

THE PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION ABOUT CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES

by

Pauline Bary Khan

Bachelor of Science
University of Michigan, 1990

Master of Science
University of Michigan, 1997

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

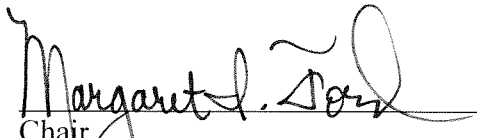
For the Degree of Doctor of Education in

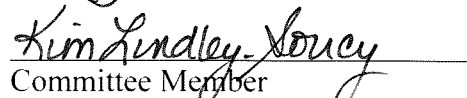
Educational Leadership

School of Education


Southern New Hampshire University


2019


Chair
Margaret I. Ford, Ph.D.


Committee Member
Kim Lindley-Soucy, Ed.D.


Committee Member
Richard Ayers, Ed.D.


External Reader
Megan Paddack, Ph.D.


Executive Director
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership

©2019
Pauline Bary Khan
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Conflict, and the methods by which conflict is handled in organizations, may lead to obstacles when solving problems or may contribute to constructive feedback and progress. In a higher education organization, interpersonal conflicts exist among faculty members, staff, and administrators. These conflicts may occur due to a variety of reasons, including differences in work ideology, decisions, tasks, and resource allocation. Often, department administrators are charged with handling their own conflicts as well as handling and managing interpersonal conflicts between others. Therefore, it is vital for department leaders to understand conflict management and the different conflict handling styles. This study uses qualitative methodologies to examine how administrators in higher education perceive conflict handling within their organization. The results include seven primary themes about how administrators describe and develop conflict handling styles. Three major conclusions are presented in this research. First, higher education administrators would benefit from more formal training about how to handle conflicts. A second conclusion that was reached from the data in this study is that a chosen conflict style is dependent on the perceived situation. A third conclusion that was identified from this research is that emotional conflicts can result in unresolved conflicts that can negatively impact the culture of a department for a long period of time.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughters, Aliya and Ariana, and my niece and nephews, Karina, Armaan and Mikhaal, and all future generations who can discover truths and, as a result, institute meaningful change in society in order to maintain respect and to continue to cultivate the hope and the promise of liberty and prosperity to all of mankind.

Acknowledgements

A person cannot be complete without others. I owe so much to so many others for what I have gained in perspective, understanding and knowledge.

I am so very grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work with during this time in my life. Dr. Ford, Dr. Lindley-Soucy and Dr. Ayers, my Dissertation Committee. These esteemed faculty members have provided me with such caring, professional guidance and have taught me significantly about thoughtful inquiry and research. Thank you for your unyielding support and encouragement. I would especially like to thank my cohort members, Bernadette, Karen, Roy, Christine, Kathleen, Sydney and Anita for their unbounded enthusiasm and cheer during each step of this marvelous trek.

My dear husband, Farris, and my two loving daughters, Aliya and Ariana, never doubted that I could reach my goals and allow me to dance, no matter how embarrassing, in my own way. They are my life.

I realize more and more how much sacrifice my parents, Mohammad Rafiqul and Sufia Bary have made to leave a war-torn country and to establish themselves in a country with hope so that our family could experience education in the highest form. They created a foundation for me and my sister and encouraged ethics, compassion, openness, creativity, endurance and adventure. Thank you, love you, thank you.

My sister, Pamela, who has rarely met the day without laughter and love. She has provided so much kindness and sheer joy by letting me share her family, Armaan, Karina, Mikhaal and Khurum.

Both my father-in-law, Mohammed Hossain and mother-in-law, Hasina, have always shown so much support. They even were brave enough to allow me to borrow their car to attend a summer residency.

One cannot be whole, be challenged, be reflective or be charitable without relationships, emotion and grace, therefore, by being provided with the opportunity to unite sentiment and passion with awareness with my family and companions, in the best way that one can, I feel, I have never felt alone.

Table of Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>ix</i>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	10
Statement of the Problem	10
Conceptual Frameworks	14
Research Questions	20
Significance of the Problem	21
General Procedure	22
Study Limitations	23
Definition of Key Terms	24
Summary	27
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	29
Introduction	29
Conclusion	51
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	52
Introduction	52
Research Design	52
Research Questions	60
The Sample	60
Methodology	61
Interview Protocols, Questionnaires, Document Analysis	63
Plan for Analysis of Data	73
Summary	75
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	76
Introduction	76
Research Findings	79
Summary of the Results	103
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	105
Introduction	105
Discussion about the Findings	105

Study Limitations	120
Conclusions	120
Future Work	121
<i>References</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Appendix A</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>Appendix B</i>	<i>141</i>
<i>Appendix C</i>	<i>143</i>
<i>Appendix D</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Appendix E</i>	<i>152</i>
<i>Appendix F</i>	<i>157</i>
<i>Appendix G</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Appendix H</i>	<i>160</i>

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Comparison chart of conceptual models related to Conflict Handling.....	15
Table 4.1 Demographic Data from Online Questionnaire about Conflict Handling Styles of Administrators in Higher Education.....	78
Table 4.2 Online questionnaire responses from Administrator in Higher Education about how they Characterize the different types of Disagreements that they have Experienced.....	81
Table 4.3 Higher Education Administrators reported that some of the types of Conflicts that they Handle stem from Faculty from Subgroups within their Departments.....	84
Table 4.4 Integrate, Compromise and Bring Concerns Out in the Open are the most selected responses about how Higher Education Administrators Describe their Method of Handling Conflicts.....	86
Table 4.5 Collaborating/Integrating shown as the most frequently selected method of Handling Conflict by Higher Education Administrators who responded to the Online Questionnaire.....	87
Table 4.6 Collaborating/Integrating, Compromising and Listening are how Higher Education Administrators who were Interviewed Describe their Conflict Handling Style.....	92
Table 4.7 Higher Education Administrator Responses to Vignette Case Studies.....	94
Table 4.8a Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses to the Question about how they Develop their Conflict Handling Style by Observing Others and by Self-Teaching.....	95
Table 4.8b Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses to the Question about how they Develop their Conflict Handling Style by Having Discussions with Peers or Mentors.....	96
Table 4.9a Higher Education Administrator Responses to Open-ended	

Questions on Survey and Interview Questions Stating that Task Conflict is Related to Resource.....	98
Table 4.9b Higher Education Administrator Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey and Interview Questions Stating that Task Conflict is Related to Processes.....	99
Table 4.9c Higher Education Administrator Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey and Interview Questions Stating that Task Conflict is Related to Department Goals.....	99
Table 4.10 Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses and Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey to the Question about how they Describe Emotional Conflict.....	100

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Rahim's Conceptual Model.....	17
Figure 2.1 Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid.....	46
Figure 2.2 Thomas-Kilmann Model.....	47

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a natural phenomenon in organizations and is a formulaic term that is often accepted without recognition of the inference it creates to either inhibit or align purpose, civility, and productivity. Conflict, when handled respectfully between participants with divergent viewpoints, may lead to constructive decision-making, more creative solutions, and reinforced shared purpose. The way in which conflict is handled can deeply impact the course of an individual's relationships and their decision-making. If an individual can identify her or his conflict handling style, more constructive paths toward the development of collaborative relationships and measured decision-making may occur.

Conflict, and the methods by which conflict is handled in organizations, may lead to obstacles when solving problems or may contribute to constructive feedback and progress. When two or more parties interact or engage over their differences, conflict may occur. Conflict within organizations may be initiated by differences in values, beliefs, or interests and occur between individuals and between groups (D. Booth, 1982; Jones & White, 1985). Misunderstandings stemming from false assumptions or miscommunications made by parties when they engage may contribute to conflict as well.

Statement of the Problem

Interpersonal conflicts arise when there is a disagreement between two or more organizational members working in the same or different hierarchical levels or units. Interpersonal conflict may occur between two individuals or two groups of individuals. The cause of the conflict may be differences in communication and behavioral styles, as

well as from an incompatibility of values, goals, interests, ideas, or resources (D. Booth, 1982; Jones & White, 1985). Within organizations, interpersonal conflict can either hinder progress and cause dysfunction, or lead to productive problem solving, heightened creativity, sounder decisions, and mutual respect. Rahim (2001) identified various dysfunctional outcomes of conflict as job stress, burnout, dissatisfaction, ineffective communication, the development of a distrustful climate, damaged relationships, poor job performance, an increased resistance to change, and decreased organization commitment and loyalty (p. 7).

Organizational conflict has been studied for many decades, and, in the 1960s, Pondy developed a process model of conflict that illustrates that it has many stages. Pondy (1969) asserts that conflict can also encourage constructive change by encouraging a critical review of past actions, effective communication, consideration for more equitable resource allocation, and standardization of procedures for resolving conflict (p. 502). Positive outcomes, such as critical reflection, more creativity, thoughtful decision-making, and collaboration are also possible when conflict situations occur. Tjosvold (2008) argued that the cooperative management of conflict has benefits for individuals, such as understanding issues, developing quality solutions, and strengthening relationships. By stimulating conflict, individuals may experience more creativity and better performance (Dreu & Vliert, 1997). Rahim (2002) states that conflict is constructive when it improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovation, encourages interest and curiosity among group members, provides the medium through which problems can be aired and tensions released, and fosters an environment of self-evaluation and change.

In a higher education organization, interpersonal conflicts exist among faculty members, staff, and administrators. These conflicts may occur due to a variety of reasons, including differences in work ideology, decisions, tasks, and resource allocation. Often, department administrators or chairpersons are charged with handling their own conflicts as well as handling and managing interpersonal conflicts between others. According to Stanley and Algert (2007), leaders spend more than 40% of their time managing conflict. Research from Aziz et al. (2005) suggests that the most important training related to faculty issues that department chairs need is to reduce, resolve, and prevent conflict among faculty.

Academic administrators, or department heads, have complex roles, which may include pedagogy, research, curriculum, faculty and student administration, and leadership (Aziz et al, 2005). As a manager and leader, academic administrators have important responsibilities to manage and lead faculty and staff by identifying goals, offering guidance, and managing conflicts. The department head is perhaps one of, if not the most, challenging positions in higher education (Lonsdale & Bardsley, 1982; D. Booth, 1982). Lumpkin (2004) emphasized that the leadership position almost demands that department administrators come prepared with skills necessary to manage, assist, and mediate interpersonal conflicts. Therefore, it is vital for department leaders to understand conflict management and the different conflict handling styles. However, most department chairs are neither equipped with these skills nor aware of their own conflict management style (Stanley & Algert, 2007; Hecht, 2004; Whitsett, 2007; Cullen & Harris, 2008).

Understanding how academic department administrators or chairpersons handle conflict will enable them to deal more effectively with the challenges associated with organizational management, leadership, productivity, and change. Different methods of handling conflict exist and the selection of an appropriate conflict management mode or style is an important part of managing conflict and improving relations in the workplace (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010; Brusko, 2010; Thomas & Kilmann, 1975; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Positive conflict styles can provide stimulation of the search for new facts or solutions as well as contribute to an increase in group cohesion and performance.

Academic department administrators in higher education may use various conflict handling or conflict management styles depending on the situation. Conflict handling or management styles are behaviors that individuals practice when they are engaged in disagreements with others. Conflict handling styles are sometimes called conflict strategies, conflict tactics, or conflict modes (Posthuma, 2013). It is important to note that conflict handling styles are different from conflict management processes because conflict management processes focus on minimizing the negative aspects of conflict and increasing the positive aspects of conflict, whereas conflict handling styles relate to the behavior that individuals exhibit when handling a conflict. One method that can be used to manage conflict is negotiation. In the process of negotiation, two or more parties make an effort to reach an agreement to resolve their differences. Negotiation is a process during which conflict handling styles will emerge and be observed (Posthuma, 2013). Different negotiators adopt varying conflict styles. When individuals or groups can successfully handle their conflict, it is called conflict management.

When an academic administrator can identify their conflict handling style, such as competing, accommodating, collaborating, avoiding, or compromising, they may gain a deeper understanding about their approach to managing conflict. They may be able to better understand a conflict situation and work toward resolving the situation. Each conflict handling style has both advantages and limitations, and by utilizing a style that would promote constructive outcomes from conflict situations, a positive impact on organizational culture may result (Gross & Guerrero, 2000; Kozan, 2002; Moberg, 2001; Rahim, 1983, 2011). Furthermore, understanding the different conflict styles may help the academic department administrator to assist colleagues to resolve conflicts.

While a number of studies that examine conflict handling and conflict management styles exist, few studies seek to identify the conflict management styles of academic department administrators or leaders (Stanley & Algert, 2007). Furthermore, few qualitative studies exist that examine the development or description of interpersonal conflict handling styles. The aim of this study is to examine how academic department administrators in higher education develop and describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles in order to better understand conflict styles and positively impact their department, which may lead to a more collaborative culture and increased productivity.

Conceptual Frameworks

Different conceptual frameworks related to interpersonal conflict handling exist. The literature for various frameworks includes two, three, four, and five-factor models, or styles, of handling interpersonal conflict (See Comparison Chart in Table 1).

Rahim's Model-Five Styles of Conflict Handling

Rahim's five styles of conflict handling model (Figure 1) is based on both the grid of managerial styles proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964), as well as the Thomas's five modes model. Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated their five styles of handling interpersonal conflict on two dimensions: 1) concern for self (the degree -- high or low— to which a person attempts to satisfy one's own concerns),

Table 1.1 *Comparison chart of conceptual models related to Conflict Handling*

Two-factor	Three-factor	Four-factor	Five-factor
Deutsch (1949)-- Cooperative- Competitive Continuum	Putnam & Wilson (1982)-- Non-confrontation, Solution-orientation and Control	Pruitt (1983)-- Yielding, Problem solving, Inaction, and Contending	Follett (1940)-- Domination, Compromise, and Integration, and Secondary methods, Avoidance and Suppression.
		Kurdek (1994)-- Problem solving, Conflict engagement, Withdrawal, and Compliance	Blake and Mouton (1964)-- Forcing, Withdrawing, Smoothing, Compromising, and Problem solving
			Thomas (1976)-- Competing (assertive and uncooperative), Collaborating (assertive and cooperative), Compromising (moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness), Avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative) and Accommodating (unassertive and cooperative)
			Rahim and Bonoma (1979)--Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Accommodating, and Compromising

and concern for others (the degree --high or low-- to which a person attempts to satisfy the concern of others). As pointed out by Rahim (2011), these dimensions portray the motivational orientations by individuals during a conflict situation. By combining these two dimensions, Rahim and Bonoma identified five conflict handling styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Figure 1).

Rahim and Bonoma (1979) consolidated and improved their framework by involving over 1,200 managers across the United States (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Rahim, 1983). Compared with the model proposed by Thomas (1976), Rahim and Bonoma use the terms Integrating in lieu of Collaborating, Obliging instead of Accommodating, and Dominating in lieu of Competing. They labeled the two dimensions (cooperativeness and assertiveness and concern for self and for others) and some styles differently, but the basic assumptions and principles behind them are similar. The strength of the Rahim model also resides in the creation of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory, ROCI-II, (a 28-item questionnaire, Appendix C) designed to measure the five styles of handling conflict with superiors, subordinates, and peers. A modified ROCI-II questionnaire Form B, the questionnaire that focuses on the conflict handling style of an individual with their peers, will be used as a part of this research study.

The terms, Collaborating, Accommodating and Competing used by Thomas (1976) is used in this study, so this study will use a model (Figure 2) that combines the Rahim and Bonoma (1979) and the Thomas (1976) styles of handling interpersonal conflict on two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. This model

uses terminology from the Rahim and Bonoma (1979) and the Thomas (1976) models to serve as a foundation for this research.

Typologies of Conflict Handling Styles

The five conflict styles that emerge from various combinations of these two dimensions are as follows:

Integrating or collaborating style. High concern for self and others reflects openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties (Rahim, 2001, 2002, 2011).

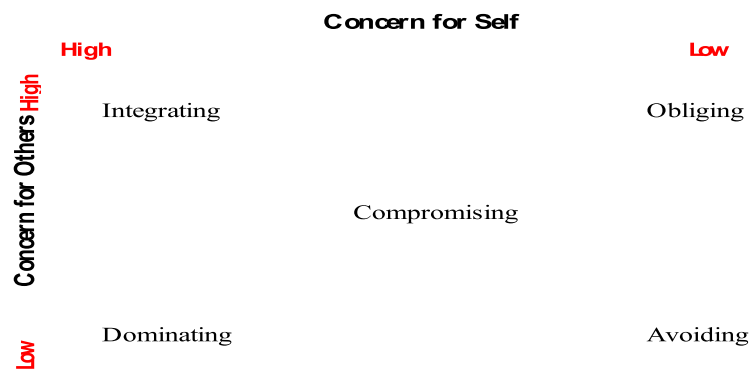


Figure 1.1 Rahim's Conceptual Model (Rahim, 2002, p.217)

The integrating style concentrates on problem solving in a collaborative manner.

Individuals with this style face conflict directly and try to find new and creative solutions to problems by focusing on their own needs as well as the needs of others.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1986) found the problem-solving, or integrating, style to be more effective than other styles for attaining integration of the activities of different subsystems. The collaborating or integrating style is the strategy that is proposed for the

win-win method. The win-win method involves a conscious decision by both parties to be open in their communication with each other and to strive to seek a solution that will benefit both parties (Jones & White, 1985). When the issues are complex, this style is suitable in utilizing the skills and information possessed by different parties to formulate solutions and successful implementations. Thus, the integrating style is believed to be both effective and appropriate in managing conflicts and, therefore, is perceived as highly competent.

The integrating style is beneficial to both individuals associated with the conflict because it provides each individual with access to the other person's perceptions or incompatible goals, thereby enabling them to find solution that integrates the goals and needs of both parties.

Obliging or accommodating style. Low concern for self and high concern for others style is associated with attempting to minimize the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party (Rahim, 2001, 2002, 2011). Obliging is associated with accommodating behaviors that include putting aside one's own needs to satisfy the individual with which one has a conflict, passively accepting the decisions the opposition makes, making yielding or conceding statements, denying or failing to express one's own needs, and explicitly expressing harmony and cooperation in a conflict episode (Wilmot and Hocker, 1998). These types of conflict strategies are indirect and cooperative (Blake and Mouton, 1964). It can be used as a strategy when a party is willing to relinquish their own needs or goals.

Dominating or competing style. High concern for self and low concern for others style has been identified with a win-lose orientation or with a forcing behavior to win

one's position (Rahim, 2001, 2002, 2011). The dominating style relies on the use of position power, aggression, verbal dominance, and perseverance. This style is direct and uncooperative (Blake and Mouton, 1964). Within interpersonal context, the dominating (competing/distributive) style has been found to be associated with low levels of effectiveness and appropriateness. However, Papa and Canary (1995) suggested that the dominating style might be somewhat effective in organizational contexts when there are production-related goals. In this case, an individual might use power strategies and aggression to effectively accomplish a goal, even though these strategies may be seen as inappropriate at a relational level. Spitzberg, Canary, and Cupach (1994) term dominating style as the maximizing response to conflict, because it maximizes the importance of one's own needs at the expense of the other individual's needs. Therefore, the dominating style is considered to be ineffective.

Avoiding style. Low concern for self and others style has been associated with withdrawing from, evading or sidestepping situations (Rahim, 2001, 2002, 2011). An individual who exhibits the avoiding style fails to satisfy his or her own concern as well as the concern of the other party. This style is useful when the issues are trivial or when the potential dysfunctional effect of confronting the other party outweighs the benefits of the resolution of conflict.

Compromising style. Intermediate in concern for self and others style involves compromise whereby both parties yield to make a mutually acceptable decision (Rahim, 2001, 2002, 2011). It may mean splitting the difference, making concessions, or seeking a middle-ground position. It may be appropriate when the goals of the individuals in conflict are mutually exclusive or when both individuals who hold equal levels of power

have reached a deadlock in their negotiation. This style may be beneficial when dealing with strategic issues, but heavy reliance on this style may result in dysfunctional outcomes.

Research Questions

Two major objectives in this qualitative phenomenological study exist. First, an examination of how academic department administrators describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles, and, second, what influenced the development of the conflict handling styles in order to positively impact their department, which may lead to a more collaborative culture and increased productivity. The linkages between conflict handling styles of academic department administrators in higher education as the subject of research is limited; hence, much work remains to improve our understanding of the development of conflict handling styles.

The research question that will be investigated is the following:

How do academic department administrators in higher education perceive conflict handling within their organization?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe their conflict handling styles with their peers?
2. What are the fundamental methods by which academic department administrators in higher education develop their conflict handling styles?
3. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe task conflict?

4. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe emotional conflict?

Both Task conflict and Emotional conflict were examined as a part of this research study. Task conflict is conflict that has a beneficial effect on cognitive task performance, and, therefore, it is considered functional (Pelled, 1996) and emotional conflict is conflict that has a detrimental effect on cognitive task performance and impedes performance, therefore, it is considered dysfunctional (Pelled, 1996). This is also called affective conflict.

Significance of the Problem

Although considerable research has been devoted to evaluating the conflict handling styles of individuals in a business organization, less attention has been paid to studying the conflict handling styles of individuals, such as academic department administrators, in higher education. Thomas and Schmidt (1976) reported that managers rated conflict management to be somewhat at the same level or of greater importance than planning, communication, motivation or decision-making. Lippitt (1982) also suggested that organizations should treat conflict handling and management as an important professional development activity. More recently, research has been conducted about conflict handling to investigate the benefits to individuals within organizations. Understanding specific personnel roles that may initiate conflict could help to anticipate and prevent dysfunctional workplace relations (Ramsay, 2001). “Knowing one’s predisposition toward conflict contributes the first step and provide an opportunity to manage conflict creatively” (Bartol et al., 2001, p. 40). Furthermore, higher education institutions may be able to provide certain professional development

training to introduce administrators, educators, researchers, and staff members to learn productive conflict handling styles.

While a number of studies that examine conflict handling and conflict management styles exist, few studies seek to identify the conflict management styles of administrators in higher education (Stanley and Algert, 2007). If an administrator, such as an academic department chairperson in higher education, understands her or his individual conflict style, they may be able to better handle conflicts in different situations and also demonstrate approaches that lead to improved interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Academic department administrators may also be able to train other faculty, staff, and administrators about conflict handling and the conditions that may lead to more collaboration. Ultimately, they may be able to positively impact their department, which may lead to a more collaborative culture as well as to increased productivity.

General Procedure

This study is a phenomenological study about the conflict handling styles of academic department administrators in higher education. For this study, higher education academic department administrators, chairpersons or department heads were asked to complete an electronic questionnaire to describe their conflict handling styles in different situations. They were asked to reflect on what may have influenced the development of their conflict handling styles. They were also asked to differentiate between task and emotional conflicts and to articulate their corresponding handling style. Four department administrators were individually interviewed two times in order to describe their conflict handling styles and to discuss the development of their conflict

handling styles. The department chairs that were interviewed were also asked to read two different vignettes and to answer written questions about their likely responses. Patterns and themes related to conflict handling styles and the development of conflict handling were evaluated. The current Curricula Vitae of the interviewed chairpersons were examined in order to identify language that identifies prior background, experience or training in conflict handling or conflict management.

