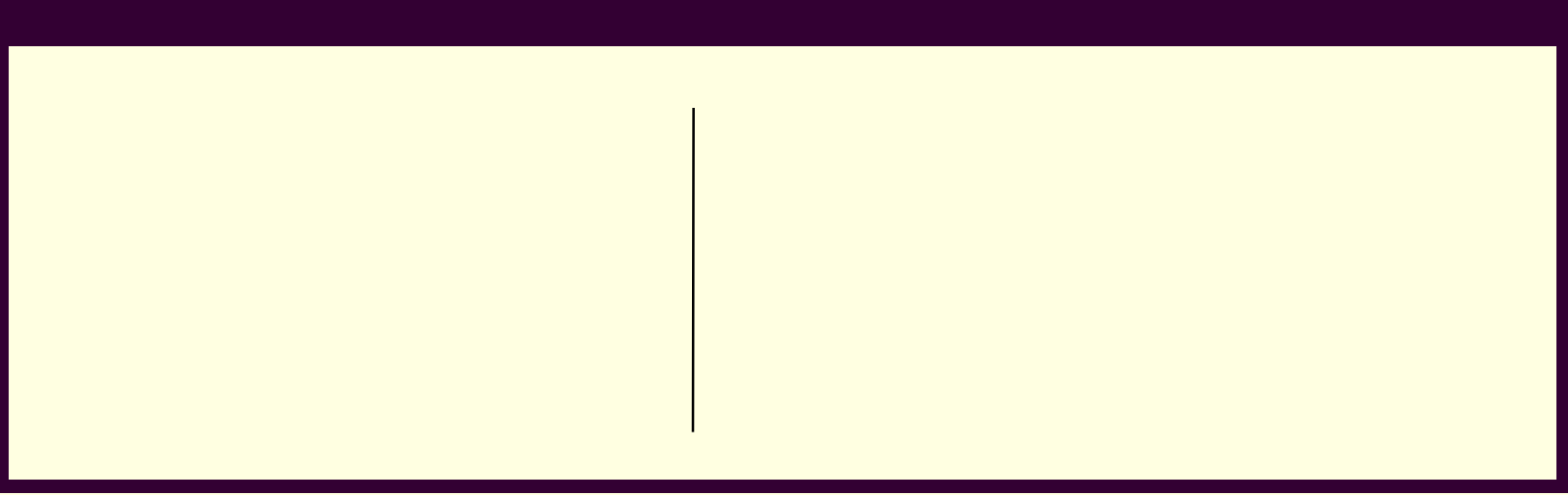


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# A Quantitative Study of Leadership and Conflict Management Techniques used by Human Resource Employees

