

Dual Executive Leadership and the Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution Methods in Nonprofit Performing Arts Organizations: an Analysis Using the Repertory Grid Technique.

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, scholars have argued that single leaders generate a more effective vision for organizational coherence. More recently, however, management research has begun to explore the added value of multiple leadership structures (Crawfis, 2011; Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2012; Gronn, 2002; Pearce & Conger, 2003) and indicated that multiple leadership structures are related with specific benefits. One specific form of shared leadership expected to benefit nonprofit organizations is the dual executive leadership model (DEL). However, despite the increasing attention for dual leadership structures within the nonprofit sector (Gottfridsson, 2013; McAndrews et al., 2011), evidence on the effectiveness of such leadership models provided mixed results. Some authors even characterized nonprofit dual leadership structures as being inherently problematic because they will lead to conflicts between the involved executives. While other authors indicated that dual leadership models are not inherently effective or ineffective but that their success is, to a large extent, dependent on the way executives handle these ‘unavoidable’ conflicts. Unfortunately, evidence on the characteristics and effectiveness of conflict resolution methods used by nonprofit leaders is virtually nonexistent. The paper at hand addresses this issue by analyzing the conflict resolution methods used by executives, employed in a leadership dyad, from the Belgian and Dutch nonprofit performing arts sector using the Repertory Grid Technique. The constructed cognitive map identifies ten different conflict resolution methods which can be grouped into four categories based on the 10 bipolar constructs used by the respondents to describe these conflict resolution methods. Academic and practical implications of the study findings are discussed.

Key words:

Dual leadership, strategic decision-making, conflict resolution methods, repertory grid methodology, qualitative analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, scholars have argued that single leaders generate a more effective vision for organizational coherence (Fayol, 1949; Rost, 1993; Weber, 1924/47). Consequently, the dominant unit of analysis within leadership research has long been the solo or ‘stand-alone’ leader. More recently, however, management research published in a range of academic and practitioner domains has begun to explore the added value of multiple leadership structures (Crawfis, 2011; Denis, Langlely & Sergi, 2012; Gronn, 2002; Pearce & Conger, 2003) and indicated that multiple leadership structures are related with specific benefits, including increased democratic involvement (Gronn, 2002), strengthened female participation in leadership roles (Anderson & Court, 2012), increased support in complex organizational environments (Heenan & Bennis, 1999), the stimulation of creative group work (Pearce & Conger, 2003), heightened levels of innovativeness (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Murray, 1989), increased problem-solving abilities (Nemeth, 1986), and flexibility and adaptability due to the diversity of skills, information sources and perspectives (for an overview see Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009: 131-136).

One specific form of shared leadership expected to benefit organizations is the dual executive leadership model (DEL). Such dual leadership dyads are generally defined as a situation in which ‘the executive position is divided into two functionally different positions’ (Bhansing, 2013:3). Although dual leadership dyads are often found in profit organizations (e.g. investment banks, design firms, newspapers, film & journalistic organizations, high-tech and family businesses (Finkelstein et al., 2009)), more and more authors claim that such shared leadership structures could benefit nonprofit organizations as they are viewed as an

effective organizational leadership structure able to help nonprofit organizations to cope with the economic and political challenges they face (Bhansing, 2013; Galli, 2011; Kocolowski, 2010; McAndrews, Kunreuther, & Bronznic, 2011; Reid, 2003)

However, despite the increasing attention for dual leadership structures within the nonprofit sector (Gottfridsson, 2013; McAndrews et al., 2011), evidence on the effectiveness of such leadership models provided mixed results. While some authors indicated that plural leadership can be seen as the ideal solution for a myriad of leadership problems and will generate a range of positive effects (Bhansing, 2013; Crawfis, 2011; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Kocolowski, 2010; O'Toole et al., 2002; Rice, 2006; Shenk, 2014), others characterized the dual executive leadership model as being highly dysfunctional, innately problematic, causing internal tension among managers and stagnating the strategic decision-making and planning process (Hommes & de Voogt, 2006; Reid, 2003; de Voogt, 2006). Bhansing (2013) argues that the majority of these drawbacks are rooted in the fact that when two leaders, with heterogenic cognitive ways of thinking and acting, try to come to a working collaboration with the aim of formulating successful strategies, assessing performance, managing change, acquiring resources, and designing and implementing solid marketing and communication plans, conflict situations are unavoidable. The question, however, raises to what extent these contradictory perspectives on the effectiveness of dual leadership structures are mutually exclusive as various authors indicated that conflicts are indeed, in most cases, an inherent part of dual leadership structures but that these conflicts can be constructive as well as deconstructive (Amason, 1996; Amason & Schweiger, 1994; Bankovskaya, 2012; Coleman, Deutsch & Marcus, 2014). Consequently, it can be argued that dual leadership structures are not inherently effective or ineffective but that their success is, to a large extent, dependent on the way how executives in a dual leadership structure handle these 'unavoidable' conflicts (Cray, Inglis, & Freeman, S. 2007; Sullivan, 2006; Whitford, 2000).

