INTEGRATING THEORY AND EXPERIENCE ESSAY
INTERGROUP BEHAVIOR

Chapter 9 covers Intergroup Behavior, Negotiation, and Team Building. One section is titled Why Intergroup Conflict Occurs and in this section the author discusses work interdependence. Work interdependence occurs when 2 or more groups in an organization depend on another to complete their tasks. One type of this is called sequential interdependence. In sequential interdependence, one group must complete their task before another group can begin or complete their tasks, therefore in a sequential fashion. This type of interdependence can cause a great deal of conflict between the groups. In order to avoid conflict between the groups, management must plan effectively. Each groups activities must coordinate and this is achieved through complex procedures that clearly and tightly specify the roles and responsibilities of each unit member. A football team is said to possess sequential interdependence because each group, offense, defense, and special teams, operate individually but one group requires that the other performs and moves off of the field before another group can begin.

A good part of my position at work involves this type of sequential interdependence. Every summer, my department prepares property budgets for approximately 250 shopping centers for the following year. The budget is split up into two parts, the expense side and the income side. My department budgets the income and completes the final budget package to be reviewed by the officers. We have a strict deadline of August 31 every year. The expense side of the budget is completed by another department, Property Management. My department can not start the income side until the property manager submits the expense side to us. The conflict comes in when the property managers miss their deadlines, which narrows the amount of time I have to complete the budget with a deadline that absolutely does not get missed. Some of the conflict occurs because my department is all centrally located in Jacksonville, but the property managers are located in offices across the United States. Conflict also occurred due to the lack
of managing the sequential interdependence. As I mentioned above, in order to achieve coordination, management must plan effectively and have a set of procedures that define everyone’s job responsibilities. For the first time this past budget season, the property managers were penalized when their expenses were not to their accountant on time. Also a set of clear procedures were developed and each department now knows the other’s department’s responsibilities.