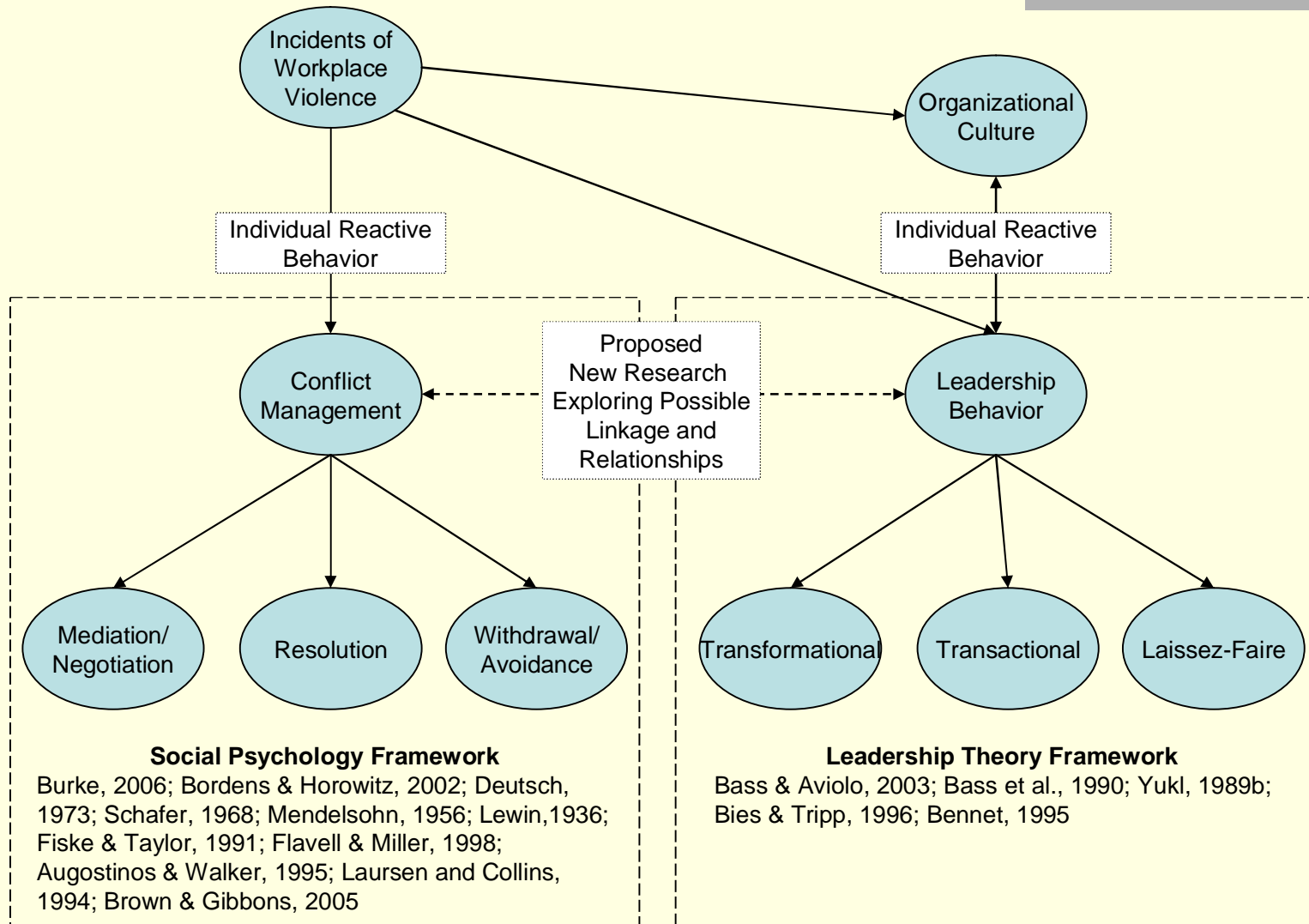


# Problem Statement

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- n Workplace violence is a critical issue facing leaders today and costs organizations in the United States an estimated \$4 billion every year (Deborah, 2002)
- n The problem the study addressed was the need to understand the relationship between leadership style and conflict management techniques human resource employees use in response to workplace violence
- n Limited attention and published research exist in the area of workplace violence in relation to conflict management (Porteous, 2002; Vega & Comer, 2005)
- n Leadership development in human resources has been identified as one of the most important issues in the field (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004)

# Support for Problem Statement



# Support for Problem Statement

continued

- n Ringstad (2005) first used the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale 2 (Straus et al., 1996) to gather data from social workers about workplace violence and conflict management techniques
  - n CTS2 developed to use with other instruments and variables
  - n 85.5% (n=880) of sample experienced workplace violence in the last 12 months
- n Data regarding the leadership behavior and conflict management techniques of human resource employees have not been published
- n Social psychology provides the basis for the research study and includes the perceptions and behavior of human resource employees in relation to violence, aggression, and conflict management

# Definition of Terms

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## n Conflict Management

- n Kemp and Fry (2004) defined as using values to promote nonviolent behavior; avoidance of violence; promoting self-restraint and self-control; using processes for reaching consensus and minimizing hard feelings

## n Leadership

- n The exercise of non-coercive influence, such as interpersonal influence and collective effort, to coordinate the members of an organized group to accomplishing the group's objectives (Barrow, 1977; Jago, 1982)

# Definition of Terms

continued

## n Workplace Violence

- n The attempted, threatened, or actual conduct of a person who endangers or is likely to endanger the health and safety of a worker, including any threatening statement, harassment, or behavior that gives a worker reasonable cause to believe the worker's health and safety is at risk (Nova Scotia Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Council, 1995)

# Significance of Study

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- n Internal incidents of workplace violence in an organization are sometimes predictable and preventable (Bergin & Westwood, 2003; Mayhew, 2000)
- n Bachman (1994) interpreted annual data from the National Crime Victimization Study in the United States and discovered, “approximately half a million workers lost 1.75 million days of work annually and victims lost more than \$55 million in wages” (p.5)

# Significance of Study

continued

- n The study is significant at the organizational and academic levels
  - n At the organizational level, the data provides human resource employees with information to implement training programs to increase safety in the workplace
    - n Verbal assault rates
    - n Rate of victimization
  - n At an academic level, the data adds to the body of knowledge and creates new opportunities
    - n Theory development
    - n Focused future research



# Research Question

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- n What is the degree, if any, whereby leadership style relates to conflict management used by human resource employees in response to incidents of abusive behavior (psychological aggression and physical assault) and physical forms of abuse (injury)?