Unfortunately, despite its presumed importance, evidence on how executives in a dual leadership structure resolve conflict is limited (McAndrews et al., 2011). Moreover, although leadership scholars extensively stressed the importance of insights on the effectiveness of conflict resolution methods (Coleman et al., 2014), research analyzing the characteristics and effectiveness of conflict resolution methods within nonprofit leadership dyads is virtually nonexistent. The paper at hand addresses this issue by analyzing the conflict resolution methods, and their perceived effectiveness, used by executives, employed in a leadership dyad, from the Belgian and Dutch nonprofit performing arts sector using the Repertory Grid Technique (Fransella, Bell & Bannister, 2004). As such, this paper contributes to the nonprofit literature in two specific ways. First of all, it provides an identification of conflict resolution methods used in leadership dyads in a nonprofit context. Second, the adopted semi-structured alternative framework of analysis, i.e. the Repertory Grid method, enables the characteristics and the differences between the various conflict resolution methods to be articulated in a ‘grounded’ manner and as such introduces the cognitive perspective in research on conflict resolution methods.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. A first section discusses the relevance of dual leadership structures for nonprofit organizations while the second section addresses the relationship between dual leadership structures and conflict as well as the importance of conflict resolution methods. The literature analysis is followed by a methodological section, which discusses the Repertory Grid Technique, provides insights on the selected data setting, the data collection and analysis procedure, and the study results. In conclusion, the study findings and its implications are discussed as well as the studies’ limitations.

DUAL LEADERSHIP IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

One of the major reasons why nonprofit organizations increasingly turn to executive leader dyads in detriment of solo leadership structures (McAndrews et al., 2011), is the fact

that nonprofit organizations have ‘steadily progressed into the knowledge economy’ (Pearce, 2007:355) and are more and more active in an environment characterized by rapid change and resource concerns (Bhansing, 2013; Galli, 2011; McAndrews et al., 2011; Reid, 2003) in which it is becoming increasingly difficult for any single individual to possess all of the skills and abilities required to successfully lead an organization (O’Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002) in). Consequently, dual leadership structures could help circumvent this pitfall as in a leadership dyad each leader typically has his or her own area of expertise (Bhansing, 2013) whereby, in most cases, one executive is responsible for the organization’s economic objectives while another is responsible for the non-economic objectives (Galli, 2011; Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

The fact that each leader is knowledgeable in her or his own area, so-called ‘role complementarity’, is considered as one of the main advantages of dual executive leadership because two executives with different backgrounds, education and/or professional experience will ‘have different orientations that they use to assess the world around them, process information to make decisions, and evaluate outcomes’ (Bhansing, 2013: 11) leading to the creation of organizations that are more responsive to and more coordinated with their external, often complex, environment (Alvarez & Svejnova, 2005; Bhansing, 2013; Heenan & Bennis, 1999). Moreover, the ability to draw from the diversity of thought and talent possessed by both members of the leadership dyad (Kocolowski, 2010; Miles & Watson, 2007; Rice, 2006) is argued to form an antidote for conventional thinking (Shenk, 2014) and as such stimulates creativity and innovation within an organization which could lead to the creation of a distinct competitive advantage (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Shenk, 2014). Additionally, dual leadership dyads are also expected to generate benefits on the individual level because both leaders can utilize their individual strengths by focusing on the leadership tasks for which they are best suited (Miles & Watkins, 2007) which not only increases job satisfaction but also reduces stress levels (Pearce, 2007).

Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of shared leadership structures within nonprofit organizations is predominantly situated within the domains of healthcare and education (Kocolowski, 2010). Examples within these fields of nonprofit organizations include an analysis of the co-leadership model in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Becket, 2010), Court's (2003) study of co-principal ship in New Zealand primary schools, Boardman's (2001) analysis of the value of shared leadership models for Tasmanian teachers, Rice's (2006) study on shared leadership in urban high schools, and Eckman's (2006) discussion of the characteristics of shared leadership models in US public and private schools. Studies outside the domains of healthcare and education are more scarce, but include a diverse collection of nonprofit organizations ranging from research on shared leadership in Baltic churches (Wood, 2005) to studies focusing on nonprofit cultural and artistic organizations such as performing arts companies (Bhansing, 2013; Reid, 2003; Reid & Karambayya, 2009), musea (de Voogt, 2006) and theatres (Sullivan, 2012). The studies focusing on shared and dual leadership in nonprofit art organizations analyzed the relationship between these leadership structures and its capacity as a problem-solving tool (de Voogt, 2006), its implications for organizational effectiveness (Reid, 2005), its impact on the long-term stability of the organization (Crawfis, 2011), leadership success (Sullivan, 2012) and decision-making (Cray et al., 2007).

