CHIEF STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS IN 4-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF

HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION INTO

THEIR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AND *PRAXIS*

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This study investigated the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The data for the study were collected using Hall's Conflict Management Survey.

The sample for the study consisted of 25 chief student affairs officers. The purpose of the study was to identify the conflict management style preferences of chief student affairs officers. The other variables studied to ascertain if they had an impact on the style preferences were age, gender, number of years of experience as a chief student affairs officer, ethnicity, and the size (enrollment) of their employing institution.

The study found statistically significant associations ($p<.05$) between ethnicity and conflict management style, specifically the synergistic and win-lose styles, and between the synergistic style and age. The association between ethnicity and conflict management style could be attributed to the fact that the Caucasian group of chief student affairs officers comprised 66.7 % of the synergistic styles and 100 % of the win-lose styles. The association between the synergistic style and age could be due to the fact that the majority of the chief student affairs officers had a synergistic style, and of that group, 66.7 % were in the 50-59 age range.

No statistically significant associations were found for correlations between conflict management style and gender; conflict management styles and number of years of experience as a chief student affairs officer; or conflict management styles and size (enrollment) of their employing institutions. The lack of significance shows that there are no associations between the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers stratified according to gender, number of years of experience, and size (enrollment) of their employing institutions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities routinely face conflict due to their rich environments of diverse activities and personalities. Thus, it is critical for them to develop plans of action prior to occurrences of conflict. Obviously, being prepared is the foremost requisite for surviving conflict of any magnitude. In institutions of higher education, all faculty, staff, and students must be provided with the tools necessary to resolve interpersonal conflicts, and the creation of viable plans of action requires the cooperation of a wide range of professionals. Plans must be specific enough to accommodate immediate actions, yet flexible enough to allow for adjustments. Workable plans allow people to anticipate potential conflicts, take steps to prevent them, contain them when they occur, and/or evaluate responses following events.

Within higher education, conflict is a fact of life (Schofield, 1975, p. 1). Its complex nature creates conflict because of the diversity of today s typical student body. In addition, higher education allows for open discussion and free thought, which are precursors to conflict (Holton, 1995). Historically, the university often bore the brunt of community hostility and tension. When conflict arises, it is often the university that is held accountable for the outcome of the situation. Institutions of higher education have a responsibility for shaping and molding the students who pay tuition to attend classes.

Conflict today is different from conflict 20 or even 10 years ago. Campus climates have changed, along with the growing population of diverse students who are seeking higher education. To plan effectively and prepare for conflict situations, an institution must develop a sense of the student body's personality and focus its goals on their needs and their holistic development. Chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) hold the key to this and to students' ultimate experience on campus. They help also to foster a positive environment for students on their campuses.

<center>Role of the Chief Student Affairs Officer in Conflict Management</center>

The role of chief student affairs officers is to "focus on the aspirations, interests, and achievements of students and thus inevitably [confront] their frustrations, prejudices, and failures as well" (Sandeen, 1991, p. 120). They must educate students to resolve conflicts effectively and provide them with the tools for problem solving and decision making. Each campus is unique, and CSAOs must adjust their conflict management style to their campus's special needs.

Sandeen (1991) discussed several ideas for being a good mediator and problem solver when dealing with conflicts. Chief student affairs officers must understand the student dynamics and the issues they face on campus. Today's college campus is extremely diverse in nature and, to communicate effectively with the students, an understanding of this diversity must exist. Building support teams among faculty and staff and setting good examples provide the benefits necessary to compromising and collaborating when conflicts arise. Chief student affairs officers must first develop a sense of their own conflict management styles to be able to resolve disputes effectively and efficiently.

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Statement of the Problem

This study involved the assessment of the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and how they manage conflict.

Rationale

In the field of higher education, much research exists on conflict management and resolution. Research shows that conflict has existed since the first Hellenic institution was established by Pythagoras and met its ruin from its own internal conflicts (Holton, 1995). In the early days of higher education, rules defined curricula, and anyone who veered from the approved content was removed from their duties. According to Holton, many universities were founded due to conflict. Harvard, the first university in the United States, opened its doors in 1636 because of a town-and-gown conflict, and in 1701, Yale was founded due to the liberal views of Harvard. Conflict also led to the development of faculty unions and student government associations. Student conflict also occurred due to the admission of anyone who was not a white male, since these individuals founded most institutions of higher education. The admission of women into Oberlin College in 1837 created a conflict because "it was widely believed that intellectual activity was contrary to feminine nature and harmful to women's health and reproductive capacity" (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 5). Today's conflicts involving females are typically due to discrimination and sexual harassment. The increasing number of minorities and members of gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities also creates diversity, which often breeds tension within the campus climate. "Thus, conflict may be intensified on many campuses as they become more diverse or more explicit in their efforts to diversify (Smith, 1989, p. 60).

The campus culture and environment and the nature of the conflict can largely define how most chief student affairs officers respond to conflict. They must assume leadership roles and are usually the primary connections with outside communities. Their actions, when dealing with conflict situations, reflect upon their institutions' successes and failures. The purpose of this study was to examine the predominant conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in their particular campus environments. In addition, other variables, such as age, gender, ethnicity, years of experience as a chief student affairs officer, and size of the institution, which may have influenced their styles and decision-making skills, were studied.

This study investigated the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The study investigated the conflict management styles of CSAOs by collecting data from them, evaluating the data, and drawing conclusions. The study was based on two fundamental questions: (a) What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers, and (b) how do they manage interpersonal conflict? By identifying the factors that contribute to chief student affairs officers' conflict management styles and how they lead to effective conflict resolution, the study may contribute to the body of literature that exists today. Continued research in this area may help to develop effective conflict management programs for chief student affairs officers and other higher education administrators.

Conceptual Frame of Reference

"Conflict can promote innovation, creativity, and the development of new ideas which make organizational growth possible, and from that standpoint, conflict is good.

The key is in how conflict is managed" (Blake & Mouton, 1964, p. 163). Blake and

Mouton developed a managerial grid that provides measurable ways to manage and

gauge conflict. Five major positions on the grid represent resolution modes that provide a

basis for interpreting conflict management preferences as a function of managerial style.

These modes, or preferences, are often used interchangeably to describe how people

respond to conflict situations. Blake and Mouton's five conflict management methods

have been used as a basis for much of the priot and current research. The five modes

correspond to these five conflict management styles: avoiding, accommodating,

compromising, collaborating, and forcing. These five management methods are

illustrated in Hall's (1996) *Conflict Management Survey* as 1/1 lose-leave style, 9/1 win-

lose style, 5/5 compromising style, 9/9 synergistic style, and 1/9 yield-lose style,

respectively, and have been used to determine the conflict management styles of chief

student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern

Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were to: (a) determine the conflict management styles

of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); (b) ascertain how chief student

affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in SACS manage conflict;

and (c) compare the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year

public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and

Schools (SACS) according to the following independent variables: age, gender, ethnicity,

years of experience as a chief student affairs officer, and size (enrollment) of their employing institutions.

Significance of the Study

A study of the conflict management style preferences of chief student affairs officers is important for two reasons. Evaluation of styles may provide information that allows institutions to develop effective programs to form viable plans of action when conflicts occur, which in turn can improve the quality of student life during and after conflict. Finally, the research contributes to the literature in conflict management and higher education by providing a baseline of the styles and factors that are associated with the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers.

Research Questions

1. What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)?

2. What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers when stratified according to age?

3. What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers as stratified according to gender?

4. What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers as stratified according to ethnicity?

5. What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers as stratified according to their number of years of experience as a chief student affairs officer?

6. What are the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers as stratified according to the size (enrollment) of their employing institution?

Research Hypotheses

The following seven hypotheses were tested:

HO1: There are no associations among chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) when stratified according to conflict management styles.

HO2: There are no associations among the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers when stratified according to age.

HO3: There are no associations among the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers when stratified according to gender.

HO4: There are no associations among the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers when stratified according to ethnicity.

HO5: There are no associations among the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers when stratified according to their number of years of experience as chief student affairs officers.

HO6: There are no associations among the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers when stratified according to the size of their employing institutions.

Limitations

A limitation of the study is that none of the chief student affairs officers were required to respond to the survey. Participation was voluntary; however, a copy of the results was offered to participants as an incentive to participate in the research. The

primary limitation of this study is that the results can only be generalized to the participants who agreed to participate in the study.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). No attempt was made to determine the psychological and sociological etiologies of observed associations.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were relevant to this study:

Chief student affairs officer (CSAO): the organizational head of student affairs of a higher education institution. For the purposes of this study, the CSAOs included those individuals identified by their public institution as the chief student life officer, director of student affairs, dean of students, or vice president of student affairs/life/development.

Chief student life officer: "responsible for the direction of student life programs including counseling and testing, housing, placement, student union, relationships with student organizations and related functions" (Rodenhouse & Torregrosa, 1995, p. xxiv). Listed as code 32 in the *1995 Higher Education Directory*, chief student life officer is used to identify the CSAO.

Conflict: circumstances, both emotional and substantive, that can be brought about by the differences between parties who are, for whatever reason, in conflict with one another. Holding different values, being motivated by different objectives, desiring the same goal when there is not enough to go around; all these may create the potential for conflict (Hall, 1996, p. i).

Conflict management: the process by which individuals react to and attempt to manage differences between and among themselves and others; also known as mode preference (Hall, 1973, p.1).

Conflict management style: the manner in which a person handles conflict and is measured on two factors, concern for self and concern for others (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Ruble & Thomas, 1976).

Dean of students: the person responsible for planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the activities of the total program of student personnel services (Parker, 1979, p.9).

Director of student affairs: "assists chief student life officer in the non-academic student life activities" (Rodenhouse & Torregrosa, 1995, p. xxvi). Listed as code 35 in the *1995 Higher Education Directory*, director of student affairs was used to identify the CSAO if there is no chief student life officer listed.

Vice president of student affairs/life/development: chief student affairs officer (CSAO).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presents an overview of conflict management and the roles of chief student affairs officers in conflict management. It also identifies the problem, the purposes, and the significance of the study. A theoretical framework is included. The research questions and hypotheses are presented along with the limitations of the study and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. A description of the population of the study is presented. The questionnaire and survey instruments are discussed. Finally, the research design and procedures for collection and analysis of data are described. Chapter 4 presents the

analysis of data collected. Tables, statistical analysis, interpretation, and results of the

data collected are included. Chapter 5 presents a summary and discussion of the major

findings, conclusions of the study, and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Conflict

Definitions of conflict vary and can at times become confusing. Costantino and

Merchant (1996) defined conflict as an "expression of dissatisfaction or disagreement

with an interaction, process, product, or service" (p.28). They stated that conflict is a

process, and dispute may be one of several products of the conflict. It can reveal itself as

a dispute, competition, sabotage, inefficiency or lack of productivity, low morale, or the

withholding of knowledge.

Coser (1956) viewed conflict as a means of adjusting the norms and power in

group relations. Himes's (1980) definition is similar in that he defined conflict as a

"struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims

of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize,

injure, or eliminate their rivals" (p.13).

Litterer (1966) viewed conflict as a type of behavior, and Deutsch (1973)

emphasized that one must understand the specifics of conflict in order to manage it

effectively. Litterer defined conflict as "a type of behavior which occurs when two or

more parties are in opposition or in battle as a result of a perceived relative deprivation

from the activities of or interacting with another person or group" (p. 180). Deutsch

stated that "a conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur; an action which is

incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures, or in some

way makes it less likely or less effective" (p. 10).

Filley (1975) defined conflict based on its characteristics. He summarized those characteristics as follows:

1) At least two parties (individuals or groups) are involved in some kind of interaction.

2) Mutually exclusive goals and/or mutually exclusive values exist, in fact or as perceived by the parties involved.

3) Interaction is characterized by behavior designed to defeat, reduce, or suppress the opponent or to gain a mutually designated victory.

4) The parties face each other with mutually opposing actions and counteractions.

5) Each party attempts to create an imbalance or relatively favored position of power vis-à-vis the other. (p. 4)

Van de Vliert (1984) defined conflict based on the elements involved in the conflict situation. Those elements include the nature of the frustration of the party or parties. The conflict begins as soon as one party feels frustration. That frustration may be both cognitive and affective and is a subjective experience, but it does not necessarily have an objective basis. He stated that the conflict exists independent of the reaction to the frustration one might experience.