# Hypotheses

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- n Null hypothesis *H10* - leadership style, as reported by human resource employees, is not related to a type of workplace violence experienced.
  - n Alternative hypothesis *H1A* - leadership style, as reported by human resource employees, is related to a type of workplace violence experienced.
- n Null hypothesis *H20* - leadership style, as reported by human resource employees, is not related to a conflict management strategy used in response to incidents of workplace violence.
  - n Alternative hypothesis *H2A* - leadership style, as reported by human resource employees, is related to a conflict management strategy used in response to incidents of workplace violence.

# Hypotheses

continued

- n Null hypothesis *H30* - the conflict management strategy used, as reported by human resource employees, is not related to a type of workplace violence experienced.
- n Alternative hypothesis *H3A* - the conflict management strategy used, as reported by human resource employees, is related to a type of workplace violence experienced.

# Fundamental Theories



# Methodology

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- n Quantitative, predictive, correlational study measured the potential relationships between leadership style and conflict management techniques of human resource employees in response to incidents of workplace violence
- n Combined Survey Tools Used for Questionnaire
  - n Revised Conflict Tactics Resolution Scales 2 (CTS2) (Straus et al., 1996)
    - n Measures workplace violence and conflict management such as negotiation, accommodating, collaborating, compromising
  - n Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), Second Edition, Form 5x-Short (Avolio & Bass, 2002)

# Limitations

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- n The study used random sampling increasing the ability to generalize the findings (Creswell, 2005) and the study was limited to the level of honesty from respondents
- n Validity of the study was also limited to the reliability of the instruments used
- n The use of human resource employees may limit the ability to generalize the findings
- n Under-reporting of violent events may occur (Erickson & Williams-Evans, 2000)

# Delimitations

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- n Research focused on workplace violence, conflict management, and leadership variables only
- n Survey tools widely tested; valid and reliable
- n Sample frame representative of wide range of human resource employees
- n Sample frame had reliable and accessible contact information for members

# Population Under Investigation

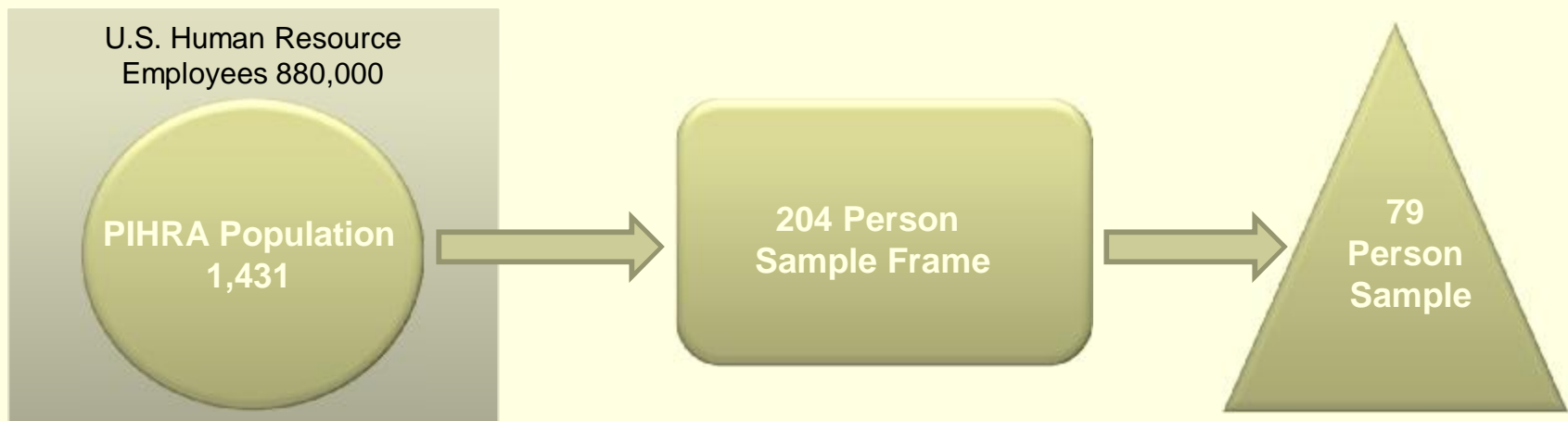
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- n The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) reported 880,000 employees in the field of human resources in 2004
- n The sample frame of 204 people for the study was obtained from the total population of 1,431 members of the Professionals in Human Resources Association (PIHRA)
- n PIHRA is the largest California chapter of the Society of Human Resource Managers
  - § Southern California geographic location only
  - § Reliable membership database renewed annually