Study Limitations

The scope of this research focused on the conflict handling experiences of a limited number of academic department administrators in higher education. One limitation of the study is that the data is derived from the nature of the sample, which is a convenience sample. The study is not generalizable because only a limited number of participants in higher education are examined. This study was qualitative in nature; therefore, causal conclusions cannot be drawn.

The researcher for this study has background knowledge and experience as an academic department administrator. Therefore, the researcher acknowledges that this prior experience may interfere with the interpretation of the data collection and analysis. However, the researcher attempted to reduce and eliminate bias by attending to the construction of knowledge and assessing her thoughts and intentions about the questions posed during data collection as well during the data interpretation and analysis process.

Furthermore, in this study, the researcher assumes that the participants' responses to the questionnaire are a true reflection of their conflict handling style. Despite the limitations noted in this study, the study may be a benefit to other

researchers if the procedures from this study may be used in another study in a different context or be duplicated in a similar context.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are pertinent to this study.

Accommodating--An unassertive and cooperative behavior where the person is attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns at the expense of his/her own.

Affective conflict--(See emotional conflict).

Assertiveness--The extent to which one tries to satisfy his/her own concerns (Thomas, 2002).

Avoiding-- Individuals who use this mode of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and low concern for self (Rahim, 2004). They assume an unassertive and uncooperative posture.

Collaborating--An assertive and cooperative behavior where the person attempts to find a win-win solution that completely satisfies both people's concerns (Thomas & Kilmann, 2002).

Competing--An assertive and uncooperative behavior where the person tries to satisfy his/her own concerns at the other person's expense (Thomas & Kilmann, 2002).

Compromising--An intermediate behavior between both assertiveness and cooperativeness where the person is trying to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people's concerns (Thomas & Kilmann, 2002). This style of handling conflict is moderate in concern for all involved (Rahim, 2004). Each party is intermediate in assertiveness and cooperativeness, giving up a portion of its own interests in an attempt to satisfy the other.

Conflict--Rahim (2004) defined conflict as "an interactive process manifested in

incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities” (p. 7).

The condition in which people’s concerns – the things they care about –appear to be incompatible (Thomas & Kilmann, 2002).

Conflict Handling Style--This term refers to the way an individual chooses to manage conflict to satisfy one’s self or others (Womack, 1988). This is also called conflict style, conflict strategies, conflict tactics, or conflict modes (Posthuma, 2013).

Conflict Management--Refers to the ongoing effort to effectively control disputes between parties. An approach that assumes that the dispute may be ongoing.

Conflict Resolution--Refers to ending a dispute between parties. An approach that assumes that the dispute can be ended.

Conflict Style--This term refers to the way an individual chooses to manage conflict to satisfy one’s self or others (Womack, 1988).

Cooperativeness--The extent to which one tries to satisfy the concerns of another person (Thomas & Kilmann, 2002).

Academic Department Administrator--Appointed leaders who have responsibility for an academic department or program. This leader may also be called a Department head, Department chair or chairperson, Department leader, or Director.

Dominating--Rahim (2004) noted that those who use this style of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and high concern for self. It is similar to the assertive and uncooperative behavior described by Thomas and Kilmann (1974) as aggressive.

Individuals who engage in this style are primarily interested in fulfilling their own interests.

Emotional conflict--Conflict that has a detrimental effect on cognitive task performance and impedes performance, therefore, it is considered dysfunctional (Pelled, 1996). This is also called affective conflict.

Experience--The length of time that a department academic administrator has directly participated in a leadership role. Experience in education refers to the number of combined years in education in any capacity; while, experience in administration refers to the number of years the chairperson has participated in higher education administration.

Integrating--Similar to those who use the collaborating style, individuals who engage in this style of handling conflict exhibit high concern for both self and others (Rahim, 2004). They attempt to work with others to find a mutually agreeable solution to the conflict. This style encompasses assertive and cooperative tendencies to resolving issues and fully addresses the needs of both parties.

Intrapersonal Conflict--Thomas (1992) defines this as incompatible response tendencies within an individual.

Interpersonal Conflict-- Thomas (1992) defines this as conflicts that occur between different individuals, groups, organizations or other social units.

Negotiation--This is a process during which conflict handling styles will emerge and be observed (Posthuma, 2013).

Obliging--Individuals who engage in this mode of conflict resolution exhibit high concern for others and low concern for self (Rahim, 2004) and tend to satisfy the needs of others at their own expense. The obliging mode of handling conflict is similar to the unassertive and cooperative style of accommodating.

Rahim Organizational Conflict Instrument-II (ROCI-II)--This instrument,

developed by Rahim (2004), identifies the styles used by individuals and groups to handle conflict. The ROCI-II categorizes conflict handling into five predominant styles: avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging (Rahim, 2004).

Task conflict--Conflict that has a beneficial effect on cognitive task performance, and, therefore, it is considered functional (Pelled, 1996).

Summary

Chapter 1 provides insight about the need for research in the field of conflict handling styles of academic department administrators in higher education. The head of an academic department has the ability to impact the core culture of an organization. The academic administrator requires many leadership skills, including the ability to handle conflicts effectively with colleagues in order to effectively manage and lead a department. Research about conflict handling styles is limited in the field of higher education. The proposed research study will provide insight regarding how academic department administrators in higher education describe and develop their conflict handling styles.

Chapter 2 will provide a literature review about different historical perspectives regarding conflict, current research about interpersonal conflict and styles, and factors that may influence conflict handling styles, including personality traits, emotional intelligence, gender, and culture. Conflict handling styles in higher education, as well as different conflict handling models and instruments to study conflict will also be presented.

Chapter 3 will provide the details of the methodology used for this study and Chapter 4 includes the results and Chapter 5 discussion and conclusions as they relate to the results.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Conflict is generally defined as a disagreement with regard to interests or ideas (Rahim, 1992). Conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities and it can occur between individuals, groups, organizations, and even nations (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979; Rahim, 1983, 1986). Two common uses of the term were explained by Thomas (1992); the first refers to incompatible response tendencies within an individual, or intrapersonal conflict, such as behavioral conflicts where one must choose whether or not to pursue a particular course of action, or role conflict where one must choose among several competing sets of role demands. The second use refers to conflicts that occur between different individuals, groups, organizations or other social units defined as interpersonal, inter-group, inter-organizational, and international conflict (Thomas, 1992). This research focuses on the conflict between two or more individuals, or interpersonal conflict.

Conflict handling styles research has shown that interpersonal conflict style is an important variable in the study of organizational culture. In fact, researchers (Gross & Guerrero, 2000; Kozan, 2002; Moberg, 2001; Rahim, 1983, 2011) have pointed out that studies should investigate the conflict style that leaders employ to manage disagreements since conflict is a natural organizational phenomenon.

This literature review includes a section about the different historical perspectives regarding conflict. It also includes current research about interpersonal conflict and styles, factors that may influence conflict handling styles, including personality traits, emotional intelligence, gender, and culture. Conflict handling styles in higher education,

as well as different conflict handling models and instruments to study conflict handling styles that are needed to inform this study will also be included.

Perspectives Regarding Conflict

Over the last few centuries, three distinct perspectives regarding conflict have emerged. From the late 19th century until the 1940s, the traditionalist view was dominant (Weber, 1947; Gmelch & Carroll, 1991; Robbins, 1974; Rahim, 2011). This perspective, identified by classical organizational theorists such as Fredrick Taylor, Henry Fayol, Max Weber, and George Elton Mayo, viewed conflict as an impediment, harmful and negative, and promoted the ideas that organizations should aim to minimize and eliminate conflict (Gmelch & Carroll, 1991; Rahim 2011). Social and political scientists who studied conflict in the 1930's and 1940's regarded conflict in society as problematic and thought that it should be reduced. Sociologist Talcott Parsons, in the 1940s, portrayed conflict as abnormal and dysfunctional (Rahim, 2001; Rahim, 2011). In contrast to the traditionalist perspective, Mary Parker Follett, a pioneer in organizational theory and behavior in the 1920s, provided a behavioral orientation to management and identified the value of constructive conflict (Rahim, 2011).

From the 1940s through the 1970s, the behaviorist view, also known as the contemporary view or the human relations view, emerged (Robbins, 1974). The behaviorists saw conflict as natural and inevitable (Verma & Dewey, 1998; Rahim, 2011). This view maintains that conflict can have a negative or positive effect, that it is natural, and that it can be managed, depending on how it is handled. The emphasis during this period was on finding relevant methods to resolve and manage conflict.

In the 1970s, the interactionist perspective developed, which viewed conflict as positive and necessary in order to be responsive to the need for change, innovation, and creativity (Robbins, 1974; Verma & Dewey, 1998; Rahim, 2011). Conflict was to be encouraged and was recognized as having a beneficial effect through improved performance so that organizations could promote creativity and innovation. Conflict management became accepted as a process. German Sociologist, Georg Simmel studied conflict and found that a certain amount was essential to the proper functioning of society (Rahim, 2001). Discovering the correct approach to handling or managing conflict relies on various factors, such as the type and relative importance of conflict, the time pressure, the power position of the players involved, and the relative emphasis on goals versus relationships (Verma & Dewey, 1998).

Interpersonal Conflict and Styles

As individuals interact in organizations, differing values and situations create tension. The foundation of interpersonal conflict originates in divergent personal-cultural views, the organizational structure, or a combination of the two (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1992). R. Booth (1982) states that interpersonal conflict may occur between two individuals or two groups of individuals, and may be caused by differences in communication and behavioral styles, as well as from incompatibility of values, goals, interests, ideas or resources. Interpersonal conflict is explained as the manifestation of incompatibility, inconsistency or disagreement between two or more interacting individuals (Rahim, 2011, p. 87). Pelled (1996) and Tjosvold (1992) have established that a moderate amount of organizational conflict is essential for productivity and change, but that uncontrolled conflict leads to dysfunction.

Conflict theorists have described conflicts as having two facets, task disagreements, and emotional, or affective, disagreements (Guetzkow and Gyr, 1954; Deutsch, 1973; Thomas, 1976). When viewed as a two-dimensional construct, task conflict has a beneficial effect on cognitive task performance, and, therefore, it is considered functional, whereas emotional or affective conflict has a detrimental effect. Emotional conflict can impede performance, and so it is considered dysfunctional or destructive (Pelled, 1996).

Task conflict is also referred to as positive conflict (Tjosvold, 1992), which is important for generating the divergent perspectives necessary for creative problem solving and performance. Interpersonal or emotional conflict has, however, been associated with ineffective teams. Pelled et al. (1999) noted that task conflict had more positive effects on cognitive task performance than emotional conflict. Other researchers have also found task conflicts to be generally associated with positive outcomes for group decisions (Putnam, 1994; Schweiger et al., 1989; Amason, 1996) and emotional, or relationship conflict to be associated with a negative effect on group decision quality (Evan, 1965; Staw et al., 1981; Janssen et al., 1999).

According to Blake and Mouton (1970), the key to understanding how individuals respond to conflict is to determine the patterns of cognition or thinking styles associated with a conflict situation. "When these basic styles are understood, one can predict for each how a man operating under that style is likely to handle conflict" (Blake & Mouton, 1970, p. 419). For example, if a person cognitively views a conflict situation as being one where there is high concern for people and high concern for production, that person is most likely to choose smoothing, or accommodating, as the response. Thus, in

the original two-dimensional model, the theory assumed that cognition is intimately associated with choice of style (Sorenson, Morse & Savage, 1999).

Goleman (1998) suggests that to handle conflict effectively, underlying differences between individuals must be understood. He also theorizes that having high emotional intelligence will enhance a person's conflict-handling styles.

Different styles of behavior by which interpersonal conflict can be handled exist and, in order to handle conflict effectively, one style may be more suitable than the other depending upon the situation. Follett (1940) conceptualized one of the earliest methods of handling conflict in organizations i.e., domination, compromise, integration, avoidance, and suppression. Conflict management style has been continuously measured by a variety of different terms. Researchers in social psychology and organizational behavior have proposed models that reduce the countless methods used to depict conflict handling styles. One of the first conceptual schemes for categorizing conflict revolved around a simple cooperation-competition dichotomy followed by the intuitive notion that styles can be arrayed on a single dimension ranging from competition or selfishness (Deutsch, 1949). However, questions were raised over the ability of the simple model to reflect the complexity of an individual's conflict behavior and the limitations posed by a single-dimension model (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Subsequent theorists invented a new two-dimensional grid for classifying the styles as suggested by Blake and Mouton (1964, p. 10) that includes a concern for people and a concern for production. Other authors have labeled the two dimensions differently (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Rahim, 1983, 1986; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986), but the basic assumptions have remained unchanged.

Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the styles of handling interpersonal conflict along two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. These dimensions explain the degree (high or low) to which a person wants to satisfy the concern for others. Studies by Van De Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) support these dimensions.

Although it has also been debated that individuals select among three or four conflict styles (Putnam and Wilson, 1982), evidence from confirmatory factor analyses concluded that the five-factor model has a better fit with data than models of two, three, and four styles orientations (Rahim and Magner, 1995). While the terms for the different conflict styles have modest differences, the general principles and basic descriptions of the styles appear very similar (see Figure 4).

Factors that may Influence Conflict Handling Styles

Theorists and researchers suggest that different factors, such as resources, power, trust, values, perceptions, context, and communication may influence conflict handling styles. Relationships between personality traits, differing roles within organizations, emotional intelligence, gender, and culture in relation to conflict handling styles have also been investigated by a number of researchers.

According to Rubin and Pruitt (1986), if individuals have access to resources, experience balanced power and trust, and hold collective norms and shared aspirations, they are less likely to experience conflict. Data collected by Morrison (2008) proposes that the determinants associated with conflict in organizations include top-down leadership decision-making, resources, communication and competition.

Several researchers assert that the conflict handling styles used by an individual can be influenced by contextual factors. Shell (2000) developed a situational matrix that hypothesizes that optimal handling style selection should be based upon perceived conflict over stakes, either high or low, and perceived importance of the future relationship with other individuals, high or low. Although this concept is helpful since it suggests that the context of a situation is relevant to the handling of a conflict, it only identifies two contextual considerations, perceived conflict over stakes and perceived importance of future relationships, which seems insufficient, and does not include contextual influencers such as a power differential between the parties, the type and relative importance of conflict, the time pressure or the availability of resources.

Mastenbroek (1993) emphasizes that the power of parties and the importance of an issue are components that impact conflict and conflict style. Context must be considered when choosing a conflict style and skilled conflict handlers must be able to utilize many styles of handling conflict. Masters and Albright (2002) identify that contextual factors are relevant to conflict and suggest that knowledge about the issue, power of parties, and interests of parties are central to understanding and effectively handling conflict. Another study researched the responses from 139 respondents from five major industries in Malaysia and examined the conflict handling styles of subordinates and supervisors (Lee, 2008). The key findings suggest that subordinates were more satisfied with their jobs when they perceived that their supervisors used integrating, obliging and compromising conflict handling styles. Subordinates also showed less job satisfaction when they perceived their supervisors to use dominating and avoiding styles of conflict handling. This study supports the findings of another study by

Rahim and Buntzman (1989) related to the satisfaction of supervisors where subordinates ranked integrating, compromising, and obliging as the most favorable conflict styles, and dominating and avoiding as the least favorable conflict styles. Superior, subordinate, and peer role influence was explored by Rahim (1983) in his study of 1,219 executives' conflict handling styles. Results from this study suggest that managers tended to handle conflict differently depending upon whether one was their superior, peer or subordinate. Respondents tended towards the obliging style with superiors, integrating with subordinates, and compromising with peers. This study included only 50 women, so the study did not make distinctions based on gender.

Studies relating emotional intelligence (EI) to conflict style have also been conducted. Rahim and Psenicka (2002) conducted an investigation of 1395 MBA students in Hong Kong, Bangladesh, South Africa, Portugal and Macau. They studied the five dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills of supervisors to subordinates' strategies of handling conflict: problem solving and bargaining. Their study examined the relationship between the emotional intelligence of superiors and conflict handling styles of their subordinates using a 40-item instrument based on Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence dimensions. Intercorrelation among the dimensions was emphasized such that self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and social skills were proposed as influences of motivation. Motivation was then suggested to be positively associated with the problem-solving conflict handling dimension (integrating style score minus avoiding style score) and the bargaining conflict handling dimension (dominating style score minus obliging style score). Results indicated a positive relationship between superiors' motivation and

the subordinates' use of problem-solving strategy for the U.S. respondents. A negative relationship was found between superiors' motivation and the subordinates' use of bargaining strategies for the U.S. respondents. These results were not assessed by gender.

Morrison (2008) also investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict handling styles of 92 registered nurses. Conflict mode was assessed using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), an instrument used to measure a person's behavior in conflict situations. The results show that, surprisingly, only 8.7% of respondents indicated using the collaboration style. Instead, 43.5% reported use of the avoiding style, and 55.4% reported accommodating. The use of competing and compromising conflict handling styles was reported by 15.2% of respondents each.

Emotional intelligence (EI) was assessed using the 72-item competency-based Emotional Competence Inventory 2.0. Results indicated a positive relationship between collaboration and the EI dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Negative correlations were reported between accommodating and self-management and relationship management. Compromising had a negative association with the accurate self-awareness and emotional self-awareness dimensions. While no correlations were reported between the competing conflict mode and any overarching EI dimension, a negative correlation was reported between competing and the optimism competency within the self-management dimension.

Similarly, negative correlations were reported between the compromising conflict mode and accurate self-awareness and emotional self-awareness competencies among the self-awareness dimension. Finally, a negative correlation was reported between the avoiding conflict mode and the initiative competency within the self-management EI dimension.

Many studies have been conducted about the factors, including EI, which may affect the complex nature of conflict handling styles. The influence of these factors requires further investigation.

Conflict handling styles related to personality type have been studied in different contexts. Marion (1995) examined the relationship between personality type and conflict management style. She used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to assess personality type and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) to evaluate conflict management style. Marion identifies that the MBTI “consists of four scales each with two polar dimensions” (p. 15). The first scale is attitudes and is measured by the degree of extraversion or introversion. The second scale is manner/style and is measured by judgment or perception. The third scale is perceptions and is measured by sensing or intuition. The fourth scale is judgments and is measured by thinking or feeling. In addition to examining personality type, Marion (1995) also examined conflict management style. As previously stated, she used the TKI to assess conflict management style. Marion’s sample consisted of 161 senior administrators in community colleges. She ran bivariate correlations for each of the personality dimensions and each of the conflict management styles. Marion concluded “the findings from this study suggest that there is indeed a relationship between individual personality type and conflict management style” (p. 9).

Kilmann and Thomas (1975) and Mills et al. (1985) also found correlations between some elements of the MBTI and the TKI. Kilmann and Thomas conducted a study of 76 male students in a graduate course in Behavioral Science for Management using the MBTI and various conflict handling instruments, including the TKI. After

analyzing their data, Kilmann and Thomas stated that the results suggest that the Jungian functions related to judging, thinking versus feeling, and the type of enactment, introverted versus extroverted, are significantly related to an individual's conflict-handling behavior. Mills et al. (1985) also studied the relationships between personality dimensions, measured by the MBTI and conflict-handling styles, measured by the TKI. Mills et al. asked 199 project management personnel to complete the MBTI and the TKI. After data analysis, the authors explained that the Jungian functions related to judging and thinking versus feeling, are associated with the distributive nature of conflict handling. Moberg (2002) points out that research efforts to explain conflict style preferences using personality "should define the related constructs of attitude and intention and distinguish them from trait and disposition" (p. 51).

Gender-based comparisons of conflict handling styles have been studied in varying contexts and within different organizations. Chusmir and Mills (1989) studied gender differences in conflict resolution styles of managers with a sample of 99 male and 102 female managers across ten organizations in the banking and mortgage, not-for-profit, and industry occupational groups. Research findings suggest that regardless of hierarchical position, female managers used the compromise conflict handling style more frequently, followed by avoidance, collaboration, accommodation, and competing. In comparison, male managers selected, in order of frequency, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, competing, and accommodation. Also, the study suggests that at higher levels of management, women were more likely to use competing conflict handling styles, but not to the same extent as men. Valentine (1995) refers to six studies conducted between 1984 and 1991 in the field of nursing which suggested that women employed in the fields

of nursing or nursing education most frequently select avoiding or compromising in response to conflict. Furthermore, the propensity to choose avoidance was explained in terms of a general discomfort with confrontation, or the perception of confrontational approaches as destructive. Valentine referred to previous studies on the socialization of females and their tendency towards the use of harmonizing styles as one possible reason for these findings. Valentine (1995) also points to literature that identified compromise as a frequent response where a power differential was prevalent and recognizes the pervasiveness of a gendered power differential in the workplace that may interfere with effective workplace operation.

Portello and Long (1994) examined the influence of gender role orientation of female managers and their interpersonal conflict handling styles with their superiors. The study of 134 female government supervisors and managers showed that respondents with higher masculinity scores indicated a greater selection of the dominating style than those with lower masculinity scores. Respondents with higher masculinity scores reported less use of avoidance. Contrary to expectations, feminine traits such as compromising, obliging and avoiding, were not associated with greater use of stereotypic feminine conflict handling styles. It is important to note that results were not consistent with Rahim's (1985) finding that subordinates tended to use obliging styles with superiors. Portello and Long's (1994) study also found no support for the influence of structural variables, formal organizational power and perceived personal power. Organizational power in terms of formal authority has been reviewed (Rahim, 1983, 1986), but the impact of perceived personal power has received less attention. These differences

underscore a need for further investigation into the factors influencing selection of conflict handling style

Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber (2002) minimized the influence of formal roles by investigating the relationship between peers. The researchers reported results suggesting that gender role orientation and organizational structure explained significant variance beyond biological sex in conflict situations, but acknowledged that the data was not definitive. This (Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber, 2002) study reports that higher scores in masculinity were associated with a dominating conflict style, while higher scores in femininity were associated with the avoiding style. The obliging style was only associated with femininity before controlling for biological sex. Similarly, respondents with lower organizational role, like respondents with higher femininity scores, were more likely to choose the avoiding or obliging style in conflict situations. An important finding was that the impact of organizational status was less substantial than that of gender role for avoiding. The influence of gender and biological sex was not clearly delineated. This suggested that additional social, psychological, or structural factors may impact the selection of conflict handling style, specifically in the selection of styles that reflect a lack of power when the referent is a peer.

Thomas, Thomas and Schaubhut (2007) studied conflict styles of 200 male and 200 females at six different organization levels, from entry-level to executive. Their findings show that assertiveness (competing and collaborating) increases monotonically at progressively higher organization levels, while unassertive styles (avoiding and accommodating) decrease (Thomas, Thomas & Schaubhut, 2007). The strongest gender

finding was that men score significantly higher on competing at all six organization levels.