Several different types of conflict also exist that deserve mentioning. In Champion's (1979) study on the preferences for organizational conflict management of men and women managers, he defined organizational conflict as a "multi-stage, time-evolving social process within the membership of a formal work organization in which

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individuals and/or groups struggle, or engage in antagonistic interaction for perceived future positions of value, status, power and resources" (p. 27).

Filley (1975) also defined two types of conflict, comparing competitive and disruptive conflict. Competitive conflict is a victory for one individual at the cost of another individual's loss. Both parties strive for mutually incompatible goals, and the emphasis is on winning. A disruptive conflict's intent is to reduce, defeat, harm, or drive away the opponent. There are no mutually acceptable set of rules, and winning is not the primary concern of either opponent.

Kriesberg (1998) defined a type of conflict that exists every day. He explained that "social conflict exists when two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible objectives" (p. 2).

Rahim (2001) discussed four general types of conflict in the workplace: intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup. He described them based on how they are measured and analyzed, their intervention methods, and the results of the interventions.

Intrapersonal conflict exists when individuals are required to perform certain tasks that do not match their expertise, interests, goals, and/or values (Rahim, 2001). The amount of conflict, the sources of the conflict, and the effectiveness of the individuals in the conflict situation measure the intensity of the intrapersonal conflict. Intervention methods include redesigning job descriptions and/or role analysis. The results are low-to-moderate amounts of intrapersonal conflict and greater individual effectiveness.

Interpersonal conflict occurs between two or more individuals of the same or different hierarchical levels (Rahim, 2001). It is measured through the styles of handling

different conflict situations, by the factors that affect the styles, and by the effectiveness of the individuals. According to Rahim, its analysis involves whether or not the individuals use the appropriate styles to deal with the different conflict situations effectively and the relationship of the styles to the conflict situations and individual effectiveness. Some interventions include transactional analysis, a provision for appeal to authorities, and a provision for an ombudsman. The results are an appropriate selection and use of the five styles as defined by Rahim, improved communication, and greater individual effectiveness.

Rahim (2001) defined intragroup conflict as occurring among group members or between groups within a large group. This type of conflict is also measured by the styles of handling conflict, the factors that affect it, and the effectiveness of the groups. The analysis involves the relationship of the styles to the amount of conflict. Intervention methods include team building and structural changes resulting in improved intrapersonal relationships and greater group effectiveness.

The last type of conflict discussed by Rahim (2001) is intergroup conflict. It occurs between two or more groups within an organization and is measured by comparing the intergroup styles of handling conflict with the members who are not part of the group. It is analyzed by the amount of conflict between the two groups and the styles of the groups. Interventions include intergroup problem solving, analysis of task interdependency, and structural changes. The results are greater synergy in decisions, improved communication, and better relationships with groups.

Stulberg (1987) defined conflict based on its anatomy. His acronym PRIOR-TO corresponds to parties, resources, issues, options of forum, rules affecting behavior, time frame, and outcomes.

Parties: persons known to each other who advocate distinct, clashing positions on a given matter and have apparent power to frustrate each other's actions or satisfy each other's concerns

Resources: people, information, finances, and publicity to which parties and mediator have recourse

Issues: matters, practices, or actions that enhance, alter or frustrate, or in some way adversely affect some person's interests, goals or needs

Options of forum: dispute resolution processes that are available to the parties

Rules affecting behavior: laws, institutional rules, professional codes of conduct, industry practices, and social conventions that establish a range of possible settlement options

Time frame: deadlines within which outcomes must be developed

Outcomes: dispositions of issues, varying in form, type, and specificity. (p. 44)

This structural framework is constant for each conflict, yet it is applied to the situation at hand. Stulberg stated that one must ask himself or herself the question, "What has happened PRIOR-TO her [or him] appearing on the scene?" (p. 43). By gathering this information, an individual can develop a clearer understanding of the conflict situation.

The definition of conflict varies and is characterized by the diversity of viewpoints. Reitz (1971) believed that conflict was inevitable due to this diversity, stating

that it would lead to creativity and flexibility between individuals and within organizations.

For the purposes of this study, Hall's (1996) definition of conflict was used since Hall's *Conflict Management Survey* was the instrument used to study chief student affairs officers' conflict management styles. Hall defined conflict as "circumstances – both emotional and substantive – which can be brought about by differences between parties who are, for whatever reason, in contact with one another" (p. 1).

Historical Perspectives of Conflict

Historically, the dominant view of conflict has been that it is bad or dysfunctional. However, conflict is at the root of all social change and can be both positive and negative. In the literature, three philosophies are evident. From the late 19th century until the 1940s, the traditionalist view dominated the world (Donovan, 1993; Gmelch & Carroll, 1991). This view aimed at eliminating conflict and saw it only as destructive (Champion, 1979; Gmelch & Carroll, 1991). The 1940s through the 1970s brought the behaviorist view, which saw conflict as natural and inevitable (Donovan, 1993). Conflict was accepted in this period, and the emphasis was on finding appropriate methods to resolve and eliminate conflict. In the 1970s came the interactionist position, which viewed conflict as positive and necessary in order to be responsive to the need for change, innovation, and creativity (Donovan, 1993). Conflict was to be encouraged and was recognized as having a beneficial effect through improved performance (Champion, 1979). It was in this era that conflict management became accepted as a tool.

Social and political scientists have studied conflict for years. Georg Simmel studied conflict and found that a certain amount was essential to the proper functioning of

a group (Rahim, 2001). In the late 1930s, Elton May viewed conflict as evil and thought that it should be eliminated, while Talcott Parsons, in the 1940s, portrayed conflict as abnormal and dysfunctional, basing it on the assumption that society is inherently stable, integrated, and functional (Rahim, 2001). Lewis Coser opposed Parson's view in his 1956 work *The Functions of Social Conflict*, seeing conflict as a social phenomenon and focusing on its productive potential.

Of course, conflict has existed throughout U.S. history. The 1960s brought about conflicts when people protested the Vietnam War. In the 1970s, a change came about in public attitudes towards higher education, falling enrollments, fluctuating job markets, accountability issues, and changing demographics. Robbins (1978) asserted that "the early evidence suggests that the 1970s may be remembered in the annals of management history as the decade that conflict management came to the forefront as a major interest of both practicing managers and academic researchers" (p. 67). In recent years, studies have been done to investigate the uses, sources, and benefits of conflict and its management.

<center>Theoretical Perspectives of Conflict</center>

An individual's theoretical view of conflict influences his or her style in managing conflict situations. Throughout the decades, the shift in attitude has changed from the elimination of conflict to its management. As Thomas (1971) stated, "More and more, social scientists are coming to realize – and to demonstrate – that conflict itself is no evil, but rather a phenomenon which can have constructive or destructive effects depending on its management" (p. 889). Mary Parker Follett, a management strategist, preceded conflict management theorists by about 30 years, stating that conflict can be

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beneficial if managed properly. Conflict theory tries to explain why people think and act the way they do. There have been several major theories in the development of conflict orientation over the decades.

Classical conflict theory is built on the Hegelian dialectic and historical materialism under the influence of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the early 1900s (Duke, 1976). The dialectic states that "any aspect of social life (thesis) is always the product of its opposite (antithesis)" (Duke, 1976, p. 14). The thesis and antithesis are in conflict and are eventually resolved into a synthesis. Marx's dialectical model explained how conflict leads to the victory of the initially weaker attacking actor over the initially stronger defending actor (Himes, 1980). Marx also believed that conflict is a necessary instrument of change and progress, and he viewed it as a positive concept. The conflict theories of Marx and Engels provided a foundation for present theories and emphasized the present competitive nature of social relations.

Max Weber built upon Marx's theory of conflict by showing how power leads to order and not to conflict (Duke, 1976). Weber did so by showing how a particular organization's power is legitimized and stabilized by using the analysis and description of the way in which the conflict is resolved and order is achieved. This view was unheard of by social theorists in the early 1900s, and Weber's theory challenged sociologists to think of new ways to resolve and accept conflict situations.

About 1908, Georg Simmel, a French social theorist, wrote his famous treatise, *On Conflict*, which explained how hostility existed in people independently of external motivation (Simmel, 1955). Simmel believed that conflict must be recognized as a form of interaction that occurs in groups because of the class associations of members (Duke,

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1976). He viewed conflict as competition and showed how peace and conflict intertwine throughout history. He assumed that conflict is inevitable and normal and that the termination of conflict is theoretically more important than the creation of the conflict itself. Simmel also proposed four ways in which conflict can be terminated; that is, the disappearance of the object of the conflict, the victory of one person or group, compromise, and conciliation. Simmel's legacy left an impression on such theorists as Lewis Coser and Theodore Caplow, who believe that in any social relationship, individuals have the tendency to seek their own interests at the expense of others (Duke, 1976). Social Darwinists also envision the world as evolving out of a struggle to survive; hence the term *survival of the fittest*, which assumes essentially that conflict creates disequilibrium (Boulding, 1962).

This theory of the competitive nature of conflict is emphasized also by Sumner's evolutionary theory, founded on assumptions about the competitive natural state of human beings (Duke, 1976). Sumner's theory is based on premises that are essentially conflict oriented, such as the natural scarcity of resources, the inevitability of competition for resources, the operation of natural selection to produce power, and status (Duke, 1976).

Around the time that Georg Simmel was writing *On Conflict*, William McDougal, a sociologist, developed the general instinct theory. McDougal's idea was to identify the proper instinct and to indicate how it is triggered and operated in a conflict situation (Himes, 1980). In 1921 Robert Park and Ernest Burgess took McDougal's idea regarding instinct and theorized that conflict is universal and natural in human society. They believed that conflict contributed to the organization, unification, change, and progress of

the human race. Later in the 1920s, Jessie Bernard developed his own idea that instincts

do not provide a way for dealing with exceptions to the rules and that the instinct theory

minimizes such elements as culture and ethnicity in society (Himes, 1980). These

elements are important in conflict situations because they not only create some conflicts,

but they also define conflicts and hinder their resolutions. Himes took all of these theories

into consideration, basing his own conflict theory on five theoretical perspectives: the

instinct theories of McDougal, Park, Burgess, and Bernard; the concept of tension; the

dialectical interaction of Marx, Engels, and Weber; the structural theory of Newman,

which combines stratification and social status with intergroup conflict; and the concepts

of frustration and aggression (Himes, 1980).

In the 1960s, Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid described for the first time a

theory based on measurable ways to gauge and manage conflict (Neff, 1986). Their grid

displays five positions, with each representing a major management theory. Each mode

changes to meet the conflict situation and the responses that can be made to the pressures

as a result of conflict. The grid provides an individual with a dominant and backup style

of managing conflict. Blake and Mouton argued that conflict is positive and promotes

innovation, creativity, and the development of new ideas (Neff, 1986). Their grid is the

first theory-like idea to exhibit the beneficial effects of conflict. Their five positions have

provided a basis for years of theory research and brought about several different focuses

that all relate to one issue – conflict. The Managerial Grid posits the five styles of

forcing, avoiding, accommodation, confrontation, and compromise (Thomas, 1971).

Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid has been used by such theorists as K. W.

Thomas, L. R. Pondy, H. A. Murray, and R. J. Burke. Pondy (1967) viewed conflict as a

dynamic process and believed that it begins with conditions that have the potential to lead to conflict. These conditions cause perceptions and feelings of conflict. In the end, the parties involved are left with feelings and thoughts that are eventually carried into other conflict situations if not resolved from the previous conflict. Pondy viewed this process in stages that include antecedent conditions, affective states, cognitive states, conflictive behavior, and aftermath. Murray used the grid to develop a three-dimensional classification to identify a conflict that includes the process, structure, and four social levels where conflict occurs (individual, group, organizational, and societal) (Champion, 1979). Burke has used the grid, finding problem solving to be the most effective resolution mode and forcing to be the most ineffective (Champion, 1979).

<center>Models and Concepts of Conflict Theory</center>

Many other models and concepts of conflict theory also exist. These models have helped to shape the contemporary theories that are evident today.

