

In the review of, "Eye to Eye", we have a case study that could benefit from applied system theory. There are three pragmatic inquiries from the Wilmot-Hocker Conflict Assessment Guide that will be used in this assessment: The Nature of the Conflict, The Styles, and Negotiation. In brief, our case study is about newlyweds, Enrique and Monica, squabbling over domestic issues. The conflict spirals out of control and becomes a textbook example of what poor communication leads to. Let us take a closer look.

Analyzing the nature of the conflict, we see Monica becoming the catalyst right away by proclaiming, "I have a real craving for pizza tonight. Or maybe we could go to the movies. Or maybe both!" (Davis, p. 1). This asserting statement was the trigger for the onset of the conflict. If we look at the ongoing relationship between Enrique and Monica, it is easy to discern that Enrique is the man of the household, and Monica is the woman of the house – in the way that their gender dictates their assigned roles in the house. This is important, because you can see as the conflict escalates, Enrique steers clear of household chores, whereas Monica begins washing dishes. Enrique even states at one point, "Ok, ok. I'll go see Jack for a while, while you clean the house" (Davis, p. 3). Enrique's goals are relaxing and not helping with the house chores. Monica's goals are completing the household chores (with Enrique's help), and then getting to spend some time with her new husband. In comparing Enrique's goals with Monica's goals, we realize they are incompatible. Rather than either one of them offering solutions, both Enrique and Monica have put up barriers and are both contributing factors in the intensifying argument.

Reviewing the style involved in this conflict, you have what Wilmot-Hocker say is "Conflict-habituated relationships, which conflict recurs constantly but has little productive effect; the fighters "don't get anywhere" (Wilmot-Hocker, 1998, p. 223). The predominant style of conflict that Enrique and Monica are involved in for most of the conflict is processing. It is processing because Enrique and Monica have negative, internal dialogue that is fueling the verbal part of the conflict. You can witness this processing when Monica remembers her own parents and their fights about housework , "...and how they would always just jump into battle and 'bite each other's head off (Davis, p.1). Enrique has his own internal processing going on with, "What's wrong with her—doesn't she see how much I'm

trying, how hard I'm working?" (Davis, p. 2-3). The internal, biased dialogues are the number one contributing factor in the conflict between Enrique and Monica. If we look at their conflict strategies, Enrique views Monica's strategy as trying to control him or nag him into helping do housework. Monica views Enrique's strategy as trying to escape chores and perhaps even not spend time with her. From an external perspective, it is obvious that Enrique and Monica are sabotaging their relationship by not collaborating with one another.

If we look at negotiation, there are no real negotiations. Monica is making one-sided suggestions and Enrique is basically a wall. Enrique does not want to be bothered by house chores or other wife requests. Monica does not want to accept "no" for an answer when it comes to Enrique not helping. The conflict eventually ends with lots of yelling and Enrique walking out. Enrique and Monica are not able to reach an agreement.

Enrique and Monica failed to resolve their conflict in the end. Poor communication, negative internal dialogue (based upon their own perceptions of gender roles), and the lack of a collaborative, household effort, all led to a failed conflict resolution.

References:

Wilmot W.W. and Hocker, J.L. (2011) *Interpersonal Conflict*, 8th Ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Davis, Deborah (n.d.). "Eye to Eye" Retrieved on 05/07/2012, from <http://kucourses.com>.

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