A meta-analysis was completed by Holt and DeVore (2005) which sought to provide a clearer understanding of culture, individualistic versus collectivistic gender and organizational role, superior, subordinate or peer, as it relates to conflict resolution styles. Based upon 123 paired comparisons within 36 empirical studies, the results of the meta-analysis indicate: (1) individualistic cultures choose dominating as a conflict style more than collectivistic cultures; (2) collectivistic cultures prefer the styles of withdrawing, compromising, and problem-solving more than individualistic cultures; (3) in individualistic cultures, compromising is endorsed more frequently by females; (4) females are more likely to endorse the use of compromising than males, regardless of culture; (5) males are more likely to report using forcing than females in individualistic cultures; and (6) with regard to organizational role, males are more likely than females to choose a forcing style with their superiors (Holt and DeVore, 2005). The researchers state that some of the discrepancies found in current studies are due to small, convenience sample sizes and that further research is needed on the topic of cultural status. They also acknowledged that the study is restricted to an individualistic culture and may not generalize beyond such cultures (Holt and DeVore, 2005). Further research about the various influences, such as differences in roles, gender, personality, and culture that impact conflict handling styles would provide greater direction for preemptive interventions in organizational settings.

Conflict Style in Higher Education

In a higher education institution, faculty and administrators' perceptions of faculty needs, resources, research focus or pedagogy are additional sources of conflict, as well as the increased professionalization of faculty and the inexperience of some administrators in higher education (Corwin, 1969; O'Connor, 1978). Tjoswold (1978) researched conflict and cooperation between administrators and teachers and stated that when administrators have similar goals to increase the competence of students, but disagree about the methods by which to reach those goals, the conflict may still result in a positive outcome due to a shared goal. More recently, a study was conducted by Van Niekerk, De Klerk & Pires-Putter (2017) to study employee well-being in higher education. They evaluated conflict management styles and well-being of 201 support staff and 180 academic staff by using 25 of the 28 questions on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II; Rahim, 1983), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory. Findings from this study showed that support staff reported the use of the compromising and the dominating styles more than academic personnel.

Models and Instruments of Conflict Handling Style

Conflict studies span a large range of fields, including political science, psychology, and organizational behavior. As a result, numerous models and instruments have been developed to characterize and measure conflict handling styles.

Two-factor models. Morton Deutsch (1949), social psychologist and conflict resolution researcher, suggested the two-factor cooperative–competitive model in the research on social conflict. This research was foundational to the understanding that

conflict could be both destructive and constructive. Deutsch's (1949) model uses a cooperative–competitive continuum to simplify the categorization of conflicts. Deutsch and other researchers have suggested that the cooperative style compared to the competitive style is more effective in managing conflict and leads to more productive and constructive functional outcomes, although these studies have not presented evidence of a positive correlation between cooperative style and job performance and productivity. This two-factor model only suggests an exclusively cooperative or an exclusively competitive conflict style. However, other researchers in this field recognize that conflict handling can be characterized by both cooperative and competitive styles (mixed-motive conflicts). Rahim (2002) identifies this as a compromising style of handling interpersonal conflicts.

Three-factor models. Identification of three styles of handling interpersonal conflict was proposed by Putnam and Wilson (1982) as non-confrontation; (also known as the obliging style as identified by Rahim), solution-orientation (also known as the integrating style as identified by Rahim), and control (also known as the dominating style as identified by Rahim). Rahim (2002) suggests that the main limitation of the proposed three-factor model is that the theoretical basis for the three-category conflict style is unclear, and also that statistical instruments and methods for investigating and analyzing the factors are not sufficiently robust.

Four-factor models

Four-factor models. Pruitt (1983) suggested a four-style model of handling conflict based on the dual concern model for self (high or low) and for others (high or low), subsequently resulting in the following styles: yielding, problem solving, inaction,

and contending. Similar to the two and three factor models, compromising is not recognized as a distinct style. Empirical evidence from laboratory studies (Pruitt, 1983; Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993) has shown that problem solving is the most effective style for managing conflicts, although these studies have not presented evidence of how the four styles can impact job performance and productivity. A four-style model of conflict management proposed by Kurdek (1994) resulted in the conceptualization and operationalization of marital conflict and includes the following four dimensions: problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance.

Five-factor models. The first five-factor model of handling interpersonal conflict in organizations was conceptualized by Follett (1940). The author first found that conflict was managed using three main styles: domination, compromise, and integration, as well as secondary methods, which include avoidance and suppression.

Blake and Mouton's five-factor conceptual model. One of the first conceptual diagrams for classifying styles of handling interpersonal conflicts in five types was proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964): forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving (Figure 3). Based on their examination of a population of managers, the researchers developed a model founded on two primary dimensions: concern for production and concern for people. These dimensions describe the attitude of the manager of being a task or relation-oriented leader, from which five leadership styles emerged.

The first style combined high concern for production outcomes with low concern for people, resulting in suppression of conflict by restricting its emergence or resulting in punishment. In contrast, managers with low concern for productivity and high concern

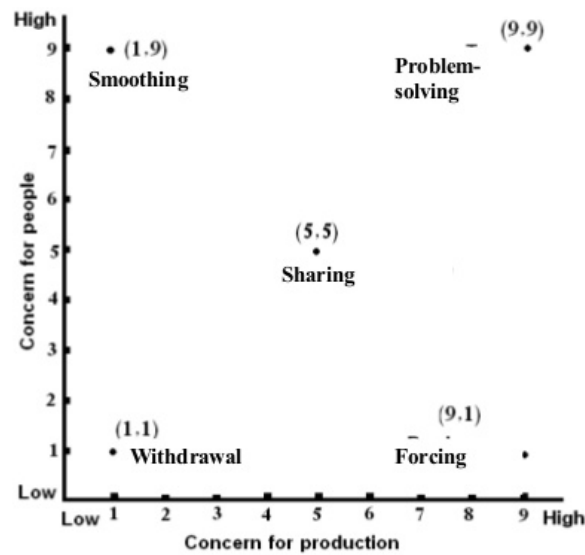


Figure 2.1 *Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton, 1964)*

for people employed smoothing to encourage agreement and otherwise minimize conflict. Low concern for people and productivity resulted in conflict avoidance often demonstrated through deference or strict neutrality. Managers demonstrating moderate concern for people and production used a compromising style. Finally, confrontation, described as directly addressing the issue, ensued when concern for both people and production were high (Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1970; Van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990).

Similar to the leadership grid proposed by Blake and Mouton, Blake and Mouton's interpersonal handling diagram was reinterpreted and extended by numerous researchers. For example, Thomas (1976) extended this model including the intentions of the parties involved, and classified the conflict handling styles using two dimensions: assertiveness (attempting to satisfy one's own concerns) and cooperativeness (attempting to satisfy other party's concerns) (Figure 4). This is called the Thomas-Kilmann Model

based on the Thomas-Kilmann Management of Differences Exercise (MODE) Instrument (TKI) (Kilmann and Thomas, 1977).

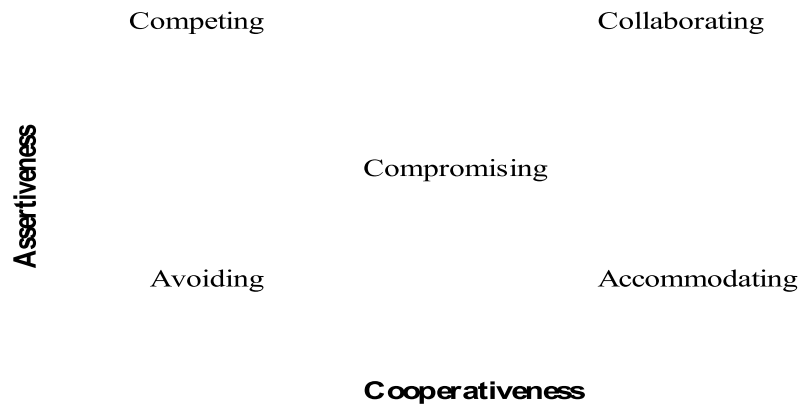


Figure 2.2 **Thomas-Kilmann Model** (<http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki>).

In the model developed by Thomas and Kilmann, a combination of the level of assertiveness and cooperativeness dimensions determines the following five conflict handling modes employed by the parties: competing (assertive and uncooperative), collaborating (assertive and cooperative), compromising (moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness), avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative), and accommodating (unassertive and cooperative).

Measures of Conflict Handling Style

Several different instruments have been developed in order to measure conflict handling styles. Studies investigating the five modes of handling conflict in organizations have primarily used self-report instruments.

The Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) measure was designed by Van de Vliert (1997) and revised and updated by De Dreu et al. (2001). The DUTCH is based

on the Dual Concern Theory (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986), which is related to the earlier work of Deutsch's Theory of Cooperation and Competition (Deutsch, 1973). This instrument consists of 20 seven-point items, assessing the five components of conflict behavior styles. Alpha coefficients of internal consistency ranged from .60-.85 (Van de Vliet and Kabanoff, 1990). Conflict behavior was tested in hospital and police organizations with subordinates and superiors, but not with peers.

Thomas and Kilmann developed the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument (TKI). The TKI (Thomas & Kilmann, 2002) "is designed to assess an individual's behavior in conflict situations—that is, situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible" (Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, 2002, p. 7). The TKI is a forced-choice instrument containing 30 pairs of statements. The leader chooses the statement in each pair that best characterizes his/her behavior.

Thomas and Kilmann studied and measured important psychometric properties of four instruments available for measuring behavior in handling conflict (Thomas and Kilmann, 1978). The instruments were those designed by Blake and Mouton (1964), Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), Hall (1969), and Thomas and Kilmann (1974). Thomas and Kilmann (1978) assessed test-retest reliabilities, internal consistencies, and the inter-correlations or convergent test validities and found that the overall reliability coefficients for the four instruments fall within the low to-moderate range, with most scales showing moderate reliabilities. With respect to an overall comparison of instruments, this indicates some problems with two of the instruments. The Blake-Mouton instrument had low test-retest reliabilities on two modes and the Lawrence-Lorsch instrument also demonstrated somewhat lower reliabilities than the Thomas-Kilmann and Hall instruments (Thomas

and Kilmann, 1978). Findings from this study also support that the Thomas-Kilmann and Hall instruments show somewhat higher reliabilities and some degree of convergent test validity across all five modes of conflict. According to Womack (1988), however, the mode subscale measures seem to have low levels of homogeneity and test re-test reliability (Van de Vliet, 1997).

Rahim and Bonoma's (1979) model was based on Blake and Mouton's (1964) grid of managerial styles as well as the Thomas-Kilmann MODE instrument (Kilmann and Thomas, 1977). Rahim and Bonoma (1979) utilized a conceptualization similar to Blake and Mouton's (1964) and Thomas's (1976), but differentiated concerns on the basis of motivational orientation during a conflict situation. In doing so, the researchers approached conflict handling styles from a cognitivist viewpoint, or mental representations, as opposed to the behaviorist perspective, or specific actions, presented by Thomas (1976). Rahim and Bonoma confirmed and advanced the factor structure of the managerial grid through contact with over 1,200 corporate managers across the United States (Rahim, 1983). The Rahim Instrument, the ROCI-II, was developed after testing with student groups, hospital management groups, teachers, and principals, and after conducting a series of factor analyses of various sets of items (Rahim, 1983). The parts of the questionnaire containing the five mode clusters are internally consistent with an alpha of .74 and stable, with a mean re-test reliability of .76 (Weider-Hatfield, 1988; Van de Vliet, 1997). Rahim (1983) also found that the ROCI-II was reliable with the Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.77. The ROCI-II uses a 5-point Likert-type scale as the means of measuring the degree to which the five conflict handling styles are used. As a result, they developed five specific conflict handling styles

and defined them as integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Rahim, 1983, 1986, 2001). Rahim (1986) asserted that individuals in organizations must learn the five styles of handling conflict to deal with different conflict situations effectively.

The DUTCH, TKI and ROCI-II instruments have been utilized in numerous research studies, yet an examination of the results indicates many inconsistencies and contradictory outcomes. The proprietary Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI) uses a 30-item forced-choice design to identify characteristic behavior (Thomas & Kilmann, 1978). The TKI is well established for use in managerial training and organizational conflict management intervention. The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II), by comparison, is a 28-item instrument widely accessible for research (Rahim, 1983). Relevant research findings from both instruments were reviewed, recognizing the slight distinctions between Thomas's (1992) behaviorist slant and Rahim's (1983) cognitivist interpretation (Sorenson, Morse, & Savage, 1999).

Different studies have applied the ROCI-II conflict handling styles instrument. Gross and Guerrero (2000) studied 200 students enrolled in management and business classes in an attempt to confirm that the five conflict strategies in the ROCI-II instrument (Rahim, 1983) are perceived differently in terms of effectiveness and appropriateness. The students were paired together and asked to make a joint decision in an organizational simulation about downsizing after being assigned opposing private motivations for the simulated case. The data from the study demonstrate that "an integrative conflict style is perceived as both appropriate and effective, a dominating style is perceived as particularly inappropriate and the avoiding style is perceived as particularly ineffective"

(Gross and Guerrero, 2000, p.224). The data also implies that the compromising style may be perceived as moderately appropriate and effective in some circumstances (Gross and Guerrero, 2000).

Conclusion

The current body of research regarding conflict handling styles is broad, educational and revealing. The development of conflict handling styles is an area that can benefit from further research. Research supports that various factors may contribute to conflict handling styles, including context, personality type, resources, experience, power, trust, and norms and aspirations. However, a gap exists in the current literature about the description and development of conflict handling styles of administrators in higher education. This gap in the literature is significant, as researchers and employers have indicated how important these skills are to the success of leaders and have not completely determined how to effectively teach, in higher education, how to manage conflict. The literature also reveals that different conflict management styles exist and that they can be assessed using the ROC-II.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Aspects of both descriptive and interpretive phenomenological qualitative research methods were used in this study to examine the conflict handling styles of academic department administrators in higher education. The phenomenon of interest is how department administrators describe and develop their interpersonal conflict handling styles. The complex voice of the academic department administrators is the foundation of this investigation since their lived experiences will bring light to the phenomenon of conflict handling. In particular, the descriptive phenomenological methodology as defined by Giorgi (1997), as well as the interpretative phenomenological methodology by Husserl (1983) were utilized to closely examine the concept of conflict handling by academic department administrators. A limited number of studies currently exist about how academic administrators in higher education describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles.

This chapter includes the rationale for selecting a qualitative method for studying the phenomenon of conflict handling styles and the mechanics of the selected approach.

The first two sections include the research design, the research questions, and the sample. The following sections include the details of the methodology and an analysis of the data. The final section includes a summary.

Research Design

A qualitative strategy incorporating elements of phenomenology was chosen to help direct the investigatory effort for this research. A declaration regarding how an investigator views knowledge strategically motivates the research and guides every

aspect of the study from question to conclusion (Charmaz, 2006). This section outlines the use of ontological, epistemological, and philosophical tenets for this study. In this investigation, the researcher's own knowledge development paradigm leads the exploratory effort and provides further rationale for strategic decisions regarding selection of methodology, data collection, subject sampling, and data analysis. According to Creswell (2003), ontology is the claim researchers make regarding knowledge; epistemology is how individuals have arrived at that knowledge; and methodology is the process of studying it. With this understanding, the research scaffolding is designed with an ontological view that assumes the phenomenon being studied is complex where contingencies are inevitable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Crotty's (1998) assertion "all knowledge, and, therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42) is relied upon for this study. The manner in which humans respond to the social environment is based on their own perceptions and significantly affects future actions and interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These ontological assumptions assisted the researcher in better understanding the lived experiences and worldview of the participants of this study and to further align the epistemological inclinations with this study. A fundamental belief motivating this project evolved from the researcher's own alignment with a constructivist disposition. Whereas an objectivist view espouses knowledge exists in objects independent from consciousness and experience, a constructivist epistemology asserts knowledge is a product of the social context where meaning evolves from interactions with others (Crotty, 2005). Further support for constructivism is evident in

the aim of this project to explore the way in which academic department administrators as participants create and understand meaning through their own social constructions (Charmaz, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), a study steeped in constructivism asserts: the researcher-respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and interdependent and that reality is multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable. The values of the researcher, respondents, research site, and underlying theory undergird all aspects of the research - the research product is context specific (p. 83). A constructivist approach aspires to both discover and describe the unique nature of those being investigated (Broido & Manning, 2002). This epistemological leaning aligned with the study and structurally placed the academic department administrator's voice at the center of the discovery. The rich description of the participant responses guided the analysis of the data. In order to prepare for the researcher's constructivist disposition as the investigator, the study relied on how meaning is made (Crotty, 2005) and acknowledged that the study participants conveyed multiple meanings surrounding the same issue (Creswell, 2009). The intentionality of design helped to guide this interactive experience with an emphasis placed on the evolving story told by the participants. The researcher commits to accurately shedding light on how the experience of the academic department administrators handle conflict as described by their understanding and knowledge. The constructivist epistemology enabled the navigation of this research project with an open-minded approach to discovery. Broido and Manning (2002) suggest the interactive relationship between constructivist researcher and respondent is subjective and guiding where multiple realities may emerge creating complexity not easily measured. Even further, the context specific interpretation is influenced by the values of

all involved. To best explore these interpretive perspectives, the researcher needed to actively engage respondents in the constructivist foundations of shared history, language, and actions. This research seeks to explore the phenomenon surrounding how academic department administrators view their interpersonal conflict handling styles.

As previously suggested, the research related philosophical persuasions and helped to construct the framework in which the study is designed (Charmaz, 2006). This investigation was founded on pragmatic undertones with belief that meaning is created through action and interaction. As one who aligns with pragmatism, the researcher assumes social knowledge is an accumulation of experiences that combine to form a foundation for the continued evolution of thought and societal trajectory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The truth is what individuals recognize as a current viewpoint and new knowledge becomes useful in changing and further developing what was previously recognized as reality. The goal is to understand the essence of how academic department administrators experience and describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles and the individual voices of the academic administrators guided the investigation to understand this truth.

After aligning with a constructivist epistemology, the next step to developing a research framework was to subscribe to a qualitative approach. This directed the research to focus in on the emotional responses and perceptions of the participants rather than more quantifiable variables. Quantitative research evolved from earlier postpositive thinking and seeks to define knowledge through cause and effect perspectives, whereas qualitative research has emerged more recently with links to a constructivist view (Creswell, 2003). This assertion claims that meaning is developed both socially and

historically with individual experience holding a capacity for multiple subjective interpretations. The inductive approach was used to explain the complexity of a social phenomenon through defining patterns in the emergence of findings. Through in-depth conversation between the researcher and the academic department administrators, the researcher revisited their experiences and constructed meaning through dialogue. The interpretive data was collected through open-ended inquiry and then analyzed in an evolving manner that required the researcher to actively participate in the explanation of social meaning (Creswell, 2003). This investigative process of discovery is designed to develop a richly detailed analysis that embodies the description of interpersonal conflict handling styles by academic department administrators.

The qualitative research is used to explore the depth of the phenomenon to provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the idiosyncrasies involved with the phenomenon of conflict handling (Creswell, 2003). The flexibility associated with this effort allowed me to probe for deeper meaning through continued dialogue with the study participants (Creswell, 2003).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define methodology as “a way of thinking about and studying social reality” (p. 3) while method is “a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data” (p. 3). A research methodology was chosen that was best aligned with the research interest, which is a phenomenological inquiry that attempts to explore the inner experiences of everyday life. This method was selected to help identify meaning behind the human experience as it related to a phenomenon or notable collective occurrence (Creswell, 2009). The phenomenon of interest is how academic department administrators describe and develop their interpersonal conflict handling styles. The

modern phenomenological method is credited to German philosopher and mathematician, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) whose work evolved during the ideological turmoil following World War I. Husserl advocated through his research that objects exist independently, and that observations and experiences involving these objects are reliable, suggesting an individual's perceptions are accurate representations of their consciousness. The phenomenological foundation of this study aims at attaining a profound understanding of the nature or meaning of the daily experiences of department administrators (Crotty, 2005). Other researchers dedicated to furthering this method who appear in the literature include Martin Heidegger, Alfred Schultz, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Husserl's work titled *Logical Investigations* was originally published in two volumes in 1900 and 1901, then republished in 1970, and is considered the primary doctrine for the movement (Crotty, 2005). Phenomenology is used extensively in research emanating from sociology, psychology, health sciences, and education (Creswell, 1998).

By utilizing the phenomenological method, the researcher intends to help lead a comprehensive account of lived experiences from which "general or universal meanings are derived" (Creswell, 1998, p. 53). After determining that a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study, the following suggestions as outlined by Creswell (2009) and derived from Moustakas (1994) were included in the design and served as a procedural map for my project which explored how academic department administrators describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles. Data analysis occurred through organized "clusters of meaning" and from these clusters evolved both textural and structural descriptions of the experience, which led to a composite

description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). This requires a thorough inquiry, including detailed interviews with participants, to gather a comprehensive understanding of the context, intentionality, temporal awareness, and language, to capture the pure lived experiences. Perceptions, thought, language, and actions were explored. A limited number of studies have identified how academic department administrators in higher education describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles. Therefore, since a qualitative method was used, the research interview questions and direction were adjusted as new information emerged regarding the circumstances and conditions. The researcher maintained focus on how academic department administrators describe their interpersonal conflict handling styles, how they describe the development of their conflict handling style and the conditions that may lead toward collaboration. The complexities related to circumstances and the subtleties related to participant responses were captured through qualitative inquiries, and may have been missed if more positivistic inquiries were to be used.

Background about the Descriptive Analysis Approach

Husserl’s (1970) philosophical ideas about how science should be conducted gave rise to the descriptive phenomenological approach to inquiry (Cohen, 1987). An important component of Husserlian phenomenology is the belief that it is essential for the researcher to shed all prior personal knowledge to clearly understand the essential lived experiences of those being studied. This means that the researcher must actively withhold consciousness of all prior expert knowledge as well as personal biases. Withholding personal biases is an important component of all research, and, for this study, the researcher examined and withheld personal biases to allow for clear understanding of the

lived experiences of the academic department administrators. The goal of the researcher is to achieve transcendental subjectivity, a Husserlian ideology, which means that the impact of the researcher on the inquiry is constantly assessed and biases and preconceptions neutralized, so that they do not influence the object of study. Descriptive phenomenologists have proposed specific techniques, such as bracketing, to accomplish this. Bracketing involves the researcher holding back ideas, preconceptions, and personal knowledge when listening to and reflecting on the lived experiences of participants. Another assumption underlying Husserl's approach to the study of human consciousness is that there are features to any lived experience that are common to all persons who have the experience. These are referred to as universal essences, or eidetic structures. For the description of the lived experience to be considered a science, commonalities in the experience of the participants must be identified, so that a generalized description is possible. The essences are considered to represent the true nature of the phenomenon being studied. The assumption that essences generated through phenomenological research result in one correct interpretation of experiences of the participants represents a foundationalist approach in inquiry (Allen, 1995). In this view, reality is considered objective and independent of history and context.