Boulding (1964) developed four basic concepts of the conflict theory in order to better understand the magnitude of its effects. The first concept involves the parties in the conflict. He argued that there must be at least two parties in the conflict and that there must be a relationship between these two parties. The second concept is based on the field of conflict. It includes the "whole set of relevant possible states of the social system" (Boulding, 1964, p. 45). The dynamics of the conflict situation make up the third concept. This occurs when the field consists of a combination of the positions of the two parties, with each party adjusting its own position to what it believes the position of the other party to be. The final concept entails conflict management itself. According to

Boudling, this stage is reached when the parties "exhibit control if they have some sort of machinery for avoiding pathological moves" (p.48).

Schofield (1975) also developed a theory of conflict that he explained by using psychological and sociological theories. Psychological theories deal with the internal dynamics of behavior in conflict situations, while sociological theories deal with group dynamics. Schofield corresponded these levels to Derr's two general levels of conflict by associating psychological theories to intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict and sociological theories to intraorganizational, interorganizational, and revolutionary conflict.

Schofield's (1975) psychology of conflict deals with perception, aggression and hostility, and threat and anxiety. These three phases comprise the conflict situation and explain its development. Perception, the first phase, is not the same as reality. According to Schofield, the "way in which people perceive conflict and the other people involved in it obviously in part determine[s] their actions, and therefore, the outcome" (p. 7). The discrepancies in reality resulting from the conflict lead to selective perception, which ultimately leads to selective recall. Selective recall occurs when individuals remember evidence that supports another's viewpoint and forget that it opposes their own set of assumptions. The second phase of aggression and hostility occurs when an individual has a "behavior without a goal" (p. 9) and displaces the aggression resulting from the conflict onto someone or something else. Scapegoating and projection also characterize this, because it is difficult to perceive fault in oneself. According to Schofield, the last phase of the psychology of conflict includes threat and anxiety. In a conflict where an individual feels threatened, tunnel vision can obscure the important elements that should

not be ignored. When people feel anxious about the society around them, their ability to tolerate ambiguity decreases, and the very source of the conflict comes from the human being's fallible nature of judgment. Ultimately, the decision-making process is fraught with error due to subjectivity.

Georg Simmel (1955) first dealt with the sociology of conflict, and Schofield (1975) expanded on his concept. Simmel stated that conflict is a means of achieving unity through the resolution of differing points of view, and Schofield explained that "if a stable relationship exists between groups taking different sides in an interorganizational conflict, the willingness of these groups to express hostility toward each other increases" (p. 13). He believed that conflict can strengthen relationships between groups and that it is a direct expression of their hostility. Schofield argued that the intensity of a conflict is more intense among closely-related parties and that strong ideological elements can increase the intensity.

Thomas (1971) examined the two general models of conflict: the process and structural models. The process model views conflict as a series of episodes, each of which includes the stages of frustration, conceptualization, behaviors, and outcome. It is seen as a dynamic process. Thomas's structural model is "concerned with the underlying conditions, variables, and parameters which influence conflict behavior as portrayed by episodes of dynamic conflict in the process model" (p.890). Van de Vliert (1984) put the process and structural models of Thomas together to develop the prevention-escalation model. This model begins with latent conflict, which results from antecedent conditions, similar to those of Pondy. The actual issue of the conflict leads to feelings of obstruction or irritation. Van de Vliert distinguished the prevention behavior as including the

reduction of chances of the other party becoming frustrated; a reduction of the chances of

related conflicts in the future; a resolution of the current conflict; or the prevention of

intensification. Escalation behaviors are just the opposite of prevention behaviors. Both

of these behaviors can either be spontaneous or strategic, and each has consequences of

prevention or escalation. The major advantage of Van de Vliert's model is that it

integrates the process and structural models of Thomas and focuses on the prevention and

escalation of conflict while providing a typology of strategies of conflict management.

Pondy (1967) also defined three major classes of conflict, which include the

bargaining model, the bureaucratic model, and the systems model. The bargaining model

deals with conflict among interest groups in competition for scarce resources, whereas

the bureaucratic model is concerned with the problems caused by attempts to control

behavior and the reactions to such control. The systems model is directed at conflict

among parties and their need to coordinate their efforts.

Pondy's (1967) research on conflict also includes the five stages of a conflict

episode. The first stage of latent conflict examines the competition for scarce resources,

the desire for autonomy, and the conflict of roles. This stage is also referred to as the

antecedent conditions stage. Perceived conflict, the second stage, occurs when latent

conflict no longer exists. This results from the parties' misunderstanding of each other's

true position. The third stage of felt conflict happens when an individual or group

personalizes conflict and the whole personality of the individual or group is involved in

the relationship. It is expressed as feelings of threat, hostility, and fear or mistrust (Filley,

1975). Manifest behaviors comprise the fourth stage of a conflict episode. It is the

resulting action of the conflict and is expressed as open aggression, competition, debate,

or problem solving. Pondy's last stage is the aftermath of the conflict, which involves the consequence of the conflict's resolution. Filley also used these five stages, but added another stage before the conflict aftermath, which involves conflict resolution or suppression. This stage has to do with bringing conflict to an end, either through agreement among all parties or defeat.

Baldridge (1971) developed a model that illustrates the cycle of a conflict and the characteristics of the situations that provoke a conflict. His model is viewed as a continuous circle with seven positions. Each position reflects the general characteristic of each stage of the cycle. The first position in the cycle involves the unifying issue related to the conflict. The characteristics of this position are divided into three categories. The first category involves the iceberg phenomenon. This explains how the apparent issue of the conflict is rarely the major factor. The second category concerns how issues that cause large-scale conflicts usually have a unifying effect on diverse interest groups. The last category of the first position states that conflict is a result of rising expectations and always involves moral overtones or "sacred issues" (Baldridge, 1971, p. 168). The second position on the circle occurs when the intensity of the conflict increases. This is usually when leadership styles become much more radical. The third position occurs when issues expand from specific topics to generalized questions of authority. When sanctions are applied to a conflict, then threat, strategic bargaining, and negotiation occur in the fourth position. The last three positions include a call for allies, mediation and conciliation, and bureaucratization of the conflict, respectively. This cycle provides a basis for determining the levels of intensity and hostility that are involved in a conflict situation.

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Sources of Conflict

Numerous sources of conflict exist in society today. In this new millennium, diversity has increased on U. S. college and university campuses, and diversity is probably one of the major sources of conflict today (Moore, 2000). Other issues facing higher education that might cause conflict include racism, sexism, homophobia, substance abuse, and academic dishonesty, among others. Little is known about the ways race and ethnicity contribute to the dynamics of conflict and the process of conflict resolution (Gadlin, 1994). Pederson and Jandt (1996) stated it well when they noted that "culture defines values and interests that are at the core of conflicts, shaping perceptions, shaping alternatives, and defining outcomes as positive or negative" (p. 4).

Neff (1986) listed several sources of conflict in her study of the conflict management styles of women administrators in state universities in Ohio. Her list includes goal incompatibility; availability of resources and interdependency; ambiguous or overlapping jurisdictions; barriers to communication; the necessity of a consensus in a decision; and the impositions of behavior regulations. Other common sources include diversity of personality and experiences, communication, and power (Donovan, 1993).

Donovan (1993) compiled a list of the four most common sources of conflict:

1. Feeling that certain human values are seen as legitimate rights. It is felt that all people should be vested with civil rights, be granted political freedom, and have educational and economic opportunities. Many view decent housing, suitable jobs, and adequate health care as a right. Another value that is often seen as a right by many is the expectation of being involved in decision-making processes.

In colleges and universities, faculty and students consider it their right to be heard and to influence decisions affecting them.

2. Unrealized expectations as a source of conflict; when the legitimate rights mentioned above are not operationalized in daily life, frustration, anger, and conflict are generated;

3. Social changes which accompany technological change, such as changes in the sciences, technology, and business which give individuals more freedom of time and energy to, theoretically at least, become more involved in decision-making; and

4. A continuation of the old sources of conflict, such as the struggle for power, desire for economic gain, the need for status, or the desire to exploit others. (p. 31)

The rights of citizens and the demand for those rights, technological changes, and unresolved conflicts serve as sources of conflict that drive our democratic society, but also define our history and future.

Pondy (1969) stated that poor communication resulting from unintended poor coordination is one of the most important sources of conflict. This is the most apparent source in higher education. Communication is the key to all resolutions. Change occurs on each college and university campus every day; it is sometimes unsettling and threatening. Changing student attitudes, student dissent, and generation gaps must be considered when understanding the source of conflict at a college or university. King and McGinnies (1972) explained how student unrest could be due to such things as "alienation and estrangement from the adult community and its values"; "disillusionment

with higher education"; "concern with international problems"; "concern with domestic problems"; "prospects after graduation"; "lack of older and experienced leadership"; and the "lack of factual information about relevant issues" (pp. 57-61). Student conflict can lead to riots because of poor food quality, inadequate housing, and excessively strict parental rules. Some precursors to these sources of conflict are open discussions, free thought, and critical thinking (Holton, 1995).

Some of the root causes of conflict have also been discussed by Slaikeu and Hasson (1998). They list 10 causes of conflict to be denial, skill deficits, lack of information, conflicting interests or values, psychopathology, personality style, scarce resources, organization deficiencies, selfishness, and evil intent. All of these are in some way similar to Likert and Likert's (1976) list, but are spelled out more definitively as the core source of a particular conflict situation.

Deutsch (1973) emphasized the importance of what the actual nature of the conflict is, not the source. The nature of the conflict could be the actual size of the conflict. The larger the conflict, the more destructive it will be. To decrease the size, one must diminish the perceived opposition in values and interests of the conflicting parties. Issue rigidity must also be addressed. If there is a perceived lack of alternatives for achieving positive outcomes, the conflict will continue growing. According to Deutsch, a conflict that is central to both parties is the most irreconcilable. The number of issues involved and their interdependence on one another also define the nature of a conflict, along with the consensus on the importance of different issues and the consciousness of those issues. The very nature of a conflict can help to define the methods to its resolution.

Several other types of conflict should be addressed because they explain the source of a particular type of conflict. Rahim (2001) described 10 different types of conflict, and the following is a summary:

1. Affective conflict: when two interacting social entities become aware that their feelings and emotions regarding some or all of the issues are incompatible

2. Substantive conflict: when two or more disagree on their task or content issues

3. Conflict of interest: inconsistency between two parties in their preferences for the allocation of a scarce resource

4. Conflict of values

5. Goal conflict

6. Realistic versus nonrealistic conflict

7. Institutionalized versus noninstitutionalized conflict: involves explicit rules, continuity in relationships, and displaying predictable behavior

8. Retributive conflict: the need for a drawn-out conflict to punish the opponent

9. Misattributed conflict: the incorrect assignment of causes of conflict

10. Displaced conflict: direct hostilities to those not involved in the conflict

These particular conflicts can occur in any situation when a value is being judged, a disagreement occurs due to conflicting goals, rules are being tested, or where punishment is the goal.

Holton (1995) also discussed several types of conflict. Conflict over resources occurs when two or more people want something that is scarce, whereas conflict over needs is more tangible and difficult to resolve. It includes needs for power, for belonging,

for achievement, and for self-esteem. Conflict over values is the most difficult of all to resolve because it includes conflict over the mission of the institution, over the goals of the departments, and over what is politically appropriate for the division.

Functions of Conflict

Conflict can decrease morale, impede communication, reduce cooperation, sap energy, inspire new levels of performance toward goals, and enhance a group's solidarity (Champion, 1979), among other things. Pondy (1969) believed that conflict can also induce constructive change by "the critical review of past actions, effective communication, equitable resource allocation, and the standardization of procedures for resolving conflict" (p. 502). Tjosvold (1978) also felt that conflict could lead to change, but focused on how "conflicts over ideas enhance a group's decision-making and problem-solving capabilities by encouraging group members to collect more relevant information, to investigate the issues more deeply, and to explore more alternative solutions to the problem" (p. 140).

