categories of conflict handling styles for Whites provided significant results. Those favoring use of the obliging and compromising styles also were more likely to use the integrating style. The result is consistent with the high concern for others that is integral to these three styles. Results also indicated the coupled use of the avoiding and obliging styles. The common denominator here is that those who favor these two styles exhibit low concern for self when resolving disputes.

Supplemental Variables of Age, Gender, and Supervisor Status

An evaluation of the data by gender provided mixed results. Results indicated that both men and women preferred the integrating style. The data also revealed some differences between the way men and women prefer to handle conflict. Women were more likely than men to use obliging and avoiding styles. This suggests that women have a higher tendency to exhibit low concern for self when resolving disputes. Women and men exhibited a willingness to use mediation at about the same level.

The results differ somewhat from Rahim’s (2004) characterization of gender norms, which indicated that the females were “more integrating, avoiding, and compromising and less obliging than males” (p. 19). The women in the current study were more likely than the men to use the avoiding and integrating styles. These results parallel Rahim’s characterization in the use of avoiding but bear a contradiction in the use of the obliging style.
Results indicated no significant differences in conflict handling styles by age. Supervisors were less likely to use an avoiding style than were nonsupervisors. This is not surprising in that in the workplace, supervisors hold a position of power and authority. The supervisory role intimates that adopting a posture of low concern for both self and others would not be conducive to dealing directly with workplace issues.

Discussion

The study’s small sample size presents a serious limitation to the generalization of the findings. The discussion of the results that follows should be considered in a framework that recognizes the small sample size. As a result, caution must be exercised in the reading, interpretation, and applicability of the conclusions and implications.

As noted in chapters 3 and 4, several efforts were made to increase the response rate. Communication with the designated point of contact was ongoing throughout the data collection process; however, several forces may have influenced the return rate. Inquiries from sample members as to the legitimacy of the introductory email from the researcher influenced the decision not to send out more than a one-time follow up. The overlap of the study period and a holiday period and the shift-work schedules of one subset of the Hispanic sample may have had an adverse effect on the number of actual participants.

The results of the study support the hypothesis that there are no significant differences in the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army nor were there significant differences between the two groups’ willingness to use mediation. Given the small sample size, it is highly probable that there was insufficient power to detect any significant differences.
Within each group, the data revealed consistent coupling trends with regard to several of the conflict styles. That is, certain conflict handling styles were more likely to occur together, evidencing a relationship between these styles. The dyads of integrating and compromising as well as integrating and obliging appeared within the Hispanic sample. Dyads of integrating and compromising, integrating and obliging, and avoiding and obliging appeared in the White sample.

Hofstede (2001) proposed that one of the five dimensions of culture is individualism. Historically, Hispanics have been identified with a collectivist mentality, whereas Whites have been identified with more individualist thinking (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995, 2004). The most obvious outcome of Hofstede’s proposal would be for Hispanics to engage in conflict decisions that would support the group and maintain harmony within their environment. The conflict handling styles that indicate high concern for others would appear to be most favorable for this group—obliging, compromising, and integrating. Whites, as individualists, would be more likely to engage in conflict decisions that indicate high concern for self—dominating, compromising, and integrating.

Study results provided mixed acceptance of Hofstede’s (2001) premise. According to Hofstede, the styles most endorsed by Hispanics were those that involved a high concern for others. The Hispanic respondents in the study reported a proclivity to use a mix of integrating and compromising as well as a combination of integrating and obliging. For White respondents, significant correlations occurred between use of the compromising and integrating styles. However, the White participants in the study
showed a high propensity to use a blend of the integrating and obliging styles, both of which have a high concern for others dimension.

Although the results of this study present no statistical differences between Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army in their choice of a conflict handling style, the mean scores in the study showed that for Whites, the mean scores were higher in all of the style for which there is a high concern for other. The present study provides mixed evidence of the importance of culture’s role in how an individual chooses to handle conflict. There were no differences between the two groups, but there were defined couplings in the choice of conflict handling styles within each group.

Hispanics, as collectivists, value harmony and tend to sacrifice their own desires to achieve it (Hofstede, 2001). Hispanics in the current study favored the use of integrating and compromising, which promote negotiation and result in getting the needs of both parties met. The findings in this study partially support an earlier study in which Mexican students showed a preference for the accommodating (obliging) and collaborating (integrating) styles (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). Although collaborating (integrating) was the primary style of choice for the Hispanics in the Kirkman et al. (2006) study, which consisted of a large number of Mexican employees, the accommodating (obliging) style was chosen fourth out of the five styles. Higher mean scores manifested for the compromising and avoiding styles.