Background about the Interpretive Analysis Approach

Another scholar who modified and built on the work of Husserl was Heidegger, a student of Husserl, who challenged some of his assumptions about how phenomenology could guide meaningful inquiry. Heidegger's ideas in this respect cover the interpretive, or hermeneutic, research approach to analysis (Cohen, 1987). In relation to the study of human experience, hermeneutics goes beyond mere description of core concepts and

essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices (Heidegger, 1962). These meanings may not be apparent to the participants, but can be understood and assembled from the participant narratives. The focus of a hermeneutic inquiry is on what humans experience rather than what they consciously know (Solomon, 1987). This study will use a combination of descriptive and interpretative phenomenological analysis methods to understand the description of the essence of the lived experiences as well as to search for the meaning of those experiences.

Research Questions

The research question that were investigated are the following:

How do academic department administrators in higher education perceive conflict handling within their organization?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe their conflict handling styles with their peers?
2. What are the fundamental methods by which academic department administrators in higher education develop their conflict handling styles?
3. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe task conflict?
4. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe emotional conflict?

The Sample

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study and answer the research questions, a phenomenological methodology was utilized (Husserl, 1983; Giorgi, 1997),

examining the lived experiences of four higher education department chairpersons as related to the phenomenon of conflict handling. A purposeful, criterion-based sampling strategy (Creswell, 1998) was used to recruit participants for the study. The criterion includes higher education academic department administrators who have held the position to lead a department for at least three years and also has had the responsibility to manage a group of at least five faculty members in their department during this time period.

An online questionnaire with open-ended questions and a modified ROCI-II Form C (Appendix C) was sent to participants through a U.S. organization for department chairs. At the end of this questionnaire, the researcher inquired as to whether the participant would like to be contacted to participate in an interview. A convenience recruitment technique was used to identify four chairpersons at colleges and universities in the Midwest U.S. who have fulfilled the criteria.

Methodology

The overall methodology included the following: the administration of an online questionnaire, a series of two online, by phone or in-person, semi-structured interviews with four department administrators, an examination of the responses to two vignettes administered to interviewees, and the examination of the Curricula Vitae of all interviewees. For this qualitative, phenomenological study the researcher identified and recruited participants who have worked as an academic administrator in higher education and have managed a department with at least five faculty members. Pseudonyms for the university and college locations sites and administrator participants were created to ensure that all participants' identities were kept private.

After the administration of the online questionnaire, semi-structured, in-person interviews were conducted by the researcher. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher using a method defined as oral coding (Bernauer, 2015) in order to capture the lived experiences of the higher education administrators who participated in the study. Oral coding is an alternate method of transcribing qualitative interview data. Instead of immediately transcribing data following an interview, the “oral coding” approach, according to Bernauer (2015), relies on a Three-Phase Approach. Phase One involved extended and reflective listening of the oral recording of the original interview data. This extended time with data in its original oral form enabled the researcher to construct both intended and inferred knowledge in relation to the phenomenon being investigated. Intensive encounters with the original data were continued during the Second Phase of analysis and interpretation by re-recording on another device those segments that were considered to be potentially thematic as well the researcher’s own reflective and interpretive comments in relation to these segments. Finally, in Phase Three, using a combination of keyboarding and transcription software, both in vivo quotes and researcher reflections were transcribed to text and organized by research question and broader themes. This entire Three Phase process was used to transform raw data into comprehensible accounts because the researcher was able to hold onto to the original oral data for an extended time. This process delayed reduction to text and enabled the researcher to capture participant nuances conveyed through tone, inflection, volume, pause, and emphases. “The interweaving of participant quotes and researcher comments simulates a dialogic exchange resulting in cumulative and transformative insights” (Saldana, 2016, p. 74).

Interview Protocols, Questionnaires, Document Analysis

To study the conflict handling styles of department chairpersons in higher education, an online questionnaire was distributed, participants were interviewed, and participants were asked to read and respond to two vignettes. The open-ended questions on the questionnaire, the interview transcriptions, the vignette responses, and the Curricula Vitae of the interviewees were analyzed to gather data.

Online Questionnaire

An online questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent to participants of a national organization for department chairs as well as to one or two colleges. This study used a modified version of Rahim and Bonoma (1979), and Rahim (1983, 1986, 2001, 2011) styles of handling interpersonal conflict on two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory ROCI-II (Rahim, 1983) was developed to identify the styles of handling interpersonal conflict with a superior (Form A), with subordinates (Form B), and with peers (Form C). The modified ROCI-II Form C instrument developed for this study (Appendix C) contains five demographic questions, 10 questions using a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) and eight additional survey questions, including open-ended questions (Appendix C). The terms for the conflict handling styles were defined for the survey participants. After IRB approval for this research was received, the online questionnaire was sent to participants through a U.S. organization for department chairs. Demographic data, such as gender, title, number of years as an academic administrator, number of faculty members in their department, and general responsibilities within their department was also collected in the survey. A letter was embedded within the questionnaire and

included a description of the purpose of the study, the focus of the research, and instructions about how to complete the questionnaire. This questionnaire also contained a permission clause and a statement declaring the assurance of anonymity, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw from participation at any time with no repercussions. The participants were asked to electronically approve a consent form and then complete the online questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they would like to include their contact information if they would like to be considered to participate in interviews, in-person, by phone or online.

The researcher contacted 64 higher education administrators via email and sent a link to a national survey. The names and contact information were acquired from lists obtained from a United States national register for administrators in higher education, as well as from four Midwest U.S. University directories posted on the internet. Thirty-three higher education administrators responded to the survey after seven days, followed by which the survey was closed. Thirty-two of the thirty-three respondents completed the full survey. These 32 administrators answered demographic questions (Appendix C), as well as other survey questions about conflict handling (Appendix C). At the end of the online questionnaire, the researcher inquired as to whether the participant would like to be contacted to participate in an interview. A convenience recruitment technique was used to identify four chairpersons at colleges and universities in the Midwest U.S. who had fulfilled the criteria and were willing to participate in two interviews each, provide their Curricula Vitae and complete two responses to case study vignettes.

The responses from the open-ended questions were used to draw comparisons with the data collected from semi-structured interviews that were conducted following the dissemination of the questionnaire.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A total of eight interviews were conducted, two interviews were conducted face-to-face- and in-person with three of the four higher education administrators. One face-to-face, in-person interview and one phone interview was conducted with one of the four higher education administrators. The purpose of these individual interviews was to elicit responses from department administrators or heads on self-perceptions about interpersonal conflict handling styles. A modified Seidman (1998), two-interview protocol was used to collect data. The interviewed administrators also responded to two case study vignettes and provided their Curricula Vitae for examination.

The four interviewees in the final sample were obtained through the responses from the national survey for which they offered their email address if they were willing to be interviewed. There were multiple respondents; but several were unable to commit because of work schedules or other family or job-related matters; however, the researcher was able to secure appointments with the four participants who were willing to be interviewed twice and also who met the criteria of working as a department administrator with at least five faculty members who worked in their department. After the researcher made the selection, each participant was contacted and asked questions about their availability for two interviews.

To ensure the results of the study are credible and accurate, the researcher only asked questions specific to the interview protocol as well as ensured the participants

selected were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely. Two to 10 participants are recommended for the phenomenological method in human science and are sufficient to reach saturation. The researcher held face-to-face, semi-structured interviews for three of the four interview and one face-to-face, semi-structured interview followed by a phone interview for one of the participants. The researcher used two recording devices to capture the complete interviews. The terms for the conflict handling styles were defined for the interview participants.

Some of the interview questions for both the first and second interviews are located in Appendix E.

Some of the questions or prompts were:

1. How did you first start in the field of higher education?
2. Generally speaking, what are some of your responsibilities?
3. Can you tell me a little bit about your department-the number of faculty and their responsibilities?
4. Please provide an example of how you make decisions with your faculty members.
5. When conflicts arise, are they related to tasks, such as course schedules, course goals, research goals or teaching assignments? If so, what types of tasks?
6. When other conflicts arise, are they related to relationships? If so, what types of topics?
7. Can you describe your approach to handling of a conflict for a situation, for example, when you need to present constructive feedback to a colleague?

8. How important are conflict handling skills to achieving success in your field?
9. Have you experienced conflict handling training? Do you feel that this was/would be valuable?
10. What are some examples of interpersonal conflict in your organization?
11. How do you handle this conflict?
12. Do you feel that conflict handling is an important element of your role? If so, what are some of your reasons?
13. Could you give me an example of some challenging experiences, specific to conflict handling, that you have had as a practicing department chairperson? OR Can you walk me through a time that you experienced conflict with one of your colleagues?
14. How do these experiences differ from one another?
15. What do you think are some of the reasons for these disagreements?
16. Can you describe your approach to handling this conflict? When given a choice, interviewees may select from among five conflict handling styles and discuss why they made the selection. The styles offered will be: (1) Dominating; (2) Compromising; (3) Avoiding; (4) Integrating/Collaborating; and, (5) Accommodating/Obliging.
17. Have you considered different ways of handling conflicts or do you notice that you favor a specific approach?
18. Do you use an approach that you find particularly effective?
19. Under what conditions are you more likely to collaborate?
20. Can you reflect on how you think that you developed your style?

21. Can you tell me about professional development experiences that you have had that have helped you how to manage disagreements or conflicts?

22. Are there any conflict handling skills that you wish you knew earlier in your career and would like to share, that have been particularly effective?

When given a choice, interviewees may select from among five conflict handling styles and discuss why they made the selection. The styles offered will be: (1) Dominating; (2) Compromising; (3) Avoiding; (4) Integrating/Collaborating; and, (5) Accommodating/Obliging.

Interviewees were asked to provide specific examples about how they make decisions and communicate with other faculty members, instead of directly asking how they deal with conflicts. Interviewees were asked to provide a detailed account of a conflict and then explain their perception of how it was solved. All interviews were conducted individually. Each interview lasted for approximately 50 minutes. The interviewee was told the purpose of the project and that the data would be kept confidential. The interviewer requested permission to tape record the interview prior to the start of the interview.

All interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recording device, and field notes were taken by the researcher. The audio-recorded statements were then transcribed. The researcher listened and re-listened to the interview recordings eight times in order to capture and transcribe 328 phrases from the interviews prior to coding the transcriptions and memos for emergent themes. The transcriptions were marked with time-stamps so that the data could be referenced easily from the original recordings. The researcher also wrote memos from the interactions with the participants and also from listening to the

recordings. Emphasis placed on specific words, phrases and topics were noted in the researcher's memos.

The researcher ensured that a detailed description of the interviews was captured and was an important provision for promoting the credibility of participants so that this helped to convey the actual situation being investigated. More importantly, a key criterion for a researcher evaluating works of qualitative inquiry is having the ability to relate the findings to an existing body of knowledge. Utilizing an interview protocol supported each interview to remain within the time limitations to ensure all the necessary information was covered. The protocol aided in keeping the interview within the scope of the research and ensuring that all of the appropriate information was addressed. Additional questions related to the topic of conflict handling were asked during interviews in order to allow the interviewees to speak openly about factors that they identified that may impact their conflict handling style. To ensure participants would speak freely and honestly about their present or former employer, each interviewee was ensured the information disclosed during the interview would be kept confidential and released only to those people listed on the consent form; me, my committee chair, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Also, the researcher provided each participant with a copy of the consent form reiterating the privacy and confidentiality of each interview. To minimize potential risk, data that directly identifies the participants was concealed by the researcher.

The audio recordings of the interviews were reviewed by the researcher eight times over two weeks, transcribed after listening the third time, and were coded by the

researcher using descriptive, process, and thematic methods. Memos made by the researcher during, before, and after the interviews were also coded for additional data.

Interviews were held according to participants' availability at their academic offices. Interviews were conducted in April and May of 2018, closely following research and data collection approval from the IRB.

The interview sample consisted of one male and three females, all of whom work at a higher education institution in the Midwest United States. All of the interviewees lead and manage departments of at least five faculty members and have served as an administrator for more than three years.

Before the interviews began, each participant was given the consent form (see Appendix C) which was explained in its entirety to ensure each participant understood the process of the interview as well as what steps would be taken to ensure the information collected would remain confidential. The interviews varied in length, although an interview protocol was utilized to conduct each interview. Several interviews lasted longer than the 60 minutes, which allowed for each participant to fully express their perspectives. Each interviewee was asked the same questions that derived from the research questions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into a written form that allowed the researcher to review the interview for accuracy and to gather any missed information transcribing during the duration of the interview. Following the transcribing of the interviews, the interviews were organized utilizing using in vivo, descriptive, process, thematic, and holistic coding to assess the frequency and types of words, summarize data, and provide the necessary answers to narrow the data to specific themes associated to the research questions.

Following the interviews, two case study vignettes were either handed or delivered via electronic mail to the interviewees. A request was made to the interviewees for a current copy of their curricula vitae, as well.

Following the coding process, the interviewee was asked to check the accuracy of the summary of the transcription in order to improve data accuracy and credibility.

Vignette Responses

As a tool for sociological research, vignettes have been defined as a qualitative research tool used in structured and in-depth interviews as well as focus groups, providing details of fictional scenarios. Hughes (1998) defines vignettes as “stories about individuals, situations and structures which can make reference to important points in the study of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes” (p. 381).

The interviewed participants in the study were invited to articulate, drawing on their experience, how the central character in the scenario would behave. Vignettes can be used to place the participant in a hypothetical scene and then inquire about their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the situation.

The aim of using vignette responses is to produce qualitative data to examine the meaningful and symbolic content. One of the main purposes for the use of a vignette is interpretation of actions and occurrences that allows situational context to be explored and influential variables to be examined. Scenarios that are viewed by participants as highly plausible are more likely to produce rich data on how subjects in the vignettes interpret lived-experiences than those that invite astonishment, incredulity or disbelief (Jenkins et al., 2010). The more genuine the character’s situation is in a vignette, the

greater the likelihood of interviewees being able to put themselves in the character's place.

Applied to this study, asking the interviewee to answer questions after reading a vignette added more insight about the interviewee's interpretation of a situation and allowed them to respond with their perspective about their conflict handling style. The researcher was able to disseminate common or overlapping themes that may emerge from the responses to questions posed following the reading of the vignettes by the participants. An example of two vignettes and corresponding questions for the interviewee are located in Appendix F.

All interview participants were asked to read two vignette cases (Appendix F) and to provide a written response. These responses were read six times by the researcher and then coded based on themes related to the research question and sub-questions using descriptive, process, thematic, and holistic coding methods. Three of the four interviewees validated the summary of the transcripts produced by the researcher. Following the validation, no changes were required.

Interviewee Curricula Vitae

The Curricula Vitae were collected from the interviewees of this study. The dissemination of interviewee curricula vitae provided another avenue to assess themes regarding the description or development of conflict handling styles. The Curricula Vitae were read six times each over a period of two weeks by the researcher and then coded based on themes related to the research question and sub-questions using descriptive, process, thematic, and holistic coding methods. Some of the codes that were investigated,

such as conflict handling training, negotiation, or teamwork training, are located in Appendix G.

Analysis of Data

The structure of the phenomenon is the major finding of any descriptive and interpretative phenomenological inquiry. This structure is based upon the essential meanings that are present in the descriptions of the participants and is determined both by analysis and also by the researcher's insights (Kleiman, 2004). Both descriptive and interpretative analysis methods were used to examine the data produced in the study.

Analysis Details for this Study

In order to apply a combination of the descriptive and interpretative phenomenological analysis methods, the following procedures were followed to analyze the data. The data was read by the researcher eight times from the open-ended survey questions, the interview transcript, the vignette responses and the Curricula Vitae, as whole elements, in order for the researcher to gain a broad view. The individual responses and transcripts were then re-read in order to organize the data into meaningful sections or units. The sections or units were then integrated and rearranged based on meaningful themes, and then the language needed to identify the basic components of phenomena was developed. The raw data was revisited again, while the researcher used bracketing techniques to attempt to withhold her perceptions or biases. The researcher noted that one's cognitive choices on a self-report instrument are not the same as one's behavior. For the purposes of this research, conflict choice was viewed as a cognitive orientation, and "all measures including choice of conflict style was assessed cognitively rather than behaviorally" (Sorenson, Morse, & Savage, 1999, p. 30). The interpretations

of the themes were then re-evaluated and connected to the raw data. A critical analysis of the work followed the process, which included an examination of the detailed descriptions that had been obtained from the participants, that the phenomenological reduction had been maintained throughout the analysis, that essential meanings had been discovered, and that the raw data has verified the results.

Coding During the Reduction Process

The open-ended responses on the modified ROCI-II Form C questionnaire, the interviews, the vignette responses, and the interviewee Curricula Vitae were transcribed and coded using published content analysis procedures as described by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014). To maintain the phenomenological data analysis, the protocols were divided into statements holding equal value, called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Then, the units were transformed into clusters of meaning to make a general description of the experience, including textural description, or what is experienced, and structural description, or how it is experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

The open-ended responses from the online questionnaire and the transcriptions from the interviews were coded in a first cycle to determine data chunks and then in a second cycle to seek patterns in the data. In vivo coding (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014, p. 74) was utilized to analyze the responses to the open-ended and interview questions so that the participants' own language may be reflected in the codes for both the textural and structural descriptions. Additional coding methods were used to evaluate the data using multiple strategies. This allowed the researcher to rearrange the patterns of words to examine the data. The researcher also employed reflexive analysis at multiple points during the data collection, before and after the formation of the survey questions,

before and after the formation of the interview questions, and before and after each stage of data collection. This process allowed the researcher to consciously examine and re-examine her own preconceptions and assumptions about the research process and analysis.

Following the data collection process, matrices demonstrating thematic interconnections were developed to re-arrange the data for further analysis and reduction to determine the essence of the participants' experience.

Summary

A descriptive and interpretive phenomenological approach was used to analyze participant responses to open ended survey questions, interview transcriptions, and curricula vitae evaluation in order to derive the essence of the conflict handling styles of department chairpersons in higher education. Both textural and structural descriptions were coded using an in vivo analysis to deduce patterns in themes related to the description and development of conflict handling styles. The researcher repeatedly re-examined the interpretations and attempt to improve the credibility of the analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the way in which higher education academic administrators perceive their interpersonal conflict handling styles. The findings presented served to answer the following central question and four sub-questions:

How do academic department administrators in higher education perceive conflict handling within their organization?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe their conflict handling styles with their peers?
2. What are the fundamental methods by which academic department administrators in higher education develop their conflict handling styles?
3. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe task conflict?
4. How do academic department administrators in higher education describe emotional conflict?

Both Task conflict and Emotional conflict were examined as a part of this research study. Task conflict is conflict that has a beneficial effect on cognitive task performance, and, therefore, it is considered functional (Pelled, 1996). This type of conflict is focused on a task in an organizational environment, such as scheduling, budgeting, work processes or goals. Emotional conflict is conflict that has a detrimental effect on cognitive task performance and impedes performance, therefore, it is considered

dysfunctional (Pelled, 1996). This is also sometimes referred to as relationship or affective conflict. This form of conflict is focused on interpersonal relationships, often due to differences in personality, personal values, and beliefs (De Dreu & van Vianen, 2001; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

The research approach, demographic data, and research findings related to the research question for this study are provided in this chapter.

Research Approach

The data for this study consists of responses to questions related to the central question and sub-questions on an online survey, eight interviews, eight vignette responses and four interviewee Curricula Vitae. The researcher also developed memos throughout the transcription process. The data for this study was collected, secured and maintained only by the primary researcher. The researcher reflected on potential bias that might arise during the process of data collection and analysis of memos to improve validity.

Consistency in data collection and analysis were also maintained by the researcher by transcribing the data within one week of the data collection order to improve reliability. To increase the validity within this study, multiple procedural and reflective methods were employed. First, to increase construct validity, or the operational procedures for the theories to be studied, multiple sources of evidence in the data collection process were used by the researcher. To increase internal validity, pattern matching and explanation building during the data analysis of the open-ended responses, the interview transcriptions, the vignette responses and the review of the interviewee curricula vitae were employed. To increase external validity, the theoretical frames anchored in the literature review were utilized to develop the conceptual framework for the multiple data

collection and analysis methods. Validity in a qualitative study is important as the use of multiple strategies in a case study's data collection process can assist in increasing accuracy among the findings (Yin, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, contradictory evidence, often known as deviant cases, were pursued, studied, and explained in the analysis to ensure that researcher bias did not interfere with or alter their perception of the data and any insights offered.

The data was analyzed using in vivo, descriptive, process and thematic coding. The researcher identified thematic motifs and thematic links according to Owen's (1984) criteria for thematic narrative analysis: repetition, or repetitive words, recurrence, or using different words or phrases, but with similar threads of underlying meaning, and for forcefulness, such as vocal inflections, and for changes in volume or dramatic pauses.

Demographic Data of the Participants for the Online Questionnaire

The demographic data for the participants who fully completed the online questionnaire showed that 11 females and 21 males responded. Job titles for the administrators who responded include Chair, Professor and Department Chair, Director, Chairperson, Division Chair, Associate Professor and Chair, School Director, and Program Director. Table 4.1 displays additional demographic information about the online questionnaire participants.

Demographic Data of the Interviewees

The interviewees for this study are department administrators at universities in the Midwest U.S. They have each served as an administrator for at least three years with at least five faculty members directly reporting to them. Three administrators were female

and one was male. They each serve in different fields, including healthcare, music, arts and science.

Table 4.1

Demographic Data from Online Questionnaire about Conflict Handling Styles of Administrators in Higher Education

Gender	Female=11
	Male=21
Number of years as a department administrator	0-up to 3 years = 8 More than 3 years and up to 5 years= 5 More than 5 years= 19
Number of faculty members in department	1-4 faculty members = 1 respondent 5-10 faculty members = 1 respondent More than 10 faculty members = 30 respondents

Research Findings

The following seven themes related to the research questions and sub-questions developed from this study:

- Administrators perceive that learning how to handle conflicts is important
- Administrators perceive that conflicts occur over goals, processes, communication, relationships, and funding
- Administrators perceive that conflicts occur between sub-groups within the department
- Administrators describe their conflict handling style as collaborating/integrating and compromising
- Administrators develop their conflict handling styles by observing others, self-teaching, and discussions with peers

- Administrators describe task conflict as conflict over resources, processes, and goals
- Administrators describe emotional conflict as conflict over issues related to self-interest, job security, job position, job performance, promotion, power struggles, hiring, and a perception of a lack of respect.

These themes are explained in the following sections.

Administrators Perceive that Learning how to Handle Conflicts is Important

One question that was answered by the online questionnaire respondents was “How important is it to learn how to handle conflicts in the workplace?” using a scale in which 0= Not at all important and 5=extremely important. The thirty-two online questionnaire respondents, 100% of respondents who completed the survey in full, selected ‘extremely important’ to learn how to handle conflicts in the workplace. More generally, this basic finding is consistent with research showing that training in how to handle conflicts is important and needed. This finding is in alignment with Lippitt’s (1982) proposal that organizations should treat conflict handling and management as an important professional development activity. Managers rated conflict management to be somewhat at the same level or of greater importance than planning, communication, motivation or decision-making in a study by Thomas and Schmidt (1976).