Conflict also serves the function of bringing out emotions. Gmelch and Carroll (1991) listed some of the positive emotions of conflict as being excitement, enjoyment, stimulation, curiosity, creativity, commitment, and involvement. Deutsch (1973) also believed these to be positive emotions of conflict, but thought that it also prevents stagnation, provides a medium through which problems can be discussed, and is the root of personal and social change. Filley (1975) believed the positive values of conflict to be the diffusion of a more serious conflict; stimulation of the search for new facts or solutions; an increase in group cohesion and performance; and the provision of a measure of power and ability. Gmelch and Carroll portrayed the negative emotions elicited by

conflict to be anger, distrust, resentment, fear, and rejection. According to Pederson and Jandt (1996), negative conflict "threatens to erode the consensus needed for growth and development, while positive conflict is "usually about less central or fundamental issues and takes place within the context of a general consensus" (p.4).

Conflict can also cause functional and dysfunctional outcomes. Rahim (2001) listed these as

> Functional Outcomes: stimulate innovation, creativity and growth; organization decision-making may be improved; alternative solutions to problems may be found; may lead to synergistic solutions to common problems; individual and group performance may be enhanced; individuals and groups may be forced to search for new approaches; and individuals and groups may be required to articulate and clarify their positions. . . .
>
> Dysfunctional Outcomes: job stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction; communication between individuals and groups decreases; climate of distrust and suspicion; relationships damaged; job performance decreases; resistance to change can increase; and organization commitment and loyalty may be affected. (p. 7)

Conflict can be functional, but the results can be either positive or negative. According to Rahim, both serve a purpose. Functional outcomes, or positive conflict, can increase production rates and encourage new solutions to old problems. Dysfunctional outcomes, or negative conflict, can decrease production rates and discourage creativity (Rahim, 2001).

The latent functions of conflict were studied by Lewis Coser (1956) in his research on social conflict. Coser discussed 18 latent functions extensively, and the following is a summary:

1. Conflict helps to maintain a sense of identity and boundary lines between groups.

2. Conflict is required to maintain relationships.

3. Conflict serves a realistic purpose by being instrumental and external. It also serves a nonrealistic purpose by relieving tension and providing self-rewarding action.

4. Conflict stimulates interaction between the subjective and objective.

5. Conflict promotes hostility in close social relationships.

6. The closer the relationship, the more intense the conflict.

7. Conflicts that do not contradict basic values are functional by eliminating dissociating elements.

8. It provides stability in relationships.

9. It mobilizes energies and increases cohesion.

10. Conflict in another group defines the group structure and the consequent actions to the internal conflict.

11. It inhibits a search for enemies to maintain internal unity.

12. The ideology may be more radical and intense.

13. It may bind opponents by initiating new forms of interaction.

14. It increases interest in the unity of the enemy.

15. It establishes and maintains a balance of power.

16. It creates associations and coalitions.

17. It prevents rigidity and facilitates reorganization.

18. It promotes transformation by altering all structural relations.

Each of these latent functions can occur in everyday activities, and each can function to create a relationship that feeds off of conflict.

Ultimately, conflict functions to serve society as a means for creativity and change. "Conflict initiates a search for some way to resolve or ameliorate the conflict and, therefore, leads to innovation and change" (Litterer, 1966, p. 180).

<center>Techniques for Managing Conflict</center>

Many techniques exist for managing conflict situations. Miles (1980) identified four strategies used to manage conflict: altering the organization, altering the issues, altering the inherent relationships, and/or altering the individuals involved. Boulding's (1964) approach described three mechanisms for managing conflict that include unilateral peaceableness, political solutions, and mediation. Katz (1964) presented three steps to managing conflict. The first step involves making the system work by placing more emphasis on human relation skills to improve interpersonal relationships; clarifying role structures; and minimizing barriers to communication. Katz's second step is to develop additional machinery for conflict adjudication. To do so one must place an emphasis on controlling the conflict, not eradicating it. The last step encompasses restructuring the organization to decrease present conflicts. This is accomplished by creating new positions or restructuring old ones.

Stulberg (1987) listed the five P's of conflict management: perception, problems, processes, principles, and practices. Perception includes anger, fear, tension, anxiety, and nature in general. Problems are the sources of the conflict. The steps one follows to

manage the conflict are the processes, which could include fighting, litigating, mediating, or just giving in. Principles involve an individual's attitude toward the conflict. This could be an attitude of fairness, justice, or compliance. Practices include power, self-interest, unique situations, or combining processes from previous conflict situations. Each of these techniques is useful for managing conflict.

Slaikeu and Hasson (1998) also discussed ways to resolve conflict in organizations. Avoidance seems to be the first technique most frequently used. It happens when no action is taken to resolve the problem at the present time. Power play and force are also techniques used in organizations. This could involve physical violence, strikes, or behind-the-scenes maneuvering. One could also appeal to a higher authority to manage a conflict by referring up the line or chain of command, making internal appeals, or conducting formal investigation or litigation. Collaboration is also a technique that involves individual initiative, negotiation, and mediation.

Conflict can be resolved by managing preventive and escalating behaviors. Van de Vliert (1984) outlined the different ways to manage these behaviors to either prevent or de-escalate conflict. Spontaneous preventive behaviors include denying the conflict, determining the specific conflict of the particular situation, and automatic regulation mechanisms that can arise from previous experiences with conflict. Strategic preventive behaviors include changing the antecedent conditions, problem solving, reconceptualization of the conflict, and negotiation. Spontaneous escalating behaviors involve exaggerating the conflict, attacking the opponent, and restricting contact. Strategic escalating behaviors also include changing the antecedent conditions and

reconceptualization of the conflict. The only difference between preventive and escalating is that the latter must look for allies to manage the conflict.

Rahim (2001) set forth certain criteria that must exist in order for conflict management techniques to be effective. These include enhancing learning, long-term effectiveness, and critical and innovative thinking; satisfying the needs and expectations of stakeholders and attaining a balance among them; and upholding ethical standards. Deutsch (1973) described several variables that affect the course of conflict management. These are the characteristics of the parties of the conflict (i.e., values); motivations; beliefs about the conflict; prior relationships to one another; the nature of the issue that causes the conflict; the social environment within which the conflict occurs; the interested parties to the conflict; the strategies and tactics employed by the parties in the conflict; and the consequences of the conflict to each of the participants and the other interested parties. Each of these variables affects the outcomes of the techniques used to manage a conflict situation.

Several models also exist that describe techniques for managing conflict. The Holton conflict management model (Holton, 1998) details three steps to managing a conflict. The first step involves identifying the conflict. Six questions must be asked in order to define the conflict: who is involved, what is the conflict, when did it happen, where did it happen, what management attempts have been made, and what are the consequences of the conflict. Identifying solutions to the conflict is the second step. One must develop a positive attitude, establish ground rules, identify the interests of the parties involved, develop alternatives, identify criteria, and weigh solutions against the criteria in order to identify viable solutions. Implementing solutions, the final step,

involves developing a plan of action (i.e., who will be involved, what exactly should be done, when the parties will act, and who is responsible for mediating) and determining how to handle future conflicts.

Main and Roark's (1975) consensus model of conflict management details five steps to managing a conflict. They include describing the situation, describing the feelings and meanings, describing the desired situation, determining necessary changes, and outlining an agenda. Their model is much less complex than Holton's model. Gmelch and Carroll (1991) examined the three R's of long-term conflict management: recognition, response, and resolution. Recognizing the nature and causes of the conflict allows an individual to see how the potential for conflict increases when goals are unclear. Goals must be set forth realistically and clearly, and power must be distributed evenly or conflict will arise. Response options must be identified and explored also in order to determine effectiveness before a conflict arises. Conflict resolution is the final phase and should be judged by three criteria: (a) it should produce a wise outcome; (b) it should improve or at least not damage the relationships between the people involved; and (c) it should be efficient (Gmelch & Carroll, 1991, p. 118). Gmelch and Carroll's idea of the foundation of a principled resolution includes (a) separating people from the problem; (b) focusing on interests, not positions; (c) generating a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do; and (d) basing the resolution on objective standards (pp. 119-120).

Other techniques for managing conflict are described by common terms such as competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and collaborating. These terms are used interchangeably to coincide with different approaches such as 9/1, 1/9, 1/1, 5/5,

and 9/9, respectively. These numbered terms are used by Hall and are described in detail later in this chapter. Basic definitions of these techniques, as described by Blake and Mouton's (1978) *The New Managerial Grid*, follow.

The competing approach is a win-lose situation in which only one individual can win and conflict is viewed as an indication that control is being broken. Individuals take a position and stay with it. They also use taunts, game playing, dirty tricks, leverage, and suppression to win the conflict. The accommodating approach, as defined by Blake and Mouton (1978), seeks to maintain a relationship through geniality. The individuals simply give in to the other person rather than cause more conflict. It is a lose-win situation, and individuals use techniques such as indirect expressions of their position, apologies and promises, holding their tongue when in disagreement, and letting others go first in order to manage the conflict. According to Blake and Mouton, the avoidance approach is a lose-lose situation. Conflict is futile, and the individual will be seen but not heard. The person is only the messenger and procrastinates and straddles the fence. Ultimately, this approach leads only to the individual's neither satisfying his or her own goals nor improving relations with others. The compromising approach is based more on persuasive logic, with individuals falling back on traditions and established practices, believing that they must give a little in order to resolve the conflict. An attempt is made to meet as many of their goals as possible without harming relationships. The final approach, collaborating, assumes that although a conflict is inevitable, it is resolvable. Critical to this approach is the way in which it is managed. This approach involves the assumption that it is possible to meet one's personal goals and improve relationships. Individuals will seek ways to integrate interests. Techniques of this approach include

openly communicating; explaining rationale; seeking facts, data, and logic; experimenting; critiquing; and confrontating (Blake & Mouton, 1978). This approach appears to be the most desirable method in that it is a win-win situation.

Another technique for managing conflict is alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Its origin stems from overloaded court dockets and the increased cost and decreased satisfaction with litigation (Costantino & Merchant, 1996). The societal movement toward a more natural and humane method of dispute resolution and a desire to empower disputants to participate in their own disputes have also increased the use of ADR.

Other techniques for managing conflict include offering conflict resolution training, engaging in conflict prevention activities, and supporting nonviolent social protest and change (Slaikeu & Hasson, 1998). Such skills as active listening, clarifying statements made by others, expressing empathy, building trust, and problem solving are counseling techniques that are also useful in managing conflict (Moore, 2000). Ultimately, "the object of conflict management is to see that conflicts remain on the creative and useful side of an invisible but critically important barrier that divides the good conflict from the bad" (Boulding, 1964, p. 76).

<div align="center">Hall's Conflict Management Styles</div>

Hall (1996) observed the following:

Conflict exists whenever there are important differences between people, groups, or nations. It is a natural part of the human condition, but the manner in which you respond to and manage its dynamics will help determine the successes of your enterprise. (p. 1)

Hall's Conflict Management Survey (CMS) is the instrument used in this study, and it is used as an assessment of preferences for conflict management. It is the most widely used self-assessment conflict mode instrument for training in business (Shockley-Zalabak, 1988).

Womack (1988) identified the strengths and weaknesses of the CMS. The strengths of the instrument, according to Womack, are that it is the most comprehensive of its type; it deals explicitly with different contexts; trainers feel that the scores are extremely informative; and it specifies different contexts appropriate to organizations. Its weaknesses include a social desirability bias and questionable reliability; it assumes that there is one best way to manage conflict; and it is lengthy and difficult to administer.

Hall's (1996) conflict management is comprised of two dimensions: the context within which conflict occurs and the personal relevance of issues involved in the conflict. Hall explained that the degree of concern people have for one another will determine the actions they see as appropriate for dealing with conflict. The model itself places relationships on the vertical axis and personal goals on the horizontal axis. The scale from which the scores are measured is made up of 9 points, with 1 denoting low concern and 9 denoting high concern. By pairing the two concerns, one can identify the five pure styles of conflict management. These styles, in ideal order of preferences, are 9/9 (collaborating), 5/5 (compromise), 1/9 (avoidance), 9/1 (accommodating), and 1/1 (competing). The terminology of the two dimensions and five modes varies somewhat among researchers, based on their own personal preferences. Hall noted,

No one is locked into a given profile simply because it is characteristic of that person at a particular point in time. We choose and determine our behavior. They

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are neither innate nor compulsory and we can elect to use more productive

behaviors. (p. 18)

Thomas and Kilmann's (1978) research on several conflict management

instruments found that the CMS has the third highest test-retest reliability of the four

most frequently used instruments. With an N=86, the test-retest reliability coefficients for

each style are as follows: competing = .66; collaborating = .54; compromising = .41;

avoidance = .61; and accommodating = .53. The mean test-retest reliability is .55. Its

internal consistency is the second highest of the four instruments researched by Thomas

and Kilmann. With an N=86, the internal consistency coefficients for each style are as

follows: competing = .61; collaborating = .73; compromising = .45; avoidance = .39; and

accommodating = .57. The mean internal consistency is .55. The CMS proves to be a

reliable and valid instrument by being consistent in its findings from previous studies and

measuring what it purports to measure: conflict management style preferences.