A recurring theme in these studies is the fact that one of the major disadvantages of the model is its increased potentiality of conflict (Crawfis, 2011; Kocolowski, 2010; Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

DUAL LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT: DUAL OR DUEL?

As indicated in the previous sections, a variety of scholars have argued that leadership dyads are inherently problematic because of their potential for conflict escalation (Bhansing, 2013; Reid & Karambayya, 2009). More specifically, these authors argue that in a dual leadership structure, existing out of two persons with different skills, attitudes and areas of

interests, decision-making will result in conflicts. Traditionally, such conflicts, which can be defined as ‘an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals’ (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001:41), are thought to hinder decision making processes as they can disrupt info exchange among the team of decision makers reducing decision quality (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997), undermine commitment that is needed to get the decision properly implemented (Amason, 1996; Amason & Schweiger, 1996), and reduce satisfaction and affective acceptance among the leaders of the dyad which threatens cohesion and the prospects for future decisions (Schweiger & Sandberg, 1991; Schweiger, Sandberg & Ragan, 1986). Especially in the case of strategic decision-making it has been argued that when leaders are influenced by their personal ideas of how value can be created for the organization’s stakeholders, or even who the key stakeholders of the organization are, corresponding attitudes and behavior are likely to hinder strategic decision-making (Bhansing, 2013; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Wilmot and Hocker, 2001). Or as Hommes and de Voogt (2006:2) formulate it: ‘Dual leadership, at first sight, creates an impending management impasse: dual becomes a duel, a battle for leadership’.

The question, however, raises to what extent conflict within a dual leadership structure has to be negative. Previous research on organizational conflict initially viewed conflict as dysfunctional to organizations and argued that it poses a threat to individual well-being, productivity and, sometimes even, legitimate authority (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997). However, other authors, the so-called conflict-as-resource (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; De Dreu & Van Vaaenen, 2001), argued that conflict is not inherently negative. These researchers emphasized the multidimensional nature of conflict, and linked it to perception and cognitive studies (Bhansing, 2013; De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; De Dreu & Van Vaaenen, 2001; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The foundation of this cognitive perspective on conflict is the cognitive versus affective conflict binominal (Bankovskaya, 2012; Coleman et

al., 2014; De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997). This research stream argues that conflict can be emotional and focused on personal disputes, which Amason (1996) labeled affective conflict, or task oriented and focused on judgmental differences about how best to achieve common objectives' (Amason, 1996:127). This type of conflict is labeled cognitive conflict (Amason & Schweiger, 1994) and is often regarded, in contrast to affective conflict, as constructive and contributing to decision quality 'because the synthesis that emerges from contesting of the diverse perspectives is generally superior to the individual perspectives themselves' (Amason, 1996: 125). Hence, most conflict theories emphasize the importance of constructive (cognitive) conflict as it is supposed to benefit organizational performance by reducing the negative effects of group-think (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997), stimulating higher-quality decisions (Amason & Schweiger, 1994; Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2012) and reducing the likelihood of destructive conflict escalation (Baron, 1997).

A key element in the relationship between constructive conflict and its presumed benefits, however, is the way executives in a dyad leadership structure resolve conflict and id conflict escalation or the shift from a constructive conflict to an affective conflict. Despite the importance of conflict resolution, however, little consensus exists about the effectiveness of various conflict resolution methods and their relation to each other while research on conflict sensemaking and conflict resolution methods within nonprofit settings is limited (Allyn, 2011; Mikkelsen, 2013; Oparanma, Hamilton, & Ohaka, 2009; Reid & Karambayya, 2009). This observation led Coleman, Deutsch and Marcus (2014) to remark that few scholars explore the connection between theory and practice on leadership and conflict resolution. The paper at hand would like to address this call for more research by examining the characteristics and effectiveness of conflict resolution methods in a nonprofit setting based on the cognitive approach of constructive conflict and using the Repertory Grid Technique.