The interviewees in this study were also asked the question about the importance of learning how to handle conflicts in the workplace and all four interviewees restated that it was extremely or very important:

Learning how to handle conflicts is a key skill to have in order to make decisions and to be an effective leader. I cannot think of a more important skill. I wish that I had more training in this area since I seem to have to handle conflicts with faculty and between faculty on a daily basis. (P4, May, 2018)

This is an important theme because the perception of the importance to learn conflict handling in this study can be examined in relation to the descriptions of how higher education administrators discuss the development of their conflict handling styles and the training that they have received about this topic. Furthermore, this finding is noteworthy because 100% of the online survey respondent as well as all four interviewees emphasized that it was extremely or very important to learn how to handle conflicts as a higher education administrator.

Administrators Perceive that Conflicts Occur over Goals, Processes, Communication, Relationships, and Funding

A question was posed in the online questionnaire about how higher education administrators would characterize the different types of disagreements that they have experienced in their department. For this question, they were given a chance to select from a list of options, and four of the options were ‘other’ for which they were able to type in their own response. Several of the respondents selected more than one option, as illustrated in Table 4.2.

The data shows that respondents selected more than one option and that they identified disagreements about processes, goals, funding, as well as disagreements due to a lack of effective communication or a lack of positive relationships to characterize the different types of disagreements. Furthermore, respondents chose to fill in their own responses and identified ‘Disagreements because of an over-emphasis on self-interest’ (SR16, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018), ‘Disagreements about scheduling sequence’ (SR24, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018), ‘Disagreements about distribution of responsibilities’ (SR28, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018), ‘Corruption in a statewide

system’ (SR32, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018), and ‘Ethical and moral conflicts over sexual harrassment [sic]’(SR30, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018) as additional types of disagreements that they have experienced in their department.

Table 4.2

Online Questionnaire Responses from Administrator in Higher Education about how they Characterize the Different types of Disagreements that they have Experienced

#	Response	%	Count
1	<i>Disagreements about goals</i>	20.78%	16
2	<i>Disagreements about funding</i>	15.58%	12
3	<i>Disagreements about processes</i>	22.08%	17
4	<i>Disagreements due to a lack of effective communication</i>	16.88%	13
5	<i>Disagreements due to a lack of positive relationship</i>	16.88%	13
6	<i>Other 1 (please specify)</i>	5.19%	4
7	<i>Other 2 (please specify)</i>	2.60%	2
8	<i>Other 3 (please specify)</i>	0.00%	0
9	<i>Other 4 (please specify)</i>	0.00%	0

This data suggests that disagreements about goals, processes, funding, lack of communication and lack of relationships are how higher education administrators responding to the online questionnaire would characterize the different types of disagreements within their department. The disagreements about goals, processes and funding are considered to be task-related conflicts and the disagreements about a lack of

communication or relationship are considered to be emotional conflicts. The responses that were written in as options could be described as task-related, such as disagreements about scheduling or the distribution of responsibilities. The responses that were written in as options such as an over-emphasis of self-interest, corruption or ethical or moral conflicts over sexual harassment can be interpreted to lean more toward being characterized as emotional conflicts. However, since these were written responses, tone and emphasis could not be understood, and therefore, limitations exist when deciphering these responses.

Administrators Perceive that Conflicts Occur between Sub-groups within the Department

A theme that emerged following the four interviews was that each of the interviewees identified a number of conflicts that they handled are perceived to be rooted in conflicts that occur between faculty in sub-groups within their departments. Although this was not a specific focus of this research and that the design of this research did not spotlight the evaluation of conflicts between departmental subgroups, the theme emerged, unprompted by the researcher's questions, in all of the interviews. This only emerged in the interviews, just following the dissemination and collection of the online questionnaire, so the concept did not emerge in the other methods of data collection in this research study. However, because the theme emerged without formal investigation, the researcher felt that the preliminary theme is worth identifying and investigating further in future studies.

The data collected from this study about this theme are from the department administrators that were interviewed who each had either two to four sub-groups that reported to them. The four department administrators that were interviewed each shared

their narratives about the conflicts which arose when a faculty member in one sub-group perceived a difference between their sub-group and other sub-groups. P1 explained that she had clinical and teaching faculty, and that several conflicts occurred due to the perceived differences in resources, schedules or workload:

Some of the clinical faculty requested that I investigate the schedules of the teaching faculty since they perceived that the teaching faculty had fewer work hours since they did not have to be in the office for clinical work. I collected data about the work hours and created a master schedule to be shared with all of the faculty members in our department. (P1, May, 2018)

P2 shared that three faculty members, each from different musical groups, often approached her with conflicts about resources and budgets because they perceived an inequity caused by differences in resource allocation. She, in one instance, requested that they have one person from each group work on a joint committee to propose a solution to allocate resources. In this situation, the group developed a solution that was not feasible, so she worked with them to determine a solution.

P3 spoke about three different science sub-groups in his department and that conflicts are sometimes initiated and brought to him because they each have different needs, especially about hiring new faculty, but because there is only one source of funding, the faculty members made a case as to why their group needed the resources over other groups.

P4 explained that she has lecturers and tenured faculty within her department and that this is often the cause for several departmental conflicts. Lecturers seek more respect and understanding. They often feel as though they manage more of the teaching load and are sometimes treated as a graduate student working for faculty rather than as an equal partner in on a teaching team. Primary findings from the interview data about the types of

conflicts that higher education administrators handle stemming from disagreements between subgroups within their department are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Higher Education Administrators Reported that some of the Types of Conflicts that they Handle Stem from Faculty from Subgroups within their Departments

Theme	In Vivo responses from interviews
A type of conflict that higher education administrators handle occur between faculty members from different subgroups within their department	<p><i>Clinical and teaching-faculty often have disagreements that I handle within our department because they have different schedules and one group of faculty members believe that the other is not pulling their weight with the workload. Also, one group requests more resources because their perception is that they have more work. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>We have different music groups within our department and they each have developed a clique. They often have disagreements over resource allocation that come to my doorstep. I will usually work with each faculty to manage the disagreements and come to a resolution. (P2, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>Our department has three different groups that specialize in different fields of physics. They each have different needs and sometimes they would each like to hire a new member and I only have one new hire. This causes conflict, but I usually explain that if they are unable to get their hire this year, that they will have their turn next time. (P3, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>We generally have a cooperative culture we definitely have divisions between the sub-groups, it's inevitable. The primary fracture is between the different sub-disciplines That is natural. (P3, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>We have junior and senior faculty member groups in our program who often bring disagreements to me. I am asked to handle these conflicts and often they are about the direction of the program or about the changes that are being instituted by faculty. (P4, May, 2018)</i></p>

*There is sometimes an imbalance of work or **perception of an imbalance** of contribution to the courses and workload **between different groups** in our department. (P4, May, 2018)*

Data collected from the interviews imply that some of the conflicts that occur within higher education departments originate from perceptions between faculty members within department subgroups.

Administrators Describe their Conflict Handling Style as Collaborating/Integrating and Compromising

Data was collected from two questions on the online questionnaire, from the interviews and from the vignette responses about how higher education administrators describe their conflict handling styles. Following a review of the interviewee Curricula Vitae, data could not be found specifically about how administrators described their conflict handling styles and, therefore, was not used to support this theme. The overall findings from the survey questions, the interviews and the vignette responses suggest that higher education administrators describe their conflict handling styles as Collaborating/Integrating, Compromising and Bringing Concerns Out in the Open.

Primary findings from the ROC-II modified survey data about conflict handling styles are shown in Table 4.4. An examination of the data collected reveals a few key findings by examining responses for which over 90% of the survey respondents answered either somewhat or strongly agree on this question about the method by which they handle conflicts. Notably, 100% of the respondents reported that they somewhat agree or strongly agree to try to “integrate” their ideas with those of their peers to come up with a decision jointly. Furthermore, 91.67% of the respondents conveyed that they somewhat agree or strongly agree that they “negotiate” with their peers so that a compromise can be

reached. 95.83% of the respondents expressed that they somewhat agree or strongly agree that they try to “bring all concerns out in the open” so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way. These findings are compared to findings about conflict handling styles and specific terms used by higher education administrators about integrating, negotiating, or bringing concerns out in the open in the interviews and vignettes.

Table 4.4

Integrate, Compromise and Bring Concerns Out in the Open are the most selected responses about how Higher Education Administrators Describe their Method of Handling Conflicts
(32 respondents)

Responses related to major themes	Combined percentage of survey responses selecting either somewhat or strongly agree
I try to integrate my ideas with those of my peers to come up with a decision jointly.	100%
I negotiate with my peers so that a compromise can be reached.	91.67%
I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.	95.83%

Another set of data collected from another question posed in the national survey to higher education administrations asked survey respondents to answer the following question: How do you describe your method of handling conflicts? Mark all that apply.

For this question, they were provided with the opportunity to select from a list of options, and one of the options was ‘other’ for which they were able to type in their own response. The online questionnaire participants were allowed to select more than one choice, as well. The choices provided were developed based on the combined five-factor conceptual frameworks of Thomas (1976) and Rahim and Bonoma (1979) in Table 1 for conflict handling styles. The choices and results are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Collaborating/Integrating shown as the most frequently selected method of Handling Conflict by Higher Education Administrators Who Responded to the Online Questionnaire

#	Response	%	Count
1	Accommodating/Obliging	14.58%	7
2	Compromising	29.17%	12
3	Collaborating/Integrating	47.92%	23
4	Dominating	0.00%	0
5	Avoiding	4.17%	2
6	Other (please specify)	4.17%	2
	Total	100%	48

This data illustrates that the Collaborative/Integrating style of handling conflicts was selected most often, 47.92%, by survey respondents. The Compromising style of handling conflicts was selected next most frequently, 29.17%, by survey respondents. The Accommodating/Obliging style of handling conflicts was selected less frequently at 14.58% and the Avoiding style was selected at only 4.17%. The Dominating style was selected at 0.00%.

The results of the online questionnaire from Table 4.5, in which Collaborative/Integrating style of handling conflicts was most frequently selected, overlaps with the responses to those from Table 4.4 since 100% of the respondents somewhat or strongly agree to the following statement “I try to integrate my ideas with those of my peers to come up with a decision jointly” on the modified ROC-II question.

A particularly interesting finding that was revealed by this data is that, when provided with the option to select more than one conflict handling style, that 16 of the 32 higher education administrators selected to choose more than one style of handling conflicts.

Another interesting finding is that when provided with the option to express other conflict handling styles, one respondent selected to name other conflict styles as ‘listening; providing facts’ (SR16, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018) and one respondent selected to name other conflict handling styles as “confrontational” (SR32, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018). Although these specific responses fall outside of the conceptual frameworks by Thomas and by Rahim and Bonoma, listening; providing facts may be considered a process that occurs as one is approaching handling a conflict. The selection of the word Confrontational could possibly be related to the selection

Dominating, but the respondent selected to identify this as their own term under the choice of 'Other.'

The term Dominating had a 0.00% response as shown in Table 4.5, but this could also be due to the fact that the term has a negative connotation, and that survey respondents did not identify themselves with the term. Findings from one observational study suggests that managers employ a dominating style more than they actually admit (Munduate et al., 1997).

Furthermore, the interviewees from this study provided more data to compare the perceptions of how higher education administrators describe their conflict handling styles in different situations. For example, when P2 is approached by a peer and the peer questioned her method of managing the appointment percentages related to scheduling classes and distributing resources, P2 explained that she first tries to understand and listen carefully to the question. She tries to answer questions with data and facts, and refers to herself as trying to be open and to listening as much as possible:

I experience conflict with people above me and people below me and I receive demands from both. When someone approaches me with a concern, I try very hard to *stay open, listen carefully* and to *offer* as much *information* as possible. I intentionally try to work with the person to understand their viewpoints and *collaborate*. I have faculty who feel as they take on a larger bulk of the workload than others. I try to *empathize*, and then go through my process of determining the schedule. If they see the process, they are more likely to understand the intricacies of the decision. This faculty member usually begins to understand once I review the process. They also try to *provide data* to me about their perspective and why they feel that the schedule is unbalanced. We then try to *determine a solution together*. (P4, May, 2018)

Interviewee, P3, expressed that several of his conflicts occur over hiring new faculty. He says that this is one of the most important decisions made within his department because it has a long-lasting impact. He has three sub-groups within his

department, and sometimes more than one sub-group requests resources to hire a new faculty member, but that he is sometimes allocated only one position to hire by the Dean's office:

Hiring a new faculty member is difficult because it impacts everyone very strongly. We have various sub-disciplines and everyone wants to hire into their sub-discipline. Our hiring plan did not always fall within strategic plans. When this happens, I *consult* with the faculty to discuss if these changes were acceptable. We have to have a *discussion*. I try to be *very open*, and I try to *get* faculty *input* and work with them to find a solution. People understand when we do make decisions that way. (P3, May, 2018)

P4 explained a situation about how a faculty member approached her with the idea that the university was disrespecting their position by giving them a changing and large class size. In turn, the faculty member declined to help students in their classes in order to manage the workload. Her approach to handling the situation was to listen to the faculty member and express the options that they had to manage the class and student requests. Despite the option that were presented, the faculty member charged the administration as trying to take advantage of the faculty members:

The faculty member was visibly upset, and appeared emotionally distraught. He had taught at the University for a number of years and expressed that he did not feel valued. He was also very upset about the fact that he would receive course evaluations from students and verbal evaluations about his team-teaching from his peers. He did not believe in teaching evaluations and felt that he was being unfairly evaluated after contributing so much. He also expressed that he did not feel the need to work with students as needed because the University demanded too much already. I tried very hard to *listen*, although I did not agree with his perspective. I get my perspective by managing a large group and determining attitudes and perceptions that fall outside of the norm. I worked to *explain* that our collective goal is to serve the student population, but that I was *willing to evaluate* the need for additional resources in the class, if we have data or evidence for us to rely upon. Even though the faculty member insisted that the teaching load was unfair, I tried to maintain my composure and offer to go through an evaluation process with him. I try to *work with* my faculty to find solutions. (P4, May, 2018)

Interviewees used term such as *listening* or *listen* or *resolve conflicts together*, *consult faculty*, *make decisions together*, or *work with them* to express their approach to handling conflicts, whether the conflict was related to a task within their department or whether it was an interpersonal relationship. These terms reflect a more collaborative and integrating approach to handling conflicts. This data is confirming of the data from the two questions from the online questionnaire which also asked higher education administrators to describe their conflict handling style. The responses from both of those questions (Table 4.4 and Table 4.5) also point to higher education administrators describing their conflict handling style most frequently as Collaborating/Integrating. The higher education administrators who were interviewed for this study also indicated that a conflict handling style that they use is *listening* to their faculty and colleagues when they handle conflicts, however, this data did not specifically emerge from the two questions posed about the description of conflict handling styles in the online questionnaire.

The vignette responses from the four interviewees in this study suggest a pattern, as well. For Scenario A (Appendix F), which is a task-related conflict case with a relatively low impact on a colleague and faculty member, the interview participants had to respond to how a chairperson should handle a conflict. The data from the vignette responses to Scenario A show that all four interviewees who completed the scenario selected *Integrating/Collaborating* as a method for the character in the scenario to handle the task conflict that was presented.

The responses to Scenario B (Appendix F), which is an emotional conflict case asking interviewees to respond to a difficult situation about terminating a senior faculty member, also showed a trend. When the interviewees were provided with a choice of

responses based on the conceptual frameworks of Thomas (1976) and Rahim and Bonoma (1979) in Table 1, including Collaborating/Integrating, Compromising, Dominating, Avoiding, Accommodating, or Other, all four higher education administrators selected 'Other' and wrote in "Factual," "Use evidence and data," "Use data and facts," or "Be direct and explain data." They also wrote about reaching out to other support groups, such as human resources or other department executives, such as the Dean prior to holding the difficult meeting portrayed in vignette scenario B. Examples of the responses are shown in Table 4.7. In the data analysis, 42% of the holistic codes supported that administrators describe their conflict handling style as Collaborating/Integrating and 22% of the holistic codes supported that administrators

Table 4.6

Collaborating/Integrating, Compromising and Listening are how Higher Education Administrators who were Interviewed Described their Conflict Handling Style

Theme	Example In Vivo responses
Collaborating/Integrating	<p><i>We try to resolve conflicts together. I advise my faculty and make suggestions rather than make demands. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>We have band, choir, and orchestra and these are the large ensembles where we would make decisions together. (P2, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I work toward developing a shared purpose with faculty, even if they are part time. (P2, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I do consult strongly with my faculty. I think that they realize that we have to make choices and don't have unlimited resources. (P3, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>The way to deal with conflicts caused by (differences between subgroups) is to try to create bridges between these areas. (P3, May, 2018)</i></p>

	<i>I usually try to collect information and then meet in a transparent manner with faculty to identify the root of the problem and then work with them to find a solution. We often draft a resolution and circulate it between all of the parties to make sure that we are on the same page about the resolution and expectations. (P4, May, 2018)</i>
Compromising	<p><i>We come to an agreement together and we both sometimes just have to compromise about resources. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I consider hiring the right person for a position to be the most important part of my job. I try to compromise with faculty when we need to go through a process to hire someone new for our Program. (P2, May, 2018)</i></p>
Listening	<p><i>The faculty members in my department know that I listen carefully, and they are willing to work with me because of it. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I spend a great deal of time communicating one-on-one with my faculty and try to listen and understand their concerns. (P4, May, 2018)</i></p>

describe their conflict handling style as Compromising.

Administrators Develop their Conflict Handling Styles by Observing Others, Self-teaching, and Discussions with Peers

The analyzed data collected from open ended responses on the online questionnaire, interview responses and Curricula Vitae showed themes about how higher education administrators reported how they developed their conflict handling style or styles. A review of the Curricula Vitae for each of the interview participants revealed that the interviewed higher education administrators did not indicate training related to conflict handling or conflict management. However, themes emerged from the response to the survey asking about the development of conflict handling styles and the transcribed interview data. A question on the survey asked participants the following question: Could

you describe how you think that you developed your conflict handling style or styles? Mark all that apply. The higher education administrators selected most frequently *Observing others* and *Self-taught* as their responses, each with 17 responses. This was followed by the response *Formal training* with 10 responses. Examples of responses from the interviews confirm the finding about *observing others* and being *self-taught*. Only one of the four interviewees, however, discussed receiving formal training about conflict handling as a part of one professional development course. Examples of responses from the interviews are located in Table 4.8a and Table 4.8b.

A theme that emerged from this study about how higher education administrators identified that it is extremely important to learn how to handle conflicts, and, as a related topic, the data from this theme suggests that many administrators most frequently learn

Table 4.7 *Higher Education Administrator Responses to Vignette Case Studies*

Vignette	Example In Vivo responses
Vignette Scenario A (Appendix F)- A Task conflict scenario in which a department chair has a disagreement with a colleague about changes to a course.	<p><i>Mr. Jones should definitely explain the benefits to the department for instituting a new online course. He should listen to the faculty member and try to work together to find a solution. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>The chairperson should listen to the faculty member and try understand and collaborate with them to find a reasonable solution. They should stay open to options that are proposed by the faculty member. (P2, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>The chair should make a rationale and evidence-based decision that respects the faculty member's point of view. (P3, May, 2018)</i></p>

*The response should be for Mr. Jones to share ideas and **collaborate** with the faculty member since he/she has significant expertise and has an opinion. They should **share** facts and evidence. (P4, May, 2018)*

Vignette Scenario B
(Appendix F)-An **Emotional conflict** scenario in which a department chair has to terminate a senior faculty.

*This is a very tough situation and one that I have yet to experience. However, I would have **first reached out to HR or the business office**, as well as other executives to make sure that all of the policies are met. I would then present the information in a **factual manner** to outline the reasons for dismissal. (P1, May, 2018)*

*The person in this scenario **should first contact the proper human resource and union members, as well as the Dean** prior to releasing someone of their duties. This would be hard to do, but they should just present data and have **a fact-based discussion**. Warnings should have been provided before this event. (P2, May, 2018)*

*Mr. Jones should **collect all of the necessary data and procedures prior** to this meeting. The meeting should **focus on facts and the unmet expectations**. A professional, direct and clear tone should be maintained. (P3, May, 2018)*

Table 4.8a

Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses to the Question about how they Develop their Conflict Handling Style by Observing Others and by Self-Teaching

Theme	Example In Vivo responses
Developing conflict handling styles by observing others, self-teaching	<p><i>I like to read books to gather knowledge about how to manage people. I teach myself and read a lot of professional development and management books. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I use a lot of personal observations of previous and current administrators in the health field to learn what I like and what I don't like about how conflict is handled. I adopt things that I like. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I study leadership books for my personal growth. I feel that it is important to include empathy and compassion when operating a</i></p>

group. As a child, this has always worked for me—eye contact, listening, developing an understanding that is authentic and caring is essential. (P4, May, 2018)

***I observe others** a lot. So many people try to separate business and personal—I believe that these two realms overlap and, as a human being, it is alright to listen carefully to both areas of thought when a person is speaking to you. You can better understand the larger context, if you do so. (P4, May, 2018)*

*I was an orchestral musician--**I watch and listen**, I really think that I learned how to listen and then became the conductor. That influenced how I lead today. I think about how to inspire them with my tone and my leadership. I've been a section leader and this is how I thought about how to get them to play together. I've thought a lot about how you get them to work together--youth orchestra. (P2, May, 2018)*

*It is a lot by **watching** others. **I see** a lot of how people run meetings, talk about leadership. (P2, May, 2018)*

conflict handling through personal observation of other administrators and from self-teaching rather than from formal training. In the data analysis, 76% of the holistic codes support that administrators learn conflict handling through personal observation of other administrators and from self-teaching.

Table 4.8b

Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses to the Question about how they Develop their Conflict Handling Style by Having Discussions with Peers or Mentors

Theme	Example In Vivo responses
Developing conflict handling styles by having discussions with other higher education administrator peers or mentors	<p><i>I have mentors who are administrators in other departments. They are deans and directors who have had to manage departments. I let them know when I'm experiencing problems and reach out for help. (P1, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I can learn a lot from people around me. (P2, May, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>I had a lot of opportunity to see how other people work, what did</i></p>

I like, what I didn't like. (P2, May, 2018)

*He (a Dean) had a lot of really **good counsel**. (P2, May, 2018)*

*I have some formal training, conflict management training. I also **rely on a cohort of other administrators** in higher ed (education) that are at my level. We call each other and I go through my current problems or disagreements. (P2, May, 2018)*

*I really **rely on these colleagues that are at different institutions** outside of the state, but experience similar conflicts. (P3, May, 2018)*

*I am also able to **share and voice reason with cohort of colleagues** who have similar roles to mine. (P3, May, 2018)*

*I've been at the University for about 21 years and in industry prior to this. I really like to **learn from others and adopt methods and approaches** that I think are effective and beneficial for our department. I even keep a notebook filled with words and messaging that I feel are effective. Continuous learning is important. (P4, May, 2018)*

Administrators Describe Task Conflict as Conflict over Resources, Processes, and Goals

Data from open ended responses to the online questionnaire and interview responses were examined about how higher education administrators describe task conflict. Task conflict, according to theory, is focused on a task in an organizational environment, such as scheduling, budgeting, work processes, or goals. In this study, higher education administrators expressed task conflicts as conflicts related to conflicts over resources, processes or department goals. Some administrators specified that the processes were related to course scheduling, research, and clinical work within their department. Others stated that conflicts occurred with their colleagues over processes such as the distribution of work and decision-making within the department. Survey respondents and interviewees also expressed that some of the conflicts that they face

occur due to the differences in opinion about the direction or goals of the program or department. Open-ended survey responses from the survey and interviews about the different types of task conflict they have encountered are located in Tables 4.9a, 4.9b and 4.9c. In the data analysis, 59% of the holistic codes support that higher education administrators describe task conflict as conflict over resources, processes and goals.