Findings/Studies Related to Conflict and Conflict Management

Many studies have found that compromising is the most frequently used style of

conflict management. Garnier (1981) found this to be the case in his study of academic

deans. He also posited that the integrating, problem-solving method is the most effective

as perceived by deans' associates and the dominance and avoidance are least effective.

Newell (1979) researched various divisions in academia to find that collaboration

(integration) is the most effective method in student affairs but that compromising is the

most frequently used method. Woodtli (1987) studied deans of nursing programs to find

that the most frequently used style is also the compromising method. Rahim's (1985)

research found that integrating and compromising are the styles of choice for strategic

issues, whereas the remaining styles are more appropriate for problems that are more routine and part of daily activities. Likert and Likert (1976) also found that a review of the results of research of others concludes that the integrative (compromising) problem-solving method is most desirable.

Some studies focused on variables such as gender and age. Champion (1979) and Revilla (1984) both found no differences between male and female managers in their preferred means of resolving conflict. However, Cardona (1995) did find a gender difference in that females are more avoiding than males, and Thomas (1971) found that women tend to be less aggressive or more passive than their male counterparts. Revilla (1984) found a significant difference in age, and Thomas found that older individuals are less aggressive than younger individuals. Revilla discovered that the more experienced administrators (with 5 or more years of experience) scored means closer to those of the norm group on all five conflict management styles. Revilla also found that conflict management styles are more influenced by the amount of time spent in administration than any other variable.

<div align="center">The Chief Student Affairs Officer and Conflict</div>

The chief student affairs officer (CSAO) is "engaged in counseling students with serious dependency; resolving differences among racial and ethnic groups; supervising complex student activity programs; and supervising student conduct programs" (Sandeen, 2000, p. v). The CSAO developed out of the increased enrollment of students after WWII. Faculty started to become more committed to scholarship and research, and, therefore, the student affairs division developed. The literature expanded to meet the needs of diverse students, new theories arose, and professional associations flourished.

The major influences on student affairs in the past 30 years include such events as the "civil rights movement, rising expectations for higher education, the Vietnam War, and the national political trend (since 1980) toward conservatism" (Sandeen, 1991, p. 209). The CSAO answers to a variety of constituents, many of whom represent conflicting priorities and expectations. The CSAO must know the strengths, limitations, and priorities of the institutional president in order to support him or her. An ineffective CSAO will result in negative consequences for the institution and eventual removal from office (Sandeen, 2000). The role of the CSAO is to provide leadership and direction for services and programs. The role "focuses on aspirations, interests, and achievements of students and thus inevitably confronts their frustrations, prejudices, and failures as well" (Sandeen, 1991, p. 120). The essential skills necessary for effective leadership include the "ability to resolve complex problems while not alienating most people; the ability to relate effectively to a diversity of students, faculty, and staff; and the ability to uphold ethical standards" (Sandeen, 2000, p. 6). Each campus is unique, and the CSAO must adjust to its special needs. Sandeen described several things that CSAOs must know in order to be effective leaders. They must know the students and understand the issues they face. They must develop effective problem-solving skills, build support with teams, earn the president's support, use mediation to teach, set an example, and learn to compromise.

The management of conflict is a major responsibility of all administrators, especially the CSAO. Administrators tend to manage conflict poorly because they do not want to deal with conflict that cannot be controlled; they fail to make plans for conflict situations because they do not view conflict as productive; they fail to accept conflict and are threatened by it; and they find conflict difficult to accept due to the implication that

conflict is equated with change (Cardona, 1995). The strains and tensions in higher

education do not help with the management of conflict. Today's CSAOs have to deal

with the desires of students who want more control of their extracurricular activities; the

tendency for students to become hostile as they make their choices of academic or

vocational specialization; the desire on the part of women and ethnic minorities to move

up within faculty ranks at a time of declining opportunities; and the desire on the part of

younger faculty to work and face increasing numbers of older faculty (Cardona, 1995). A

CSAO must be able to handle and resolve conflict; educate students in resolving conflict;

know what is expected of them, when to intervene, and who should be involved; and be

an effective mediator (Sandeen, 1991).

Chief student affairs officers must develop a conflict management style similar to

the president of their institution in order to maintain good relations with the president and

community leaders; they must be approachable when conflict situations arise; and they

must be effective mediators. The conflict management style of a CSAO depends on a

number of factors, including the CSAO's own conflict management preference, the

organizational culture of the institution, and the issue being debated (Donovan, 1993). A

CSAO uses conflict management to increase the effort to manage conflicts and disputes;

to show its practical use to students; and to show the significance of the contributions of

colleges and universities.

Changes in higher education such as the changing student body, the changing

curriculum, increased competition within and among higher education institutions,

increased technology, and shifting attitudes all call for the use of effective conflict

management techniques. The very nature of a university is reflected in its management of

conflict.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES FOR THE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Design

The research design employed in this study involved a mailed questionnaire and

an ex post facto descriptive methodology. This was appropriate because the purpose of

the study was to garner information regarding an existing condition; that is, the

relationship between chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) and their conflict

management mode preferences. The study involved the use of a mailed questionnaire for

the collection of data on how CSAOs in 4-year public institutions of higher education in

the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) manage conflict. The mailed

questionnaire format was used for a number of reasons. First, the respondents were on the

campuses of schools throughout the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and

financial limitations precluded the possibility of personal interviews. Second, the mailed

surveys were more timely in data collection than interviews.

A disadvantage of the mailed questionnaire was participant nonresponse. To

minimize nonresponse, three contacts were used to communicate with the

nonrespondents. A brief pre-notice letter was sent to the respondents asking for their

interest in participating in the study (see Appendix A). Once their interest was noted, a

questionnaire and self-addressed, stamped return envelope were mailed immediately. A

detailed cover letter explaining the importance of a response by January 14, 2002, was

also sent (see Appendix B). On January 15, 2002, another letter was sent to

nonrespondents, again requesting their participation and reminding those who had
expressed an interest to complete their survey (see Appendix C). The successive mailing
sequence was completed in 6 to 8 weeks. The sample participants were reminded of the
confidentiality of their responses in each correspondence.

Description of the Population

The population of the study consisted of 140 chief student affairs officers in 4-year
public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and
Schools (SACS), as listed in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
(NASPA) membership directory (2000). A list of all CSAOs is maintained in the NASPA
membership directory. Their names and addresses are public information.

Instrumentation

The *Conflict Management Survey* developed by Jay Hall and a demographic fact
sheet prepared by the researcher were utilized to examine the conflict management
preferences of chief student affairs officers.

The *Conflict Management Survey* was first published in 1969 and later revised in
1973, 1986, and 1996. It is a self-administered, untimed, 12-item, pencil-paper survey that
takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. No modifications were required for this
study. The survey was removed from its booklet so that the self-scoring profile was not
part of the research design, which could have altered the participants' responses.

The *Conflict Management Survey* included four categories that addressed the
respondent's personal view of conflict, interpersonal conflict, group conflict, and
intergroup conflict. Each of the four sections included three situations followed by five
alternative ways of handling the conflict situation. The respondents were asked to identify

which response was most characteristic of them and to rate the statement on a scale from 1

(*completely uncharacteristic*) to 10 (*completely characteristic*). The respondents then

chose the statement that was least characteristic of them and rated it on a 1 to 10 scale.

They were asked to do the same for the remaining three statements. The instrument

provided an overall score for each style and gave subscores for each of the four types of

situations. The scores revealed a preference for handling conflict by addressing the two

dimensions of conflict behavior: concern for relationships and concern for personal goals.

Each dimension was a motivational factor that determined the dominant conflict

management style.

Hall (1996) described the five conflict management styles in the *Conflict*

*Management Surve*y booklet:

*9/9 synergistic style***:** working through differences will lead to more creative

solutions. Hidden agendas are coaxed into the open . . . relationships may be

strengthened as a result.

5/5 compromise style: attempts to soften the effects of losing by limiting the gains .

. . manipulative; both ends are played against the middle . . . result is value

confusion and a climate of suspicion . . . halfhearted relationships and only limited

attainment of goals are the usual result.

9/1 win-lose style: associate winning with demonstrating status and competence . .

. losing is seen as a display of incompetence and weakness . . . places prime

importance on personal goals to the virtual exclusion of any concern for the

relationship.

1/9 yield-lose style: seeks to appease others by ignoring, denying, and avoiding

conflict . . . giving in to the other person's goals is seen as an effective way of

protecting the relationship.

1/1 lose-leave style: hopelessness is the central feature . . . willing to forego

personal gain as well as any positive contribution to the relationship in return for

noninvolvement. (pp. 16-17)

Since Hall's initial development of the *Conflict Management Survey* in 1969 and

its revisions in 1973, 1986, and 1996, several studies have utilized the instrument and have

found it to be a reliable and valid tool for identifying an individual's preferred conflict

management style. These research studies are discussed in chapter 2. Hall (1996) used the

Spearman-Brown item-test approach to estimate test reliability and found:

the reliability coefficients for the 5 conflict management modes were as follows:

Collaborative (synergistic) = .87; Compromise = .73; Accommodative (yield-lose)

= .75; Forcing (win-lose) = .83; and Avoidant (lose-leave) = .75. Based on a factor

analysis of the items, the average commonality across the five styles is .93. (p.23)

Hall (1996) also provided evidence of construct validity by stating that "style

scores load strongly with several personality traits CPI (California Personality Inventory)

and Bass's Famous Sayings Test" (p.23). According to Shockley-Zalabak (1988), the

"Hall CMS also correlates significantly with the Lawrence-Lorsch and Blake and Mouton

instruments for competition, collaboration, avoiding, and accommodation modes" (p.313).

The scoring of the *Conflict Management Survey* was based on the five raw scores

calculated for each conflict style. Shockley-Zalabak (1988) provided an excellent

description of the scoring method:

The sum of the 12 numbers becomes the respondent's overall raw score for each

conflict style. Personal, interpersonal, small group, and intergroup context scores

for each style are obtained by subtotaling the overall raw score with three numbers

per context. Raw scores for each style can be transformed to t-scores by using the

conversion tables provided in the interpretation materials which accompany the

instrument. Hall describes the t-score concept as a statistical technique which

adjusts raw scores through comparison to a normative population. The relative

standing of an individual within a comparison group is more reflective of style

preferences than raw scores and is more likely to control for response bias. (p. 309)

Procedures for the Collection of Data

Approval for the study was obtained from the University of North Texas (UNT)

Institutional Relations Board. The University of North Texas partially supported the

research project by (a) providing the paper and professional copy machines necessary to

produce the questionnaires, (b) permitting the cover letter accompanying the questionnaire

to be printed on UNT letterhead, (c) permitting the mailings to be sent in UNT envelopes,

and (d) funding the total cost of the mailings. In return for support and funding, the

University of North Texas was given bound and electronic copies of the final dissertation

for future reference.

A three-step process for mailing questionnaires was used to achieve a higher

response rate. The first letter from the Higher Education Program was sent to inform the

participants of the purposes of the assessment, the need for their feedback, the importance

of the study, and a request for their participation. The pre-notice letter went out on

November 21, 2001 (see Appendix A).

The second mailing, to those who had expressed an interest in participating, consisted of a packet with a cover letter signed by the major professor (see Appendix B), the UNT informed consent protocol, the questionnaire, and a postage-paid, self-addressed return envelope. The response target date was set for January 14, 2002.

On January 15, 2002, a "thank-you" letter from the researcher and her major professor was sent to each participant (see Appendix C). The letter was brief and served as both a "thank you" to those who had completed and returned the questionnaire and a reminder to those who had not.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

The demographic information was entered into a computer using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher enlisted the help of the UNT computing center to design a program to code the variables. The researcher found the response means and performed a chi-square on the primary conflict management styles.