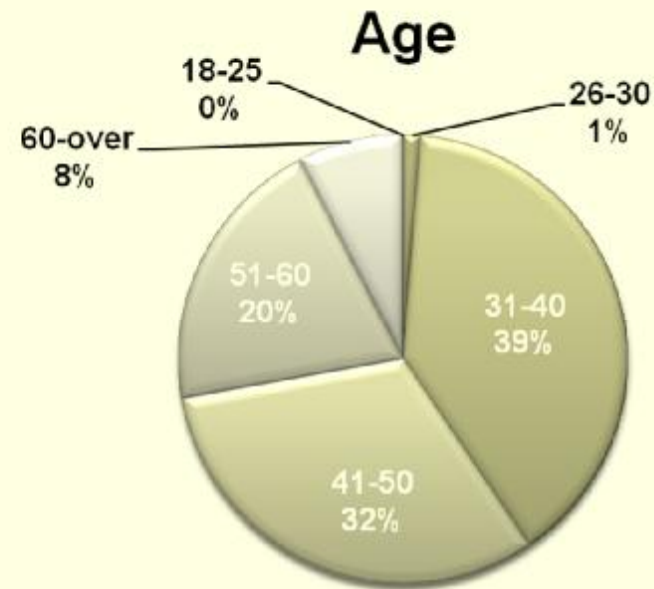
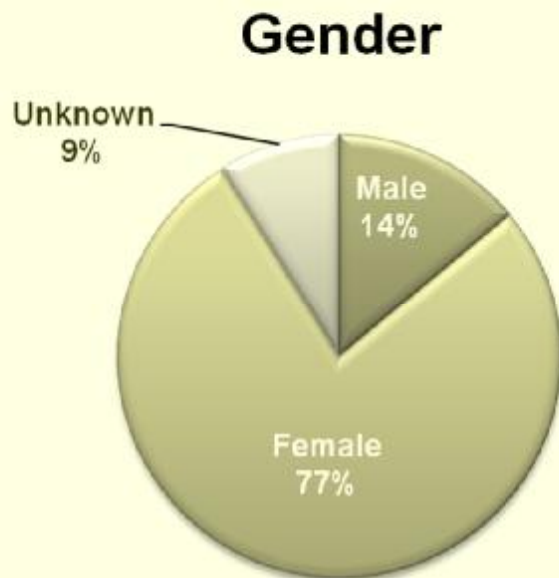
# Sample

- n 79 valid surveys were returned for analysis in the sample, a 38.7% rate of return