Administrators Describe Emotional Conflict as Conflict over issues related to Self-interest, Job security, Position, Performance and Promotion, Power Struggles, Hiring and a Perception of a Lack of Respect

Data from open ended responses to the online questionnaire and interview responses were examined about how higher education administrators describe emotional conflict. Emotional conflict, according to theory, is focused on interpersonal relationships, often due to differences in personality, personal values, and beliefs (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Administrators used the term emotional conflicts to refer to conflicts that occur over issues related to self-interest, job security, job position, job performance, job promotion, power struggles, hiring, and the perception of a lack of respect. P1 stated that these were very difficult situations and that the perception of the faculty member is often hard to change. She explained how one

Table 4.9a

Higher Education Administrator Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey and Interview Questions Stating that Task Conflict is Related to Resources

Themes	Example responses
Tasks conflicts are related to resources	<i>Tension over how to best utilize scarce resources and maintain high standards. To some degree, over workload demands. (SR4, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)</i>

*Available **resources**, such as funding for space, equipment and researchers. (SR15, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

*Competing for **resources**. This not what we want, but is what happens. I try my best to be impartial when allocating resources. (P3, May, 2018)*

*Again, I think that that problem is lack of **resources**. (P3, May, 2018)*

*The conflicts that I experience often occur with colleagues over **resources and workload**. (P1, May, 2018)*

*I have to **distribute resources, personnel, and funds**, and this often is the cause of some of my conflicts. (P3, May, 2018)*
*Unclear or unfair administrative **processes** such as the distribution of work or scheduling classes. (SR30, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

faculty member felt disrespected and demanded a promotion. She relied on the human resources department to explain the policy to her and to the faculty member. She also tried to send the faculty member for professional development to try to help them understand the promotion policy. Finally, she said that the faculty member decided to leave the institution on his own. Another interviewee, P2, explained a situation in which a faculty member felt disrespected by another faculty member in their department. She said that one of the faculty members had a difficult personality and refused to change his

Table 4.9b

Higher Education Administrator Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey and Interview Questions Stating that Task Conflict is Related to Processes

Themes	Example responses
--------	-------------------

*Poor **processes**. (SR3, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

Tasks conflicts are related to processes

*Differences about **processes**, such as assigning workload or distributing **resources**. (SR4, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

*We need more transparency from the Deans office about how the **budget process** is since this causes disagreements between some of my subgroups about the **hiring process**. (P3, May, 2018)*

Table 4.9c *Higher Education Administrator Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey and Interview Questions Stating that Task Conflict is Related to Department Goals*

Themes	Example responses
Tasks conflicts are related to department goals	<p><i>Not agreeing on department direction. (SR11, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>Different visions for the department's purpose and goals. (SR31, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)</i></p> <p><i>Faculty not in concert with programmatic goals, departmental goals or mission of the College. (SR26, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)</i></p>

viewpoint. She has been unable to come to a resolution with this faculty member about treating other faculty members with respect for the past eight years.

P3 identified that he experiences conflict over faculty and when they are unable to meet expectations. He stated, specifically, that these are emotional for him because his perception is that the lack of meeting expectations is due to a lack of motivation from the faculty.

Another higher education administrator, P4, expressed that she was unable to resolve a conflict with a faculty member who felt that the institution was requiring too much from the lecturers. This conflict is also still unresolved, according to P4. Examples of the responses are shown in Table 4.10. In the data analysis, 49% of the holistic codes support the finding that administrators describe emotional conflict as conflict over issues related to self-interest, job security, position, performance and promotion, power struggles, hiring and a perception of a lack of respect.

Table 4.10

Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses and Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey to the Question about how they Describe Emotional Conflict

Themes	Example responses
Emotional conflicts occur over issues related to self-interest, job security, job position, job performance, promotion, power struggles, hiring and a perception of a lack of respect	<i>If a faculty member experiences poor team-teaching evaluations from faculty and below-average student course evaluation, they may be notified that their performance does not meet expectations. The faculty member is placed on remediation and, if the remediation is successful, they continue with their work. If they are not successful, they are terminated from their position. This has been the most emotional conflict that I have experienced during my work as an administrator. (P4, May, 2018)</i>

Table 4.10 (continued)

Higher Education Administrator Interview Responses and Responses to Open-ended Questions on Survey to the Question about how they Describe Emotional Conflict

Themes	Example responses
Emotional conflicts occur over issues related to self-interest, job security, job position, job performance,	<i>These are very difficult conflicts since the faculty members that I have worked with under these circumstances often do not agree with the idea that they need to work to improve. These seem to be very emotional exchanges, and the focus on the changes related to</i>

promotion, power struggles, hiring and a perception of a lack of respect

teaching becomes less of a focus. (P4, May, 2018)

*Higher stress and **emotional conflicts** are related to money and resources, **job security, fairness, position, hierarchy** and influence. (P4, May, 2018)*

*Sometimes faculty feel **disrespected** by the institution and this has caused them to consider leaving or leave our University. (P1, May, 2018)*

*Faculty are sometimes **emotional** over **money and promotion**. (P2, May, 2018)*

*We have Unions and this often causes **emotional** tensions. People are worried about their **jobs**. (P2, May, 2018)*

*Faculty feel a **lack of respect** by other faculty and these have caused conflicts. One senior faculty tried to impose their **power** over less-senior faculty and the less-senior faculty **felt disrespected**. This type of conflict occurs quite frequently. (P3, May, 2018)*

*I have two large **emotionally-driven conflicts**. People with abrasive personalities, and people who assume they have all the **power** within the organization. (SR22, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

*One of my faculty members felt that his **job** was in jeopardy and had a breakdown in my office. He said that he would be unable to get another job at his age. (P4, May, 2018)*

*Emotional conflicts include faculty **feeling slighted**. (SR10, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

*Faculty **self-interest**. (SR2, Online Questionnaire, March, 2018)*

The conceptual frameworks presented in this study distinguish five major styles of handling conflict, including collaboration/integration, compromising, accommodating, avoiding and dominating. Participants of this study most frequently selected the Collaborating/Integrating style of conflict handling when they were asked to describe their interpersonal style. The Dominating style, in this particular study, was not selected as a style in any of the data collection methods. One possible reason for this could be due to the negative undertone and undesirable connotation of the term, dominating.

Furthermore, when provided with an option to select more than one conflict handling style, 50% of administrators chose to do so. This suggests that administrators may feel that they use more than one style, depending on the context, situation and other limitations, such as time or resources.

Summary of the Results

Several themes emerged in this study about how higher education administrators perceive, describe, and develop conflict handling styles. The participants of this study perceive that conflict handling is important to learn in order for them to be effective in their position. However, participants relied most often on observing others and self-teaching methods in order to learn their interpersonal conflict handling styles. They characterized a number of conflicts, both task conflicts and emotional conflicts, that occurred most frequently within their department as disagreements about processes, goals, funding, as well as disagreements about the lack of effective communication or a lack of positive relationships. Several of interviewees in this study identified a number of conflicts that they handled are perceived to be rooted in conflicts that occur between faculty in sub-groups within their departments.

Higher education administrators describe task conflict with colleagues within their department as conflict over resources, processes and department goals.

Administrators spoke about task conflicts as ongoing and regularly occurring discussions that are a common function of a department. Some participants alluded to barriers to progress when task conflicts turned into emotional conflicts due to the lack of trust in relationships between individuals or groups of individuals. Finally, higher education administrators describe the term emotional conflict as conflict over job security, job

position, promotion, hiring, and perception of a lack of respect. This form of conflict seemed to be described as conflict results in deep, unresolvable disagreements, causing significant, sometimes long-lasting, impediments to progress within a department.

The themes that were revealed through this analytical process will be explored further to help answer the research questions in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to examine how higher education administrators perceive conflict handling within their departments. This chapter includes a discussion of major themes that emerged from the research findings along with the limitations of the study, and principal conclusions that can be drawn. This chapter also closes with a brief discussion about the potential areas for future research.

Discussion about the Findings

Department administrators in higher administration face numerous, varying responsibilities and encounter different forms of conflicts with their colleagues. The higher education workplace was chosen as the context of this study due to the importance of understanding the impact of interpersonal conflict within departments that may experience limitations in resources, differences in opinions about resource allocation, as well as differences in opinions about the goals of the department. Additionally, most current studies about conflict handling focus on the business environment and several of the studies are quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. This study was developed to explore the perceptions of administrators in higher education about their conflict handling styles.

For this study, department administrators were asked to respond to a questionnaire and provided demographic information as well as data about their perceived conflict handling styles. Administrators who were interviewed were also asked to provide responses to a case study vignette and provide their curricula vitae for review in order to

understand their perceptions about conflict handling in their departments. Following oral coding techniques along with careful data reduction techniques, the following themes regarding the description of conflict handling and the development of conflict handling styles developed from the research in this study:

- Administrators perceive that learning how to handle conflicts is important
- Administrators perceive that conflicts occur over goals, processes, communication, relationships, and funding
- Administrators perceive that conflicts occur between sub-groups within the department
- Administrators describe their conflict handling style as collaborating/integrating and compromising
- Administrators develop their conflict handling styles by observing others, self-teaching, and discussions with peers
- Administrators describe task conflict as conflict over resources, processes, and goals
- Administrators describe emotional conflict as conflict over issues related to self-interest, job security, job position, job performance, promotion, power struggles, hiring, and a perception of a lack of respect.

Learning How to Handle Conflicts is Important

Administrators in departments hold responsibilities to serve the executives in the institution as well as to serve and lead the faculty and staff members within their departments. As a result, administrators are required to make difficult decisions about how to allocate resources, maintain quality research and teaching, and develop impartial processes for hiring and promotion. Higher education institutions are potentially plagued with conflict due to their many levels, rules and regulations, specialized disciplines, segmented rewards, autonomy, and high interdependence (Gmelch, 1995, p. 36).

Department administrators are placed in positions to manage the conflicts that arise when having to make difficult decisions. However, most department chairs are often unprepared for these responsibilities and also unaware of their own conflict management style (Stanley & Algert, 2007; Hecht, 2004; Whitsett, 2007; Cullen & Harris, 2008).

The findings from this research study suggest that participants perceive that it is important to learn how to handle conflict with colleagues. This is a significant finding since 100% of the survey respondents, all 32 respondents, selected that learning how to handle conflicts is extremely important. One interview participant also reflected on the need to resolve conflicts on the first day of taking the administrator role. She spoke about how she had simply used her instincts to determine a course of action, and felt that it was urgent and that there was no time to collaborate. She did not even recognize that there could have been options for the method used to handle a conflict.

Interestingly, this finding does align well with research maintaining the need for administrators to learn their conflict styles in order to be able to recognize the options available to them when making decisions and handling conflicts. Gmelch (1995) asserts that one of the first steps that a department chair must take toward a positive and constructive conflict style is “to recognize the nature and causes of conflict in the department and university setting” (p. 35). The department chair holds the responsibility to create a culture for the department and to assist employees when they need to manage conflicts.

In higher education, training and professional development activities, specifically associated with handling conflicts, could better equip administrators to face the challenges associated with conflicts within their departments. According to research,

when supervisors were taught about conflict management strategies their stress levels decreased significantly because they had the tools, such as relevant communications skills, to deal with the conflict (Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002). Conflicts are inevitable, thus learning one's style and approach in different situations could raise awareness and understanding about the best practices related to handling conflicts. Furthermore, learning how to handle conflicts can more effectively lead to overcoming the barriers associated with everyday higher education leadership.

Conflicts Occur Over Goals, Processes, Communication, Relationships and Funding

Higher education administrators are often placed in complex management and leadership roles requiring them to make decisions and handle conflicts about department budgets, plans, and staffing, evaluating performance, reporting data, and allocating resources (Aziz et al, 2005). Administrators were asked how they would characterize the different types of conflicts that they encounter in their role as a department head. In the online survey, 22.08% of the respondents characterized conflicts that occurred within their department as disagreements about processes, 20.78% about goals, and 15.58% about funding. Furthermore, 16.88% of respondents also identified conflicts due to a lack of effective communication and 16.88% due to a lack of positive relationships.

Interview participants described both conflicts that occurred between faculty and also conflicts that they experienced. For this study, the researcher focused specifically on the accounts associated with the interpersonal conflicts that the administrator handled. The specific types of conflicts that survey and interview participants identified occurred over decisions about resource distribution, funding, the way in which the workload was distributed, and the goals or the direction of the department. One interview participant

articulated challenges associated with explaining the reasoning for the decisions made by the executive offices about the resources that they allocate to the department. The interviewee stated that this was a frequent type of conflict.

Research participants also characterized conflicts that occur due to a lack of effective communication and also the lack of positive relationships. Participants explained how the lack of transparency about resources or the operation of the department caused some of these problems related with communication, confidence, reliance and dependability. An example that one of the interview participants shared was when the expectations of promotion of a faculty member were unmet. The participant explained that a faculty member within their department seemed to lose trust because the administration was unable to provide a job promotion. The participant said that the criteria for advancement was explained, but that the faculty seemed to feel that it was solely the decision of the department administrator and that it was unfair.

The characterization of the types of conflict identified in this study are in alignment with O'Connor (1978) who states that faculty needs and resources are sources of conflict. The findings from this study also corroborate Tjoswold's (1978) notion that although faculty and administrators in higher education may share common goals, such as to increase the competence of students, they may still experience conflicts over the methods, or processes, by which to reach those goals. Moreover, expert researchers, including Morrison (2008) and Simons and Peterson (2000), have proposed that determinants associated with conflict include communication, as suggested by the findings in this study.

Conflicts Occur between Sub-groups within the Department

A limited amount of resources to be shared among colleagues sets the stage for increased conflict (Gmelch, 1995, p. 37). If faculty perceive that they lose resources if another faculty within the department gains resources, the department administrator will likely have to manage this conflict. In this study, all four interviewee participants specifically identified certain conflicts that they handled because of faculty who perceived differences in either resource distribution or recognition between their own subgroup in the department and another subgroup in the department. One administrator stated that the clinical faculty and the research faculty approached her with conflicts to handle. Another administrator explained how the symphony faculty and band faculty often approached her with conflicts to handle about funding and personnel resources. Disagreements over resource allocation between the astrophysics and the biophysics subgroups caused conflicts for another administrator to handle. Morrison (2008) stated that one determinant associated with organizational conflict is competition.

The notion that conflicts may stem from faculty from different department subgroups is an interesting finding. Subgroups are often separations that are designed within departments, simply denoting different subfields or teams. It would be fascinating to study the impact of the creation of subgroups. For example, if subgroups did not exist, would faculty perceive that they were one group and would fewer conflicts surface? Another question to investigate is if the perceived competition between subgroups were to be eliminated, would fewer conflicts exist? According to Rubin and Pruitt (1986), if individuals hold collective norms and shared aspirations, they are less likely to experience conflict. Since conflicts associated with subgroups was not a focus of this

study, the amount of data collected related to this theme was limited. However, the theme is worth noting since all four interviewees recognized conflicts because of faculty who perceived differences in either resource distribution or recognition between their own subgroup in the department and another subgroup in the department. Further investigation and data collection is recommended to explore this topic further.

Administrators' Conflict Handling Style are Collaborating/Integrating and Compromising

The theory related to conflict handling identifies the five general conflict handling styles as: (a) Collaborating/Integrating, (b) Compromising, (c) Accommodating/Obliging, (d) Avoiding, and (e) Dominating. This study aligns with the extensive work of Rahim and his colleagues (Rahim, 1983; Rahim, 1997; Rahim, 2001; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979; Rahim and Magner, 1995), as well as with the Thomas-Kilmann conflict handling model (Thomas, 1976; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978).

In the collected data, four of the five dimensions did emerge from within the responses from the participants. This study did find that the Collaborative/Integrating style of handling conflicts was selected most often, 47.92%, by survey respondents. The Compromising style of handling conflicts was selected next most frequently, 29.17%, by survey respondents. The Accommodating/Obliging style of handling conflicts was selected less frequently at 14.58%, and the Avoiding style was selected at only 4.17%. The Dominating style was selected at 0.00%. Furthermore, all four interview participants used the terms Collaborate and Compromise when describing their methods of handling conflicts in a variety of different situations.

Another term that all four interview participants used was ‘Listen’ or ‘Listening’ when discussing their approach to handling a conflict. Although this is not a specific term found in the conceptual model identified in this study, the terms Listen and Listening were used so frequently that the terms are worth noting. These terms were often used by participants in the context of their method prior to handling a conflict or as a part of a process.

The Collaborating/Integrating style implies focusing on shared points and goals rather than personal interests and involves working through the conflict with creativity, flexibility, and open communication and information exchange in order to achieve the best (or at least acceptable) solution for all concerned parties. Participants provided examples of how they were open to discussion with faculty when a conflict arose and that they were willing to make changes, if needed. Interview participants responding to the case study vignettes also discussed that they would try to seek evidence or find facts when working with colleagues to overcome a conflict. In the data analysis, 42% of the holistic codes supported that administrators describe their conflict handling style as Collaborating/Integrating.

The Compromising style was also selected by survey respondents and also identified by interviewees as another approach that was used to handle conflicts. Compromising is in the center of the conceptual models across concern for self and concern for the other. According to the experts in conflict handling, the Compromise style refers to a modest interest to pursue a mutually acceptable outcome, but without making a concerted effort to reach it. Thus, both parties may experience some gains and some losses by allowing give-and-take whereby both parties give up some important

needs or goals because they found that some suboptimal outcome must be accepted.

Theorists state that individuals often use this style when willingness to solve the problem is not sufficiently high or when pressures involving time limitations or high costs present themselves. Compromising involves such tactics as appealing to fairness, suggestion of a trade-off, maximizing wins and minimizing losses, and offering a quick, short-term solution.

Several participants in this study expressed their willingness to compromise when handling a conflict when allocating resources between different subgroups within their department, but two interviewees specifically pointed out that this was not their first choice. These two participants articulated that they would first try to listen and understand to work with the faculty to find a joint solution. Another interviewee explained how she often asks for faculty to assist in efforts in exchange for resources, which is more of a transactional approach. In this study, 22% of the holistic codes supported that administrators describe their conflict handling style as Compromising.

The Accommodating style of conflict handling (low concern for self and high concern for others) is characterized by an incomplete evaluation of alternatives and a one-sided process of giving-in which decrease the decision-making quality (Kuhn & Poole, 2000). When one uses an accommodating style, he neglects his own concern to satisfy the concern of the other party, and this style is characterized by such actions as giving in to others' positions and not advocating for one's own position. Several participants expressed that they specifically accommodated in situations in which they felt that there were limited or no other alternatives. In this study, 16% of the holistic

codes supported that administrators describe their conflict handling style as Accommodating.

The Avoiding style of handling conflicts describes behavior that serves to minimize addressing the conflict explicitly, either ignoring it or quickly shifting conversation to a different issue. According to Rahim (2002), the avoiding style has been associated with withdrawal, buck-passing, or sidestepping situations. The participants in this study expressed that they may select this style of handling a conflict if they are time limited. Although many research studies point to different reasons, including the power of the parties involved or the perceived importance of an issue (Mastenbroek, 1993; Masters and Albright, 2002) that may lead to the selection of a specific style, the topic of limited time as a reason has not specifically been investigated.

The Dominating style has been identified with win-lose orientation or related to the term Forcing. Putnam and Wilson (1982) assert that maneuvers commonly used to resolve conflicts in this style include commanding communication, an unempathetic disposition, and concern only for one's own position. The Dominating style was not selected by the participants in this study. According to research, the Dominating style was more identified through observation or in studies for which subordinates were able to provide data about their supervisors. In this study, observations were not used and the data was collected about peer-to-peer conflicts, so data was not collected from subordinates.

Overall, this research complements the existing body of knowledge on the conceptual framework and the terminology for conflict handling styles that were used for

this study. However, it is important to note that the Dominating style of handling conflict was not selected in the survey responses, the interviews, or the vignette responses. Since this is a study dependent on self-reporting, the researcher wondered whether the term 'Dominating' holds a negative connotation and is simply a term that participants are unlikely to choose as an option. More research should be conducted to see what the situations and conditions are that administrators might be observed to be using the Dominating style of handling conflicts.

Furthermore, the findings in this study did not support the research findings of Chusmir and Mills (1989) that suggest that regardless of hierarchical position, females used the Compromise conflict handling style more frequently, followed by Avoidance, Collaboration, Accommodation, and Competing. In contrast, female administrators in this study selected the Collaborating/Integrating style most frequently.

Another interesting development from the question about how participants describe their conflict handling style was identified. When participants were provided with the opportunity to define their own method of handling conflicts, 36% of the participants also used the term 'Listening'. When asked to respond to a scenario that was a task conflict about a process, all four interviewees selected Collaborating/Integrating as a form of handling the conflict by the character in the vignette presenting a scenario. Furthermore, when asked to respond to a scenario depicting a conflict that is about terminating someone from their position, all four interviewees selected 'Other' and identified their own method as a form of handling the conflict by the character in the scenario. Furthermore, when participants were asked to describe their conflict handling style or styles, they selected more than one style approximately 50% of the time.

These findings indicate that participants consider shifting their conflict handling style depending on the situation. One possible explanation for this finding is that the conflict handling style changes, or that different conflict handling styles may be employed in different situations. Masters and Albright (2002) identify that contextual factors are relevant to conflict and indicate that knowledge about the issue, power of parties, and interests of parties are central to conflict handling styles. Another study conducted to examine conflict styles suggests that although each individual has a predominant conflict style, this style can be altered depending on a given situation (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Other theorists have reasoned that approaches to conflict are strategies (Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988; Pruitt, 1983) or intentions (Thomas, 1979), rather than styles, selected to match the circumstances or the relationship, and, therefore, should not be treated as stable traits. This is interesting because ongoing discussions exist in conflict handling and conflict management research about whether interpersonal conflict is a style, defined as a personal trait, or a strategy.

Mikkelsen and Clegg (2018), in their research examining organizational conflict, stated that conflict was traditionally explored as an interpersonal phenomenon, premised on person-to-person relations. However, they propose a constructivist perspective in which they argue that conflict should be studied as an organizational phenomenon. They emphasize that conflict, along with its interpretation, and the forms it may take, is a style shaped by the context in which it occurs. Participants of this study echoed this idea during interviews when they expressed that they regularly shifted their style based on the situation. One participant explained that many factors contributed to his method of handling a conflict, including the level of perceived importance of the situation.