There were mixed results in the current study when compared with those of Sadri and Rahmatian (2003) that suggested Mexicans were less assertive than Whites. This study failed to show significance for Hispanics in the preference of a single conflict handling style. However, averages indicate Hispanics scoring slightly higher than Whites...
in dominating and avoiding styles and less in the obliging style. The results indicate only partial preference for a less assertive style. The higher average in dominating and lower average in obliging run counter to Sadri and Rahmatian’s findings.

Whites, categorized by Hofstede (2001) as individualists, tend to favor styles in which the emphasis is on getting individual needs met. Studies have characterized Whites’ conflict handling style as assertive (Brew & Cairns, 2004). However, in the current study, Whites, like Hispanics, favored the use of both integrating and compromising styles. The conflict handling styles of Whites in this study tended to contradict one aspect of Hofstede’s assertion of individualism and the predisposition to tend to self first that is attributed to this group. White respondents indicated the least tendency to use the dominating style and had lower mean scores than did respondents in the Hispanic group.

The literature contains studies that indicate that Whites, or Anglos, prefer a solution-oriented conflict resolution style (Brew & Cairns, 2004). This finding is similar to those in the current study indicating the preferred used of integrating and compromising styles.

Results were also presented for the variables of gender and supervisory status. The results in these categories support the findings in Colon’s (2005) study that females tend to use avoidance at a higher level than males. Brewer et al.’s (2002) study of gender role, organizational status, and conflict handling styles reported that those with a feminine gender role orientation preferred use of the avoiding style and that those with a lower organizational status preferred the use of the avoiding style. Men in Brewer et al.’s study preferred a dominating style, and those in an upper organizational status used
integrating to a large degree. These results partially supported existing research, in that women and those in nonsupervisory positions exhibited a more avoiding style.

Implications

This study provides implications for future studies on conflict, culture, and conflict resolution. It is important for leaders to continue to investigate the distinctions on how these groups interact in the workplace. The inevitability of Hispanics and Whites to work side by side in organizations and serve on cross-cultural teams provides leadership with opportunities to cultivate positive workplace relationships and enhance organizational performance and profitability. Leaders must prepare for the resultant affective conflict and design conflict resolution programs that are responsive to the myriad of potential issues.

The main theoretical contribution of the current study is the exploration of conflict handling styles and conflict resolution—in particular, the willingness to use mediation. The results of this study suggested that those who use the dominating conflict handling style are less likely to use mediation as a means of resolving conflict. This distinction transcends culture: The results were identical for both Hispanics and Whites. Despite the low sample size, the study provides some empirical data that may support this contention and make continued exploration of this topic with larger samples worthwhile. The literature review revealed no existing studies that have investigated the association. The literature does, however, contain a recent study exploring conflict handling styles as a prediction of behaviors in business negotiations (Ma, 2007). Ma’s (2007) examination appears to be the most similar to the current study.
The findings contribute to the area of cross-cultural research and conflict, providing leaders with an additional dimension to ponder in the complex management of a diverse workforce. The heterogeneity that accompanies workplace diversity will exacerbate conflict and require leaders well versed in the connection between the concepts of culture and conflict resolution to successfully face these challenges. People are complex. The more leaders know about them and their preferences, the more successful they will be in managing their workforce and minimizing conflict.

The culture of an organization may engender collaborative and integrating results. The Department of Army’s organizational culture which encourages the resolution of workplace disputes through the use of mediation may have contributed somewhat to the outcome of the current study. This study has highlighted that although groups are diverse, many of the tendencies to resolve conflict are similar. Most important, the willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes is shared by the two groups in this study and may be a harbinger to a broader willingness across all cultures.

Limitations

There were several methodological limitations to the results of the study. First, the return rate of both the Hispanic and White samples limited the ability to generalize the results to the population. The return rate of 16.6% included an almost identical number of Hispanics ($n = 14$) and Whites ($n = 15$). However, the researcher had hoped to acquire at least 100 for each group, to meet the requirement for a representative quantitative sample. The sample may have been balanced but it was not robust.

The study’s small sample size contributed to a lack of power to determine if a significant difference existed between the two groups’ conflict handling styles and
willingness to use mediation. The sample’s low power may have contributed to a Type II error. Further studies with larger samples will aid in verifying whether this is so. Future research in this area should ensure that more stringent measures are taken to improve sample size. Problems occurred in this study with regard to the methods of survey delivery and the shift work schedules of members in one of the sample groups. Special attention should be paid to these areas in subsequent studies.

The choice of study locations, Southwest Arizona, influenced the composition of the study sample. As expected, the majority of Hispanic respondents \( (n = 10, 71.44\%) \) identified themselves as either Mexican American or Mexican. The diversity of the Hispanic culture suggests that if the study location were different or if the Hispanic sample was more diversified, the results may have been different.