METHOD

Research Design: The Repertory Grid technique

The study at hand complements existent research in the field of leadership and conflict, which are dominated by a questionnaire approach, by conducting interviews based on the Personal Construct Theory and the Repertory Grid Method (Kelly, 1955). More specifically, the Repertory Grid Method, universally known as RepGrid, is a cognitive mapping tool based on the Personal Construct Theory, which was developed to elicit individual's connotations regarding a certain theme and as such to tap into their theories of how the world operates (Davis & Hufnagel, 2007). More specifically, the technique aims to 'unfold' categorizations by articulating the construct systems of individuals because this helps to better understand what meaning individuals give to a certain problem situation and what kinds of solutions they would prefer (van de Kerkhof, 2011). These construct systems are highly individual in nature and guide people's behavior (Davis & Hufnagel, 2007): people observe, interpret, give meaning to and draw conclusions about patterns of cause and effect, and behave according to those conclusions.

Although much of the 'grid work' has taken and takes place in a clinical setting, the methodology and theory has also found its home in the general management field where it has advanced our understanding of, for example, managerial effectiveness (Cammock, Nilakant, & Dakin, 1995), cognitive inertia (Hodgkinson, 1997), and more recently, entrepreneurs' cognitive construction of business models (Malmström, Johansson & Wincent, 2014), divergent conceptions of leadership between local managers with different cultural backgrounds (Wang, James, Denyer, & Baily, 2014) and how nonprofit leaders evaluate funding sources (Kearns, Bell, Deem, & McShane, 2014). In addition, Wright (2008:753) argued that the Repertory Grid Technique, and especially when combined with the use of verb-led phrases, is able to capture the heterogeneity in strategizing and hence 'allowing researchers to go deeper into eliciting more complex strategic cognitions on how strategy is crafted and recrafted in a world constructed and reconstructed'.

Research Setting

In order to gain insights in how nonprofit executives in a dual leadership structure perceive and deal with conflict, data was collected in the Belgian and Dutch nonprofit performing arts sector. This sector was selected for two reasons. Starting point is the acknowledgement that dual leadership dyads, whereby two managers are working in partnership as executive leaders, are common in nonprofit performing arts organizations (Bhansing, 2013; Reid & Karambayya, 2009). In most cases one executive -the artistic director- is responsible for the artistic or creative part of the organization (the dance or theatre performance), and another -the managing director- is responsible for the organization's administrative part: selecting administrative personnel, managing budgets and ensuring its overall financial stability (Bhansing, 2013; Galli, 2011; Reid, 2009).

Second, the presence of artistic and economic logics of practice in the same organization is expected to lead to tensions between executives as 'the AD [artistic director] is the individual artist searching for artistic expression through their leadership in an organizational structure and the ED [executive/business director] is the managerial leader motivated to ensure the sustainability of the organization through business practice' (Reid & Karambayya, 2009: 1076). These tensions are further complicated by the fact that there is a continuous mutual interdependency between the two leaders: the AD relies on the ED for financial resources (funding, ticket sales), and the ED relies on the AD to create programs appealing to audience, (possible) private donors, peers and government. Such mutual interdependency, especially in a nonprofit context characterized by an ambiguous and subjective evaluation of an organization's performance, sets the stage for conflicts when negotiating on resources and making strategic decisions (Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

The sample of this study was further limited to Belgian and Dutch performing arts companies that are honored with structural subsidies for the period 2013-2016. The Dutch (Performing Arts Fund) and the Belgian (Kunstendecreet) association for culture provide online lists of the national cultural organizations that receive subsidies. For the period of

2013-2016, the total population of grant-receiving organizations includes 56 Belgian performing arts organizations (13 dance/43 theatre) and 44 Dutch organizations (14 dance/30 theatre). From this population, 23 organizations (25%) with a dual leadership structure that was clearly divided along artistic and business goals were selected. These organizations were selected based on their size, the amount of years the dual leadership process was established and their accessibility and availability for the interviewing process. Particular effort was made to research both established companies -where the relationship was known to be notably problematic- and younger organizations that helped to reflect upon original conflict resolution methods. In spring 2014, both the managerial and the artistic directors of the participating studies were asked to participate in this study by filling in an introductory survey (quantitative analysis: observable managerial and organizational characteristics including age, job tenure, academic and professional background) as well as to participate in an interview (qualitative analysis, in April 2014). 19 leaders (of 13 different organizations) initially agreed to participate in this study whilst 14 of them provided usable data. The final sample size is deemed adequate to identify cognitive constructions as previous research indicated because information saturation is likely to occur within the first twelve interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Examples of recent studies analyzing manager's cognitive constructions using comparable sample sizes include Kearns, Bell, Deem and McShanea's (2014) analysis of nonprofit leaders' perceptions of funding sources (18 interviews), Pankratz and Basten's (2014) study on project managers' perceptions of IS project success criteria (11 interviews) and Malmström, Johansson and Vincent's (2014) study on the profitability of business models (5 interviews).