The topic of contextual factors impacting the selection of conflict handling style requires further investigation.

Administrators Observe Others and Self-Teach Conflict Handling

The development of interpersonal conflict style in an administrator in higher education is a topic that has received little attention. The researcher was unable to locate specific research about how administrators perceive the development of their conflict handling style. However, by investigating this topic, the researcher felt that the findings might help lend understanding to the current process by which administrators develop and learn how to handle conflicts, and in turn, help researchers relate identity to conflict handling. In the process of collecting this information from interviews, the researcher listened to participants reflecting on their childhood experiences as well as other experiences related, specifically, to the development of listening skills. One administrator discussed how she learned to listen carefully and to bring people together because she had to conduct orchestras at a young age. She connected her experiences about teaching music to learning how to listen carefully and offer constructive feedback as an administrator. Another faculty member relied on a cohort of other administrators and stated that she would simply pick up the phone to ask for their advice about specific situations.

In this study, higher education administrators stated they rely primarily on the observation of peers and former administrators as well as self-teaching, such as reading or consulting with peer, as a way to develop their conflict handling styles. Only a few participants expressed that they had received training, and the training they received was

more broadly identified as leadership and management training, rather specific training on conflict handling.

Task Conflict is Conflict over Resources, Processes, and Goals

Task conflict is defined in literature as a divergence of opinion or interests over work-related topics (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Task conflict refers to task-related disagreements which, as well as having potential detrimental effects, may encourage the exchange of ideas and improve decision quality (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). The literature about task conflict in higher education refers to conflicts occurring over resources, such as budgets or physical space, or processes, such as how business is conducted within a department.

The findings from this study align closely with literature about describing task conflict in organizations. In the data analysis, 59% of the holistic codes support that higher education administrators describe task conflict as conflict over resources, processes, and departmental goals. Study participants expressed frequent conflicts over how money is allocated, teaching schedules, teaching policies, decisions about the curriculum, work allocation, sabbatical schedules, teaching load, textbook choices, office hours, absent or late faculty, program development and goals, and the implementation of new courses. Interviewees in this study also expressed that task conflicts were relatively common, less stress inducing, and usually solvable.

Current research is ongoing about personality characteristics, attitudes, communication, and interactions of team members for which task conflict may result in positive outcomes (Simons & Peterson, 2000). As long as team communication remains positive, with respectful and inclusive dialogue, and trust between faculty and

administration is maintained, research indicates that task conflict may lead to positive outcomes. Specifically, in team conflict research, the concept that task conflict can turn into relationship conflict is explored (Choi & Cho, 2011). Research also shows that task conflict may be mitigated by means of improved interpersonal factors, such as team trust and team communication (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Emotional Conflict is Related to Job Security, Position, Performance and Promotion, Power Struggles, Hiring, and a Perception of a Lack of Respect

Emotional conflict, sometimes referred to as relationship conflict, includes disagreements and divergence of interests or opinions stemming from personality clashes and interpersonal incompatibility. Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) first distinguished between conflicts based on task and those based on interpersonal relationships. A more recent multidimensional scaling study by Pinkley (1990) supported the concept that dimensions of conflict include relationship versus task conflict. Jehn (1995) found further support for the task and relationship focused dimensions of conflict.

In the data analysis, 49% of the holistic codes support the finding that administrators describe emotional conflict as conflict over issues related to self-interest, job security, position, performance and promotion, power struggles, hiring, and a perception of a lack of respect. Faculty hiring decisions were another source of conflict among faculty in several departments, a finding supported by Lumpkin (2004). Study participants stated that faculty worked less effectively and produced lower quality outcomes when emotional conflict is present. A critical aspect of the finding highlights that participants expressed deep concern over emotional conflicts and stated that they were often long-lasting and created significant barriers toward progress. In addition,

interview participants reflected on emotional conflicts and stated that they are often left unresolved unless one of the parties leaves the department. Solutions to emotional conflicts cause profound stress for department administrators and ongoing problems for faculty. Han and Harms (2010) found that relationship conflict had the most negative effects on productivity. The impacts are widespread because these conflicts can impact students, staff, other administrators, and the reputation of the institution as a whole. More research about how administrators may approach handling emotional conflicts must be pursued.

Study Limitations

Although this study may be able to provide some insight into conflict handling styles in higher education, this research has limitations. First, the phenomenological approach was used, and, although multiple open-ended question responses, interview responses, case study vignette responses, and Curricula Vitae data were evaluated, the number of survey respondents and interview participants was limited. Second, data was gathered with self-report measures, so the data was not confirmed by observation. Third, the narratives are described by the participants and are a reflection of the participants' perceptions and experiences. Other interpretations of the conflicts are possible, the final interpretation of the data is limited by the statements made by the participants. Finally, the researcher also speculated about whether respondents who offered to volunteer several hours of their time to serve as an interview participant for this study would inherently demonstrate a collaborative nature that would bias the study. Despite these limitations, the conflict handling phenomenon is not unique to the higher education

industry, therefore, the findings in this research may be useful when studying different populations within higher education and in other industries, as well.

Conclusions

Three primary conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study.

The first conclusion, one of a practical nature, is that higher education administrators would benefit from more formal training about how to handle conflicts. This study suggests that administrators learn conflict handling by observing others and that they self-teach. Research-based training focused on building relationships, effective problem-solving, careful listening, and positive communication can help administrators learn about and hone conflict handling styles.

A second conclusion that can be reached from the data in this study is that a chosen conflict style is dependent on the perceived situation. Participants of this study selected more than one handling style for different situations. The perceived situation, according to current research, may include a number of variables that could impact one's conflict handling style, including trust in other parties, cultural differences, power differences, the importance of the matter, and prior experience working with an individual.

Finally, a third conclusion that can be identified from this research is that emotional conflicts can result in unresolved conflicts that can negatively impact the culture of a department for a long period of time. Understanding the nature of emotional conflicts and potential resolutions could help overcome barriers to progress in institutions.

Future Work

The practical implications of this study are applicable to both scholars and practitioners in the higher education community as well as leaders in the business community who are interested in informing their work in academia or practice concerning workplace conflict.

Much potential exists for further research in conflict handling in higher education in varied contexts using different methods. The concept of situational variances in conflict handling styles could be explored through both self-report measures and observations. Both superiors and subordinates in higher education departments could be surveyed and interviewed to include multiple perspectives and deeper insights about conflict situations. The researcher recommends that future studies include a larger sample group. A study performed in different departments in large and small institutions could shed light about whether similar forms of conflict exist within higher education.

Further research can be conducted about whether the current terminology used in conflict handling strategy should be extended. In this study, a salient finding from the vignettes showed that the interview participants did not select any of the existing terms, Collaboration/Integration, Avoiding, Accommodating, Compromising, or Dominating, when responding to a situation in which a faculty member was being terminated by an administrator. Perhaps an exploration of other terms, such as Empathizing, Listening, or Supporting, should be investigated. Furthermore, other terms for the Dominating style may be explored in future research to see if other terms better align with how participants may characterize their conflict handling style.

Also, future studies could explore whether the current frameworks for conflict handling should be adjusted to create a continuum, one between Non-collaborative and

Collaborative. Within this continuum, participants could express the conflict styles or approaches that they exhibit.

This study advances the scientific knowledge base by examining the perceptions of higher education administrators about their conflict handling styles. By articulating the various situations and contexts in which conflicts arise in higher education and by providing research-based recommendations of how to handle the conflicts, future research might be able to provide guidance to administrators, not only about the various conflict styles or approaches that they may take, but also which styles may be employed to reach tangible and long-lasting resolutions.

References

- Allen, D. G. (1995). Hermeneutics: Philosophical traditions and nursing practice research. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 8(4), 174-182.
- Amason, A. C. (1996). Distinguishing the effects of functional and dysfunctional conflict on strategic decision making: resolving a paradox for top management teams, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 39, 123-48.
- Antonioni, D. (1999). Relationship between the Big Five Personality Factors and Conflict Management Styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 9(4): 336-355.
- Aziz, S., Mullins, M. E., Balzer, W. K., Grauer, E., Burnfield, J. L., Lodato, M. A., & Cohen-Powless, M. A. (2005). Understanding the training needs of department chairs. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(5), 571-593.
doi:10.1080/03075070500249260
- Bartol, G. M., Parrish, R. S., & McSweeney, M. (2001). Effective conflict management begins with knowing your style. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development*, 17(1), 34-40.
- Bennett, J. B., & Figuli, D. J. (1993). *Enhancing departmental leadership: The roles of the chairperson*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx.
- Bernauer, J. A. (2015). Opening the Ears that Science Closed: Transforming Qualitative Data Using Oral Coding. *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 20, No. 4
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1964). *The managerial grid*. Houston, TX: Gulf.
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1970). The fifth achievement. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 6, 413-426.

- Booth, D. J. (1982). *The Department Chair. Professional Development and Role Conflict*. AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 10, 1982. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Booth, R. Z. (1982). Conflict resolution. *Nursing Outlook*. September/October. 447-453.
- Brewer, N., Mitchell, P., & Weber, N. (2002). Gender role, organizational status, and conflict management styles. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 78-94.
- Broido, E. M., & Manning, K. (2002). Philosophical foundations and current theoretical perspectives in qualitative research. *Journal of College Student Development*. 43(4). 434-445.
- Brusko, L. (2010). Organized chaos: A survey of conflict management strategies, gender roles, and status in an organizational setting. *University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 13, 1 - 11.
- Buchanan, D., & Huczynski, A. A. (2010). *Organizational behavior* (7th ed.). Edinburgh, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Choi K., & Cho, B. (2011). Competing hypotheses analyses of the associations between group task conflict and group relationship conflict. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32, 1106-1126. doi:10.1002/job.733
- Chusmir, L. H., & Mills, J. (1989). Gender differences in conflict resolution styles of managers: At work and at home. *Sex Roles*, 20(3/4), 149-163.

- Cohen, M. Z. (1987). A historical overview of the phenomenological movement. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 19(1), 31-34.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Corwin, R. G. (1969). Patterns of organizational conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 14(41), 507-520
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage Publications.
- Crotty, M. (2005). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cullen, R., & Harris, M. (2008). Department chair development: A catalyst for change. *Department Chair*, 19(1), 21-24.
- Dreu C. K. W., & Van Vianen A. E. (2001). Managing relationship conflict and the effectiveness of organizational teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, 309-328. doi:10.1002/job.71

- Dreu, C. K., and Vliert, E. V. (1997). *Using conflict in organizations*. London: Sage Publications.
- Deutsch, M. (1949), A theory of cooperation and competition. *Human Relations*, Vol. 2, pp. 129-51.
- Deutsch, M. (1973). *The Resolution of Conflict*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT
- Evan, W. (1965). Conflict and performance in R&D organizations. *Industrial Management Review*, Vol. 7, pp. 37-46.
- Finch, J. (1987). The Vignette Technique in Survey Research. *Sociology* 21(1): 105–14.
- Follett, M. P. (1940). *Constructive Conflict*. In H.C. Metcalf and L. Urwick (Eds.), *Dynamic Administration: The collected papers of Mary Parker Follet* (pp. 1-20), New York: Harper.
- Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 28(2), 235-260.
- Gmelch, W. H. (1995), Department chairs under siege: Resolving the web of conflict. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 1995: 35-42.
doi:10.1002/he.36919959207
- Gmelch, W. H., & Carroll, J. B. (1991). The three Rs of conflict management for department chairs and faculty. *Innovative Higher Education*, 16, 107–123.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Goleman D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books, New York, NY.

- Gross, M. A., & Guerrero, L. K. (2000). Managing conflict appropriately and effectively: An application of the competence Model to Rahim's organizational conflict styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 11(3), 200-226. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/199036514?accountid=14667>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). London: Sage.
- Guetzkow, H., & Gyr, J. (1954). Human Relations. *Human Relations*, 7(3), 367-382.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700307>
- Guohong, H., & Harms, P.D. (2010). "Team identification, trust and conflict: a mediation model", *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 21 Issue: 1, pp.20-43, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1108/10444061011016614>
- Hall, J. (1969). *Conflict management survey: a survey on one's characteristic reaction to and handling of conflicts between himself and others*. Conroe, Texas: Teleometrics International.
- Hecht, I. W. D. (2004). The professional development of department chairs. *New Directions for Higher Education*, (126), 27-44.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Hocker, J.L., and Wilmot, W.W. (1995), *Interpersonal Conflict*, 4th ed., Brown and Benchmark, Madison, WI.

- Holt, J. L., & DeVore, C. J. (2005). Culture, gender, organizational role, and styles of conflict resolution: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(2), 165-196.
- Hughes, R. (1998). 'Considering the Vignette Technique and its Application to a Study of Drug Injecting and HIV Risk and Safer Behaviour', *Sociology of Health & Illness* 20(3): 381-400.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans). Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*. First book (F. Kersten, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1913).
- Janssen, O., Van De Vliert, E. & Veenstra, C. (1999). "How task and person conflict shape the role of positive interdependence in management teams", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 25, pp. 117-42.
- Jehn, K., & Bendersky, C. (2003). Intragroup conflict in organizations: A contingency perspective on the conflict- outcome relationship. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 24, 187-242.
- Jenkins, N., Bloor, M., Fischer, J., Berney, L., & Neale, J. (2010). Putting it in context: the use of vignettes in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, 10(2), 175-198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109356737>
- Jones, R. E., & White, C. S. (1985). Relationships among personality, conflict resolution styles, and task effectiveness. *Group and Organization Studies*. 10(2) 152-167.

- Kilman, R. H., & Thomas, K. W. (1975). Interpersonal conflict-handling behavior as reflections of Jungian personality dimensions. *Psychological Reports*, 37, 971-980.
- Kilman, R. H., & Thomas, K. W. (1977). Developing a Forced-Choice Measure of Conflict-Handling Behavior: The MODE Instrument. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 37(2), 309–325.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447703700204>
- Kleiman, S. (2004). Phenomenology: to wonder and search for meanings. *Nurse Researcher* 11(4): 7-19.
- Knapp, M. L., Putnam, L. L., & Davis, L. J. (1988). Measuring interpersonal conflict in *The International Journal of Conflict Management* 2000, Vol.11, No.1, pp. 32-55
21/23 organizations: Where do we go from here? *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1, 414-429.
- Kozan, M. K. (2002). Subcultures and conflict management style. *Management International Review*, 42(1), 89-105.
- Kuhn, T., & Poole, M. (2000). Do conflict management styles affect group decision making? Evidence from a longitudinal field study. *Human Communication Research*, 26: 558-590. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2000.tb00769.x
- Kurdek, L. (1994). Conflict Resolution Styles in Gay, Lesbian, Heterosexual Nonparent, and Heterosexual Parent Couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 56(3), 705-722. doi:10.2307/352880
- Lawrence, R. R., & Lorsch, J. W. (1967). *Organization and environment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.

- Lawrence, P. R., & Lorsch, J. W. (1986). *Organization and environment: Managing differentiation and integration / Paul R. Lawrence and Jay W. Lorsch ; with the research assistance of James S. Garrison*. Harvard Business School classics: 1.
- Lippitt, G. L. (1982). Managing conflict in today's organizations. *Training and Development Journal*, 36(7): 67-74.
- Lonsdale, A. J., & Bardsley, W. N. (1982). The Administrative Tasks and Professional Development Needs of Heads of Academic Departments. Braddon, ACT: *Australian Conference of Principals of Colleges of Advanced Education*.
- Lumpkin, A. (2004). Enhancing the effectiveness of department chairs. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 75(9), 44-48.
- Marion, L. A. (1995). Conflict management and personality type among community college executives (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 1995). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 56 (05A), 1606.
- Mastenbroek, W. F. G. (1993). *Conflict Management and Organizational Development*. New York City, NY: Wiley & Sons Publishing.
- Masters, M. F., & Albright, R. R. (2002). *The complete guide to conflict resolution in the workplace*. New York City: NY, AMACOM Publishing.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mikkelsen, E. N., & Clegg, S. (2018). Unpacking the Meaning of Conflict in Organizational Conflict Research. *Negotiation Conflict Manage Resolution*, 11: 185-203.doi: 10.1111/mcmr.12127

- Munduate, L., Luque, P., & Barón, M. (1997). Styles of handling interpersonal conflict: an observational study, *Psicothema*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 145-53.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Third edition.). California: SAGE.
- Mills, J., Robey, D., & Smith, L. (1985). Conflict-handling and personality dimensions of project-management personnel. *Psychological Reports*, 57, 1135-1143.
- Moberg, P. J. (2001). Linking conflict strategy to the five-factor model: Theoretical and empirical foundations. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12(1), 47-68.
- Morrison, J. (2008). The relationship between emotional intelligence competencies and preferred conflict-handling styles. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 16(8), 974-983.
- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O'Connor, A. B. (1978). Sources of conflict for faculty members. *Journal of Nursing Education*. 17. 35-38.
- Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 274-287.
- Papa, M. J., & Canary, D. J. (1995). *Conflict in organizations: A competence-based approach*. In A.M. Nicotera (Ed) *Conflict and organizations*. Communicative Processes, pp: 153-179. New York: State University of New York Press.

- Pelled, L. H. (1996). Demographic diversity, conflict, and work group outcomes: an intervening process theory. *Organizational Science*, Vol. 7 No. 6, pp. 615-31.
- Pelled, L. H., Eisenhardt, K. M., & Xin, K. (1999). Exploring the black box: an analysis of work group diversity, conflict, and performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 44, pp. 1-28.
- Putnam, L.L. (1994), Productive conflict: negotiation as implicit coordination. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 5, pp. 285-99.
- Pinkley, R.L. (1990). Dimensions of conflict frame: disputant interpretations of conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 75, pp. 117-26.
- Pondy, L. (1969). Varieties of Organizational Conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 14(4), 499-505. doi:10.2307/2391586
- Portello, J. Y., & Long, B. C. (1994). Gender role orientation, ethical and interpersonal conflicts, and conflict handling styles of female managers. *Sex Roles*, 31(11/12), 683-701.
- Posthuma, R. (2013). Conflict Handling Styles. *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*. doi:10.4135/9781452276090.n43
- Pruitt, D. G., & Rubin, J. Z. (1986). *Social conflict: escalation, stalemate, and settlement*. New York: Random House.
- Putnam, L. L. (1994). Productive conflict: negotiation as implicit coordination. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 5, pp. 285-99.
- Putnam, L. L., & Wilson, S. R. (1982). "Communicative strategies in organizational conflict: reliability and validity of a measurement scale", in Burgoon, M. (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook*, Vol. 6, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA, pp. 629-52.

- Rahim, M.A. (1983). A Measure of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 26(2), 368-376.
- Rahim, M. A. (1986). Referent Role and Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 126: 79-86.
- Rahim, M. A. (1992). *Managing conflict in organizations* (2nd Ed.). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Rahim, M. A. (2001). *Managing conflict in organizations* (3rd ed.). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- Rahim, M.A. (2001). *Managing Organizational Conflict. Challenges for Organization Development and Change*. In R.T. Golembiewski (ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior* (2nd rev. ed., pp. 365-387). New York: Marcel Dekker.
- Rahim, M. A. (2002). Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13: 206–235. doi:10.1108/eb022874
- Rahim, M. A. (2004). *Rahim organizational conflict inventory-II: Forms A, B, and C*. Bowling Green, KY: Center for Advanced Studies in Management.
- Rahim, M. A. (2011). *Managing Conflict in Organizations* (4th ed.). New Brunswick (CA.): Transaction.
- Rahim, M. A., & Bonoma, T. V. (1979). Managing Organizational Conflict: A Model for Diagnosis and (1979). Managing Organizational Conflict: A Model for Diagnosis Intervention. *Psychological Reports*, 44: 1323-1344.

- Rahim, M. A., & Buntzman, G. F. (1989). Supervisory Power Bases, Styles of Handling Conflict with Subordinates, and Subordinate Compliance and Satisfaction. *Journal of Psychology, 123*: 195-210.
- Rahim, M. A., & Magner, N. R. (1995). Confirmatory factor analysis of the styles of handling interpersonal conflict: First-order factor model and its invariance across groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80*(1), 122-132.
- Rahim, M. A., & Psenicka, C. (2002). A model of emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies: A study in seven countries. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 10*(4), 302-326.
- Ramsay, M. A. E. (2001). Conflict in the health care workplace. *Baylor University Medical Center proceedings, 14*(2), 138 – 139.
- Robbins, S. P. (1974). *Managing Organizational Conflict: A nontraditional approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shell, R. G. (2000). *Bargaining for advantage: Negotiation strategies for reasonable people*. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing.
- Sorenson, R. L., Morse E. A., & Savage, G. T. (1999). A test of the motivations underlying choice of conflict strategies in the dual-concern model. The *International Journal of Conflict Management, 10* (1), pp. 25-44.
- Schweiger, D. M., Sandberg, W. R., & Rechner, P. L. (1989). Experiential effects of dialectical inquiry, devil's advocacy, and consensus approaches to strategic decision making. *Academy of Management Journal 32*(4), 745-772.

- Seidman, I. E. (1998). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Simons T. L., & Peterson, R. S. (2000). Task conflict and relationship conflict in top management teams: The pivotal role of intragroup trust. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 102-111. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.85.1.102
- Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1:1, 39-54.
- Solomon, J. L. (1987). *From Hegel to existentialism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sorenson, R. L., Morse E. A., & Savage G. T. (1999). A test of the motivations underlying choice of conflict strategies in the dual concern model. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 10 Issue 1, pp.25-44, <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022817>
- Spitzberg, B. H., Canary, D. J., & Cupach, W. R. (1994). *A Competence-based Approach to the Study of Interpersonal Conflict*. In D.D.Cahn. (Ed.), *Conflict in Personal Relationships*, 183-202. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Stanley, C. A., & Algert, N. E. (2007). An Exploratory Study of the Conflict Management Styles of Department Heads in a Research University Setting. *Innovative Higher Education*, 32(1), 49-65. doi:10.1007/s10755-007-9035-y

- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Staw, B., Sandelands, L., & Dutton, J. (1981). Threat-rigidity effects in organizational behavior: A multilevel analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 26, pp. 501-24.
- Thomas, K. W. (1976). *Conflict and conflict management*, in Dunnette, M.D. (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Rand McNally, Chicago, IL, pp. 889-935.
- Thomas, K. W. (1979). *Conflict*. In S. Kerr (Ed.), *Organizational behavior* (pp. 151-181). Columbus, Ohio: Grid.
- Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and conflict management: Reflections and update. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(3), 265–274.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030130307>
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974, 2002). *Thomas-Kilmann conflict MODE instrument*. Tuxedo, NY: Xicom.
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1978). Comparison of Four Instruments Measuring Conflict Behavior. *Psychological Reports*, 42(3c), 1139–1145.
<https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1978.42.3c.1139>
- Thomas, K. W., & Schmidt, W. H. (1976). A Survey of Managerial Interests with Respect to Conflict. *Academy of Management Journal*, 19: 315-318.
- Thomas K. W., Thomas G. F., & Schaubhut, N. (2008). Conflict styles of men and women at six organization levels. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 19 Issue: 2, pp.148-166, <https://doi.org/10.1108/10444060810856085>

- Tjosvold, D. (1978). Cooperation and Conflict between Administrators and Teachers - ProQuest. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 12(1), 138–148.
- Tjosvold, D. (1992). *The Conflict-positive Organization: Stimulate Diversity and Create Unity*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA.
- Tjosvold, D. (2008). The Conflict-Positive Organization: It Depends upon Us. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(1), 19-28.
- Valentine, P. E. B. (1995). Management of conflict: Do nurses/women handle it differently? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22, 142-149.
- Van de Vliert, E., & Kabanoff, B. (1990). Toward Theory-based Measures of Conflict Management. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33: 199-209.
- Van de Vliert, E. (1997). *Essays in social psychology. Complex interpersonal conflict behaviour: Theoretical frontiers*. Hove, England: Psychology Press/Erlbaum (UK) Taylor & Francis.
- Van Niekerk W. M., De Klerk, M., & Pires-Putter, J.K. (2017). Conflict management styles and work-related well-being among higher education employees, *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 27:3, 221-226.
- Verma, V. K., & Dewey, J. (1998). *Conflict Management*. Retrieved from http://www.iei.liu.se/pie/teio12/allmanna_filer/1.171778/conflManagementVerma.pdf
- Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization* (A.M. Henderson & T. Persons. Trans from German) New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [originally published in 1929].

