

**EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE ON VALUES, ATTITUDES AND
CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR**

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To shed light on the process by which effects of inconsistent or discrepant communication vary among and between class members.
2. To become more aware of the relationship between attitudes and behavior and understand our own reactions to conflict and ambiguity.
3. To sharpen our insights about the nature of the conflict between individual and organization.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Read the theoretical overview. Do not read further until all group and class members have met in open session on the exercise. It is necessary that all members participate in the exercise together.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Learning theorists maintain that an individual's cognitive structure (beliefs, attitudes, values and feelings) may be balanced or unbalanced. A cognitive (or affective) structure of attitude is balanced when it contains elements that "mesh" or "fit together." It is unbalanced when the elements are seen as "not being consistent with each other." In an unbalanced state, the individual will experience dissonance or tension and will seek to relieve the tension or imbalance. The psychological concept of cognitive consistency has been widely explored in numerous experimental contexts under studies dealing with attitude dissonance and consonance.

The exercise to be conducted here is designed to focus attention on differences in how you and other members respond to conflicts in organizational behavior. In so doing, you will be better prepared to assess the conflict between individual traits and organizational demands. Hopefully, by understanding your own reaction to conflict compared to that of other members,

you will gain much stronger insight into the many problems of coping with individual adjustment to organizational controls and change.

This exercise will focus on both reactions to conflict (i.e., mode of conflict resolution) and one's own behavioral orientation in organizations, as well as the relationship between them. For the best effect, it is necessary for members to proceed together.

PROCEDURE

Step 1. Fill out the "reaction to discrepant information" questionnaire.

Step 2. Complete the "cognitive temperament" questionnaire by estimating where your attitude is along the continua for "specificity-generality" and "reaction-reflection." Write A for attitude at the appropriate point on the continuum.

Step 3. Place an S (structure) on the "context continuum" at a point representing what kind of an organization setting you prefer to be in (closed-open).

REACTION TO DISCREPANT INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read each statement and check only one answer that best applies in the box at the left. (These may appear somewhat awkward; however, remember there are no "right" or "wrong" answers--only your experience. Work quickly.)

1. Those persons having qualities of energy and initiative are more passive and dependent than those who do not.
 - a. Qualities of energy and initiative result in being more active and independent.
 - b. This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.
 - c. That is not true.
 - d. Qualities of energy and initiative do not result in being passive and dependent.
 - e. This happens when persons are inappropriately suited to job requirements.

2. Individuals who accurately understand others as well as themselves are less sensitive and flexible in job relations than those who do not.

- a. That is not true.
- b. Qualities of understanding yourself and others do not result in being less sensitive and flexible.
- c. Qualities of understanding yourself and others results in being more sensitive and flexible.
- d. This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements.
- e. This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.

3. Persons having versatile skills and talents are more rigid and limited in the ways they act than those who do not.

- a. This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements.
- b. This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.
- c. Qualities of versatility and talent do not result in being more rigid and limited.
- d. That is not true.
- e. Qualities of versatility and talent result in being less rigid and limited.

4. Individuals having broad interests and experiences are more technical in their jobs and narrowly specialized in the organization than those who do not.

- a. This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements.
- b. Qualities of broad interests and experiences result in being less technical and narrowly specialized in organization jobs.
- c. This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.
- d. Qualities of broad interests and experiences do not result in being technical and narrowly specialized in organization jobs.
- e. That is not true.

5. Persons having a long time perspective in planning their work are more pressured to make rapid decisions and take immediate action than those who do not.

- a. This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.
- b. This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements.
- c. Qualities of long time perspective result in being less pressured to make rapid decisions and take immediate action.
- d. That is not true.
- e. Qualities of long time perspective do not result in more pressure to make rapid decisions and take immediate action.

6. Individuals having high level needs for achievement occupy lower level jobs in the organization than those who do not.

- a. Those having high level needs for achievement occupy higher level jobs in the organization.
- b. That is not true.
- c. This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.
- d. This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements.
- e. Those having high level needs for achievement do not occupy lower level jobs in the organization.

7. Persons having a keen awareness of their own high capabilities and potential, exercise stronger self-determination and control over their actions than those who do not.

- a. This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements.
- b. Those having keen awareness of their own high capabilities and potential, exercise weaker self-determination and control over their actions.
- c. This is possible; the notion needs no qualification or specification of circumstances.
- d. That is not true.
- e. Those having keen awareness of their own high capabilities and potential do not exercise strong self-determination and control.

COGNITIVE TEMPERAMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Read the definitions of responses for the "generality-specificity" and "reaction-reflection" dimensions and then, on the scales below estimate where your attitude lies. Write A for attitude at that point.

generality

specificity



When confronted with ambiguity and incongruity, I try to ignore discrepancies and indistinguishable details by simplifying problems and fitting them into previous experience and familiar frames of reference.

When confronted with ambiguity and incongruity, I try to pay a great deal of attention to the details of difficulty by actively seeking to clarify problems and fitting them into new and distinctive experiences and frames of reference.

reaction

reflection



When confronted with ambiguity and incongruity, I try to reduce the pressure by searching for immediate results and reach decisions quickly on the basis of information available.

When confronted with ambiguity and incongruity, I try to reduce the pressure by working around the requirement for immediate results and defer decisions until information available is sufficient to support them.