The scale score for each response selected by a chief student affairs officer was placed in the order shown on the *Conflict Management Survey*. A subtotal was computed for each of the three questions under the four categories: personal orientation, interpersonal conflicts, small group conflicts, and intergroup conflict. Hall's (1996) conversion table was used to convert the subtotals of the raw scores to *t* scores for all five conflict management styles. The *t* scores were then placed in their order of preference on the Profile Summary Sheet. The largest number was entered as the primary conflict management style.

To determine whether there were significant associations among chief student affairs officers' conflict management preferences based on age, gender, ethnicity, years of

experience as a CSAO, and the size (enrollment) of the institution, a chi-square was

performed on each variable.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). An interest letter was sent to 140 CSAOs in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and 35 affirmative responses were received. A mailed questionnaire was then used to collect data from 35 CSAOs in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; 25 usable questionnaires were returned (N=25). A response rate of 71.4 % was achieved.

This chapter presents the data and the results of the statistical analysis pertaining to the six research questions specified in chapter 1. The presentation of the findings is divided into three sections: (a) the demographic data, (b) the results of the conflict management style stratified according to each independent variable, and (c) the results of each of the five conflict management styles stratified according to each independent variable. All statistical tests were performed at the .05 alpha level.

Demographic Data

Table 1

Age of CSAOs

Age	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
40-49	5	20	8.33
50-59	15	60	8.33
60 & over	5	20	8.33
Total	25	100	24.99

$x^2 = 8.00$; $df = 2$.

Of the 25 participants responding to the item regarding their age (Table 1), 20 % ($N=5$) were in the age range of 40-49 years, 60 % ($N=15$) were in the age range of 50-59 years, and 20 % ($N=5$) were in the 60-or-over age range.

The chi-square value of 8.00 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 1 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the number of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 2

Gender of CSAOs

Gender	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Female	8	32	12.5
Male	17	68	12.5
Total	25	100	25

$x^2 = 3.24$; $df = 1$.

Of the 25 participants responding to the item regarding gender (Table 2), 8 respondents (32%) were female; 17 (68%) were male.

Theoretically, the expected distribution of gender would be 12.5 % female and 12.5 % male. The chi-square value of 3.24 for gender is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 2 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 3

Number of Years of Experience as a CSAO

Number of Years	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10 Years	14	56	8.33
11-20 Years	8	32	8.33
21+ Years	3	12	8.33
Total	25	100	24.99

$x^2 = 7.28$; $df = 2$.

Of the 25 participants responding to the item regarding the number of years of experience as a CSAO, a majority (N=14; 56%) had spent 1-10 years, 32 percent (N=8) had spent 11-20 years, and 12 % (N=3) had spent over 21 years.

The chi-square value of 7.28 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 3 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the number of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 4

Ethnicity of CSAOs

Ethnicity	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Black	5	20	8.33
Hispanic	1	4	8.33
White	19	76	8.33
Total	25	100	24.99

$x^2 = 21.44$; $df = 2$.

Of the 25 participants responding to the item regarding ethnicity, a majority of the responses (N=19; 76%) were White, 5 respondents (20%) were Black, and 1 respondent (4%) was Hispanic.

The chi-square value of 21.44 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 4 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the number of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 5

Size (Enrollment) of CSAOs Employing Institutions

Institution size	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10,000	15	60	12.5
10,001 and over	10	40	12.5
Total	25	100	25

$x^2 = 1.00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 25 participants responding to the item regarding size or enrollment of their employing institution, 15 respondents (60%) said the institution size was 1-10,000; 10 respondents (40%) said it was 10,001 or over.

Theoretically, the expected N distribution of respondents would be 12.5 in each of the two categories. The chi-square value of 1.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 5 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 6

Conflict Management Styles of CSAOs

CMS	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Synergistic	12	48	5
Compromise	2	8	5
Yield-lose	5	20	5
Win-lose	4	16	5
Lose-leave	2	8	5
Total	25	100	25

$x^2 = 13.6$; $df = 4$.

Of the 25 participants responding to the conflict management survey, a majority of the respondents ($N=12$; 48%) were synergistic, 5 respondents (20%) were yield-lose; 4

respondents (16%) were win-lose, 2 respondents (8%) were compromise, and 2

respondents (8%) were lose-leave.

The chi-square value of 13.6 is statistically significant. The observed distribution

of responses in Table 6 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected

under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the number of responses

per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

CMS Stratified According to Each Independent Variable

Table 7

CMS Stratified According to Age

			Age			
			40-49	50-59	60 & over	Total
CMS	Synergistic	Observed N	2	8	2	12
		Expected N	4	4	4	12
	Compromise	Observed N	0	2	0	2
		Expected N	0.67	0.67	0.67	2
	Yield-lose	Observed N	3	2	0	5
		Expected N	1.67	1.67	1.67	5
	Win-lose	Observed N	0	2	2	4
		Expected N	1.33	1.33	1.33	4
	Lose-leave	Observed N	0	1	1	2
		Expected N	0.67	0.67	0.67	2
	Total	Observed N	5	15	5	25
		Expected N	8.33	8.33	8.33	25

$x^2 = 15.27$; $df = 8$.

The chi-square value of 15.27 is not statistically significant. The observed

distribution of responses in Table 7 does not depart significantly from the distribution of

responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 8

CMS Stratified According to Gender

			Gender Female	Male	Total
CMS	Synergistic	Observed N	4	8	12
		Expected N	6	6	12
	Compromise	Observed N	1	1	2
		Expected N	1	1	2
	Yield-lose	Observed N	2	3	5
		Expected N	2.5	2.5	5
	Win-lose	Observed N	1	3	4
		Expected N	2	2	4
	Lose-leave	Observed N	0	2	2
		Expected N	1	1	2
	Total	Observed N	8	17	25
		Expected N	12.5	12.5	25

$x^2 = 4.54$; $df = 4$.

The chi-square value of 4.54 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 8 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 9

CMS Stratified According to Number of Years of Experience as a CSAO

			Years of experience			
			1-10	11-20	21 & over	Total
CMS	Synergistic	Observed N	6	4	2	12
		Expected N	4	4	4	12
	Compromise	Observed N	2	0	0	2
		Expected N	0.67	0.67	0.67	2
	Yield-lose	Observed N	4	1	0	5
		Expected N	1.67	1.67	1.67	5
	Win-lose	Observed N	2	2	0	4
		Expected N	1.33	1.33	1.33	4
	Lose-leave	Observed N	0	1	1	2
		Expected N	0.67	0.67	0.67	2
	Total	Observed N	14	8	3	25
		Expected N	8.33	8.33	8.33	25

$x^2 = 14.27$; $df = 8$.

The chi-square value of 14.27 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 9 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 10

CMS Stratified According to Ethnicity

			Ethnicity			
			Black	Hispanic	White	Total
CMS	Synergistic	Observed N	3	1	8	12
		Expected N	4	4	4	12
	Compromise	Observed N	0	0	2	2
		Expected N	0.67	0.67	0.67	2
	Yield-lose	Observed N	2	0	3	5
		Expected N	1.67	1.67	1.67	5
	Win-lose	Observed N	0	0	4	4
		Expected N	1.33	1.33	1.33	4
	Lose-leave	Observed N	0	0	2	2
		Expected N	0.67	0.67	0.67	2
	Total	Observed N	5	1	19	25
		Expected N	8.33	8.33	8.33	25

$x^2 = 26.83$; *df* = 8.

The chi-square value of 26.83 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 10 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 11

CMS Stratified According to Size (Enrollment) of Employing Institution

			Institution size		Total
			1-10,000	10,001 & over	
CMS	Synergistic	Observed N	7	5	12
		Expected N	6	6	12
	Compromise	Observed N	1	1	2
		Expected N	1	1	2
	Yield-lose	Observed N	4	1	5
		Expected N	2.5	2.5	5
	Win-lose	Observed N	2	2	4
		Expected N	2	2	4
	Lose-leave	Observed N	1	1	2
		Expected N	1	1	2
	Total	Observed N	15	10	25
		Expected N	12.5	12.5	25

$x^2 = 2.14$; $df = 4$.

The chi-square value of 2.14 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 11 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Each CMS Stratified According to Each Independent Variable

Table 12

Age of CSAOs Stratified According to the Synergistic CMS

Age	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
40-49	2	16.67	4
50-59	8	66.67	4
60 & over	2	16.67	4
Total	12	100.01	12

$x^2 = 6.00$; $df = 2$.

Of the 12 participants with a synergistic conflict management style, 2 respondents (16.67%) were in the age range of 40-49 years, 8 respondents (66.67%) were in the age range of 50-59 years, and 2 respondents (16.67%) were in the 60-or-over age range.

The chi-square of 6.00 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 12 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no associations between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 13

Gender of CSAOs Stratified According to the Synergistic CMS

Gender	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Female	4	33.3	6
Male	8	66.6	6
Total	12	99.9	12

$x^2 = 1.33$; $df = 1$.

Of the 12 participants with a synergistic conflict management style, 4 respondents (33.3%) were female; 8 respondents (66.6%) were male.

The chi-square of 1.33 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 13 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 14

Number of Years of Experience of CSAOs Stratified According to the Synergistic CMS

Years of experience	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10	6	50	4
11-20	4	33.3	4
21 & over	2	16.6	4
Total	12	99.9	12

$x^2 = 2.00; df = 2.$

Of the 12 participants with a synergistic conflict management style, 6 respondents (50%) had 1-10 years of experience as a CSAO, 4 respondents (33.3%) had 11-20 years of experience, and 2 (16.6%) had over 21 years of experience.

The chi-square of 2.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 14 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of

responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 15

Ethnicity of CSAOs Stratified According to the Synergistic CMS

Ethnicity	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Black	3	25	4
Hispanic	1	8.3	4
White	8	66.7	4
Total	12	100	12

$x^2 = 6.5$; $df = 2$.

Of the 12 participants with a synergistic conflict management style, 3 respondents (25%) were Black, 1 respondent (8.3%) was Hispanic, and 8 respondents (66.7%) were White.

The chi-square of 6.50 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 15 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 16

Size (Enrollment) of Institution of CSAOs Stratified According to the Synergistic CMS

Institution Size	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10,000	7	58.3	6
10,001 and over	5	41.6	6
Total	12	99.9	12

$x^2 = .33$; $df = 1$.

Of the 12 participants with a synergistic conflict management style, 7 respondents (58.3%) said their institution size was 1-10,000; 5 respondents (41.6%) said their institution size was 10,001 or over.

The chi-square of .33 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 16 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 17

Age of CSAOs Stratified According to the Compromise CMS

Age	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
40-49	0	0	0.67
50-59	2	100	0.67
60 & over	0	0	0.67
Total	2	100	2.01

$x^2 = 3.98$; $df = 2$.

Of the 2 participants with a compromising conflict management style, none of the respondents (0%) were in the age range of 40-49 years, 2 respondents (100%) were in the age range of 50-59 years, and none of the respondents (0%) were in the 60-or-over age range.

The chi-square value of 3.98 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 17 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 18

Gender of CSAOs Stratified According to the Compromise CMS

Gender	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Female	1	50	1
Male	1	50	1
Total	2	100	2

$x^2 = .00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 2 participants with a compromising conflict management style, 1 of the respondents (50%) was female; 1 (50%) was male.

The chi-square value of 0 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 18 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 19

Number of Years of Experience of CSAOs Stratified According to the Compromise CMS

Years of Experience	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10	2	100	0.67
11-20	0	0	0.67
21 & over	0	0	0.67
Total	2	100	2.01

$x^2 = 3.98$; $df = 2$.

Of the 2 participants with a compromising conflict management style, 2 of the respondents (100%) had 1-10 years of experience as a CSAO, none of the respondents (0%) had 11-20 years of experience, and none (0%) had over 21 years of experience.

The chi-square of 3.98 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 19 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 20

Ethnicity of CSAOs Stratified According to the Compromise CMS

Ethnicity	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Black	0	0	0.67
Hispanic	0	0	0.67
White	2	100	0.67
Total	2	100	2.01

$x^2 = 3.98$; $df = 2$.