# Demographic Findings

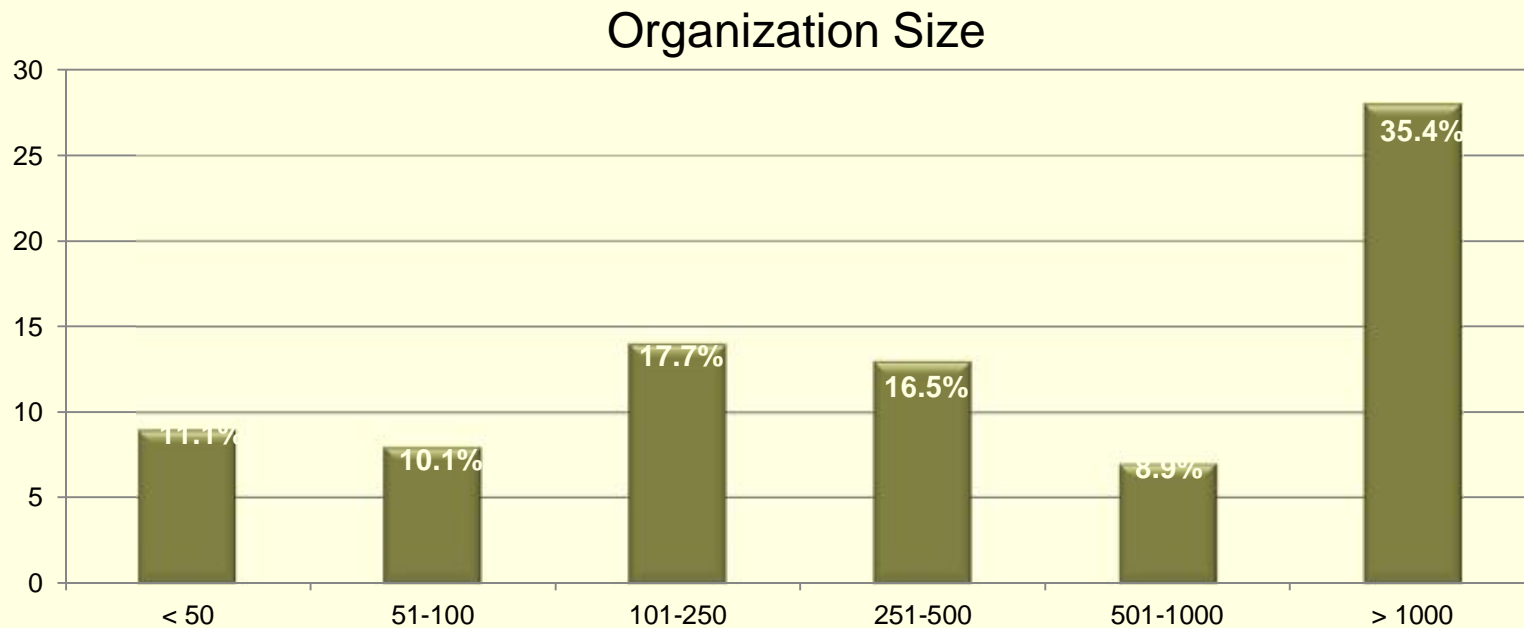
- Demographic characteristics indicate the sample was predominantly female (77.2%, n=61) between the ages of 31-40 (39.2%, n=31) with most being highly educated and having a 4-Year College Degree or higher (78.5%, n=62)



# Demographic Findings

continued

- n A majority of respondents had
  - § A supervisory role (74.7%, n=59)
  - § More than 26 years of work experience (32.9%, n=26)
  - § 11-15 years of human resources experience (30.4%, n=24)
- n A majority of respondents worked in an organization with more than 1000 employees (35.4%, n=28)



# Results

- n Cronbach's Alpha for the combined surveys were .85 and reflected an acceptable level of internal consistency
- n Nearly 1 in 2, or 43% (n=34) of respondents were victims of workplace violence during the last 12 months experiencing psychological assault, psychological aggression, or physical assault
- n No major injuries were sustained by respondents. When a minor injury occurred, the respondent rarely needed to seek the medical attention of a doctor ( $M = .13$ , or *much less than once in the last 12 months*)
- n The most common form of physical assault was being grabbed ( $M = .34$ , or *less than once in the last 12 months*) followed having something thrown at them ( $M = .18$ , or *less than once in the last 12 months*)

# Results

continued

- n The most commonly reported acts of psychological aggression were products of verbal assaults such as being swore at ( $M = 1.99$ , or *nearly twice in the last 12 months*) or yelled at ( $M = 1.73$ , or *nearly twice in the last 12 months*)
- n Most of the incidents derived from conflict resulted in the employee ( $M = 1.31$ , or *more than once in the last 12 months*) and not the respondent ( $M = 0.80$ , or *less than once in the last 12 months*) stomping out of the room
- n Respondents scored in the mid-range for showing a coworker they cared ( $M = 3.81$ , or *3 to 5 times in the last 12 months*)
- n Showing respect for a coworker during a disagreement scored the highest ( $M = 4.23$ , or *6 to 10 times in the last 12 months*)