Context Questionnaire

Instructions: Read the definition of responses for the "context continuum" dimension and then, on the scale below estimate where your preference lies. Write S for structure at that point.

closed

open



When confronted with an opportunity to select between well-defined, well-structured problems and ill-defined, ill-structured problems, I prefer those that are well-defined and well-structured.

When confronted with an opportunity to select between well-defined, well-structured problems and ill-defined, ill-structured problems, I prefer those that are ill-structured and ill-defined.

Step 4. Score the "Reaction to Discrepant Information" Questionnaire as follows.

Question (1)	Question (2)	Question (3)	Question (4)	Question (5)	Question (6)	Question (7)
3 for a.	1 for a.	4 for a.	4 for a.	5 for a.	3 for a.	4 for a.
5 for b.	2 for b.	5 for b.	3 for b.	4 for b.	1 for b.	3 for b.
1 for c.	3 for c.	2 for c.	5 for c.	3 for c.	5 for c.	5 for c.
2 for d.	4 for d.	1 for d.	2 for d.	1 for d.	4 for d.	1 for d.
4 for e.	5 for e.	3 for e.	1 for e.	2 for e.	2 for e.	2 for e.

Write R (for mode of resolution) at the point on the evaluation scale represented by your total score. Total score for reaction to discrepant information:

- 7 Reject the assertion, e.g., "That is not true."
- 14 Discredit the assertion, e.g., "Qualities of understanding yourself and others do not result in being less sensitive and flexible."
- 21 Refute the assertion, e.g., "Qualities of understanding yourself and others result in being more sensitive and flexible."
- 28 Reinterpret the assertion, e.g., "This happens when individuals are inappropriately suited to job requirements."

35 Tolerate the assertion, e.g., “This is possible; however, the notion needs more qualification and specification of circumstances.”

Score interpretations based on second question of Discrepant Information Questionnaire and total is based on all seven questions.

Step 5. Mark all of your responses to the “discrepant information,” “cognitive temperament,” and “context continuum” on the scales below.

Total score for Reaction to Discrepant Information				
Reject	Discredit	Refute	Reinterpret	Tolerate
Cognitive Temperament Scales				
Generality			Specificity	
Reactive			Reflective	
"Context Continuum"				
Closed			Open	

Compare S (preferred structure), A (for cognitive attitudes of style) , and R (for mode of resolution to cognitive conflict). Discuss the results in groups and with the total class.

a. Identify specific organizational experiences (your experience with conflict situations in organizations) that may have influenced your S (preference for structure), A (attitude for “specificity-generality” and “reaction-reflection”), and R (mode of resolution) scores. What is your individual pattern of response along these dimensions? Explain.

b. Is there a general pattern for your group as a whole? For example, is the R (mode of resolution score) typically to the left of A (attitudes) and S (structure) scores?

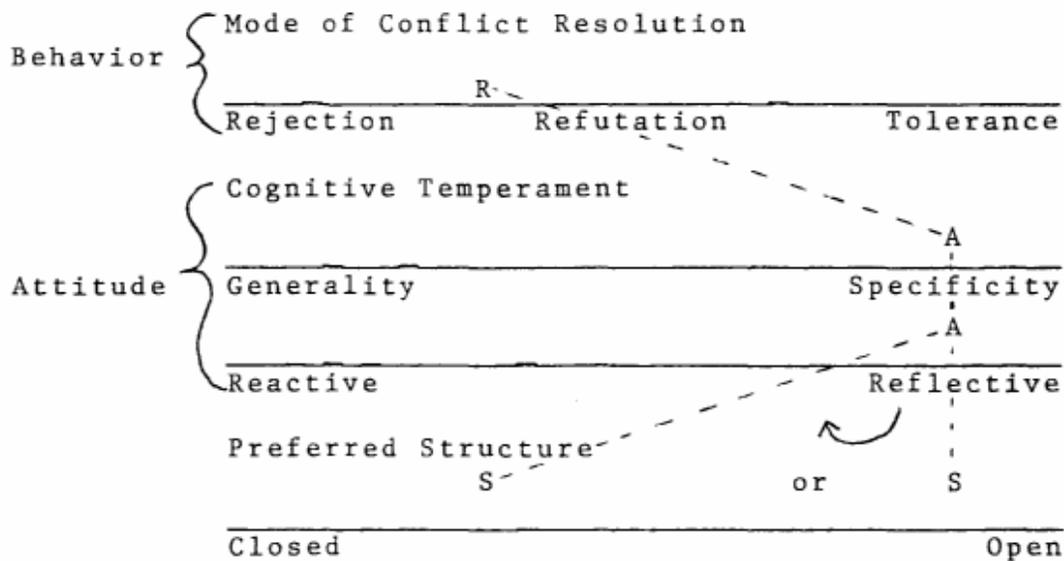
c. Note that assertion no. 7 of the “Discrepant Information Questionnaire” is different from assertions 1-6. Do group members have similar responses to no. 7 and differ for assertions 1-6? What factors might account for the results?

New Horizons in Simulation Games and Experiential Learning, Volume 4, 1977

- d. Discuss specific examples of organizational situations that you have observed where expressed preferences for structure (S) and attitudes (A's) seemed to differ from actual modes of conflict resolution (R). To what do you attribute these differences?
- e. Identify and evaluate the forces in an organization that may make it difficult for us to translate our professed attitudes and preferences into actual behavior.

DISCUSSION

Did your results on the questionnaires fit one of the general patterns here?



What specific pattern did you obtain and what might account for the results? Numerous possible interpretations arise and several criticisms are apparent in evaluating this exercise.