Of the 2 participants with a compromising conflict management style, none of the respondents (0%) were Black, none of the respondents (0%) were Hispanic, and 2 respondents (100%) were White.

The chi-square of 3.98 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 20 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of

responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 21

Size (Enrollment) of Institution of CSAOs Stratified According to the Compromise CMS

Institution Size	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10,000	1	50	1
10,001 and over	1	50	1
Total	2	100	2

$x^2 = 0.00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 2 participants with a compromising conflict management style, 1 respondent (50%) said their institution size was 1-10,000; 1 respondent (50%) said their institution size was 10,001 or over.

The chi-square of 0.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 21 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 22

Age of CSAOs Stratified According to the Yield-Lose CMS

Age	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
40-49	3	60	1.67
50-59	2	40	1.67
60 & over	0	0	1.67
Total	5	100	5.01

$x^2 = 2.8; df = 2.$

Of the 5 participants with a yield-lose conflict management style, 3 respondents

(60%) were in the age range of 40-49 years, 2 respondents (40%) were in the age range of

50-59 years, and none of the respondents (0%) were in the 60-or-over age range.

The chi-square value of 2.8 is not statistically significant. The observed

distribution of responses in Table 22 does not depart significantly from the distribution of

responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the

numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be

attributed to chance.

Table 23

Gender of CSAOs Stratified According to the Yield-Lose CMS

Gender	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Female	2	40	2.5
Male	3	60	2.5
Total	5	100	5

$x^2 = .20; df = 1.$

Of the 5 participants with a yield-lose conflict management style, 2 of the respondents (40%) were female; 3 (60%) were male.

The chi-square value of .20 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 23 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 24

Number of Years of Experience of CSAOs Stratified According to the Yield-Lose CMS

Years of experience	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10	4	80	1.67
11-20	1	20	1.67
21 & over	0	0	1.67
Total	5	100	5.01

$x^2 = 4.99; df = 2.$

Of the 5 participants with a yield-lose conflict management style, 4 of the respondents (80%) had 1-10 years of experience as a CSAO, 1 of the respondents (20%) had 11-20 years of experience, and none (0%) had over 21 years of experience.

The chi-square of 4.99 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 24 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 25

Ethnicity of CSAOs Stratified According to the Yield-Lose CMS

Ethnicity	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Black	2	40	1.67
Hispanic	0	0	1.67
White	3	60	1.67
Total	5	100	5.01

$x^2 = 2.8$; $df = 2$.

Of the 5 participants with a yield-lose conflict management style, 2 of the respondents (40%) were Black, none of the respondents (0%) were Hispanic, and 3 respondents (60%) were White.

The chi-square of 2.8 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 25 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of

responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 26

Size of Institution of CSAOs Stratified According to the Yield-Lose CMS

Institution size	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10,000	4	80	2.5
10,001 and over	1	20	2.5
Total	5	100	5

$x^2 = 1.8; df = 1$.

Of the 5 participants with a yield-lose conflict management style, 4 respondents (80%) said their institution size was 1-10,000; 1 respondent (20%) said their institution size was 10,001 or over.

The chi-square of 1.8 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 26 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 27

Age of CSAOs Stratified According to Win-Lose CMS

Age	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
40-49	0	0	1.33
50-59	2	50	1.33
60 & over	2	50	1.33
Total	4	100	3.99

$x^2 = 2.01$; $df = 2$.

Of the 4 participants with a win-lose conflict management style, none of the respondents (0%) were in the age range of 40-49 years, 2 respondents (50%) were in the age range of 50-59 years, and 2 respondents (50%) were in the 60-or-over age range.

The chi-square value of 2.01 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 27 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 28

Gender of CSAOs Stratified According to Win-Lose CMS

Gender	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Female	1	25	2
Male	3	75	2
Total	4	100	4

$x^2 = 1.00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 4 participants with a win-lose conflict management style, 1 of the respondents (25%) was female; 3 (75%) were male.

The chi-square value of 1.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 28 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 29

Number of Years of Experience of CSAOs Stratified According to Win-Lose CMS

Years of experience	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10	2	50	1.33
11-20	2	50	1.33
21 & over	0	0	1.33
Total	4	100	3.99

$x^2 = 2.01$; $df = 2$.

Of the 4 participants with a win-lose conflict management style, 2 of the respondents (50%) had 1-10 years of experience as a CSAO, 2 of the respondents (50%) had 11-20 years of experience, and none (0%) had over 21 years of experience.

The chi-square of 2.01 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 29 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 30

Ethnicity of CSAOs Stratified According to Win-Lose CMS

Ethnicity	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Black	0	0	1.33
Hispanic	0	0	1.33
White	4	100	1.33
Total	4	100	3.99

$x^2 = 8.02; df = 2.$

Of the 4 participants with a win-lose conflict management style, none of the respondents (0%) were Black, none of the respondents (0%) were Hispanic, and 4 respondents (100%) were White.

The chi-square of 8.02 is statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 30 departs significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, cannot be attributed to chance.

Table 31

Size (Enrollment) of Institution of CSAOs Stratified According to Win-Lose CMS

Institution size	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10,000	2	50	2
10,001 and over	2	50	2
Total	4	100	4

$x^2 = 0.00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 4 participants with a win-lose conflict management style, 2 respondents (50%) said their institution size was 1-10,000; 2 respondents (50%) said their institution size was 10,001 or over.

The chi-square of 0.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 31 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 32

Age of CSAOs Stratified According to Lose-Leave CMS

Age	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
40-49	0	0	0.67
50-59	1	50	0.67
60 & over	1	50	0.67
Total	2	100	2.01

$x^2 = .99; df = 2.$

Of the 2 participants with a lose-leave conflict management style, none of the respondents (0%) were in the age range of 40-49 years, 1 respondent (50%) was in the age range of 50-59 years, and 1 respondent (50%) was in the 60-or-over age range.

The chi-square value of .99 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 32 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 33

Gender of CSAOs Stratified According to Lose-Leave CMS

Gender	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Female	0	0	1
Male	2	100	1
Total	2	100	2

$x^2 = 2.00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 2 participants with a lose-leave conflict management style, none of the respondents (0%) were female; 2 (100%) were male.

The chi-square value of 2.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 33 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 34

Number of Years of Experience of CSAOs Stratified According to Lose-Leave CMS

Years of experience	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10	0	0	0.67
11-20	1	50	0.67
21 & over	1	50	0.67
Total	2	100	2.01

$x^2 = .99$; $df = 2$.

Of the 4 participants with a lose-leave conflict management style, none of the

respondents (0%) had 1-10 years of experience as a CSAO, 1 of the respondents (50%)

had 11-20 years of experience, and one (50%) had over 21 years of experience.

The chi-square of .99 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of

responses in Table 34 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses

expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of

responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to

chance.

Table 35

Ethnicity of CSAOs Stratified According to Lose-Leave CMS

Ethnicity	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
Black	0	0	0.67
Hispanic	0	0	0.67
White	2	100	0.67
Total	2	100	2.01

$x^2 = 3.98$; $df = 2$.

Of the 2 participants with a lose-leave conflict management style, none of the

respondents (0%) were Black, none of the respondents (0%) were Hispanic, and 2

respondents (100%) were White.

The chi-square of 3.98 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of

responses in Table 35 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses

expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of

responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

Table 36

Size (Enrollment) of Institution of CSAOs Stratified According to Lose-Leave CMS

Institution size	Observed N	Percent	Expected N
1-10,000	1	50	1
10,001 and over	1	50	1
Total	2	100	2

$x^2 = 0.00$; $df = 1$.

Of the 2 participants with a win-lose conflict management style, 1 respondent (50%) said their institution size was 1-10,000; 1 respondent (50%) said their institution size was 10,001 or over.

The chi-square of 0.00 is not statistically significant. The observed distribution of responses in Table 36 does not depart significantly from the distribution of responses expected under the condition of the hypothesis of no association between the numbers of responses per response category. The observed distribution, therefore, can be attributed to chance.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study involved an assessment of the conflict management styles of chief

student affairs officers (CSAOs) in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The purposes of this study were

the following: (a) to determine the conflict management styles of chief student affairs

officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of

Colleges and Schools (SACS); (b) to ascertain how chief student affairs officers in 4-year

public institutions of higher education manage conflict; and (c) to compare the conflict

management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher

education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) according to the

following independent variables: age, gender, ethnicity, years of experience as a chief

student affairs officer, and size (enrollment) of their employing institutions.

This chapter concludes the study in four sections. The first section summarizes the

findings of the study; the second section discusses those findings; the third section draws

general conclusions from the study; and the fourth section presents recommendations

regarding future studies of CSAOs and their conflict management styles.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings is presented in two sections. The first section summarizes the findings of the demographic information of the chief student affairs officers. The second section summarizes the findings about each of the five conflict management styles of the chief student affairs officers and their associations to each independent variable.

Demographic Data

Regarding respondents' ages, a majority was in the age range of 50-59 years (60%); 20% were in the age range of 40-49 years; 20% were in the 60-or-over age range.

A majority of the respondents (68%) in this study were male; 32% were female.

The majority of the respondents (56%) had 1-10 years of experience as a chief student affairs officer; 32% had 11-20 years of experience; and 12% had over 21 years of experience.

A majority of the respondents (76%) were White/Anglo. Smaller percentages were Black (20%) and Hispanic (4%).

Regarding the size or enrollment of the chief student affairs officer's employing institution, 60% reported the institution's enrollment as 1-10,000, and 40% reported it as 10,001 or over.

A majority of the respondents (48%) had a synergistic conflict management style; 20% had a yield-lose style; 16% had a win-lose style; 8% had a compromising style; and 8% had a lose-leave style.

Each Conflict Management Style and its Association to Each Independent Variable

Regarding the 12 respondents who had a synergistic conflict management style, the majority (66.67%) was in the age range of 50-59 years; 16.67% were in the age range of 40-49; 16.67% were in the 60-or-over age range. The majority (66.6%) were male; 33.3% were female. When asked how many years of experience they had as a chief student affairs officer, 50% reported they had 1-10 years; 33.3% reported that they had 11-20 years; and 16.6% reported that they had over 21 years of experience. The majority (66.7%) were White; 25% were Black; and 8.3% were Hispanic. In response to the question of the size or enrollment of their institution, 58.3% reported the enrollment as 1-10,000, and 41.6% reported the enrollment as 10,001 or over.

Regarding the 2 respondents who had a compromising conflict management style, both (100%) were in the age range of 50-59 years. One was male; one was female. When asked how many years of experience they had had as a chief student affairs officer, both (100%) reported that they had 1-10 years of experience. Both (100%) of the respondents were White. In response to the question of the size or enrollment of their institution, 50% reported the enrollment as 1-10,000, and 50% reported the enrollment as 10,001 or over.

Regarding the 5 respondents who had a yield-lose conflict management style, the majority (60%) was in the age range of 40-49 years; 40% were in the age range of 50-59; none of the respondents were in the 60-or-over age range. The majority (60%) was male; 40% were female. When asked how many years of experience they had had as a chief student affairs officer, 80% reported that they had had 1-10 years; 20% reported they had had 11-20 years; none of the respondents reported that they had had over 21 years of experience. The majority (60%) was White; 40% were Black; none of the respondents

were Hispanic. In response to the question of the size or enrollment of their institution, 80% reported the enrollment as 1-10,000; 20% reported the enrollment as 10,001 or over.

Regarding the 4 respondents who had a win-lose conflict management style, 50% were in the age range of 50-59 years; none of the respondents were in the age range of 40-49; 50% were in the 60-or-over age range. The majority (75%) was male; 25% were female. When asked how many years of experience they had had as a chief student affairs officer, 50% reported that they had had 1-10 years; 50% reported that they had had 11-20 years; none of the respondents reported that they had had over 21 years of experience. All of the respondents (100%) were White. In response to the question of the size or enrollment of their institution, 50% reported the enrollment as 1-10,000; 50% reported the enrollment as 10,001 or over.