RESULTS

Data Analysis

Interviews were conducted according to the specifications of the Repertory Grid Technique and the collected data were analyzed using specialized RepGrid software (i.e. Webgrid 5) in

order to increase the validity of the research design. More specifically, the data collection and analysis procedure consisted of four distinct phases.

Phase 1: Initial interview phase. All interviews started with questions related to strategic decision-making in a dual leadership structure. The aim of this initial interview phase to put the participants at ease and introduce them to the topic without immediately overwhelming them with questions regarding conflict. As was hoped for, the questions regarding strategic decision-making ignited the discussion and resulted in respondents becoming more active, confident and interested in talking about their own decisions. As such, these introductory questions paved the way for the interviewer to introduce the more personal and sensitive, topic of conflict situations and resolutions.

Phase 2: Conflict resolution methods elicitation phase. In order to gain more knowledge on the various conflict resolution methods that DEL leaders use and are familiar with, the following questions were asked: *When did you experience conflict in taking strategic decisions within the dual leadership dyad you are part of? How did you solve the conflict?* and *What other actions can you think of to solve conflicts?* In this second interview phase, each respondent suggested 3 to 5 conflict resolution methods (elicitation). Subsequently, the interviewer stimulated further cognitive elaboration of the subject by presenting the respondents with fictional conflict situations and asking them how they would react in such a situation. This stimulated the respondents to expand their thoughts and discuss conflict resolution methods they were less familiar with, conflict resolutions methods they thought were less effective and not worth mentioning, and conflict resolution methods they perhaps, at first, did not want to talk about (i.e. semi-supplied elements). This combined way of element gathering (elicited & semi-supplied elements) resulted in a total of 10 different

conflict resolution methods¹. Table 1 lists the discussed conflict resolution methods (M1-M10) as well as the number of respondents that mentioned them.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 indicates that building and maintaining trust (M1) (14 times), ensuring communication quality (M7) (13 times) and internal mediation by means of a team or a board member (M6) (10 times) were mentioned most frequently, while the use of external mediations (M9) and dual leadership termination (M10) were mentioned the least.

Remarkably, the majority of the nonprofit dual executive leaders emphasized the difference between internal and external mediation. Whereas the general conflict literature indicates that within the profit sector both forms of mediation are widely accepted and implemented (Eisenkopf & Bächtiger, 2012), the questioned sample considers involving an external mediation party (M9) as not desirable. Especially the artistic leaders preferred to solve conflict through internal mediation (M6) as external parties might not have a thorough understanding of or experience with the specificities of the artistic creation process. Two of the participating leaders indicated that they already had experienced such a situation and explained how ‘with a third party the conflict only intensified’ (Anonymous, 2014/04/14).

Third phase: Construct elicitation phase. The developed list of conflict resolutions methods provided the starting point for the next step, namely the Repertory Grid constructs elicitation phase which is intended to map the perceived similarities and differences between the elements included in the study in order to clarify the cognitive frameworks of respondents (Eden & Jones, 1984; Wright, 2008). More specifically, the respondents were confronted with various triads of conflict resolution methods and each time asked to answer the following question: ‘In what way are two of these similar and yet different from a third?’ (Eden &

¹ We limited the analysis to the comparison of 10 conflict resolution methods, as these 10 methods were indicated by a significant number of participants (above 25% of the total data set). According to the elicitation requirements (i.e. more than seven) proposed by Eden & Jones (1984) an amount of 10 methods is sufficient.

Jones, 1984:781). This triad elicitation (Wright, 2008) continued until no new construct dimensions were produced (Wright, 2008). This method resulted in ten valid bipolar constructs used by the respondents to characterize and differentiate specific conflict resolution methods (van Kerkhof, 2011). Within the Repertory Grid vocabulary, these poles are indicated as the emergent and the opposite construct (Wright, 2008). Table 2 lists the identified bipolar constructs:

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Insert Table 2 about here
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The labels attached to the conflict resolution have obvious parallels with the advantages and disadvantages of the conflict resolution methods discussed in the leadership literature (Coleman et al., 2014).