# Results

continued

- n Agreeing to try a solution to a problem averaged more than twice in the last year ( $M = 2.18$ ) whereas suggesting a compromise to a disagreement occurred three to five times in the last 12 months ( $M = 3.44$ )
- n A conflict may have persisted once identified which was indicated by a low frequency of respondents who were sure a problem could be worked out ( $M = 1.72$ , or *more than once in the last 12 months*)
- n Most respondents were scored as having a predominantly transformational leadership style ( $M = 3.05$ ) followed by transactional ( $M = 1.98$ ) and laissez-faire ( $M = 0.67$ )

# Results

continued

- n Correlation analysis completed on variables
- n A slight positive correlation was found between:
  - § *Negotiation and Transactional Leadership Style*  
( $r = .11, p = .00$ )
  - § *Negotiation and Physical Assault-Major*  
( $r = .07, p = .03$ )
  - § *Psychological Aggression and Transactional Leadership Style*  
( $r = .07, p = .04$ )
- n A slight negative correlation was found between:
  - § *Negotiation and Injury* ( $r = -.10, p < .01$ )
  - § *Negotiation and Physical Assault-Minor*  
( $r = -.13, p < .01$ )

Variable	1a	1b	1c	2	3	4a	4b	5
1a. Leadership Style: Transformational	–	.06	-.08	.05	-.01	.04	.01	-.00
1b. Leadership Style: Transactional		–	.04	-.02	.11**	-.02	.00	.07*
1c. Leadership Style: Laissez- Faire			–	a.	.06	.02	-.05	-.02
2. Injury				–	-.10**	-.01	-.01	-.03
3. Negotiation					–	.07*	-.13**	.04
4a. Physical Assault: Major						–	-.01	-.01
4b. Physical Assault: Minor							–	.01
5. Psychological Aggression								–

Note. N=79; \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; a. one of the variables was a constant



# Hypotheses Testing

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- n Multiple regression analysis revealed Leadership Style was not a significant predictor of the Workplace Violence experienced
  - § The results suggested the null hypothesis ( $H_{1_0}$ ) failed to be rejected and there was no support for the alternative hypothesis ( $H_{1_A}$ )
- n Multiple regression analysis revealed that Leadership Style was not a significant predictor of the Conflict Management
  - § The results suggested the null hypothesis ( $H_{2_0}$ ) failed to be rejected and there was no support for the alternative hypothesis ( $H_{2_A}$ )

# Hypotheses Testing

continued

- n Multiple regression analysis revealed Conflict Management was a weak, yet significant predictor of Workplace Violence, yet accounted for only 4% of the variance in the violence experience reported ( $R^2 = .04$ ;  $p = .00$ )
- n Injury ( $b = -.11$ ,  $p = .00$ ) and Physical Assault-Minor ( $b = -.13$ ,  $p = .00$ ) demonstrated significant effects on Negotiation
  - § The results suggested the null hypothesis ( $H_{3_0}$ ) was rejected
  - § There was support for the alternative hypothesis ( $H_{3_A}$ )

# Conclusion of Data

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## n Added to Literature

- § Nearly half of respondents experienced an act of workplace violence in the last 12 months
- § Self-reported leadership style was not a predictor of workplace violence experienced
- § Self-reported leadership style was not a predictor of conflict management technique selected in a given situation
- § Conflict management technique selected was a slight, yet significant predictor of workplace violence, however only accounted for a 4% variance in the violence reported

# Conclusion of Data

continued

## n Further in Question

- § The nature of the violence sustained by a respondent or the ultimate resolution
  - Ongoing or single incident?
  - Aggressor terminated, reassigned, quit?
- § Conflict management techniques that explain the 4% variance in the violence reported
- § How other range of leadership behaviors might influence conflict management and violence
- § Violence outside of work? Domestic violence?

# Recommendations

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- n CTS2 was limited in its ability to measure the full range of conflict management techniques available in the workplace as evidence by third hypothesis testing
  - § Investigate other violence and conflict instruments
- n Rate of return was low; consider future surveys using a higher sample frame and also consider using e-mail or web based surveys to increase rate of return
- n MLQ measured a range of three primary leadership behaviors; consider using a different leadership instrument

# Recommendations

continued

- n Additional qualitative, phenomenological approaches in regard to conflict management could assist in the development of a conflict management theory or strategy
- n Experiences of other employees related to workplace violence could be gathered and analyzed replicating current methodology
  - § Geographic expansion across the U.S.
  - § Longitudinal data gathering and analysis
- n Broader investigation of conflict resolution techniques encompassing different behaviors

# Questions?

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