Regarding the 2 respondents who had a lose-leave conflict management style, none of the respondents were in the age range of 40-49 years; 50% were in the age range of 50-59; 50% were in the 60-or-over age range. Both (100%) of the respondents were male. When asked how many years of experience they had had as a chief student affairs officer, none of the respondents reported that they had had 1-10 years; 50% reported that they had had 11-20 years; 50% reported that they had had over 21 years of experience. Both (100%) of the respondents were White. In response to the question of the size or enrollment of their institution, 50% reported the enrollment as 1-10,000; 50% reported the enrollment as 10,001 or over.

Discussion of Findings

The following discussion is outlined according to the six research questions in this study: a) conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers in 4-year public institutions of higher education in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, b) conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their association to age, c) conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their association to gender, d) conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their association to ethnicity, e) conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their association to the number of years of experience as a chief student affairs officer, and f) conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their association to the size (enrollment) of their employing institution.

Conflict Management Styles of Chief Student Affairs Officers

One of the major findings of this study was that the synergistic conflict management style was the dominant preference of a majority (48%) of the chief student affairs officers. The synergistic style has been shown to be the most effective in managing conflict, encouraging collaboration, and building trust (Blake & Mouton, 1978; Hall, 1996; Robbins, 1978; Thomas, 1971). Other studies of the conflict management styles of higher education administrators have found that compromising was the most preferred and frequently used style (Garnier, 1981; Newell, 1979; Revilla, 1984; Woodtli, 1987), whereas in this study only 8% preferred the compromising style. Perhaps CSAOs prefer the synergistic style because it is a win-win situation in which they can meet their personal goals and improve relationships. The synergistic style also emphasizes

collaboration, which is an effective technique when dealing with issues of diversity and change.

Conflict Management Style and Age

No statistical significance was found in the association between the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their ages. This could be due to the fact that the sample was not large enough to detect any differences. Yet the data did reveal a statistically significant association between the age of CSAOs with a synergistic conflict management style. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the majority of the CSAOs had a synergistic conflict management style. Of that group, 66.67% were in the 50-59 age range, while 16.67% were in the 40-49 age range and 16.67% were in the 60-or-over age range. A possible explanation for the large number of chief student affairs officers in the 50-59 age range is that most student affairs professionals do not begin their graduate work until after they have been in the field for several years and it also takes several years to become a CSAO at an institution of higher education. Most CSAO positions require a doctoral degree. Revilla (1984) did find a significant association between style and age when studying the conflict management styles of men and women administrators in higher education, whereas Thomas (1971) found that older individuals were less aggressive than younger individuals.

Conflict Management Style and Gender

No statistically significant associations were found between the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their gender. This could be due to the fact that the sample was not large enough to account for any association. Perhaps there were no statistically significant associations because the field of student affairs

historically has been dominated by males; however, in recent years the number of females in this field has increased, which could show a balance in gender biasing. Neither Champion (1979) nor Revilla (1984) found associations between male and female managers in their preferred conflict management styles. However, Cardona (1995) found a gender association in that females were more avoiding than males. Thomas (1971) found that women tended to be less aggressive or more passive than their male counterparts. Even though no statistically significant associations were found based on the gender between male and female conflict management style preferences, it may be more significant when age is taken into account also. Study data show that 60% of the chief student affairs officers were in the age range of 50-59. Of the 68% who were male, 47% had synergistic conflict management styles, while only 32% of the chief student affairs officers were female and 50% had a synergistic conflict management style. As previously stated, the synergistic style was the preferred style, and the 50-59 age range was the most common among chief student affairs officers.

Conflict Management Style and Number of Years of Experience

No statistically significant associations were found between the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and years of experience. Perhaps there were no statistically significant associations because the sample was not large enough to detect any associations. Yet the majority (56%) of the CSAOs had 1-10 years of experience, and of that group 43% had synergistic conflict management styles. This might indicate that newer CSAOs prefer to use a more collaborative method in order to create a trusting and cooperative environment. Revilla (1984) discovered that the more experienced administrators (with 5 or more years of experience) scored means closer to

those of the norm group on all five conflict management styles. Revilla also found that conflict management styles are more influenced by the amount of time spent in administration than any other variable.

Conflict Management Style and Ethnicity

Study data show that there was a statistically significant association between conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and their ethnicity. The ethnic background of the CSAOs was heavily Caucasian (76%). This can be considered an accurate reflection of the population of CSAOs since white males have historically dominated the field. Other statistically significant associations were found between ethnicity and the synergistic and win-lose conflict management styles. This could be due to the fact that the Caucasian group of CSAOs comprised 66.7% of the synergistic styles and 100% of the win-lose styles.

Conflict Management Style and Size (Enrollment) of Employing Institution

No statistically significant associations were found between the conflict management styles of chief student affairs officers and the size (enrollment) of their employing institutions. This could be largely due to the fact that the sample was not large enough to detect any associations. Perhaps there are no statistically significant associations because this variable does not affect the manner in which a CSAO manages conflict. Even though more students would seem to lead to more episodes of conflict, more important is how the conflict is managed, how effective the techniques are, and how to prepare for conflict if it occurs. No other studies have documented an association between conflict management styles of CSAOs and the size of their employing institutions.

One factor that could have affected the findings was the lack of participation among the chief student affairs officers asked to participate, which ultimately led to a small skewed sample. Many chose not to show an interest in the study by not responding to the first mailing. While 140 chief student affairs officers were asked to participate, only 35 showed an interest and agreed to participate. Of that 35, only 25 useable questionnaires were received. Perhaps the limitation to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools also limited the number of individuals who would have participated in the study.

A second factor that may have affected the results was that the population was not picked at random. The chief student affairs officers were picked from the NASPA 2000 Directory based on their location in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. A more random sample of CSAOs across the United States in all 4-year public institutions may have afforded more significance among the variables.

A third factor that may have affected the results is the low number of female respondents. The student affairs profession is now dominated by the female gender, and conflict management styles of this group may be markedly different than those of male chief student affairs officers. Similarly, males may have different conflict management styles than females, but because of the low number of female respondents; no statistically valid generalizations could be made.

Conclusions

1. The pattern that emerged from the data indicates that the dominant conflict management style of CSAOs is synergistic in nature. They tend to lean towards more collaborative efforts when dealing with conflict situations.

2. According to the age ranges of the CSAOs, those with a synergistic style tend to be older than those with the other conflict management styles. Increasingly, age is a key issue because students are graduating from college earlier, getting jobs in student affairs earlier, and ultimately, rising through the ranks at much earlier ages due to the large number of individuals who have been in the field of student affairs for many years and are now at the age of retirement.

3. According to the gender of the CSAOs, the student affairs profession, specifically CSAOs, is well-balanced between men and women. This is largely due to the fact that the historically male-dominated field is now being inundated with female professionals and research is including more females in their studies. The qualities of effective leaders include intuition, collaboration, caring, and the desire to preserve relationships, which have been identified as characteristic of the female style of leadership (Slavlik & Touchton, 1988). Emerging themes in student affairs – "fostering, nourishing, caring, relationships, intuition, and empathy – are very much at home in female value systems" (p. 108).

4. According to number of years of experience of CSAOs, there is not an association between conflict management style and experience. Many respondents indicated that they were fairly new in their positions as chief student affairs officers. These individuals received their positions through maturity and experience and may already have become comfortable with their chosen conflict management style. This shows that no matter how long an individual has been a CSAO, it does not affect the decisions they make regarding conflict situations.

5. A pattern that emerged from the data indicates that conflict management style is associated with a CSAO's ethnicity. This could be the result of different cultural backgrounds and different lifestyles due to the varying cultural backgrounds.

6. Conflict management styles of CSAOs are not associated with the size or enrollment of their employing institution. An institution's enrollment is reflected only in numbers, not by the number of conflict situations that have occurred. And although CSAOs continually deal with conflict situations, they do not work with every student enrolled at their respective institutions.

Recommendations

In order to validate and expand the findings of this study, the principal investigator recommends that future studies be conducted in the following areas.

1. This study concerned chief student affairs officers of 4-year public universities in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and their conflict management styles. Additional studies, particularly replications of the current study among all public institutions in the United States, are needed to confirm and explore the associations between CSAOs and their conflict management styles. It is important to know whether or not the findings reported here are particular to this research or are universal to the position of the chief student affairs officer.

2. A study should be conducted on a larger group of chief student affairs officers to determine whether the finding in this study, which indicated that the majority of CSAOs have a synergistic conflict management style, was an anomaly or is generally true.

3. A qualitative study, in addition to a quantitative study, should be conducted using interviews and observations of chief student affairs officers.

4. A longitudinal study of chief student affairs officers should be conducted, beginning with their first appointment to a CSAO position and continuing on a 2-year basis, to address the issue of whether or not CSAOs change their dominant conflict management style as time passes.

5. A future study could expand on this study to include the chief student affairs officers' institutions presidents and their immediate staff, such as assistant or associate vice presidents in their division and anyone who falls within their organizational structure. Their perceptions regarding the CSAO's actions/reactions when managing conflict could validate or refute the self-perceptions of the chief student affairs officers.

6. A study should be conducted regarding the chief student affairs officers' conflict management styles and the institutions in which they studied. A fair comparison of all master's and doctoral programs needs to be presented in order to decipher whether the information that CSAOs learned at the graduate level has affected their conflict management styles.

7. A study should be conducted that utilizes measures to examine pre-chief student affairs officers' characteristics prior to the use of the Conflict Management Survey. While it is speculated that pre-chief student affairs officers' characteristics may have been responsible for their present conflict management style, what those characteristics might be and their possible effect on the Conflict Management Survey are not known.

8. More in-depth, empirical studies of the conflict management styles utilized by Black, Hispanic, Native American or Alaskan Native, and Asian or Pacific Islander American chief student affairs officers should be conducted because this group is underrepresented in this study.

9. Survey instruments show patterns of responses that reveal an individual's dominant conflict management style. When these styles are identified, graduate programs can begin to offer and incorporate conflict management training into the curriculum.

APPENDIX A

INITIAL MAILING COVER LETTER

November 21, 2001

Dear [Chief Student Affairs Officer]:

Here at the University of North Texas we currently have underway a multi-state study of the conflict management styles of Chief Student Affairs Officers. We believe the research we are conducting has the potential to make a substantive contribution to the modern and future practice of student affairs administration. This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of North Texas Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects.

We know you are very busy these days, especially considering the forthcoming holidays, which is one more reason we will be most appreciative for your cooperation. To let us know you are agreeable to participating in our research, simply send an e-mail to lumsden@unt.edu with one word: YES. We will then promptly send you a questionnaire with a self-addressed and postage paid return envelope. The questionnaire – to be completed **anonymously** – will ask about yourself and your own conflict management style. You will have until Monday, **January 14, 2002** to complete and return the questionnaire to us.

We are looking forward to hearing from you and hope you will be able to work with us. In the meantime, best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season.

Collegial regards,

D. Barry Lumsden
Professor of Higher Education
University of North Texas

Trisha L. Van Duser
Principal Investigator

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear [Chief Student Affairs Officer]:

A very special note of thanks for your willingness to participate in our research on the conflict management styles of Chief Student Affairs Officers. We greatly appreciate your cooperation.

Enclosed is a Conflict Management Style questionnaire for you to complete *anonymously*. After completing the questionnaire, simply return it to us in the enclosed self-addressed and postage paid envelope by Monday, January 14, 2002.

Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable holiday season. And best wishes, too, for a wonderful and healthy New Year.

Collegial regards,

D. Barry Lumsden
Professor of Higher Education

Trisha L. Van Duser
Principal Investigator

enclosures: (2)

APPENDIX C

REMINDER COVER LETTER

January 15, 2001

Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear [Chief Student Affairs Officer]:

This past November we sent you a letter to ask if you would participate in a national study we have underway concerning the conflict management styles of Chief Student Affairs Officers. We received from you a reply indicating that you are agreeable to participating anonymously in our research.

Weeks ago we sent you a questionnaire to be completed, but for whatever reasons we have not received it back. We are, therefore, enclosing another copy today along with a postage paid and self-addressed envelope. Your voluntary participation in what we are doing is essential to the progress of the study.

Thanks for your assistance. We hope to receive your completed questionnaire within the next 10 days. If you have questions, do not hesitate to call me at 940-597-7923.

Collegial regards,

D. Barry Lumsden
Professor of Higher Education

Trisha L. Van Duser
Principal Investigator

enclosure

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