The study results indicate that the participating nonprofit leaders use ten bipolar constructs (D1-D10) to characterize conflict resolution methods and to differentiate them from one another. First, conflict resolution methods are valued based on their relative cost (D1); they can be perceived as financially expensive or economical. Second, conflict resolution methods are set apart based on the involvement or absence of a third party mediator (D2). A third perceived discerning trademark includes the degree of formality of specific conflict resolution methods, e.g. formal versus informal solutions (D3). Four, conflict resolution methods are classified based on whether their application of is perceived as irreversible (D4). Five, conflict resolution methods are classified based on the degree to which the application of the method requires the willingness to compromise of the parties involved (D5). A sixth conflict dynamic, also discussed by Reid and Karambayya (2009), is the impact of the conflict resolution method on the (members of the) organization: the impact of some conflict resolution methods is restricted to the leadership dyad while the scope of others is much broader (D6). Seven, conflict resolution methods can involve both of the DEL leaders or just one (D7). Eight, a conflict resolution methods can be viewed as immediately effective or as effective on the long-term (Weitzman and Weitzman, 2000) (D8). In addition,

while some solutions are perceived as continuous methods, others are viewed as one-off actions that can be executed quickly (D9). Ten, consistent with existing academic scholarship focusing on leadership in relation to accorded status and esteem (Bass & Stogdill, 1990), participants describe how resolution methods can mitigate the effect of status of the leaders in the DEL structure, such as tenure and professional experience, or might have a minor effect on status differences between the two leaders (D10). Finally, the interviewed nonprofit executives categorize conflict resolution methods according to their level of desirability. However, desirability was not included as a differentiating bipolar label in the study because it is viewed as an expression of a respondent's individual evaluation of a conflict resolution method based on the ten listed bipolar criteria rather than an independent method characteristic.

Phase 4: Rating phase and digital mapping phase. In the fourth phase of this analysis process, respondent's evaluations (whereby 1 = negative relationship and 5 = positive relationship) of the selected conflict resolution methods on the detected elicited bipolar constructs were aggregated (Fransella et al, 2004) using the software Webgrid 5 in order to develop a visual and conceptual representation of the cognitive models of the respondents with respect to conflict resolution methods. Figure 1 displays the analysis results:

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Insert Figure 1 about here
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The results, i.e. a detailed grid including the various conflict resolution methods (elements) and the various relationships between them (bipolar constructs) indicates that the ten detected conflict resolution methods can be clustered into four major categories.

A first category of methods, labeled emotional intelligence based methods, focuses on the effort and capacity of leaders to share, recognize, keep faith and take into account the opposing parties' feelings and thoughts. This category includes three conflict resolution methods, namely trust development and maintenance (M1), empathy and interest enhancement (M2) and a respect increase towards the opposing partner of the dual leadership

structure (M3), which share the same dominant bipolar features (see Figure 1). More specifically, these methods do not involve a third party (D2) and are, consequently, viewed as inexpensive (D1). Additionally, these three methods are viewed as conflict resolution methods that are effective on the long-term (D8). Remarkably, almost 94% of the participating artistic and business leaders indicated the development and maintenance of trust is the most important method for successful conflict resolution. In line with Lewicki & Tommlinson (2014), participants explain how during times of conflict it is important ‘to take steps to increase trust and decrease distrust’ (Lewicki & Tommlinson, 2014: 112).

A second category, labeled root cause analysis methods, groups two conflict resolution methods focusing on identifying the root causes of the conflict situations and/or problems, as opposed to simply addressing their symptoms. Both causal information visualization (M4), and strategic decision intermission followed by a second chance meeting (M5) are viewed as conflict resolution methods that depart from tracing back previous actions within the decision making process. They provide information on when and where the problem started, and how it escalated into a conflict. As a result, such conflict resolution methods could provide insights into possible win-win solutions and how to prevent conflict recurrence. Perceived characteristics of these conflict resolution methods are reversible (D4), inexpensive (D1) as they do not need external involvement (D2) and are almost immediate effective (D8) because mapping out all actions taken in the decision process or planning a second chance (follow-up) meeting on a later moment can be done rather quickly. Subsequently, these conflict resolution methods are viewed as easy and time efficient methods to resolve conflicts.

A third category, labeled joint conflict resolution method, bundles methods which require to step beyond the boundaries of the leadership dyad and as such necessitate interaction with other parties varying from an internal mediator to the organization’s management team as a whole. Mohr and Specker (1994) argued that the adoption of joint problem solving techniques could be viewed as one of the primary characteristics of

partnership success. The detected joint conflict resolution methods are: internal mediation (M6), the optimization of the communication between the DEL parties (M7) and the generation of clarity about organizational roles and responsibilities (M8). These three methods are perceived to share three specific characteristics. First, respondents indicate that these methods necessitate the willingness to compromise by both DEL parties (D5). Second, these three resolution methods require interactions with other parties (D6). For instance, respondents indicate that the creation of a management communication manual together with other management team members can be a very effective exercise to optimize information sharing, the standardization of recurrent meetings and an agreement upon the do's and don'ts in conflict situations. Furthermore, the joint clarification of a role and responsibilities organogram can help the DEL parties to define their responsibilities and help organizational members to understand whom to report to and as such prevent conflict. Internal mediation also impacts the organization beyond the leadership dyad because, in most cases, a board or management team member joins the DEL dyad to help address the problem.