Over one third of the Hispanic sample did not have access to a computer. To compensate for the lack of access and to facilitate the distribution of surveys, the organization’s EEO Manager served as the agent to deliver the questionnaires. Although the surveys were delivered personally to this segment, the lack of computer access may have had an impact on responsiveness.

In comments to the researcher, one of the Hispanic respondents objected to the term *peer* in the study. This participant was not certain of the definition. Other participants potentially could have faced a language barrier as well. The study site is situated in an area where, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), some Spanish speakers spoke English less than very well. As such, the potential for some of the respondents to have misunderstood certain statements raises questions about the validity of the data.
The age of the participants limited the results. The majority of respondents self-identified as 45 years old or older \((n = 22, 84.6\%)\). Differences may have been revealed in the results had a larger number of younger individuals been represented in the sample.

Finally, the focus on one dimension of the ROCI-II may have limited the results. The study focused on how peers handle conflict, and a more accurate representation may have been gained from the administration of the one or both of the other dimensions of the ROCI-II: handling conflict with superiors and with subordinates.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study presents opportunities for a number of future research avenues. The most exciting would be to add to the limited research exploring whether a connection exists between conflict handling styles and the willingness to use mediation. This study focused on Hispanics and Whites, and the opportunities to focus on other groups are unlimited. Because most of the research on conflict handling styles has been conducted within the Asian community, an examination of the nexus between conflict handling styles and the willingness to use mediation within this group would provide relevant information for managers in the workplace and supplement research in that area. The researcher recommends the continued focus on Hispanics within the workplace because of the inevitability of their increased entry into the workplace in the impending years. Research on the association with mediation would also benefit from further study using the additional exploratory variables of age and gender.

An examination of how superiors and subordinates handle conflict and the connection to the use of mediation will provide valuable information relevant to realistic organizational relationships. Many times when complaints arise, the parties involve a
manager and a subordinate. Future studies that tackle the dimensions of culture, conflict handling styles, the supervisor–subordinate relationship, and willingness to use mediation will edify the conflict and conflict resolution literature.

The current study focused on conflict handling styles of civilian employees within an organization that supports the military. Another possible variation to the study would be to use an exclusively military sample. The unique culture of the military may have influenced the results in this study of Hispanics and Whites.

Finally, when exploring the nexus between conflict handling styles and mediation, future research may benefit from the use of a mixed methodology. Dialogue with participants to glean more in-depth information about the willingness or reluctance to use mediation may provide valuable information for all organizations that have incorporated alternative dispute resolution into their conflict resolution systems.

Conclusions

The development of conflict management skills is important for individuals to function within any work environment (Brewer et al., 2002). The awareness of how individuals intuitively handle conflict is a precursor to developing skills to resolve conflict. The results in this study sustain to a degree that culture is an important component in the determination of one’s conflict handling style (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

The management and resolution of conflict cannot be ignored within organizations. A one size fits all approach to conflict management will not yield optimum results. Leaders who are serious about the immediate disposition of conflict within their environment must ensure that the design of conflict resolution programs considers the elements of culture and conflict handling styles. The strength of program success hinges
upon improving awareness, education, and communication at all levels of the organization.

Despite the rapid increase in the number of Hispanics that are entering the workplace, there are few studies devoted to how Hispanics handle conflict in the workplace. As efforts to increase diversity intensify, the importance of understanding the link between culture and conflict becomes more of a leadership and organizational imperative.

The continuing potential for conflict in the workplace makes it essential that managers and employees become aware of the possibilities for conflict resolution. Conflict management skills in a multicultural environment must be a mainstay in the repertoire of the 21st century leader. Mediation is a proven prescription for sustaining relationship longevity. Because it appears that there is a proclivity among Hispanics and Whites to use it to resolve workplace differences, leadership must take advantage of opportunities to mitigate any issues that distract mission accomplishment.

Summary

This study has illuminated the integrated themes of conflict, culture, and conflict resolution. The cultural experiences that accompany individuals enrich an organization but also increase the opportunities for conflict. Leaders who successfully educate themselves and members of their organizations on the criticality of understanding and respecting diversity will set into motion the creation of an environment with minimal affective dysfunction.

An awareness of associations between conflict handling styles and culture has been cultivated in the literature. Although the study presented no significant difference in
the conflict handling styles of Hispanics and Whites within the Department of Army, the small sample may have influenced these findings. The continued emphasis on creating diverse organizations makes this topic ripe for future study. The increased cross-cultural interaction and communication required for success in the global economy command leadership attentiveness to these concepts.