Weider-Hatfield, D. (1988). Assessing the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1(3), 350–366.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318988001003005>

Whitsett, G. (2007). Perceptions of leadership styles of department chairs. *College Student Journal*, 41(2), 274-286.

Wilmot W. W., & Hocker, J. L. (1998). *Interpersonal conflict* (5th ed). Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill.

Wilmot, W. W., & Hocker, J. L. (2007). *Interpersonal conflict* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Womack, D. F. (1988). Assessing the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Survey. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1(3), 321–349.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318988001003004>

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Appendix A

Email to administrators at the American Council on Education (ACE) Leadership Academy for Department Chairs to request their assistance to send out the Modified ROCI-II (Form C) questionnaire to participants.

Dear _____,

I am currently a doctoral student in the Ed.D. Program at Southern New Hampshire University. As a part of my dissertation, I am collecting feedback from chairpersons in higher education about their conflict handling styles.

I am writing to you to request your assistance to send out a link to a qualtrics survey to the members of your organization, _____. I would greatly appreciate it if you would be able to send out a brief survey to higher education chairpersons who are a member of your organization. If you are able to do so, please contact me at

734-646-3131, pauline.khan@snhu.edu, or pbkhan@umich.edu, and I can provide the link. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pauline Khan, M.S.

Doctoral Candidate, SNHU

Appendix B

Questionnaire Confidentiality and Consent Form

Conflict Handling Survey Report

Conflict Handling Styles of Higher Education Chairpersons

Q1 - Questionnaire Confidentiality and Consent

This participant survey is a query for information services professionals in the higher education community who would be willing to participate in research titled, “Conflict Handling Styles of Chairpersons in Higher Education”. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to consider why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully and select yes or no to provide your consent below.

Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this research is to examine how department chairpersons, or department heads, describe their conflict handling styles with colleagues within their department at their institution. This research will also examine the ways in which the department chairpersons or heads develop their conflict handling styles. This survey is a modified version of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II, Form C. The data from this survey will remain strictly confidential.

Who will be asked to take part of this study?

The researcher is collecting information from chairpersons in higher education.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

Participants of this study are asked to complete a brief questionnaire. The time to complete the questionnaire is expected to be approximately 6-10 minutes.

Confidentiality

Your personal information will be held strictly confidential by the researcher. Survey responses will be collated anonymously using an identifying number. The link between your personal information and your identifying number will be known only to the researcher and stored in an encrypted file on secure media. All responses received in the study will be strictly confidential, and your identity will not be divulged. Direct quotes to free-text answers may be used as part of the study report, but all identifying information will be removed and will not be traceable back to you or to your institution.

Data Protection

Survey responses will be collected online using the survey tool, Qualtrics, utilizing a secure internet connection. Results will be downloaded to an encrypted computer to allow analysis by the researcher. Data will be stored for the duration of the research project and then deleted.

Research Ethics

The proposed research study abides by the ethical requirements of Southern New Hampshire University in the conduct of the research project. A copy of Southern New Hampshire University’s ethics committee application and decision letter is available on request. Participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no consequences for refusing to participate or for withdrawing. Thank you for reading this information and for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Pauline Khan, at Pauline.khan@snhu.edu.

I understand that I will be asked questions about my experiences and thoughts about my conflict handling styles as a part of research study and that the responses are transcribed. I understand that the transcribed data will be coded and analyzed for themes and that the themes, along with supporting evidence will be submitted to the researcher and researcher’s dissertation committee members. I understand that I will not be individually identified with any particular statement or in any specific way except as a survey participant. No attempt will be made to identify individuals in the analysis or in the report. Please check the

box marked 'yes' below, if you agree to participate in the survey about the Conflict Handling Styles of Higher Education Chairpersons.

Appendix C

Email to request questionnaire participation, Demographic Questions and Modified Conflict Handling Questionnaire

Email to request questionnaire participation

Dear Chairperson,

I am currently a doctoral student in the Ed.D. Program at Southern New Hampshire University. As a part of my dissertation, I am collecting feedback from chairpersons in higher education about their conflict handling styles. Thank you for your willingness to complete a brief survey regarding your conflict handling style with your colleagues. This information will be used for data as a part of a research project regarding the conflict handling styles of department chairpersons in higher education.

Conflict Handling Survey Report

Conflict Handling Styles of Higher Education Chairpersons

Questionnaire Confidentiality and Consent

This participant survey is a query for information services professionals in the higher education community who would be willing to participate in research titled, “Conflict Handling Styles of Chairpersons in Higher Education”. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to consider why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully and select yes or no to provide your consent below.

Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this research is to examine how department chairpersons, or department heads, describe their conflict handling styles with colleagues within their department at their institution. This research will also examine the ways in which the department chairpersons or heads develop their conflict handling styles. This survey is a modified version of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II, Form C. The data from this survey will remain strictly confidential.

Who will be asked to take part of this study?

The researcher is collecting information from chairpersons in higher education.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

Participants of this study are asked to complete a brief questionnaire. The time to complete the questionnaire is expected to be approximately 6-10 minutes.

Confidentiality

Your personal information will be held strictly confidential by the researcher. Survey responses will be collated anonymously using an identifying number. The link between your personal information and your identifying number will be known only to the researcher and stored in an encrypted file on secure media. All responses received in the study will be strictly confidential, and your identity will not be divulged. Direct quotes to free-text answers may be used as part of the study report, but all identifying information will be removed and will not be traceable back to you or to your institution.

Data Protection

Survey responses will be collected online using the survey tool, Qualtrics, utilizing a secure internet connection. Results will be downloaded to an encrypted computer to allow analysis by the researcher. Data will be stored for the duration of the research project and then deleted.

Research Ethics

The proposed research study abides by the ethical requirements of Southern New Hampshire University in the conduct of the research project. A copy of Southern New Hampshire University’s ethics committee application and decision letter is available on request. Participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no consequences for refusing to participate or for withdrawing. Thank you for reading this information and for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Pauline Khan, at Pauline.khan@snhu.edu.

I understand that I will be asked questions about my experiences and thoughts about my conflict handling styles as a part of research study and that the responses are transcribed. I understand that the transcribed data will be coded and analyzed for themes and that the themes, along with supporting evidence will be submitted to the researcher and researcher's dissertation committee members. I understand that I will not be individually identified with any particular statement or in any specific way except as a survey participant. No attempt will be made to identify individuals in the analysis or in the report. Please check the box marked 'yes' below, if you agree to participate in the survey about the Conflict Handling Styles of Higher Education Chairpersons.

Demographic Questions

Researcher: Pauline Khan, Pauline.khan@snhu.edu Southern New Hampshire University,
School of Education

Research Topic: Conflict Handling Styles of Chairpersons in Higher Education

Q1. Gender?

Q2. How many years have you served as a department administrator?

0-3 years

3-5 years

More than 5 years

Q3. What is your specific job title?

Q4. How many faculty members do you lead in your department?

Q5. Generally speaking, what are some of the responsibilities you hold as a department
chairperson?

Coordinating work with external departments

Managing and leading faculty

Scheduling courses

Solving faculty-related problems

Solving student-related problems

Planning future direction of department

Other? _____

Modified ROCI-II (Form B) Online Questionnaire
Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II, Form C
Strictly Confidential

The purpose of this research is to examine how department chairpersons or department describe their conflict handling styles with peers within their department at their institution. This research will also examine the ways in which the department chairpersons or heads develop their conflict handling styles. Finally, the research will include how a department chairperson or head describes the conditions that lead to collaboration. The data from this survey will remain strictly confidential.

Please check the appropriate box after each statement, to indicate how you handle your disagreement or conflict with your colleagues. Try to recall as many recent conflict situations as possible in ranking these statements.

Please use the following scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Somewhat Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5

1. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my peers to come up with a decision jointly..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
2. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
3. I usually accommodate the wishes of my peers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
4. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
5. I negotiate with my peers so that a compromise can be reached. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
6. I try to stay away from disagreement with my peers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
7. I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
8. I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
9. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way...☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
10. I try to satisfy the expectations of my peers.☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Additional Survey Questions

Q1. Could you describe some of the conflicts with colleagues that you have experienced as a chairperson?

Q2 How would you characterize the different types of disagreements that you have experienced? Mark all that apply.

Disagreements about goals

Disagreements about funding

Disagreements about processes

Disagreements due to a lack of effective communication

Disagreements due to a lack of positive relationship

Other:

Q3. How would you describe the most frequent cause(s) of conflicts in the workplace?

Q4. How do you describe your method of handling conflicts? Mark all that apply.

Accommodating/Obliging- An unassertive and cooperative behavior where the person is attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns at the expense of his/her own.

Compromising- An intermediate behavior between both assertiveness and cooperativeness where the person is trying to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people's concerns.

Collaborative/Integrating- An assertive and cooperative behavior where the person attempts to find a win-win solution that completely satisfies both people's concerns.

Dominating- An assertive and uncooperative behavior where the person tries to satisfy his/her own concerns at the other person's expense

Avoiding- Individuals who use this mode of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and low concern for self.

Other:

Q5. Could you describe how you think that you developed your conflict handling style or styles? Mark all that apply.

Formal Training

Self taught

Observing others

Other:

Q6. How important is it to learn how to handle conflicts in the workplace?

Not at all important = 0

Extremely important = 5

Q7. Would you be willing to participate in an interview, if you are invited? If you agree, please provide your email address below. This email address will not be shared and will be kept strictly confidential. It is only requested to facilitate further communication between you and the survey moderator.

Appendix D

Interview Confidentiality and Consent Form

This participant interview is a query for information to professionals in the higher education community who would be willing to participate in research titled, “Conflict Handling Styles of Chairpersons in Higher Education”. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to consider why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully.

Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this research study is to learn about the conflict handling styles of higher education chairpersons.

Who will be asked to take part of this study?

The researcher is collecting information from chairpersons who have held the position for at least 3 consecutive years and have at least five faculty members in their department.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

Participants of this study are asked to complete two 60-90 minute interviews.

Confidentiality

Your personal information will be held strictly confidential by the researcher. Interview responses will be collated anonymously using an identifying number. The link between your personal information and your identifying number will be known only to the researcher and stored in an encrypted file on secure media. All responses received in the study will be strictly confidential, and your identity will not be divulged. Direct quotes from free-text answers may be used as part of the study report, but all identifying information will be removed and will not be traceable back to you or to your institution.

Data Protection

Interview responses will be tape recorded and transcribed. Data will be stored for the duration of the research project and then deleted.

Research ethics

The proposed research study abides by the ethical requirements of Southern New Hampshire University in the conduct of the research project. A copy of Southern New Hampshire University’s ethics committee application and decision letter is available on request. All participants will be asked to complete and return a consent form. Participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no consequences for refusing to participate or for withdrawing.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research. Please let us know whether or not you would like to take part by answering yes/no below. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Pauline Khan, at Pauline.Khan@snhu.edu.

Do you wish to participate? Yes or No

Purpose of Research Study

The purpose of this research study is to learn about the conflict handling styles of higher education chairpersons.

Research Study about Conflict Handling Styles

I, _____, agree to participate in the interview about the Conflict Handling Styles of Higher Education Chairpersons.

I understand that I will be asked questions about my experiences and thoughts about my conflict handling styles as a part of research study and that the session is being recorded and transcribed. I understand that the transcribed data will be coded and analyzed for themes and that the themes, along with supporting evidence will be submitted to the researcher and researcher's dissertation committee members. I understand that what I will not be individually identified with any particular statement or in any specific way except as a survey participant. No attempt will be made to identify individuals in the analysis or in the report.

Appendix E

Interview Protocol and Examples of Interview Questions

Pre-interview script

Hello! My name is Pauline Khan. I'm a doctoral candidate from Southern New Hampshire University. I'm here to learn conflict handling styles of department chairpersons. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to learn about how you describe conflict handling styles in different situations.

There are no right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. If it's okay with you, I will be tape recording our conversation since it is hard for me to write down everything while simultaneously carrying an attentive conversation with you. Your responses say will remain confidential, which means that only my doctoral committee, a transcriptionist and I will be aware of your answers.

I will request that you review the summary that I write regarding your responses so that you may confirm that the summary accurately represents your responses.

Demographic Questions

Researcher: Pauline Khan, Pauline.khan@snhu.edu Southern New Hampshire University, School of Education

Research Topic: Conflict Handling Styles of Chairpersons in Higher Education

Q1. Have you served as the department chairperson for at least three years?

Q2. What is your job title?

Q3. Do you have at least five faculty members in your department?

Q4. Generally speaking, what are some of the responsibilities you hold as a department chairperson?

Managing faculty

Scheduling courses

Managing budget

Managing students

Planning future direction of department

Managing Committees (if so, what kind?)

Q5. How long have you been in your current position?

0-2 years

3-5 years

More than 5 years

Q6. Have you experienced disagreements or conflicts with your colleagues within or outside of your department? If so, what types of disagreements occur?

Disagreements about goals

Disagreements about funding

Disagreements about processes

Disagreements due to a lack of communication

Disagreements due to a lack of relationship

Other:

Q7. Would you be willing to participate in an interview, if invited?

Please provide your email address. This will not be shared and will be kept strictly confidential. It is only requested to facilitate further communication between you and the survey moderator.

Interview Questions

Table E.1 Interview#1 questions as they relate to the interviewees background, the general context or to broader dissertation research questions

Related Contextual or Research Question	Corresponding Interview Questions
<p>Gathering background information-knowledge and context.</p>	<p>How did you first start in the field of higher education? Generally speaking, what are some of your responsibilities?</p> <p>Can you tell me a little bit about your department-the number of faculty and their responsibilities?</p> <p>Please provide an example of how you make decisions with your faculty members?</p> <p>When conflicts arise, are they related to tasks, such as course schedules, course goals, research goals or teaching assignments? If so, what types of tasks?</p> <p>When other conflicts arise, are they related to relationships? If so, what types of topics?</p> <p>Can you describe your approach to handling of a conflict for a situation when you need to present constructive feedback to a colleague?</p> <p>How important are conflict handling skills to achieving success in your field?</p> <p>Have you experienced conflict handling training? Do you feel that this was/would be valuable?</p> <p>How would you describe a collaborative culture in an organization?</p> <p>How would you describe positive productivity in an organization?</p>
<p>How do department chairpersons in higher education perceive conflict handling within their organization?</p>	<p>What are some examples of interpersonal conflict in your organization?</p> <p>How do you handle this conflict?</p> <p>Do you feel that conflict handling is an important element of your role?</p>

Table E.2 Interview#2 questions as they relate to context or to dissertation research questions

Related Contextual or Research Question	Corresponding Interview Questions
<p>How do department chairpersons in higher education describe their conflict handling styles with their peers?</p> <p>How do department chairpersons in higher education describe task conflict?</p> <p>How do department chairpersons in higher education describe emotional conflict?</p>	<p>Could you give me an example of some challenging experiences, specific to conflict handling, that you have had as a practicing department chairperson?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We've been talking about _____, (follow up question here). <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Can you walk me through a time that you experienced conflict with one of your colleagues?</p> <p>How do these experiences differ from one another?</p> <p>Tell me about different types of disagreements that occur during your time serving as a chairperson?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Task-related? ● Emotional? ● Other? <p>What do you think are some of the reasons for these disagreements?</p> <p>Can you describe your approach to handling this conflict?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When given a choice, interviewees may select from among five conflict handling styles and discuss why they made the selection. The styles offered will be: (1) Dominating; (2) Compromising; (3) Avoiding; (4) Integrating/Collaborating; and, (5) Accommodating/Obliging <p>Have you considered different ways of handling conflicts or do you notice that you favor a specific approach?</p> <p>Do you use an approach that you find particularly effective?</p> <p>Under what conditions are you more likely to collaborate?</p>

<p>2. What are the fundamental methods by which a department chairperson in higher education develops their conflict handling styles?</p>	<p>Can you reflect on how you think that you developed your style?</p> <p>Can you tell me about professional development? experiences that you have had that have helped you how to manage disagreements or conflicts?</p> <p>Are there any conflict handling skills that you wish you knew earlier in your career and would like to share, that have been particularly effective?</p>
<p>Reflection questions</p>	<p>You said earlier that _____, can you clarify why this is _____ [anything can go into these blanks.</p>

Post-interview script

This concludes our interview. Thank you so much for participating and for offering your insights. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix F

Vignettes and Corresponding Questions

Scenario A

Assume that Dr. Jones, a department chairperson, is developing digitally available course materials for use in a hybrid online and in-classroom course and that they would like to make this material available to all students registered at your institution. A colleague disagrees with this idea because, in their view, it may create a difference with the way the course is currently taught, which is primarily in a classroom environment. The colleague is concerned because they believe that students may no longer attend classes because they will assume that they can learn the necessary concepts online.

1. Describe how you think that Dr. Jones might handle this situation?

2. How would you characterize Dr. Jones's approach that was described in the response to question 1?

You may select one or more answers from among the following styles:

- 1.Accommodating/Obliging-** An unassertive and cooperative behavior where the person is attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns at the expense of his/her own.
- 2.Compromising-** An intermediate behavior between both assertiveness and cooperativeness where the person is trying to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people's concerns.
- 3.Collaborative/Integrating-** An assertive and cooperative behavior where the person attempts to find a win-win solution that completely satisfies both people's concerns.
- 4.Dominating-** An assertive and uncooperative behavior where the person tries to satisfy his/her own concerns at the other person's expense
- 5.Avoiding-** Individuals who use this mode of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and low concern for self.
- 6.Other** _____

Is this situation similar to a situation that you have encountered?

Scenario B

Assume that Dr. Jones, a department chairperson, has a senior faculty member within her department, Dr. Smith, who has been underperforming for the past three years. Dr. Smith has been uncommitted to her teaching responsibilities and her course evaluations reflect student feedback that is poor. Additionally, other faculty members who team-teach with Dr. Smith have complained to Dr. Jones about her lack of participation in the administration of the class, her tardiness and her poor engagement with students. This has been ongoing for three years, even though Dr. Smith has been provided with annual feedback indicating these problems. Whenever Dr. Jones has attempted to provide constructive feedback in the past few years, Dr. Smith has been resistant to accepting the feedback. Dr. Jones is now required to meet with Dr. Smith to provide a letter to terminate her.

1. Describe how you think that Dr. Jones might handle this situation?

2. How would you characterize Dr. Jones's approach that was described in the response to question 1?

You may select one or more answers from among the following styles:

- 1.Accommodating/Obliging-** An unassertive and cooperative behavior where the person is attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns at the expense of his/her own.
- 2.Compromising-** An intermediate behavior between both assertiveness and cooperativeness where the person is trying to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people's concerns.
- 3.Collaborative/Integrating-** An assertive and cooperative behavior where the person attempts to find a win-win solution that completely satisfies both people's concerns.
- 4.Dominating-** An assertive and uncooperative behavior where the person tries to satisfy his/her own concerns at the other person's expense
- 5.Avoiding-** Individuals who use this mode of handling conflict exhibit low concern for others and low concern for self.
- 6.Other** _____

3. Is this situation similar to a situation that you might have encountered?

Appendix G

Coding for Curricula Vitae

Table G.1 Themes and potential codes for the review of the interviewee's curricula vitae

Research sub-topics	Corresponding codes
Development of Conflict Handling Styles	Compromise Collaboration Teamwork Negotiation Faculty management Dispute management Disagreement
Description of Conflict Handling Training	Conflict handling training Conflict management training Professional development in conflicts, disputes or disagreements

Appendix H

Table of Research Questions and Emerging Themes

Related Contextual or Research Question	Corresponding Emerging Themes
Gathering background information-knowledge and context.	
How do department chairpersons in higher education perceive conflict handling within their organization?	The conflict handling style of the administrator depended on contextual factors, such as impact of conflict on an employee, such as job security, funding or position within an organization

Related Contextual or Research Question	Corresponding Interview Questions
<p>How do department chairpersons in higher education describe their conflict handling styles with their peers?</p> <p>How do department chairpersons in higher education describe task conflict?</p> <p>How do department chairpersons in higher education describe emotional conflict?</p>	<p>Could you give me an example of some challenging experiences, specific to conflict handling, that you have had as a practicing department chairperson?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We've been talking about_____, (follow up question here). <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Can you walk me through a time that you experienced conflict with one of your colleagues?</p> <p>How do these experiences differ from one another?</p> <p>Tell me about different types of disagreements that occur during your time serving as a chairperson?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Task-related? ● Emotional? ● Other? <p>What do you think are some of the reasons for these disagreements?</p> <p>Can you describe your approach to handling this conflict?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When given a choice, interviewees may select from among five conflict handling styles and discuss why they made the selection. The styles offered will be: (1) Dominating; (2) Compromising; (3) Avoiding; (4) Integrating/Collaborating; and, (5) Accommodating/Obliging <p>Have you considered different ways of handling conflicts or do you notice that you favor a specific approach?</p>

	<p>Do you use an approach that you find particularly effective?</p> <p>Under what conditions are you more likely to collaborate?</p>
<p>2. What are the fundamental methods by which a department chairperson in higher education develops their conflict handling styles?</p>	<p>Can you reflect on how you think that you developed your style?</p> <p>Can you tell me about professional development? experiences that you have had that have helped you how to manage disagreements or conflicts?</p> <p>Are there any conflict handling skills that you wish you knew earlier in your career and would like to share, that have been particularly effective?</p>
<p>Reflection questions</p>	<p>You said earlier that _____, can you clarify why this is _____ [anything can go into these blanks.</p>