A final category, intractable conflict resolution methods, groups two conflict resolution methods, e.g. external mediation (M9) and a dual leadership termination (M10). The participants distinguished these two methods according to the following differentiation bipolar constructs: both mediation by a professional external conflict expert and ending the leaderships dyad, by removing one (or both) of the leaders, are interpreted as expensive methods (D1), both financially and emotionally. Both are irreversible (D4) and formal methods (D3) and have an organizational impact beyond the leadership team (D6).

In addition, although the general management literature considers mediation (both external and internal) as one of the most important, preferred and effective conflict resolution methods (Bankovskaya, 2012; Kressel, 2014), the study results indicate that the participating nonprofit managers discriminate between external mediation by a professional conflict expert and internal mediation by a team or board member. While internal mediation is perceived as a

preferred action, external mediation is perceived more as a treat than a conflict resolve method. Both business and artistic leaders perceive the involvement of external mediators as increasing hostility and an additional pressure for the leadership relation.

DISCUSSION

The study at hand addresses Avolio's (2009) call for a more cognitive approach in leadership research by using a cognitive approach to analyze nonprofit executives, active in a dual executive leadership structure, perceptions of the characteristics of conflict resolution methods. More specifically, the conducted Repertory Grid analysis reveals the diverse web of conflict resolution methods that nonprofit leadership dyads take into account when confronted with conflicts during the process of strategic decision-making. In addition, the conducted analysis provides insights on the perceived characteristics of each conflict resolution method. As such, the study at hand addresses the issue that, although the academic literature emphasizes the importance of each of the ten identified conflict resolution methods, insights on the characteristics of these methods on how these methods can be categorized are limited. The constructed cognitive map indicates that the respondents evaluate the identified conflict resolution methods based on ten bipolar constructs (D1-D10) which can be grouped into four categories. These categories are aligned with the existing literature in conflict resolution methods (Coleman et al., 2014).

The study results also provide insights on the external generalizability of previous research on the managers' use and perceptions of conflict resolution methods. Although researchers often stress that nonprofit organizations are very different from for profit and public organizations (Crawfis, 2011), the study findings are aligned with previous studies on dual leadership conflict resolution methods conducted in sectors such as the banking or software sector (Bhansing, 2013; Crawfis, 2011). Consequently, the study results seem to suggest that the private-nonprofit distinction is not a discrete characteristic influencing managers' perceptions of conflict resolution methods. It seems that conflict arise when

executives that are part of a dual executive leadership (DEL) need to balance economic and non-economic objectives regardless of the sector (Arnone & Stumpf, 2010).

IMPLICATIONS

Academic Implications

This study contributes to our knowledge about the relationship between dual leadership and conflict in nonprofit settings by adopting, as one of the first, a cognitive research approach which is deemed to enable us to better understand, explain, and predict managers' behavior (Bhansing, 2013). In addition, this study is one of the first to provide a detailed rapport of how the Repertory Grid Technique can be used to gain insights on conflict resolutions methods within a nonprofit context. Consequently, this study provides an application of a methodology, which could stimulate conflict (resolution) researchers to continue the cognitive approach taken in the paper at hand.

A final academic implication includes the usage of qualitative contributions to the leadership and conflict field, allowing the investigation to go much deeper than past research into the core perceptions that influenced respondent's attitudes and subsequent behaviors. One of the main methodological difficulties in carrying out research in the field of leadership is the use of pre-designed behavioral questionnaires; a review of 10 years of publications of *The Leadership Quarterly*, Lowe and Gardner (2000) showed that 64% of the studies employed a questionnaire-based method of collecting data. This research breaks away from conventional questionnaire-generated perceptions. Using the Repertory Grid technique it focuses on eliciting personal constructs of how real respondents receive conflict solving actions in relation to the dual leadership structure of which they are part. The method allows to go much deeper than past research into the core perceptions that influence respondent's attitudes and subsequent behaviors. Previous literature showed commonality in motives for strategic consensus in the decision-making process, yet this research builds on these findings adding

not only the theme of conflict but also new constructs, core perceptual dimensions, opening up new questions and issues for further research.

Practitioner Implications

The study findings suggest a number of practical considerations. The first insight involves the cognitive process of dual executive leadership parties regarding the application of conflict resolution methods. The constructed cognitive map of ten conflict resolution methods and their specific bipolar labels could help executive leaders to more carefully consider which resolution to proceed with and better understand its consequences. In addition, the constructed cognitive map could heighten executives' awareness of what which conflict resolution method is most appropriate on a particular moment and given situation. Along these lines, this study can help counterweight the often less thoughtful decisions on conflict resolution methods based upon previous experiences. This leads to a final implication: this research advocates the idea of developing more cross-discipline professional training programs such as seminars or workshops to train future artistic and business leaders.