The incidence of conflict in organizations must be accompanied by strategies and procedures for resolution. The findings in this study suggest that there are correlations between conflict handling styles and mediation in both the Hispanic and White samples. As mediation becomes more popular as a conflict intervention, knowledge of conflict handling styles provides valuable insight into its potential success with specific cultural groups. Leaders must foster a culture of communication to guide their organizations effectively through the immense challenges associated with diversity and conflict in the global environment of the future.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE ROCI-II

This survey is designed to allow you to assess how you handle conflict with your peers in different situations. While it is possible that you may use different methods to handle conflict with supervisors or subordinates, this survey focuses on peer-peer conflict. The survey will also seek general information about your preferences to resolve conflict through mediation. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. There are two parts: the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II, Form C and questions designed to collect demographic information and data about conflict resolution preferences.
APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

-----Original Message-----
From: MGT2000@aol.com
To: ATPEACEWITHGOD1@aol.com
Sent: Wed, 23 May 2007 12:21 am
Subject: Order for ROCI-II

J. Pamela Ray,
Thank you very much for your order of the ROCI-II and its Manual. Attached please find camera-ready Word files for these documents. You are authorized to make up to 600 copies of the ROCI-II and one copy of the Manual for your research.
Good luck with your research.
Afzal Rahim
APPENDIX C: RECEIPT FOR PURCHASE OF SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Center for Advanced Studies in Management

1794 Mallory Court
Bowling Green, KY 42103-1560, USA
Phone & Fax: 706-300-2601
Email: mgj0006@csu.edu

Subject: Receipt for the purchase of NCP-11 Equipment and Manual

Date: 11/20/68

To: Name

Return

City

Phone

Fax

Total number of pages (including this page): 1

If you did not receive all the pages of this transaction or if you have any questions, please call the sender immediately.

From: Dr. Afez A. D. A.

Message:

Received with thanks $100.00 (two hundred dollars) for the NCP-11 equipment and its manual.
APPENDIX D: SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

Please complete the following information:

1. Race/National Origin: ___ Hispanic ___ White (non-Hispanic) ___ Other

2. Place an “X” to the left of the column that most further identifies your ethnicity/cultural background. Please write or type in any “Other”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other (please enter in column below)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>European</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto-Rican</td>
<td>Near Eastern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from) Spain</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central American</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
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<td>Republican</td>
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<td>South American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Gender: _____ Female _____ Male

4. Grade: ___________

5. Age: _____ under 25 _____ 25-34 _____ 35-44 _____ 45-54 _____ 55+

6. Supervisory Status: _____ Supervisor _____ Not a Supervisor __________

7. Are you familiar with mediation (even though you may not have participated in a session)? _____ Yes _____ No

8. Have you ever participated in a mediation session? _____ Yes _____ No

9. Have you ever participated in a mediation session to resolve a workplace dispute? _____ Yes _____ No

10. Would you be willing use mediation, if offered, as a way of resolving a workplace dispute? _____ Yes _____ No

11. If no, why not? Don’t know enough about it Doesn’t fit with how I would handle conflict Have tried it before and it didn’t work Other (please note reason)

12. I would like to receive a copy of my results. _____ Yes _____ No

Send results to: (insert email or mailing address).
APPENDIX E: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear [Redacted] employee:

I am a student at the University of Phoenix working on a doctoral degree in management. I am conducting a research study entitled: *Culture: Its Influence on Conflict-Handling Styles and Use of Mediation*. The purpose of the research study is to compare how two diverse cultural groups handle conflict within organizations and to determine if there is a relationship between their predominant conflict-handling style and their willingness to use mediation to resolve workplace disputes.

Your participation will involve the completion of the attached two-part survey instrument. The estimated time for completion should be no more than 15 minutes. I have received approval from the installation chain of command to contact you; however, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. The results of the research study may be published but your name will not be used and your results will be maintained in confidence. If you indicate in Part II of the survey form that you would like to receive your results, they will be forwarded to you.

In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you. The possible benefits of the research may be that it provides you with information on how you handle conflict. The research will also provide the Department of the Army and other organizational leaders with information on how different cultures within a diverse environment handle conflict and provide insight on the value of mediation as a conflict resolution tool. Prior to completing the survey, I ask that you indicate your consent to participate by typing your name, signing, or electronically signing in the area indicated on the survey instrument.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at (202) [Redacted]. You may also email me at: [Redacted]. If you choose to email me, please put RESEARCH STUDY in the subject line of your email. Also, if you choose to participate, please forward the completed instrument to [Redacted] and put RESEARCH STUDY in the subject line of your email.

Sincerely,

J. Pamela Ray
APPENDIX F: PERMISSION TO USE PREMISES

University of Phoenix
Informed Consent: Permission to Use Premises
(Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association)

Name of Facility: U.S. Army, Garrison,

J. Pamela Ray, a student at the University of Phoenix, has permission to conduct a study using participants from the U.S. Army Garrison. The purpose of the study will be to examine the conflict handling styles of Hispanic and White employees and determine if their methods of handling conflict influence the use of mediation as a process to resolve workplace disputes.

[Signature]
Approval Number

18/09/2007
Date