

In “Women’s Ways: The Impact of Workplace Status in the Organization on Women’s Management Styles,” Lynn Foster-Johnson and Martin N. Davidson examine the degree to which differences in women’s conflict styles can be attributed to status in the organization. The purpose of this study was to determine if there were differences in conflict management styles between female managers and nonmanagers that were due to job level or rank in the organization. First, the authors wanted to ascertain if there were differences in conflict management styles between female managers and nonmanagers that could be attributed to position in the organization. Second, they were interested in the correspondence of the conflict management styles of managers and nonmanagers to those commonly held gender-based expectations of conflict management styles. Third, the authors were interested in the relative differences in conflict management styles that might be due to age, level of education, and tenure with the company.

Differential use of competing strategies was clearly linked to organizational status, while status differences in the use of accommodation, collaboration, avoidance, and compromise were less strong. Managers and women with more education preferred to compete in conflict encounters, using avoidance and collaboration much less as a strategy to resolve conflicts. Older women, nonmanagers, and women with only a high school education used accommodating and compromising strategies to resolve conflicts, rather than competition.

In general, there were differences in conflict management styles that could be attributed to organizational status factors. The differences that emerged were in the predicted direction for the status of the woman. The actual topography of the conflict management styles corresponded closely to those variations that have historically been

commonly attributed to gender. Female managers in our sample tended to handle conflict with typically “masculine” methods, such as competing and collaborating while nonmanagers tended to employ “feminine” strategies, like accommodating and compromising. In addition, for some conflict management strategies, differences also emerged as a result of age. Women who were older than 55 years of age reported using accommodation strategies to manage conflict, while women 34 years and younger relied on avoidance strategies.

To request a copy of the full research paper, please contact Martin at <http://www.leveragingdifference.com/contact>