Weitzman & Weitzman (2000) suggested already that problem solving and decision-making techniques should be taught together in conflict resolution training programs. They argued that training should explain the conditions that encourage adoption of a problem solving approach, and factors that undermine good decision-making (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2000).

Likewise, this study argues that policymakers should realize that the current top managers of performing arts organizations in the Lowlands do not have the most ideal strategic orientation for an environment in which the organization should be mostly focused on the market. This creates tensions between the artistic and the economic objectives of the organization. A first step for public policy would be to help leaders to deal with the current situations, increase the cognitive diversity within the DEL structures and make sure that the artistic leader understands the economic situation and that the business leader better understand the artistic context.

LIMITATIONS

The study at hand has four main limitations. First, we argue that the bipolar constructs used to describe conflict resolution methods can be grouped according to these into four clusters of conflict resolution methodologies, but we did not empirically test whether the participants themselves experienced these four groups as equally important, relevant and representative. Second, this study is limited by the number of participating organizations – more responses would have provided a more powerful Repertory Grid model. Third, the study examined one setting in two countries (Belgium & The Netherlands) and focused on one particular nonprofit setting, e.g. the performing arts sector. Subsequently, similar studies in different contexts are needed to test the generalizability of the study results. Fourth, the study design analyzed managers' perceptions of conflict resolution method characteristics and effectiveness. It would be fruitful to complement these findings with non-perceptual data on the effectiveness of conflict resolutions methods.

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TABLE 1**Elicited Conflict Resolution Methods within the Dual Executive Leadership (DEL)
Practice in the Nonprofit Performing Arts Sector in Belgium and the Netherlands**

Method abbreviation	Dependent Variables	Amount of participants that mentions the method
M1	Trust development and maintenance	14
M2	Empathy and interest enhancement	9
M3	Respect increase towards the opposing dual leadership party	13
M4	Causal information visualization	7
M5	Strategic decision intermission followed by a second choice meeting	8
M6	Internal mediation	10
M7	Optimization of the communication between the DEL parties	13
M8	Generation of clarity on roles and responsibilities within the team	8
M9	External mediation	2
M10	Dual leadership termination	6

TABLE 2**Visualization Bipolar Conflict Resolution Constructs**

Differentiator identification	Differentiator Label	Emergent Construct Pole	Opposite Construct Pole
D1	Relative cost	Expensive	Economical
D2	Third party involvement	Third party involved	Internal resolution, no third party
D3	Degree of formality	Formal action	Less formal action
D4	Degree of reversibility	Reversible	Often irreversible
D5	Willingness to compromise	Requires willingness to compromise	Does not requires willingness to compromise
D6	Organizational impact	Limited organizational impact	Large organizational impact
D7	Leadership involvement	Both leaders involved, joint action	One leader involved, choice of one leader
D8	Conflict litigation time	Effective on the long-term	Effective immediately
D9	Timeframe of the method	Continuous process	One-off action
D10	Effect on leader status	Mitigates the effect of status differences between DEL leaders (e.g. tenure, professional experience)	Strengthens the status differences between DEL leaders

FIGURE 1

Repertory Grid Example and Indication of the Terminology

		Personal Constructs (opposing pole)										
			Economical	Internal resolution, no third party	Less formal action	Often irreversible	Does not require willingness to	Large organizational impact	One leader involved, choice of one	Effective immediately	One-off action	Strengthens the status differences between DEL leaders
Conflict Resolution Methods (M1-M10)	10	Dual leadership termination	1	1	5	1	1	1	5	1	1	3
	9	External mediation	5	5	5	1	1	1	5	1	1	1
	8	Generation of clarity on roles & responsibilities within the team	1	1	5	5	3	1	5	3	1	3
	7	Optimization of the communication between the DEL parties	1	1	5	5	5	1	5	3	1	1
	6	Internal mediation	1	5	5	5	5	1	5	1	1	3
	5	Strategic decision intermission followed by a second choice meeting	1	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	1	3
	4	Causal information visualization	1	1	1	5	3	5	5	1	1	3
	3	Respect increase towards the opposing DEL party	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	5	5	1
	2	Empathy & interest enhancement	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	5	5	5
	1	Trust development and maintenance	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	5	5	5
Personal Constructs (emergent pole)			D1 Expensive	D2 Third party involved	D3 Formal action	D4 Reversible	D5 Requires willingness to compromise	D6 Limited organizational impact	D7 Both leaders involved, joint action	D8 Effective on the long-term	D9 Continuous process	D10 Mitigates the effect of status differences between DEL leaders

